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ROBERT HENRI AND COSMOPOLITAN CULTURE
OF FIN-DE-SIECLE FRANCE

by

LINDA JONES GIBBS

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

1999

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Art History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Abstract

ROBERT HENRI AND COSMOPOLITAN CULTURE
OF FIN DE SIECLE FRANCE

by

LINDA JONES GIBBS

Advisor: Professor Gail Levin

The American painter Robert Henri (1865-1929) lived in Paris and its environs for nearly eight years between 1888-1900. This dissertation relates the critical impact his extensive exposure to fin-de-siècle French culture had upon his early paintings, his theories about the production of art, and ultimately upon the ideological foundation of the Ashcan School. This is accomplished through analysis of the many significant cosmopolitan elements Henri encountered in France not only in the realm of art but literature, philosophy, and politics.

Henri's rebellion against the art institutional bureaucracy and hierarchy and his non-traditional teaching methods have frequently been attributed to the individualist spirit of the American frontier where he spent much of his youth. Such stereotyping diminishes the importance of his residencies in France. In the Introduction, these persistent references to Henri's western upbringing are chronologically surveyed. The nationalist context in which

he has so often been placed and his alignment with primarily American writers, artists, and thinkers is also called into question.

Part I of the dissertation begins with a chapter on Henri's early studies at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and surveys the degree to which that training influenced his theories and style. The subsequent three chapters chronicle his first trip to France from 1888-1891 in terms of the literature he read and the many parallels that exist between such diverse sources as Emile Zola and Leo Tolstoy and his own evolving attitudes about art. Part II begins with a chapter on French politics and its influence on Henri, with an emphasis on the anarchist movement. The following chapter charts the similarities between the anti-positivism of Henri's art theories found in his treatise The Art Spirit and the theory of vitalism developed by the French philosopher Henri Bergson.

The final chapter surveys early critical reaction to Henri's early paintings and analyzes these works in terms of the many influences discussed throughout the dissertation. The conclusion assesses the impact of Henri's French experience on the philosophical development of the Ashcan School and establishes his importance as a vanguard of complex modern thought in turn-of-the-century American.

PROLOGUE

Some years ago while working at a museum in Utah I curated an exhibition entitled Harvesting the Light: The Paris Art Mission and Beginnings of Utah Impressionism.¹ The exhibition contained works by a small group of Utah artists who joined the hundreds of Americans flocking to France to study in the late nineteenth century. These Mormon artists were from rural communities in what was then the Territory of Utah. They were subsidized in Paris by the Mormon Church which later employed their skills to paint murals in the newly constructed temple in Salt Lake City. Their stay in Europe was relatively brief - one to two years - and while in Paris it appears they sequestered themselves as best they could from what they deemed a sinful environment. They were in Paris solely to obtain the training necessary for their religious oriented obligations back home.²

The limited degree to which these "art missionaries," as they came to be called, immersed themselves in the environment of France was the antithesis of the broad education experienced by Robert Henri who arrived in Paris in 1888, precisely two weeks after the first artist from Utah reached the French capital.³ Not only did Henri return to France for extended periods of time between 1888 and 1900, he absorbed its cultural and intellectual climate perhaps more than any

other American artist of his time. In addition to visiting the Salons and other art exhibits and galleries, Henri learned the French language and read current newspapers, periodicals, and contemporary novels. His diaries also recount his awareness of and interest in the political turmoil of fin-de-siècle France.

In the early twentieth century, several Utah artists who belong to a generation subsequent to the "art missionaries" came under the tutelage of Robert Henri in New York. Among them was Jack Sears (1875-1969) who studied with Henri from 1907-1908. Sears painted a small vigorous portrait circa 1907 of his then famous teacher working at an easel presumably in the classroom. (Fig. 1) Henri is seen in profile, his features somewhat caricatured in the vein of Sear's cartoon-like illustrative style. Henri's left hand is raised to the canvas on which he is painting a nude model. His right hand holds a cigar along with several brushes loaded with paint. A figure, probably an observing student, is roughed into the background. From his vantage point the student cannot possibly see the canvas on which Henri is working; if he is watching anything at all, he is watching Henri, a reinforcement of the notion that Henri the man, and not his art, had the greatest impact on his students. The brushstrokes of Sear's portrait are loose and sketchy in keeping with Henri's advocacy of a rapid painting style, but what is most telling about Sear's

observation of his teacher at work is the way he has depicted the paint on Henri's palette. It appears to have a life of its own, literally leaping upwards toward the brush and/or canvas. "The mere brush stroke itself must speak," Henri wrote, "it is . . . rich, full, generous, alive . . . and knows what is going on."⁴

Henri's desire for art to be a living vital force went beyond the realism espoused at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts where he first studied and differed radically from the traditional attitudes toward art to which he was exposed at the Académie Julian and Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. As early as 1891 he would declare that "the theory of painting and the theory of life . . . is the same."⁵ This fervent belief in the marriage of art and life was later directed toward his many students. Thirty-nine of the ninety-three artists, for example, who exhibited in the 1910 Exhibition of Independent Artists in New York had studied with Henri. His influence on not only his students but upon succeeding generations through his treatise The Art Spirit is well documented and inarguably extensive.⁶ Yet there exists no in depth study of the myriad factors that informed his developing attitudes toward art. The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the political, philosophical, and intellectual issues that impacted Henri's theoretical and aesthetic concerns.

In H. Barbara Weinberg's concluding paragraphs of The

Lure of Paris, Nineteenth Century American Painters and Their French Teachers, she asserts that of all the professionally trained American artists of the nineteenth century, Robert Henri departed the most radically from the conservatism of his teacher in the Académie Julian, the archetypical academician Adolph-William Bouguereau (1825-1905).⁷ One might say that this dissertation takes up where Weinberg leaves off. Indeed, within a relatively short time after his initial arrival in Paris, Henri became critical of much of the academic training he had so eagerly sought. Other American artists had become disenchanted with academic training but Henri reacted against it with vehemence and devoted much of his life to preaching and teaching an antithetical approach to art.

What differentiated Henri from his fellow American students in France was, in a word, *Weltanschauung*, a German expression which means "life attitude." The term appears in one of the books in Henri's personal library entitled Artists and Thinkers.⁸ In a chapter on Leo Tolstoy, whom Henri admired, author William Flacius uses the expression to describe the Russian novelist's belief that art must be rooted in an all-encompassing outlook toward life and not in a singular character or plot. Soon after Henri departed for training in France his feelings about art evolved from something separate from himself - a thing to be learned within

a specific setting - to something inextricably tied to the way he lived his life. It is that evolution and its impact on his early paintings and the formation of the Ashcan School that will be explored herein.

Notes

1. See Linda Jones Gibbs, Harvesting the Light, The Paris Art Mission and Beginnings of Utah Impressionism, exh. cat. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Museum of Church History and Art, 1987).

2. While not oblivious to the rich cultural environment of Paris, these "art missionaries" kept their priorities in line with what was considered a religious mission. Their single-mindedness of purpose is exemplified by a comment made by one of them in a Salt Lake City magazine. John Hafen remarked: "When I beheld the grand boulevards and avenues of Paris . . . or strolled in the paradisiacal parks among a profusion of flowers, sparkling fountains and marble statuary . . . or gazed upon the magnificent architecture of the Louvre, Madeleine, Notre Dame, Pantheon . . . did I lose interest in the Gospel? No. For the Lord has predicted greater things than these for Zion [Utah]; then it is we realize what a great work there is before us." John Hafen, "An Art Student in Paris," The Contributor 15:11 (September 1894): 690.

3. James Taylor Harwood (1860-1940) from Lehi, Utah arrived in Paris on September 8, 1888. Henri arrived on September 22. Harwood was not one of the artists subsidized by the Mormon Church; however, his arrival in Paris to study art prompted other Utah artists to follow, most directly those who came in 1890 under the auspices of the Church.

4. Robert Henri, The Art Spirit (New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1923; reprint ed., New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1984), 69.

5. Henri letter to parents, 11 May 1891, BRBL.

6. The Art Spirit, originally published in 1923, contains a selection of statements made by Henri in class at the Arts Student League and recorded by one of his students, Margery Ryerson. Also included are instruction sheets he distributed to his students, reprints of articles he wrote, and several lectures he delivered over the years. Bennard B. Perlman reported that The Art Spirit had sold over 200,000 copies since its original printing. See Perlman, Robert Henri, His

Life and Art (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1991), 133.

Henri's students at the New York School of Art (where he taught between 1902-1908) and later his own Henri School of Art (1909-1912) and at the Arts Students League (1915-1927) included Guy Pène du Bois, George Bellows, Rockwell Kent, Glenn O. Coleman, Edward Hopper, Josephine Nivison, Patrick Henry Bruce, Homer Boss, Julius Golz, A.B. Frost, Carl Sprinchorn, Gifford Beal, Walter Pach, C.K. Chatterton, Andrew Dasburg, Morgan Russell, Stuart Davis, John Koopman, Arnold Friedman, Vachel Lindsey, and Randall Davey. Henri also taught at the Modern School of the Ferrer Center Henri from 1911-1916. His students there included Moses Soyer, Niles Spencer, Man Ray, Robert Brackman, William Gropper, Peggy Bacon, Elias Goldberg, Ben Benn, Robert Minor, and briefly Leon Trotsky. For information on Henri's influence see Helen E. Goodman; "Robert Henri: The Teacher" (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1975), Bruce Robertson, "Henri's Students and Friends: Rockwell Kent, George Bellows, Leon Kroll, George Luks, and Edward Hopper," chapter in Reckoning with Winslow Homer (Cleveland: The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1990), 101-136; "An Interview with Stuart Davis," Archives of American Art Journal 31 (1991): 4-13; and Rockwell Kent, It's Me O Lord (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1955), 81-86.

7. H. Barbara Weinberg, The Lure of Paris, Nineteenth Century American Artists and Their French Teachers (New York: Abbeville Press, 1991), 258.

8. Louis William Flacius, Artists and Thinkers (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1916), 147. Henri's personal library was bequeathed to the National Arts Club in 1991 by Henri's heir, Janet LeClair. The library contains many monographs on artists whom Henri admired, including Daumier, Goya, Manet, and Velasquez. It also includes bound volumes of French caricatures, bound issues of The Craftsman, and illustrated catalogues of the annual Salons in Paris from 1879-1882. In addition there are numerous books on the philosophy of art as well as an early biography of Walt Whitman. The collection contains approximately 123 volumes but most of them were published during the second and third decades of the twentieth century. With the exception of an 1894 edition of Whitman's Leaves of Grass, the collection is lacking many of the books owned by Henri early in his career.

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I wish to thank Mrs. Janet LeClair, heir to the Henri estate, for our many correspondences and conversations and for permission to have access to the Henri diaries. The staff at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library were also extremely helpful as the Henri papers were undergoing re-cataloguing and conservation around the time I needed access to them. Harriet Memeger, Librarian at the Delaware Museum of Art, was most gracious during my visit there and in subsequent correspondences. Cheryl Leibold, Archivist at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, was also very helpful on numerous occasions.

I would like to acknowledge the many other curators and registrars at the various institutions noted in the illustration credits who facilitated my obtaining photographic images. Henri scholar Bennard B. Perlman assisted me several

times in locating specific sources and data. Veronica DelaCruz, Tim and Holly Robinson, and Guy and Nicole Moran all contributed to the accuracy of my French translations. I also wish to acknowledge Dawn Pheysey, curator at the Brigham Young Museum of Art, for her help in locating various research materials.

Throughout the process I enjoyed, as always, the unwavering support of my parents, Dr. Charles Stewart and Ruth Jones, even though they were stymied at times as to why my Ph.D. took considerably longer than a medical degree to complete. My deepest gratitude goes to my husband Michael who has endured the stresses of the magnitude of this project with enthusiasm and pride and belief in my ability to bring it to fruition. My children, Graham and Chelsea, also buoyantly survived a mother whose moods were at times unpredictable depending upon the success of the day. Their exuberance upon completion of the project made my sense of accomplishment all the sweeter.

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INTRODUCTION

ROBERT HENRI AND THE MYTHIC TEN GALLON HAT

The brochure distributed at the family home of Robert Henri in Cozad, Nebraska bears the provocative title "The Mystery of Robert Henri, World Famous Artist, Son of John J. Cozad."¹ Beneath this wording is a photograph of Henri's face superimposed over an image of the house. Henri appears ghost-like, the home apparent through his visage. (Fig. 2) The pamphlet further declares: "Robert Henri's Art Spirit Was Born Amid 1890 Turmoil." Inside the brochure are additional photographs of the interior of the home along with the query "What is the mystery of this 100-Year Old Hotel?" The question is never answered in the booklet but there remains the implication that there is a significant connection between the enigmatic Henri and the unsettled days of his youth.

The mystery of the boarding house where Henri and his family lived in Cozad is, of course, the now well known fact that while living there in 1882, Henri's father killed an employee, apparently in self defense over a dispute about money. Fearing for John Cozad's safety, the family quickly left town. After reuniting in Denver, they moved to New York, finally settling in Atlantic City, New Jersey late in 1883.

Although subsequently cleared of the murder charge, John Cozad determined it was in his family's best interest to change their names. Robert took his middle name of Henry as a surname but changed its spelling to reflect his French ancestry. Disliking pretense, he insisted upon an American pronunciation of "Hen-rye."²

One could have a psychoanalytic field day examining Henri's change in identity brought on by his father's disreputable past - a concept never explored but hinted at by Edward Lucie-Smith who wrote that "this abrupt change in continuity during his vulnerable adolescent years must have fostered a later search for roots."³ For the purposes of this dissertation, however, Henri's adoption of a Frenchified form of his middle name as a surname serves as a metaphor for the dichotomy that will be explored herein - namely his significant engagement with French culture - art, philosophy, literature, and politics - as seen alongside the nativist context in which he is so often discussed.

This study enhances our appreciation of the complexity of Henri as a theorist and illuminates our knowledge of the many parallels that exist between his thought and that of a diverse range of writers and thinkers. Such knowledge of the artist's cosmopolitan roots in social and political thought as well as aesthetics adds to our understanding of the lengthy foreground of his life that preceded the development of the so-called

Ashcan School.⁴ Many assumptions concerning Henri's nationalism will also be called into question and his interest in French culture viewed as a conscious rejection of American Puritan sensibilities.

Henri admitted to being "a kind of man distinctly American." Yet he explained: "My parents taught me to believe in this American man of courage, of wit, of invention who developed because he had to find a way out of many difficulties"⁵ Henri's elucidation is important - his description of a distinctly American man is void of nationalist or patriotic overtones; rather this American man of courage, wit, and invention makes obvious reference to the literal reinvention of his immediate family due to his father's unfortunate past. Possibly as a consequence, Henri appears to have been intrigued throughout his life by the notion of self invention, claiming that "the fun of living is that we have to make ourselves"⁶

Perhaps of more interest than Henri's own self perceptions are the suppositions others have made of him. Since Henri's death in 1929, writers and critics have consistently attributed much of his character and commitment to personal and artistic individualism to his upbringing in a frontier environment. The very year of his death, an article appeared in The Literary Digest entitled "Henri, 'Typically American,' a 'Born Insurgent.'" While not making specific

reference to his place of birth in the Midwest, the title suggests a link between his alleged American disposition and his rebelliousness.⁷ Walter Pach's description of the artist almost a decade after his death typifies the popular mythic conception that Henri's philosophical nonconformity derived largely from a youth spent amid the lawlessness and individualism of the western frontier:

Tall, broad-shouldered, and a bit rough in his ways, he could make convincing allusions to the men with revolvers he had known in the Far West of his youth. Jesse James was pretty nearly a hero to him. Something of the fascination, of the sense of danger and adventure of the old West hung about his talk and flashed from under his dark brows-that would relax a moment later as a smile warmed his rugged face.⁸

Subsequent references to the artist contain similar commentary. Henri's fellow Ashcan School painter John Sloan described his friend and mentor as having "come from the West and had the pioneer's contempt for cant and aestheticism."⁹ Literary critic Van Wyck Brooks (1886-1963) wrote that Henri emerged "out of a Bret Harte story of the West."¹⁰ The Eastern press even dubbed the first showing of paintings by the Eight at Macbeth Gallery the "outlaw" salon.¹¹

Henri's youth spent in frontier America was, in fact, the sole subject of Mari Sandoz's 1960 Son of the Gambler Man: The Youth of an Artist. The very title of the book, full of invented dialogue, presents a romanticized view of the artist's rough and tumble Midwestern upbringing. The author

explained in the preface that Henri was "condemned" by his father "to live and die under a fictitious name and biography." Prepared to set the record straight, Sandoz centered her account on letters in her possession that John Cozad had penned to her father in 1903. However, Cozad "left his trail too shadowed and confused," she explains, "for the complete clarification demanded by non-fiction." Sandoz admittedly "filled in a few holes necessary to reconstruct something of the crucible in which the dross of the son's youth was burned away and the gold of it freed to find itself."¹²

William Inness Homer, one of Henri's primary biographers, is careful to qualify his assumptions about the influence of the West on Henri but nevertheless appears to accept the supposition that it was of considerable consequence. He writes:

It may seem cliché to attribute his democratic spirit, his individualism, and his suspicion of external controls to an upbringing in a pioneering community. But if we accept Frederick Jackson Turner's classic thesis on the effect of the frontier upon the American character, then much of Henri's personality can be explained by the fact that he spent his formative years in the West.¹³

Turner believed that the early experience of American life fostered individualism through the condition of life on the moving frontier and through the free lands of the virgin West:

That coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and inquisitiveness; that practical, inventive turn of mind, quick to find expedients; that masterful grasp of

material things, lacking in the artistic but powerful to effect great ends; that restless nervous energy; that dominant individualism, working for good and evil, and withal that buoyancy and exuberance which comes from freedom--these are the traits of the frontier, or traits called out elsewhere because of the existence of the frontier.¹⁴

Homer aligns Turner's description of the western "type" with Henri but is careful to note that Henri departs from the archetypal westerner in terms of lacking an artistic sense -- a rather significant exception in Henri's case.

More recent biographers have continued to project an image of Henri as a rugged westerner. Bennard Perlman compared the artist's early life to a "western thriller: a rough-riding life in the pioneer West of Buffalo Bill and the pony express." He further described Henri's enrollment at the Pennsylvania Academy as that of "a pioneer youth, emerging from the wild West of Jesse James' day."¹⁵ Bruce W. Chambers in his 1986 essay "Robert Henri: American Independent" cited Walt Whitman, Louis Sullivan, and Teddy Roosevelt as "among his [Henri's] exemplars, the 'modern heroes' of every westward-facing pioneer."¹⁶ Bruce Robertson, in his recent book on Winslow Homer, concluded that "the spirit of the Wild West never seems to have left Henri, which goes a long way toward justifying his individualism and rebelliousness."¹⁷ Playing off the theme of the Wild West in Henri's background, German writer Hubert Beck wittily described the artist as "the fastest brush in the East."¹⁸ Yet another writer, making

reference to the artist's adoption of a new identity to escape the family scandal, described the name "Henri," despite its family origins, as a "made-up name, as American as a shoot-em-up."¹⁹

In 1991, Steven Watson further typecast Henri when he described him as the antithesis of his contemporary, the more metropolitan Alfred Stieglitz. Watson compared Henri, "the westerner who wore a ten-gallon hat and whose father had shot and killed a card-game opponent," with Stieglitz, the "bourgeois urban Jew."²⁰ Watson's reference to a ten-gallon hat enhances the mythology of Henri as cowboy/anarchist as does his mention of an equally fictitious card game episode which immediately conjures up images of a reckless wild west upbringing.

Henri has been cast not only within the context of the West but in broader nationalist terms as well. In their 1921 account of Henri's life, biographers William Yarrow and Louis Bouche defined Henri's spirit as one "not confined to mere liberality." They further explained that his spirit "is a mixture of passionate eagerness and wisdom and in the strictest connotation of the word it is intensely American."²¹

Henri has consistently been aligned with certain American writers, artists, and politicians, as in the aforementioned essay by Bruce Chambers. In 1980 Charles Alexander, writing a book on nationalism and the arts, compared Henri to other

American "romantic nationalists" such as the writer Van Wyck Brooks, composer Arthur Farwell, and the dramatist/playwright Percy MacKaye. Unlike Farwell and MacKaye, however, who searched the indigenous roots of their respective art forms to find nationalist expressions, Henri's artistic models were predominately European.²²

Rebecca Zurier, in her dissertation on the art of the Ashcan School, stated that "coupled with a strong nativism, this search for genuine or vital experience linked Henri to a generation of American thinkers."²³ Her assertion echoes Joseph J. Kwait's comment in the 1956 that Henri's ideas are "linked with the great intellectual tradition of American transcendentalism . . . " characterized not only by Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman but Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Herman Melville.²⁴ Zurier also draws parallels between Henri and the educational theories of John Dewey (1859-1952) and, perhaps taking her cue from Bruce Chambers, finds similarities between Henri's art theory and the organic aesthetics of architects Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright. Like Frank Lloyd Wright, Zurier maintains, Henri "cultivated a distinctly rugged, American persona."²⁵

Zurier furthermore suggested an affinity between Henri and the "strong and sensitive protagonist" of the 1902 novel The Virginian by the Philadelphia born Owen Wister.²⁶ This immensely popular book, a combination of myth and exotic

detail, was a paeon to the closure of the frontier (and coincidentally dedicated to Theodore Roosevelt whom Zurier also relates to Henri). Our first introduction to the Virginian, "a slim young giant" Wister tells us, with a "weather-beaten bloom of his face" covered with dust which failed to tarnish "the splendor of his youth and strength" is reminiscent of Walter Pach's description of Henri as "tall, broad-shouldered, a bit rough in his ways," whose "rugged face" emitted a sense of adventure of the old West."²⁷

The painter Guy Pêne du Bois recalled in his memoirs that in Henri's classroom "Americanism . . . was never mentioned" yet he goes on to describe Henri as "the American ideal of an American" in reference to his forthright nature.²⁸ Even Henri's well-known treatise The Art Spirit has been discussed in nationalist terms. The poet Vachel Lindsay described it as "one of the great textbooks on real Americanism."²⁹ This perception of Henri the nationalist continues to exist as exemplified by Bruce Robertson who wrote in 1990 that like Winslow Homer, the "strength of Henri's art lay . . . in his nature as an American."³⁰ Robertson supports this assertion with a statement from an article in The International Studio of 1915 in which the author declared that "through [Henri's] democratic humanism, his exclusion of feudal themes, and his vigorous mental attitude and faith he is an American."³¹

This "vigorous mental attitude" is precisely what Zurier

and others have evoked to connect Henri with Theodore Roosevelt, in particular his enormously popular speech of 1899 "The Strenuous Life." The address was given by Roosevelt while governor of New York and as a prime contender for the Republican vice-presidential nomination. A close reading of the talk, which was delivered to a group of businessmen at a Chicago men's club, reveals a major fissure between Henri's pacifist, nonaggressive ideology and Roosevelt's dream of national greatness through economic superiority and participation in world affairs.³²

In his speech, Roosevelt declared "we do not admire the man of timid peace." In reference to the Civil War, he goes on to thank God "for the iron in the blood of our fathers . . . who . . . bore sword and rifle in the armies of Grant" in order that the "mighty American republic" became once again "a helmeted queen among nations." Roosevelt then arrived at the purpose of his remarks, a defense of the United States involvement in the Spanish American war and a definition of what he meant by the "strenuous life." He proclaimed that the "men who fear the strenuous life, who fear the only national life worth leading . . ." are those who "shrink from seeing us build a navy and an army adequate to our needs . . . shrink from bringing order out of chaos in the great, fair tropic islands from which the valor of our soldiers and sailors has driven the Spanish flag."³³

The philosopher William James found criticism with the imperialist and militaristic overtones of that speech, writing that Roosevelt "gushes over war as the ideal condition of human society, for the manly strenuousness which it involves . . ."³⁴ Henri's antiwar stance was expressed early on during his student days at the Académie Julian in Paris. In a letter to his parents he wrote:

War has always been made glorious by literature and art and Verestchagin makes it horrible, ghastly, murder and serves to teach us of what it really is, and that it should be avoided.³⁵

Rockwell Kent recorded a later incident at the New York School of Art where Henri was teaching that supports the fact that Henri did not align himself with the "strenuous life" ideology. The students at the school decided to conduct their own political campaign to elect a governing student body. There resulted two opposing political parties - "The Simple Palette Party," whose members included those students who called themselves the Henri disciples and the "Free Graft and Strenuous Life Party," composed of many who had been active in student affairs. According to Kent, Henri was genuinely upset by the overwhelming defeat of his party.³⁶

Is there not, in fact, something problematic in aligning Henri, a devotee of the anarchist Emma Goldman, with Theodore Roosevelt? Roosevelt labeled Goldman a "pervert" and "madwoman" while Goldman considered Roosevelt to be "America's

future Napoleon."³⁷ At the very least, comparisons between Henri and Roosevelt invite a second look. Henri's ideal of a man with conviction and energy is closer to that of Goldman's declaration that anarchism called for "men who are men, and who have a bone in their backs."³⁸

While Henri did spend much of his youth in the frontier, one must counter this fact with the efforts made by his mother to ensure that her sons be well read and well educated. Henri, in fact, admitted that "the stimulating influences of my mother who had a natural love for books and painting . . . counted favorably against an environment - the far West, cowboy, etc., etc., in which there was no association with artists."³⁹ While living in pioneer communities, John and Teresa Cozad sent the boys to school in Cincinnati, Denver, and later New York to ensure a college bound future. Henri wrote fondly of his western upbringing but he never expressed a longing or desire to return to his roots.⁴⁰ He made his homes in two of the most cosmopolitan cities of the world, Paris and New York, fully immersing himself in the cultural richness of modern urban life. The very internationalism of Paris was for Henri a great attraction. Referring to what he described as "a background of thirteen years of intimate living over there," Henri wrote of his experience many years later:

In reality, France does not possess Paris and Paris does

not possess France. Paris is just a magical center where people from all countries have converged, where their spirits have met. The artistic distinction of this place is more universal than it is French; that universality has been its strength and its lure.⁴¹

Thirteen years of "intimate living" in France certainly merits a broader search for parallelisms beyond American architects, poets, and presidents.

Peter Conn, in his admirable survey of cultural history, The Divided Mind, Ideology and Imagination in America, 1891-1917, included Henri as representative of the profound conflict between tradition and innovation that occurred in the early twentieth century. Henri, indeed, exhibits the divided consciousness acute in the transitional age of the early 1900s when people lived within complex and sometimes contradictory value systems. One sees it manifest in both his professional and personal lives. For example, as an artist Henri's talk was liberal but his painting technique conservative. He greatly admired the radical feminist/anarchist Emma Goldman, an advocate of free love, but in his own private life observed monogamous relationships during the course of his two marriages.⁴²

However, I question Conn's assertion that the realism of Henri and the Eight was a "legatee" of Puritanism and its historical demand on American art to be straightforward and void of sensuousness.⁴³ Other historians have furthered this notion. Leslie Katz similarly wrote of Henri's art as a

"peculiarly native product," concluding that "his soul, steeped in the puritan gloom of American energy, does not give in easily to the release and freedom that is the destiny and desire in the early Twentieth Century."⁴⁴ Henri rejected the Puritan sensibility and its English roots, signaled in part by his expanding choice of literature. He moved on from the moralizing and sentimental Dickens of his youth to the harsher realism of Emile Zola and Leo Tolstoy, the liberalism of Mikhail Bakunin, and the sensuality of Walt Whitman. Henri's denouncement of puritanism was, in fact, rather harsh:

I am always sorry for the Puritan, for he guided his life against desire and against nature . . . He found what he thought was comfort, for he believed the spirit's safety was in negation, but he has never given the world one minute's joy or produced one symbol of the beautiful order of nature. He sought peace in bondage and his spirit became a prisoner.⁴⁵

Henri even advised his students to read the French Realist Guy de Maupassant. "He's a little immoral. You'll like him," he stated. "Wicked enough to be interesting . . ." ⁴⁶

In a published show of support for Emma Goldman, Henri admired the fact that she can "talk plainly to us as though we were free-thinking creatures and not the children of Puritans."⁴⁷ Rather than being derivative of the pragmatism and puritanism of early American representational art, the realism espoused by Henri is far more ideologically connected to French nineteenth century art, particularly in terms of Gustave Courbet's belief in painting one's own time, the

humanitarian ideals of Jean François Millet, and Edouard Manet's interest in contemporary life.

The claim by many writers that Henri personified the archetypical American artist (Western or otherwise) must be viewed in light of the demands of the culture that shaped his reputation and legendary appeal. Henri's personal history has frequently been analyzed in terms of prevailing social values. Much of the writing about Henri and the Ashcan School derives its nationalist slant from terminology used by art critics and Henri, himself, during the first two decades of the twentieth century - terminology which reflects the cultural nationalism movement in America of the time.

Cultural nationalist critics tended not only to ignore the cosmopolitan influences behind many American artists and writers but exaggerated their "Americanness." After experiencing an economic upsurge and winning the Spanish American war in 1898, the United States was poised to assume its place among the world's great powers. With this new imperialist America came a resurgence of nationalism which in the early twentieth century became synonymous with culture. Cultural nationalism gained significant momentum after about 1910 in the writings of not only Van Wyck Brooks but the journalist/critic H.L. Mencken (1880-1956) and social philosopher Lewis Mumford (1895-1990) and was later reinforced by the isolationism of the interwar period of the 1920s.

Van Wyck Brooks, a foremost proponent of the movement, published his essay "Wine of the Puritans" in 1909, just one year after the Eight exhibited together for the first time in New York. In that treatise Brooks declared that Americans needed to "teach our pulses to beat with American ideas and ideals, absorb American life, until we are able to see that in all its vulgarities and distractions . . . there lie the elements of a gigantic art."⁴⁸

In 1908, the year of the Eight's first exhibition at Macbeth Gallery, art critic Giles Edgerton (alias Mary Fanton Roberts), envisioned Henri and his followers as the hope for a national art. In their paintings she saw salvation for the "blight of imitation" that was pervasive in American painting. At the same time, however, she understood what Henri's response would be to a so called "national art." (Henri, in fact reviewed and edited the article before publication.) Edgerton wrote:

I doubt if any of these men would talk about a 'national art'. . . They are not consciously trying to create a new art for a country that needs one; yet they are . . . doing the kind of work that is essentially creative and absolutely typical of our own racial characteristics, our social conditions and our widely diversified country.⁴⁹

This particular article appeared in the Craftsman, a magazine with a significant nationalist bias. Its founder, Gustave Stickley, declared in 1906 that "The time is ripe for the birth in this country of a national art - an art that

shall express the strongly individual characteristics of the American people"⁵⁰ Stickley took a stance that was counter to an emphasis on idealism and formal excellence in art. He believed the artist's first obligation was to "know the life of the people . . . in order to paint . . . a lasting art in America."⁵¹ Other critics wrote of Henri and his followers in nationalist terms. Writing in 1907 about the Eight, Samuel Swift observed the group's "democratic outlook" defined by the fact that "they give no hint of 'slumming' among either rich or poor . . . This is an attitude healthily American, and so is the optimism that all of them disclose in their pictures."⁵² Yet another critic writing about the Eight that same year proclaimed that "all are men who stand for the American idea" in terms of their depictions of modern urban life.⁵³

Much of the attribution of nationalism to Henri undoubtedly stemmed from his own rhetoric exemplified by the oft quoted essay "Progress in Our National Art Must Spring from the Development of Ideas and Freedom of Expression: A Suggestion for a New Art School." Such commentary, not surprisingly published in the Craftsman, was Henri's response to the tenor of the times, as indicated by his opening statement that "there has been much discussion within the last year on the question of a national art in America." In that article Henri stated that "what is necessary for art in

America, as in any land, is first an appreciation of the great ideas native to the country and then the achievement of a masterly freedom in expressing them." He continued to say that such a person's art will be "characteristically American, whatever the subject."⁵⁴

The question of Henri's nationalist allegiance even found its way into popular fiction. He was purportedly the inspiration for the principle character in a novel of 1902 entitled Edges written by New York School of Art student Alice Woods.⁵⁵ The book begins with a narrative involving a prodigal artist/son who finally returns to the bosom of his homeland after study abroad. The following passage, replete with moralizing overtones, concerns the artist's student days in Paris:

He had [in the Latin Quarter] suffered in the fever of self analysis, forgetting the value of reserve . . . restless wandering over Paris . . . and getting used to unholy things. Finally . . . he had come thankfully back to his own land.⁵⁶

When Henri did return to America from France to settle in 1900, he did not come back as a true nationalist - to be so would not have been in keeping with his anarchist and humanitarian ideals which had been fed if not rooted in his European experience. He repeatedly countered the frequent claim on his nativist leanings in his own writings. In 1915 Henri stated ". . . I am patriotic only about what I admire, and my devotion to humanity burns up as brightly for Europe as

for America."⁵⁷ He also declared that "always we would try to tie down the great to our little nationalism; whereas every great artist is a man who has freed himself from his family, his nation, his race . . . a rebel . . . without patriotism."⁵⁸

Later in life, Henri reinstated his abhorrence for what he termed "screech eagle patriotism."⁵⁹ He also asserted in The Art Spirit that:

The greatest American, of whom the nation must be proud, will not be a "typical" American at all, but will be heir to the world instead of a part of it, and will go to every place where he feels he may find something of the information he desires . . .⁶⁰

It is interesting to note that while living in France, Henri never joined the American Art Students Club. After viewing an exhibition of their work at Durand Ruels in Paris in early 1900 he declared: "I have never been a member of the club - not believing in flocking in art . . . "⁶¹ Nor did he join the Paris Association of American Artists whose stated objective was to assist in "the grand aim of all Americans . . . coming to Paris to study the development of a National Art for America."⁶²

In 1916 Henri made it clear that his interest in art was not concentrated on American art per se:

In America (or any country), greatness in art will not be attained by the possession of canvases housed in palatial museums, by the purchase and the bodily owning of art. The greatness can only come by the art spirit entering the very life of the people, not as a thing apart, but as

the greatest essential of life . . . ⁶³

What is significant in this statement is Henri's qualifying parenthetical remark that his comments pertain to any country. Henri's challenge to his students in that article to paint "what you can get to know personally -- of the manners and customs within your own experience" was not a call so much for a specifically American art as it was for an art that was sincere and void of artifice. Matthew Baigell articulated the issue of Henri's nationalism most succinctly when he wrote that Henri "was much less a nationalist than a person who believed that self-expression was primary and that it would reveal larger national patterns because of the interaction between the artist and his environment."⁶⁴

Henri's conviction that art alone can save the world from self-destruction is also pertinent to situating him within a cosmopolitan context. He wrote: "It [the art spirit] is to enter government and the whole material existence as the essential influence, and it alone, will keep government straight, end wars, and strife, do away with material greed."⁶⁵ This utopian view of the regenerative power of art stemmed from nineteenth century French ideology, which had its origins in the writings of socialists Henri de Saint-Simon (1760-1825) and Charles Fourier (1772-1837).⁶⁶

There is certainly value in acknowledging an American democratic outlook in Henri's make-up and my intent is to

neither refute nor diminish its import. I concur with Rebecca Zurier that looking at the common intellectual similarities between Henri and particular American contemporaries can be illuminating. My own research, however, will broaden that base of parallelisms to include European thinkers with whom he shared significant theoretical concerns. I find it remiss that with the exception of Emerson and Whitman, research on Henri has excluded other individuals whom we know he read.⁶⁷ This is a particularly significant oversight in light of the fact that what he read literally entered his classroom. As Stuart Davis explained, Henri "would talk about some book he'd read and what it meant about life, and how this painting and the attitude toward it were related, or not related to the book . . . When Henri spoke of writers . . . what he did was inspire a desire . . . to look up all this stuff and get involved with it."⁶⁸

In a lecture of 1901 Henri told his students that "an art student should read, or talk a great deal with those who have read. His conversations with his intimate fellow-students should be more of his life and less of paint."⁶⁹ Later on when Henri offered informal art instruction in his studio in Gramercy Park on Tuesday evenings, one of his students recalled that art was not the "only topic touched on; poetry, music, literature . . . history, in a word life and its living."⁷⁰

The prevailing nationalist context in which Henri is so often placed forms an incomplete picture to understanding the sources of his fervent lifelong campaign for individualism and has diminished the importance of his European experience. W. Francklyn Paris was one of the few who recognized the significance of Henri's French training beyond the scope of artistic influences. He wrote:

He came into the New York art world fresh from more than a decade spent mainly in France and he brought with him the lessons he has learned in those years. Some of the lessons he had learned in the ateliers, more of them in the galleries and museums . . . He came from France profoundly convinced of the importance of the individual, of the inherent dignity and nobility of man, of the supreme importance of searching and understanding one's self, of being inventive, self-expressing, and daring.⁷¹

This study is not a biographical account per say nor a survey of the artists Henri admired, a well known and much written about subject.⁷² Rather the project will situate Henri within the intellectual milieu of fin-de-siècle Paris in order to discover the many and varied cosmopolitan elements that informed his thinking. Such an analysis of the intersection of social and cultural history with Henri's theories and painting also broadens our understanding of the basis of the Ashcan School, which largely formed as a result of his influence.⁷³

The dissertation is divided into two main sections. Part I begins with a chapter on Henri's initial studies at the

Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts from 1886-1888. Its contents summarize his experience there and analyze the degree to which Henri's training under Thomas Anshutz and others influenced his theories and style. Chapters 2 and 3 chronicle Henri's first trip to France in 1888-1891 in terms of what he was reading during this initial stay abroad. I will extract aspects from his literary choices which parallel, reinforce, or may have motivated a particular attitude or theory he later developed about art. The sources are extremely varied and include the writings of Phillip Gilbert Hamerton, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Emile Zola, Marie Bashkirtseff, and Leo Tolstoy. The fourth chapter focuses on the cosmopolitan attitudes of two additional writers, the American poet Walt Whitman and the British critic George Moore, who become particularly significant to Henri during his return to Philadelphia after three years in France.

Part II of the dissertation concentrates on French politics and philosophy and their significant impact on Henri. Chapter 5 examines Henri's exposure to the French anarchist movement and how it affected his attitudes toward art and life. Included is a discussion of the close ties between anarchism and art in fin-de-siècle France. Soon after Henri returned to the United States from his initial trip to France, he became interested in the writings of the Russian anarchist Mikhail Bakunin. Henri's later involvement with American

anarchism in terms of his friendship with Emma Goldman and his teaching at the Ferrer Center in New York will also be discussed. Chapter 6 focuses on the parallelisms between Henri's art theories and the turn of the century doctrine known as vitalism. I will show the close alignment of Henri's art theories with the vitalist tenets of French philosopher Henri Bergson. This chapter will also connect Henri's interest in vitalism to French symbolist theory of the late nineteenth century. Henri's friendship with the Canadian painter James Wilson Morrice and his resulting exposure to the symbolist-related styles of the French Nabis and James McNeill Whistler will be addressed. This section concludes with a discussion of the anti-positivist strains that appear in Henri's well-known treatise, The Art Spirit.

Throughout the dissertation there is an attempt to interrelate all the topics under discussion - weaving threads of common thought that exist throughout Henri's literary, artistic and social/political concerns. Such a cross-examination will culminate in Chapter 7 in which Henri's early paintings are analyzed in terms of these many cosmopolitan influences. The conclusion will address the impact of Henri's French experience upon the ideological foundation of the Ashcan School.

What precisely was the 1890s turmoil which gave birth to Henri's "Art Spirit," as indicated by the tourist pamphlet at

the family home in Cozad, Nebraska? It was most certainly not the frontier skirmish surrounding his father's business affairs and subsequent upheaval of his family; rather, it was the aesthetic, social, and political turbulence of fin-de-siècle France.

Notes

1. "The Mystery of Robert Henri 'World Famous Artist' 'Son of John Cozad,'" brochure for Robert Henri Museum & Historical Walkway, Cozad, Nebraska.

2. Henri's parents took the name of Mr. and Mrs. Richard H. Lee and his brother that of Frank L. Southrn. Robert became Robert Earl Henri. The boys were thereafter identified as adopted sons and foster brothers.

3. Edward Lucie-Smith, American Realism (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1994), 62.

4. The term "Ashcan School" is used within this dissertation to denote the informally organized group of painters, specifically Robert Henri, John Sloan, William Glackens, George Bellows, George Luks, and Everett Shinn, who were painting in New York City in the early twentieth century. Generally assumed to have organized under the leadership of the charismatic Henri, they were primarily known for their depictions of urban life. Members of the Ashcan School have been defined as artists who brought the "gutsy vitality of common living into the staid atmosphere of the academies" and were first given the name "Ashcan School" in Holger Cahill and Alfred H. Barr, Jr., eds, Art in America in Modern Times (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1934), 89-91.

The name "ashcan" derived from a comment made in 1916 by Art Young following an argument with John Sloan when both were cartoonists for the socialist magazine The Masses. Young was dissatisfied with the lack of propagandistic elements in the art created for the periodical, declaring that the artists "want to run pictures of ash cans and girls hitching up their skirts in Horatio street." New York Sun (8 April 1916), cited in Bennard B. Perlman, Painters of the Ashcan School, The Immortal Eight (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1979), 196. He was actually referring to art not only by Sloan but by a second generation of Henri students - Stuart Davis, Glen Coleman, and others. For a more complete discussion of the origins of the term "Ashcan School" see Robert Hunter, "The Rewards and Disappointments of the Ashcan School," in Lowrey Stokes Sims, Stuart Davis, American Painter, exh. cat. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1982), 35-41; William Inness Homer, Robert Henri and His Circle (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1969; reprint ed., New York: Hacker Art

Books, 1988), 280, 281.

5. Robert Henri, "What About Art in America?," Arts and Decoration 24 (November 1925): 62.

6. Henri, The Art Spirit, 60.

7. "Henri, 'Typically American,' a 'Born Insurgent,'" Literary Digest CII (3 August 1929): 19-20.

8. Walter Pach, Queer Thing, Painting (New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1938), 45.

9. Quoted in Helen Farr Sloan, "Henri, An Appreciation" in Robert Henri, Painter, exh. cat., (Wilmington, Delaware: Delaware Art Museum, 1984), xi. John Sloan's quotations which appear in this article were taken from verbatim notes compiled by his second wife, Helen Farr Sloan, during conversations and interviews in the 1950s.

10. Van Wyck Brooks, John Sloan, A Painter's Life (New York: Dutton, 1955), 17. Bret Harte (1836-1902) was an American writer known for his works set in the American West.

11. New York American, 4 February 1908, quoted in Gotham News, p. 1, a pseudo-newspaper published as a hand-out in conjunction with the exhibition "Metropolitan Lives: The Ashcan Artists and Their New York," National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1995. The group known as the Eight consisted of Henri, George Bellows, William Glackens, George Luks, Everett Shinn, John Sloan, Ernest Lawson, Maurice Prendergast, and Arthur B. Davies. It is difficult to ascertain when the term "The Eight" was originally used. The name first appeared in print in an article by Frederick James Gregg in the May 15, 1907 issue of the New York Evening Sun.

12. Mari Sandoz, Son of the Gambler's Man: The Youth of An Artist, (New York: C.N. Potter, 1960), ix. Mari Sandoz was approached around 1940 by Dr. Robert Gatewood, a nephew and closest living relative of John Cozad, who asked her to write the story of John and his son Robert Henry. Sandoz's father had been a sandhill locator who helped settlers find homes on free land. He had written to John Cozad for business advice and assistance. In 1942 Sandoz went to Cozad to interview the town's "old-timers" but met resistance due to the John Cozad's controversial past. Respecting their hesitancy to talk, Sandoz laid the project aside until Van Wyck Brooks published his book on John Sloan in 1955. In his biography on Sloan, Brooks

discussed some of the truths about John Cozad's past which then freed Sandoz to write the Cozad story.

13. Homer, 18. Homer is making reference here to Turner's well known essay "The Significance of the Frontier in American History." The essay was given originally as an address in 1893 at the Chicago World's Fair and was first published in 1920. It is reprinted in George Rogers Taylor, ed., The Turner Thesis, Concerning the Role of the Frontier in American History (Boston: Heath, 1949), 17-18.

14. Taylor, The Turner Thesis, 17.

15. Perlman, Painters of the Ashcan School, 24, 25.

16. Bruce Chambers, "Robert Henri: American Independent," in Robert Henri, Selected Paintings (New York: Berry-Hill Galleries, Inc., 1986), 103.

17. Bruce Robertson, Reckoning with Winslow Homer: His Late Paintings and Their Influence (Cleveland: The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1990), 83.

18. Hubert Beck, "Urban Iconography in Nineteenth-Century American Painting," chapter in Thomas W. Gaehtgens and Heinz Ickstadt, eds., American Icons, Transatlantic Perspectives on Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Art (Santa Monica, California: Getty Center for the History of Art and Humanities, 1992), 336.

19. Paul Richard, "Lessons of 'Henri,' At the Corcoran, The Teachers Work," Washington Post, 20 April 1985, G1-G2.

20. Steven Watson, Strange Bedfellows, The First American Avant-Garde (New York: Abbeville Press, 1991), 81.

21. William Yarrow and Louis Bouche, Robert Henri, His Life and Works (New York: Boni & Liberight, 1921), 15.

22. Charles C. Alexander, Here the Country Lies, Nationalism and the Arts in Twentieth-Century America (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1980), 65. Farwell derived his compositions from folk music and rhythms borrowed from Native American musical tradition. MacKaye sought inspiration for his plays in New England history and folklore. On the contrary, Henri's most important artistic influences came from abroad, particularly France and Spain and the painters Edouard Manet and Diego Velasquez.

23. Rebecca Zurier, "Picturing the City: New York in the Press and the Art of the Ashcan School, 1890-1917" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1988), 24. Zurier also discusses Henri's experience in France in terms of artistic influences (see, for example, pp. 28-41).

24. Joseph J. Kwait, "Robert Henri and the Emerson-Whitman Tradition," Publications of the Modern Language Association 71 (September 1956): 617.

25. Zurier, 52. John Dewey was an American philosopher and educator who was an advocate of learning through varied activities rather than through authoritative methods and formal curriculum. The aligning of Henri with Louis Sullivan in the writings of Zurier and others may have its origins in F.O. Matthiessen's American Renaissance, Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1941), 592. Matthiessen links Sullivan to Henri in their shared indebtedness to Whitman whose poetry, he believes, helped free them from academic sterility and instilled passion in their work.

26. Ibid.

27. Owen Wistler, The Virginian (New York: Macmillan Co., 1902), 4, 5.

28. Guy Pène du Bois, Artists Say the Silliest Things (New York: American Artists Group, Inc., 1940), 88-89.

29. Quoted in Neil Martin, "More Than A Book," Christian Science Monitor, 1 February 1951, 15A.

30. Robertson, 88.

31. John Cournos, "Three Painters of the New York School," International Studio LVI (October 1915): 239, 240.

32. The Strenuous Life speech is reprinted in its entirety in Roderick Nash, ed., The Call of the Wild, 1900-1916 (New York: Braziller, 1970), 79-84. Zurier writes that "Roosevelt's call for 'vigorous, healthy' Americans to 'boldly face the life of strife'" informed Henri's definition of art as the 'trace of a magnificent struggle' and 'a record of intense life.'" See Zurier, 53. Similarly, Sam Hunter related the "Rooseveltian appetite for life" to the vigorous painting styles of the Eight. See Sam Hunter, "'The Eight'--Insurgent Realists," Art in America XIV (Fall 1956): 20. Art critic Robert Hughes, undoubtedly with George Bellows in mind,

wrote in a review of the 1996 exhibition "Metropolitan Lives: The Ashcan Artists and Their New York," that "Ashcan painting [and] its attachment to images of clash and struggle aligned it squarely with the American cultural ideology of the day - Theodore Roosevelt's praise of the strenuous life." See Robert Hughes, "The Epic of the City," Time, 19 February 1996, 63.

This alignment of Roosevelt and Henri may have stemmed from a remark made by Guy Pène du Bois in his autobiography concerning his student days at the New York School of Art during Henri's tenure. "I was the monitor of that rough-riding class," he wrote. "I use the term advisedly, for its members delighted in the Rooseveltian contribution to the color of the period: the word 'strenuous.'" Pène du Bois was making specific reference, however, to the students' active participation in sports outside the classroom. See Pène du Bois, 89. However, even earlier in 1949, Oliver Larkin, writing about the subject matter of the Ashcan School, remarked that "A degree of strenuousness could be forgiven in the days of Theodore Roosevelt" See Oliver Larkin, Art and Life in America (New York: Rinehart, 1949), 336. Perhaps it was also Roosevelt's brief flirtation with life in the West when he withdrew from public life from 1884-1886 to ranch and hunt in the Dakota Territory that has inspired comparisons with Henri.

33. Nash, Call of the Wild, 80-82.

34. Ralph Barton Perry, The Thought and Character of William James (New York: Harper Torchbooks), 246, cited in Peter Conn, The Divided Mind, Ideology and Imagination in America, 1898-1917 (Cambridge University Press, 1983), 297.

35. Henri letter to parents, 29 November 1888, Robert Henri Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University (hereafter referred to as BRBL). The artist to whom Henri made reference is Vassal Verestchagin (1842-1904), a former pupil of Jean-Leon Gérôme (1824-1904). Henri saw his paintings at the Luxembourg Museum and praised them for their moral sentiments.

36. Rockwell Kent, It's Me O Lord, 86. I am grateful to Gail Levin for calling this passage to my attention. In the fall of 1888, the year Roosevelt was campaigning for the national Republican ticket, Henri wrote home ". . . if all the republicans would only come to Paris to vote it would decrease their vote in America." Henri letter to parents, 6 October 1888, Robert Henri Papers, BRBL.

37. Richard Drinnon, Rebel in Paradise, A Biography of Emma Goldman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 19; Emma Goldman, Anarchism and Other Essays (1910; reprint, Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1969), 196.

38. Goldman, Anarchism and Other Essays, 71.

39. Henri letter to Thelma Anthony, 3 March 1926, Robert Henri Papers, BRBL.

40. Henri did visit the Southwest in his later life, spending the summers of 1916 and 1917 in Sante Fe. The trip was not an attempt to recapture his frontier youth. He went at the invitation of Dr. Edgar L. Hewett, director of the American School of Archeology in Sante Fe, who engaged Henri as an advisor for a new art museum. Henri was probably also attracted to the region's growing popularity as an artist colony, but more importantly, he found interesting models there within the area's native American population.

41. Robert Henri, "What About Art in America?" Arts & Decoration XXIV (November 1925): 36. Henri actually spent a total of not quite eight years living abroad. His sojourns to Europe between 1888 and 1900 were interspersed with residencies back in Philadelphia before he permanently settled in New York.

42. Henri was married in 1898 to Linda Craige whose death in 1905 left him devastated. In February of 1908 he met Marjorie Organ, a cartoonist, who became his student after their initial meeting. They were married the following May within weeks after she began studying with him formally.

43. Conn,, 260. Conn based this statement on John W. McCoubrey's discussion of American realism in which he explained that "for the painstaking American realist especially intent upon reproducing what he sees, there is no place for sensual appeal." See John W. McCoubrey, American Tradition in Painting (New York: George Braziller, 1963), 9. Conn goes on to clarify that the Eight's version of Puritan realism was derived by way of nineteenth century transcendentalism and what he calls "secular sacramentalism," a post-Christian spiritual reality that linked humanity with the rest of the created world. Henri's appreciation of transcendental thought, primarily through Emerson, entailed a philosophy of self-reliance rather than aspects of nature worship. (See section "Rethinking Henri and Emerson" in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.)

44. Leslie Katz, "A Note on the Paintings of Robert Henri," Robert Henri, an exhibition at Hirschl & Adler Galleries, Inc., February 3-28, 1958, unpagged.

45. Robert Henri, "My People," Craftsman XXVII (February 1915): 462. See also Henri, The Art Spirit, 147.

46. "The Teachings of Robert Henri: The Alice Klauber Manuscript," cited in Perlman, Robert Henri, His Life and Art, 141.

47. Robert Henri, "An Appreciation By An Artist," Mother Earth 10, no. 1 (March 1915): 415.

48. Van Wyck Brooks, "Wine of the Puritans," Claire Sprague, ed., Van Wyck Brooks (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), quoted in Alexander, 38. The cultural nationalist implications in the writings of Van Wyck Brooks persisted into the 1950s as in his article "The Eight Battle for U.S. Art," Art News LIII (November 1954): 41-43, 69.

49. Giles Edgerton, "The Younger American Painters, Are They Creating a National Art?" The Craftsman 13 (February 1908): 531.

50. Gustave Stickley, "The Use and Abuse of Machinery, and Its Relation to The Arts and Crafts," The Craftsman XI (October 1906): 202. Stickley was influenced by the writings of William Morris Hunt and John Ruskin. He hoped to inspire the handicraft revival in America similar to that which Morris and Ruskin had hoped to accomplish in England. After moving his publication to Manhattan from upstate New York in 1906 Stickley expanded its content to include poetry and critical writing on the arts.

51. Gustave Stickley, "A Great Sincerity Necessary . . ." Craftsman XVI (April 1909): 59, quoted in Alexander, 41.

52. Samuel Swift, "Revolutionary Figures in American Painting," Harper's Weekly LI (13 April 1907): 535. Swift's comments are related to the characteristic optimism and moral idealism that permeated much art and literature during turn of the century America, an age that has been described as embodying the "Genteel Tradition." Novelist William Dean Howells, for example, suggested in 1892 that American novelists should concern themselves with the more smiling aspects of life, which are the more American." See Chapter 1 in William Dean Howells, Criticism and Fiction (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1892), 128-129, quoted in

Alexander, 10.

53. "National Academy Stirred," The Sun (New York), 14 March 1907. Elizabeth Milroy also suggested that the pairing in the press of nationalism with Henri and the other artists who comprised the Eight helped advance their careers by "portraying the artists as a valiant band of patriots battling the monolithic National Academy." See Milroy, Painters of a New Century: The Eight, 27.

54. Robert 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.

55. Alice Woods, Edges (Indianapolis: The Bowen-Merrill Company, 1902). See Perlman, 53.

56. Ibid., 18.

57. Robert Henri, frontispiece, The Conservator no. 3 (May 1915): 1.

58. Robert Henri, "As To Books and Writers," The Conservator no. 3 (May 1915): 40.

59. Robert Henri, "Have We Grown Up in Art?" The Literary Digest (2 November 1925): 23.

60. Henri, The Art Spirit, 128, 129.

61. Henri letter to parents, 9 January 1900, Robert Henri Papers, BRBL.

62. "American Artist Association," Galignani's Messenger (24 May 1891): 2, cited in Susan Grant, "Whistler's Mother was not Alone: French Government Acquisitions of American Paintings, 1871-1900," Archives of American Art Journal 32, no. 2 (1992): 7.

63. Robert Henri, "Robert Henri Calls Art the Manifestation of Race," Milwaukee Art Institute Art Quarterly no. 5 (October 1916): 7. Henri maintained an internationalist outlook in the face of continuing cultural nationalism as evidenced by the founding that same year of the Seven Arts magazine, devoted to art that expressed contemporary American life. In its inaugural issue, the editors declared their "faith . . . that we are living in . . . a time . . . of national self-consciousness which is the beginning of

greatness." See Romain Rolland, "America and the Arts," trans. by Waldo Frank, Seven Arts (1916): 52.

64. Matthew Baigell, "American Art and National Identity: The 1920s," Arts Magazine 61 (February 1987): 48.

65. Henri, "Robert Henri Calls Art the Manifestation of Race," 7.

66. French utopian socialist Henri de Saint-Simon was one of the first in modern times to advance the theory that art should play a role in social and political realms. In the 1820s he wrote "What a magnificent destiny for the arts is that of exercising a positive power over society, a true priestly function, and of marching forcefully in the van of all intellectual faculties . . ." Henri de Saint-Simon, Opinions litteraires, philosophiques et industrielles (Paris, 1825), cited in Donald D. Egbert, "The Idea of 'Avant-garde' in Art and Politics," The American Historical Review 73, no. 2 (December 1967): 343.

67. For writings on Henri and Emerson and Whitman see Joseph J. Kwait, "Robert Henri and the Emerson-Whitman Tradition," Publications of the Modern Language Association 71 (September 1956): 285-300; Joseph J. Kwait, "Robert Henri's Good Theory and Earnest Practice: The Humanistic Values of an American Painter," Prospects 4 (1979): 389-401; and Matthew Baigell, "Whitman and Early Twentieth Century American Art," The Mickle Street Review 12 (Camden, N.J.: The Walt Whitman Association, 1990): 99-113.

68. Garnett McCoy, "The Artist Speaks: Reaction and Revolution," Art In America 53 (August/September 1965): 70; see also "An Interview with Stuart Davis," Archives of American Art Journal 31 (1991): 7.

69. Robert Henri, The Art Spirit, 83; this excerpt is from a talk Henri gave to students at the School of Design for Women in Philadelphia. The entire lecture was published in The Philadelphia Press (12 May 1901) and in The Art Spirit, 78-87.

70. "Robert Henri, A Commemorative Exhibition," foreword by Robert G. McIntyre (New York: Hirschl & Adler Galleries, March 31-April 30, 1954).

71. W. Francklyn Paris, "Robert Henri: Pioneer of Modernism in American Art," chapter in The Hall of American Artists (New York: The Alexander Press, 1948): no pagination.

72. The majority of writing on Henri elaborates on his admiration for Diego Velasquez, Frans Hals, Edouard Manet, and Honoré Daumier.

73. Such an investigation of the cosmopolitan cultural, political, and intellectual influences behind Henri's philosophies of art is surprisingly absent amidst the plethora of recent scholarship on the Ashcan School. See, for example, Elizabeth Milroy, Painters of a New Century, exh. cat. (Milwaukee Art Museum, 1991); Barbara Weinberg, Doreen Bolger, and David Park Curry, American Impressionism and Realism, The Painting of Modern Life, 1885-1915, exh. cat. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1994); Rebecca Zurier, Robert Synder, and Virginia M. Mecklenburg, Metropolitan Lives, The Ashcan Artists and Their New York, exh. cat. (Washington, D.C.: National Museum of American Art, 1995); and Rebecca Zurier, "Picturing the City: New York in the Press and the Art of the Ashcan School, 1890-1917," Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1988.

PART I

HENRI IN FRANCE: THE EMERGENCE OF A COSMOPOLITE

CHAPTER 1

HENRI AT THE PENNSYLVANIA ACADEMY OF THE FINE ARTS

The two most thorough biographies written on Robert Henri provide ample detail of his early life, rendering the inclusion here of such in-depth information superfluous.¹ Suffice it to say, Henri showed an early interest in sketching as a young boy in Nebraska. After his father's indictment for murder, Robert and his brother were sent to school in New York. When the disruption of their family life subsided and John Cozad was cleared of the charges brought against him, Henri joined his parents (who had taken the names Mr. and Mrs. Richard Lee) in their new home in Atlantic City, New Jersey. The following year, in 1885, he bought his first art book and set of oil paints. Henri's artistic efforts at that time consisted of copying magazine illustrations along with a first attempt at painting a landscape directly from nature.

With the encouragement of his family and local citizens in Atlantic City, Robert Henri began his formal art training in 1886. At the age of twenty-one he enrolled at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, just eight months after the departure of Thomas Eakins.² Certain proclivities became evident during Henri's attendance at the Pennsylvania Academy.

His avid interest in books was apparent during his years of study at the Philadelphia art school. Soon after he enrolled at the Academy he asked the "curate" to open the library at night so that "we can come and read."³

Henri's perception of himself as a revolutionary was also apparent early on in his Philadelphia days. Not too long after he began studying at the Pennsylvania Academy he boasted:

I claim the honor of being the revolutioniser [sic] of some parts of the Academy - It was me that persuaded W[hipple] to open the library - was one of the agitators of the sketch class-of the opening to the Antique [Class] of the modeling room-and now of the getting of a cast for the modeling room. I do not think I am blowing now. I am proud of being the prime mover!⁴

Being a "prime mover" also involved his initiation in 1887 of a loosely structured ten-minute sketch class. Indicative of his egalitarian sentiments about the classroom, Henri described the procedure:

Any student that wants to sketch proposes a class at any time. Those present wishing to sketch agree and everyone takes his turn at 10 m[inute] poses till the class is tired or it is too late.⁵

Henri became determined to seek training in France while a student at the Pennsylvania Academy, undoubtedly encouraged by the school's "general Beaux-Arts spirit" and the examples set by teachers and fellow students.⁶ Yet his experience at the academy is important to review as it provided a springboard for certain anti-academic sentiments which

developed more fully while studying in France. Henri's penchant for realism and his distaste for artifice in art was fostered at the Academy largely through the influence of his instructor Thomas P. Anshutz (1851-1912). His other teachers included two former students of Eakins, the French trained genre painter Thomas Hovenden (1840-1895) and James P. Kelly (1854-1893).

Scholars have placed considerable emphasis on the influence of the Pennsylvania Academy on Henri's theories and the art of the Ashcan School. Frank Goodyear made the claim that "intellectually, the basis of the Ashcan School aesthetic can be traced from the ideas of Thomas Eakins to the teaching of Thomas Anshutz at the Academy."⁷ Sandra Denney Heard referred to Anshutz as a "significant connection between Eakins and The Eight."⁸ Randall C. Griffen stated more recently that Anshutz provided a climate of freedom that nurtured the talents of the men who became the New York Realists. "Probably Anshutz's greatest legacy," writes Griffen, "was in conveying Eakins's teaching to the artists who later formed the core of the Ashcan School."⁹ Such claims require a brief reassessment of Henri's early training in Philadelphia in terms of what it did and did not contribute to his ultimate theories, style, and subject matter as well as those aspects of the Ashcan School.

It is true that under Eakins' influence the Pennsylvania

Academy had become the most progressive art school in the country. The Eakins/Anshutz teaching style to which Griffen refers and which contributed to the Academy's liberal reputation was the de-emphasis on the study of plaster casts in favor of working directly from the figure. Eakins also encouraged early attempts at painting rather than drawing the human body in order to more readily grasp volume and three-dimensional form. His interest in dissection and human and animal anatomy instruction is legendary and contributed to the school's unique curriculum.

It is also true that throughout his life Henri greatly admired Eakins. After viewing Eakins' monumental painting The Gross Clinic as an art student in Philadelphia, Henri declared it "one of the greatest pictures ever made."¹⁰ He was drawn to the same tonal style of Velázquez and Rembrandt which Eakins had embraced while studying in Europe twenty years earlier. Like Eakins and Anshutz, Henri felt that awards and prizes for art encouraged imitation and stifled personal development. However, while Eakins and Anshutz believed in fostering each student's individuality, they both insisted upon conformity to such time-honored aspects of academic education as anatomy and perspective. This was particularly true of Eakins whose authoritative approach in the classroom alienated some students, including Anshutz.

Henri was not totally committed to the technical aspects

of art education. After being required to attend Anshutz's perspective class, Henri declared "I don't like perspective. I hate it. I understand it but I can't take interest. It's like chopping wood."¹¹ John Sloan explained a collective dislike among Henri's associates for Eakins' emphasis on learning anatomy. "Our crowd didn't have much interest in studying with Eakins himself. He was so much concerned with anatomy that he thought a student was not serious if unwilling to carry home an arm or a leg to dissect in the evening."¹² Henri expressed a similar distaste for anatomical study. "One's early fancy of man and things must not be forgot," he wrote. "One's appreciation of them is too much sullied by coldly calculating and dissecting them."¹³ Henri's own mode of instruction, criticized by some as being too lax, was explained years later by Henri student Helen Appleton Read:

He taught us to paint from the inside out . . . he tried to wean us away from the idea that we were art students, a state which immediately causes scales to grow over one's eyes, and to see things again as ordinary human beings.¹⁴

Henri's lack of concern for well-honed technique was manifest in remarks he made in 1892 to his students at the School of Design for Women:

. . . I am not interested in your skill . . . What is life to you? . . . What excitement, what pleasure do you get out of it? Your skill is the thing of least interest to me.¹⁵

Art critic Frank Jewett Mather, Jr., writing years later

about the art of Henri and other members of the Eight, described them as being free from not only slackness (which he defined as superficiality) but from greatness. His statement was not meant as a criticism but rather as an assessment of their emphasis which lay not on technical virtuosity but on creating a visual record in a light-handed manner - "swift, direct and easy as possible." Technical "greatness" was replaced with "gusto" that imbued an image with a greater sense of reality than mere facility.¹⁶ Guy Pène du Bois wrote that as an instructor Henri "displaced art by life, discarded technic [sic]." He added:

Henri knew or in any case taught very little of the technic [sic] of painting. His own was very inspirational and depended, apart from a certain manual dexterity, almost entirely upon the power of the mood he was in.¹⁷

Henri once explained to an art critic that one of the biggest challenges as a teacher was to make the art student understand that "you do not want academic knowledge. You want him to know life, every-day life he sees right around him." He added that even years of European study could not ensure the ability to "produce a single picture of real life, intimate, truthful, carrying its own message with it, distinct from the more technical skill of the painter."¹⁸ This attitude derives from the ideology of the Realist movement of mid-nineteenth century France. Manet, for example, characterized his own art as, above all, sincere. The critic and champion

of realism Jules Antoine Castagnary applauded what he called "naïveté of vision" - a mind free from learned aesthetic conventions necessary for truthfulness and sincerity in art.

Henri believed that an artist should explore "many important directions, into sociology, philosophy, religion, humanity" in order to achieve an "all-round understanding of life" - even at the expense of technical proficiency.¹⁹ This very attitude had been explored decades earlier by the critic Charles Baudelaire in his well-known essay of 1863 "The Painter of Modern Life." In a discussion of the artist Constantin Guys (1802-1892), Baudelaire distinguished between an *artist* and a *man of the world*. The former, Baudelaire wrote, was "wedded to his palette like a serf to the soil" and had little, if any, interest in the "world of morals and politics." The latter, represented by Guys, does not even like to be called an artist because it is far too restrictive; Baudelaire described him as a "spiritual citizen of the universe" who had interests in the whole world, "he wanted to know, understand, and appreciate everything that happens on the surface of the globe." He [Guys] began by being an observer of life, and only later set himself the task of acquiring the means of expressing it.²⁰ Furthermore, Baudelaire believed that any deficiencies in technique or signs of artistic naivete were to be overlooked. He considered

such attributes to be a sign of originality and indicators of a faithfulness to impressions received.

Henri's experience at the relatively liberal Pennsylvania Academy and its emphasis on realism cannot fully account for his later rejection of academicism and the "type" of subject matter and style he and his associates advocated. The legacy of Eakins' realism at the academy was of a pragmatic nature. Insistence upon a thorough study of anatomical structure was to ensure an objective understanding of nature. Henri's interest in the transcription of reality was more intuitive and transcendental than Eakins'. "All manifestations of art," he stated, "are but landmarks in the progress of the human spirit toward a thing but as yet sensed and far from being possessed."²¹ Henri never embraced Eakins' meticulous attention to anatomical accuracy nor his careful interrelationship of forms. Stuart Davis, who studied with Henri from 1909-1912, concluded that his former instructor "didn't have the Eakins type of realism in his philosophy."²² Judith Zilczer has, in fact, labeled Henri's early work "anti-realism," asserting that he "deviated as much from realistic as from academic norms."²³

What Henri did share with Eakins and Anshutz was a dislike for the sentimentality and sterile artificiality so often associated with the historical and mythological themes of academic art. Never one to blindly idolize the Old

Masters, Henri was particularly incensed when such subjects were not painted with historical accuracy. "Artists should stick to the race of the person he pictures," he noted, complaining that "Raphael's Madonnas are not Jewesses, Rape of the Sabine are Dutch women not Romans!"²⁴

Barbara Weinberg astutely observed that despite Eakins' European training and his frequent adaptation of French academicism to American subjects, he has "attracted scholars in search of the most 'American' qualities in late nineteenth-century American painting." She adds, "Eakins could be viewed as a rugged, Whitmanesque, purely American painter, untainted by cosmopolitanism."²⁵ Perhaps what Henri shares with Eakins more than anything else are the limitations of having been frequently viewed through the filter of cultural nationalism.

In terms of Thomas Anshutz and his influence on Henri, Sandra Denny Heard asserted that Anshutz's The Ironworkers: Noontime of 1880 (Fig. 3) "heralded the style of the Ashcan School."²⁶ Other scholars have made similar claims. Dominic Ricciotti, in his dissertation on the urban scene in American painting, stated that Anshutz's painting was a "significant exemplar" to the Ashcan painters.²⁷ Despite the fact that it was one of the first examples in American art of industrial subject matter, similarities between this work and the paintings of Henri and his associates are minimal and superficial at best.

Although treating a contemporary industrial theme - that of workers on their noon break from an iron foundry in Wheeling, West Virginia - Anshutz's painting is extremely formal in its carefully constructed pictorial space. The deep space and bright sunlight contrasted against deep shadow enhance the painting's appearance of realism, yet any sense of a freshly observed scene is obliterated by the self conscious posturing of the figures which appear contrived and staged. Anshutz based the composition on numerous preparatory pencil and oil sketches of individual figures which were then reassembled in the composition.²⁸

The frieze-like arrangement of figures set against a recessionary background of minimal detail reflects Anshutz's love of antique statuary, something which could never be said about Henri.²⁹ The carefully modeled anatomy pays tribute to Eakins as does the logical space worked out methodically in preliminary perspective sketches. Furthermore, the painting's subject was derived from a visit to the industrial riverfront town where the artist had lived in his early teens. The image contains none of the urban spectacle that captivated the Ashcan School.

It is unlikely that Henri and other members of the Ashcan School ever saw the unpublicized painting. The work, somewhat unique among Anshutz's oeuvre, entered the private collection of American art collector Thomas B. Clarke in 1883.³⁰ After

viewing another painting by Anshutz in a PAFA exhibition while still his student, Henri was clearly unimpressed. He recorded: "I like Anshutz as a teacher and expected something good of him. I did not like his picture."³¹

It was Anshutz's attitude toward the stronghold of academic institutions and his teaching methods rather than his personal style or subject matter that may have had a lasting affect upon Henri. Anshutz's disgust for the National Academy of Design in New York was expressed early in his career in a letter to his family soon after his enrollment in 1872:

The National Academy of Design is a rotten old institution supported and controlled by lovers of art and by artists whose principle skill consists in uncorking champagne bottles . . . when the promising young genius enters the academy . . . he is given some head with strongly marked features which he works at from two to three weeks immensely to his own satisfaction. Then there comes an art critic who says, ' . . . you had better not waste any more time on it as it is hopelessly spoiled.' . . . So you work away at other heads . . . until you are thoroughly convinced you are an ass.³²

Anshutz correspondence is scant from this time period and scholars are unsure as to whether or not his displeasure with the Academy ever softened over time. One can only surmise that a continuing dissatisfaction with the National Academy and its temporary closure in 1875, led him to eventually seek training in the less restrictive atmosphere of the Pennsylvania Academy.

When Anshutz first arrived, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts was closed while a new building was under

construction on Broad and Cherry Streets. In the meantime he enrolled in the Philadelphia Sketch Club's life class taught by Thomas Eakins.³³ When the Academy reopened Anshutz enrolled in drawing and painting classes taught by Christian Schussele, Superintendent of the Academy. That same year Thomas Eakins began teaching a life class at the evening school of the Pennsylvania Academy. After Schussele's death in 1879, Eakins assumed the primary teaching responsibilities. By 1881 Anshutz assisted in the dissection classes and served as Eakins' assistant in the drawing and painting classes, and thus became very familiar with his teaching methods. Upon Eakins's dismissal in 1886, Anshutz, along with James P. Kelly, took over the anatomy and life classes. Later that year Henri enrolled at the Academy.

Anshutz did not impose his own techniques on his students but allowed each one to develop according to his own ability. The following statement appeared in the artist's obituary in 1912:

I never go to my class with the idea of imparting any of my knowledge to the students, but rather to seek what fresh thing I myself can find there which will help me in my own work . . . ³⁴

Henri often expressed similar sentiments regarding the sanctity of individual development. One such statement directed toward his students parallels Anshutz's remark:

I have little interest in teaching you what I know. I wish to stimulate you to tell me what you know. In my

office toward you I am simply trying to improve my own environment.³⁵

Henri's teaching methods were undoubtedly influenced by Anshutz's use of memory exercises both in and outside the classroom. While studying with Anshutz, Henri recorded that his teacher admonished him to:

Draw what you see, finish by memory. When at leisure notice a man . . . draw him he will move but go on and finish from memory. Try to draw what you saw. This will be hard but keep it up for a while - two years or more, you will gain great results from it.³⁶

The following month Henri also wrote in his diary that Anshutz told his students to ". . . always have a sketch book . . . sketch from nature and memory in all your spare time."³⁷ Henri would later tell his students that "all good work is done from memory whether the model is present or not."³⁸ This reliance on memory may have also been reinforced by William Morris Hunt's Talks About Art which Henri possibly read during his student days at the PAFA. Hunt admonished his students to "keep yourself in the habit of drawing from memory. The value of memory-sketches lies in the fact that so much is forgotten."³⁹

Anshutz's concern for student individuality, along with his noted acceptance of a wide variety of styles, was most apparent following his own sojourn to study at the Académie Julian in Paris in 1892-93. By that time Henri had already left his tutelage, having preceded his teacher to France in

1888. Anshutz held his former pupil in high regard and may have, indeed, been influenced in his later career by Henri's own teaching methods which he observed at the New York School of Art. On numerous occasions he visited Henri and Sloan in New York City after 1900. Upon Anshutz's death, his wife wrote a letter to John Sloan recalling that "whenever Mr. Anshutz came home from one of his trips to New York, he would go over the various incidents of the evening and tell what 'Henri said' or 'Sloan thought' with such pleasure and interest

. . . "40

Anshutz also encouraged his students to cultivate an avid interest in sights outside the studio. "The student who has not the appreciation of the beauty of the appearance of the subject, but only the mechanical faculty of copying it," he wrote, ". . . ought to be aroused to an individual interest in the world around him . . . "41 Again, the date of such a statement is problematic in determining whether this was Anshutz's influence on Henri or the reverse since it stems from a 1910 article. Interestingly, these sketching assignments outside of class that Anshutz gave his students caused writers to place him within a democratic and nationalist framework, not unlike Henri. John Couros, writing about Anshutz in the aforementioned article, stated that "His Americanism is another of his distinct characteristics. He is thoroughly imbued with the necessity of the student's entering

the life of his own people and their needs."⁴²

According to Nathaniel Pousette-Dart, the teaching styles of Anshutz and Henri were almost indistinguishable but the question of whom influenced whom remains. Pousette-Dart wrote:

I first met [Anshutz] in 1903 at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. The first week I attended the life class . . . and had the following experience. Toward the end of the class I heard a man enter the back of the class room and when he started speaking I said to myself, "I didn't know Henri was teaching here." It was Anshutz of course, but their voices were identical . . . [Anshutz's] methods of teaching were very similar to those of Henri . . .⁴³

Anshutz and Henri held somewhat differing opinions concerning the degree to which students should influence one another. Anshutz believed in the benefits of art students who "always learn more from its own [older] members [of a class] than from its teacher."⁴⁴ In a letter home from France, Henri wrote that although one can learn much from the strong fellow students at school "we should be away more to ourselves - free from the effect of cleverer and more experienced men's work - free to follow our own individual bent."⁴⁵

In the area of foreign training Anshutz and Henri also held varying opinions. Like Eakins, Anshutz felt it was unwise for art students to spend too much time studying abroad. He stated:

The right thing for the student is to work out his own salvation in his own country . . . For a student to be artificially supported in a foreign country for two, or three, or even five years, is not long enough to make a successful development of his art, but is long enough to

cause him to sink the roots of his art into foreign soil and their transplanting to his own soil is a check to his growth.⁴⁶

However, after spending less than one year abroad Henri was convinced of the benefits of foreign training. He communicated the following to his family:

One would not want to have much to do with the American schools after once studying here . . . the pictures-the atmosphere-the push-the criticisms from the greatest masters, etc. Oh, this is the place! I am so glad I came early in my career as a student-wish that I had begun here.⁴⁷

Anshutz only spent one year in Paris and at the time was over forty years old. This in contrast to Henri who, in his twenties and early thirties, spent a total of almost eight years living in Europe. Participating in a symposium held in 1928 entitled "Should American Art Students Go Abroad to Study," Henri praised the Arts Student League in New York and stated that "it is not necessary to go abroad." However, he quickly added: "On the other hand, why not go abroad, see all the museums over there, see all the peoples, mix with the great crowds . . . ?"⁴⁸

When Henri made a return visit in 1919 to the Pennsylvania Academy to lecture at the annual exhibition he was honored with a dinner; extensive commentary about the event appeared in the local newspaper. The author of that article wavered on sources of Henri's influences, finally attributing Henri's success to some cosmic force at work in

late nineteenth century Philadelphia:

The period of art in Philadelphia which produced Robert Henri was a prolific one, whether from influence, contagion, or more poetically, a subtle arrangement of astral bodies . . . the gods conspired to good purpose in the early nineties of the last century (which resulted in) a galaxy of celebrities who figure in the present world of painters and sculptors.⁴⁹

Interestingly, no specific mention of either Eakins or Anshutz was made.

Henri was undoubtedly affected by Anshutz's desire that his students go beyond learning the mechanics of art. Anshutz believed in an artistic search for a "higher truth" which he defined as a "poetic" perception of nature achieved through conscious selection and deletion of detail.⁵⁰ However, Henri's own search for higher truths was of a more metaphysical nature and connected to modern interests in a fourth dimension of reality. (This topic is treated in Chapter 6.)

What ultimately distinguishes Henri from Anshutz and others at the Pennsylvania Academy was his ultimate de-emphasis on the technical process of art making. For Henri, the production of art was an invigorating byproduct of living one's life. "After all," he wrote, "the goal is not making art - it's living a life - those who live their lives will leave the stuff that's really art. Art is a result. It is the trace of those who have led their lives."⁵¹

It is this component of Henri's theories that is perhaps most tied to the literary texts, philosophy, and politics

which Henri encountered in France. If the seeds of the Ashcan School were, indeed, sown in native soil at the Pennsylvania Academy, the theoretical nurturing of the movement took place on foreign ground.

Soon after Henri first enrolled at the Pennsylvania Academy in 1886 he mentioned his desire to study in France, writing about a fellow academy artist who had studied under the "great masters of Paris." Henri recorded:

He (James R. Fisher) says that a student can pay all expenses, fare over and back, tuition, material, board, etc. with \$500.00 per year, and live well. American students are well received by both their own countrymen and the French students. Of course the language must be spoken. I would like to go after two years study here!⁵²

During the middle of his second year at the Academy, Henri reiterated his goal to study abroad. "I have got the Paris fever bad and want to go next year."⁵³ Later that fall his plans finally materialized and on September 5, 1888 he sailed from New York for Paris with fellow Pennsylvania Academy students James R. Fisher, Charles Grafly, Harry Finney, and William Haefacker.⁵⁴

Notes

1. See William Inness Homer, Robert Henri and His Circle (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1969; reprint New York: Hacker Art Books, 1988) and Bennard B. Perlman, Robert Henri, His Life and Art (New York: Dover Publications, Inc.), 1991.

2. Eakins began teaching at the Pennsylvania Academy in 1876. His dismissal ten years later was primarily a result of his liberal approach to handling the nude in the classroom. He employed students of both sexes to pose nude in front of his classes as well as for his own private painting sessions. The now well known episode of Eakins' removal of a loincloth off a male model in a women's class was only the final incident that displeased the Board of Directors and resulted in their asking him to resign. His autocratic style was also problematic for his associates at the Academy.

3. Henri diary, 16 November 1886, Reel 885, AAA, SI. Henri's mother, Teresa Gatewood Cozad, helped instill in him a love of reading. She often took her sons to the library, bought them books, and read to them at home. At the age of fourteen, Henri began to keep diaries which included references to such favorite authors as Charles Dickens, Mark Twain, Jules Verne, and Sylvanus Cobb, Jr.

4. Ibid.

5. Robert Henri Diary, 18 April 1887, Reel 887, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution (hereafter referred to as AAA, SI.) Reel 885, AAA, SI.

6. H. Barbara Weinberg attributes the Pennsylvania Academy's overall Beaux-Arts spirit to John Sartain, an artist and Chairman of the Committee on Instruction who exhibited considerable influence in the Philadelphia art community. Following an investigative tour of Europe in 1854, Sartain made certain recommendations for the school's organization in modest emulation of the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. See Weinberg, Lure of Paris 94.

This Beaux-Arts atmosphere was also influenced by the Academy's most renowned teacher, Thomas Eakins, who had studied at the Ecole de Beaux-Arts from 1866-70 with Jean-Léon Gérôme and Léon Bonnat. Other contributors to the

modeling of the academy on French art instruction included Thomas Hovenden, with whom Henri studied at the PAFA. Hovenden had spent six years in Paris from 1874-1880 under the tutelage of the French academic painter Alexandre Cabanel. The long term presence of Christian Schussele was also significant. Schussele, an Alsatian who had gone to Paris in 1843, had apparently studied with academicians Paul Delaroche and Adolphe Yvon. He emigrated to Philadelphia in 1847 or 1848 where he exerted a profound influence on art education. He brought Beaux-Arts principles to the PAFA where he was an instructor of drawing and painting from 1863 until his death in 1874.

7. Frank H. Goodyear, "The Eight," chapter in In This Academy, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1805-1976, exh. cat. (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1976), 189.

8. Sandra Denny Heard, Thomas P. Anshutz, 1851-1912, exh. cat. (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, 1972), 3.

9. Randall C. Griffen, Thomas Anshutz, Artist and Teacher, exh. cat., (Huntington, New York: Heckscher Museum, 1994): 21, 95.

10. Henri letter to parents, 17 February 1887, BRBL. Years later in 1917 in honor of the opening of a Memorial Exhibition of Eakins' work at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Henri took the opportunity to write a lengthy tribute to Eakins in the form of an open letter to be shared with the students of the Arts Students League. He praised Eakins' artistic integrity and referred to him as "the greatest portrait painter America has produced." The letter is reproduced in its entirety in Homer, Robert Henri and His Circle, 177.

11. Henri diary, 22 March 1887, Reel 885, AAA, SI.

12. John Sloan quoted in Helen Sloan, ed., American Art Nouveau: The Poster Period of John Sloan (Lock Haven, Pennsylvania: Hammermill Paper Co., 1967), 16.

13. Robert Henri, The Art Spirit, 80.

14. Read is quoted in "I Paint My People Is Henri's Art Key," Brooklyn Eagle, Feb. 12, 1916, microfilm clipping, Reel 887, Robert Henri Papers, AAA, SI. Kenneth Hayes Miller who taught at the New York School of Art with Henri

criticized his fellow instructor, writing that he "simply got his students emotionally aroused, but never taught them anything. No discipline--no knowledge imparted," from a letter dated 1945 in the Richard Lahey papers, Archives of American Art, cited in Rebecca Zurier, "Picturing the City," 57. John Sloan was more generous in his appraisal of Henri's teaching style, writing "One of the most valuable ideas in Henri's teaching was his contempt for 'making art' one's motive in working. The unfortunate side of this precept is that it can make the student shy away from any work that has style and or evidence of much careful labor." Dianne Perry Vanderlip, John Sloan/Robert Henri: Their Philadelphia Years: 1886-1904, exh. cat. (Philadelphia: Moore College of Art Gallery, 1976), 28.

15. Henri, The Art Spirit, 127. The Philadelphia School of Design for Women is now the Moore College of Art.

16. Frank Jewitt Mather, Jr. "Some American Realists," Arts and Decoration (November 1916): 1.

17. Guy Pène du Bois, Artists Say the Silliest Things (New York: American Artists Group, Inc., 1940), 86, 90.

18. Izola Forrester, "New York's Art Anarchists," New York World (10 June 1909), p.6.

19. Robert 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): 391.

20. Charles Baudelaire, The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays translated and edited by Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1964, reprint New York: Da Capo Press, Inc., 1986), 7, 15. The essay first appeared in Le Figaro in installments on 26 and 28 November and 3 December 1863. It had been written several years earlier between November 1859 and February 1860.

21. Henri, The Art Spirit, 60.

22. "An Interview with Stuart Davis," Archives of American Art Journal (2 November 1991): 6.

23. Judith Zilczer, "Anti-Realism and the Ashcan School," Artforum XVII (March 1979): 44.

24. Henri diary, 8 November 1886, Reel 885, AAA, SI.

25. Weinberg, Lure of Paris, 104; in an earlier discussion in her book (p. 8) Weinberg writes: "Eakins has been treated as a purely American *isolatio*, like Walt Whitman and like the Beaux-Arts trained architect Louis Sullivan who has also been detached from his European training."

26. Heard, Thomas B. Anshutz, 3.

27. Dominic Ricciotti, "The Urban Scene: Images of the City in American Painting, 1890-1930" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1977), 48,49.

28. For a detailed analysis of Ironworkers: Noontime in terms of content and style see Griffen, Thomas Anshutz, 37-51.

29. Anshutz made hundreds of drawings of antique casts during his lifetime. Randall C. Griffen, in fact, believes the two most prominent men in Anshutz's Ironworkers: Noontime to be modern versions of two figures from the Parthenon frieze made familiar to the artist while studying at the Pennsylvania Academy. See Griffen, 44.

30. Ironworkers: Noontime did not surface again until the Clarke sale in New York in 1899. Anshutz painted one other subject dealing with industry, Steamboat on the Ohio, ca. 1900 - 1908, in which a factory lined river bank and smoke filled sky forms the back drop for an otherwise picturesque scene of a man in a rowboat and young boys frolicking in the water. Two paintings of that title exist, one in the Carnegie Museum of Art and a smaller perhaps preparatory version in a private collection. See Griffen, 7, 17.

31. Henri diary, 5 December 1886, Reel 885, AAA, SI.

32. Anshutz's "Discourse on Art," ca. fall 1873, Reel 140, Archives of American Art, cited in Griffen, 28. Anshutz attended the National Academy of Design in New York from 1872-1875 where he studied under Lemuel E. Wilmarth. Wilmarth's apparent lack of encouragement soured the young artist's experience.

33. The Philadelphia Sketch Club was founded in 1860 by a small group of men interested in design and illustration. It was called "The Crayon and Sketching Club" until December, 1861, when it received its new title.

34. "Thomas B. Anshutz, Noted Artist Dies," newspaper clipping, source unknown, cited in Heard, 10.

35. Henri, The Art Spirit, 16.

36. Henri diary, 17 February 1887, Reel 885, AAA, SI. Memory drawing surfaced among reformers of art education in France in the mid-nineteenth century as an antidote to the laborious academic practice of copying antique casts, engravings, and live models. Henri was exposed to numerous artists in France who were interested in memory training including James McNeill Whistler, Paul Gauguin, and the Nabis. (See pp. 309,310)

By the mid-1890's artists John Sloan, Everett Shinn, and William Glackens used the book Training of the Memory in Art by Horace Lecoq de Boisbaudran (1802-97) to enhance their memory skills. Boisbaudran was an influential educational reformer who developed a curriculum to train pictorial memory. Intended to compliment and not replace more traditional academic practices, his methods were aimed to develop visual acuity and the power of imagination. Students were first expected to master mnemonic engraving, cast, and life drawing, intended to prepare them for the "true artistic applications of memory." This was the ability to record the fleeting effects of nature and the rapid spontaneous movement of the figure in life. To this end, students were sent out to walk in the city or country and observe first hand the everyday scenes before them. They were then required to record what they saw from memory. See Petra tenn-Doesschate Chu, "Lecoq de Boisbaudran and Memory Drawing, a Teaching Course between Idealism and Naturalism," The European Realist Tradition, ed. Gabriel P. Weisberg (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1982), 242-289.

37. Henri diary, 19 March 1887, Reel 885, AAA, SI.

38. Henri, The Art Spirit, 28.

39. William Morris Hunt, Talks About Art (London: MacMillan and Co., 1878, reprint, New York: AMS Press Inc., 1975), 11.

40. Bruce St. John, ed. John Sloan's New York Scene (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 621. Henri invited his former teacher to lecture on anatomy at the New York School of Art in 1906, an occurrence which was commemorated by Sloan in the form of an etching. In the preface to Griffen's exhibition catalogue on Anshutz, William Inness Homer states

the following: "Thomas Anshutz was unusual in that he associated with his own students as an equal and learned from them. For example, he maintained cordial relationships with Robert Henri and John Sloan when the two became established leaders of the New York Realists. They would often visit Anshutz at his home in Fort Washington, Pennsylvania . . .", see Griffen, 21. John Sloan's diaries, quoted throughout John Sloan's New York Scene, are full of references to Anshutz's many visits to New York during which times he visited both Sloan and Henri.

41. John Cournos, "A Great Art Instructor: His Methods and Ideas," Philadelphia Record (29 May 1910), cited in Heard, 10.

42. John Cournos, "A Maker of Painters-Thomas Anshutz and His Service to American Art," Boston Evening Transcript, (10 February 1912), n.p., cited in Griffen, 96. Francis J. Ziegler also described the art of Anshutz as "strictly American." See Zielger, "An Unassuming Painter - Thomas P. Anshutz," Brush and Pencil 4 (September 1899): 277-84, cited in Griffen, 127, n.45.

43. Nathaniel Pousette-Dart letter to William Inness Homer, 19 July 1964, collection of William Inness Homer, Wilmington, Delaware, cited in Griffen, 97.

44. Anshutz letter to J. Laurie Wallace, ca. 1883, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives, cited in Griffen, 92.

45. Henri letter to parents, 16 May 1891, BRBL.

46. Cournos, "A Great Art Instructor," cited in Griffen, 96.

47. Henri letter to parents, 5 January 1889, BRBL.

48. Robert Henri, "Should American Art Students Go Abroad to Study?" Creative Art 2 (April 1928): 40. In this same article, other artists encouraged American students to stay at home for study, perhaps suggesting this was a prevalent attitude at the time. William Zorach, for example, stated that "one has to have roots somewhere and most of us are apt to grow best in our own soil." Edmund Quinn asserted that "for the young man's sake and for the sake of American art, I would advise him to study art in America . . . if we are to have a distinctive American art instead of as now a few distinct American artists, that art must be made at home."

49. "Art and Artists Pass in Review, Recent Visit of Robert Henri to Academy of the Fine Arts Recalls Brave Days of Old When Philadelphia Artists Attended His Famous Tuesday Nights," The Philadelphia Inquirer (18 May 1919), microfilm clipping, Reel P56/626, Archives of Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.

50. Anshutz letter to J. Laurie Wallace, 7 April 1884, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives, cited in Griffen, 91.

51. Henri, The Art Spirit, 198.

52. Henri diary, 29 October 1886, Reel 885, AAA, SI.

53. Henri diary, 13 January 1888, Reel 885, AAA, SI.

54. Charles Grafly (1862-1929) is certainly the best known of Henri's companions. Trained as a sculptor he carved ornaments and figures based on designs by Alexander Milne Calder (1846-1923) for Philadelphia's City Hall. He studied with Thomas Eakins at the Pennsylvania Academy and briefly followed him to the Arts Students' League of Philadelphia. He later returned to the Academy. In France he was received numerous awards including the prix d'atelier for a cast of a female model. He also exhibited busts in the Paris Salon of 1890. He permanently returned to Philadelphia in 1896 where he enjoyed a successful career as a sculptor. Little is known of James Fisher (1861-?) of New Jersey who studied at the PAFA in 1887 and 1888. He ultimately left Paris and returned to the United States to join his father's coal business. William Haefeker (1862-?) studied at the PAFA in 1885, 1887, and 1888. After studying in Paris he left the group for further training in Germany. Harry Finney was enrolled at the PAFA in 1888. He eventually left the group of Pennsylvania Academy students to paint on his own on the right bank in Paris.

CHAPTER 2

HENRI'S FIRST TRIP TO FRANCE, 1888-1891

Much of what we know about Henri's first trip to France stems from his extensive diaries and the many letters he wrote home.¹ He described in considerable detail his daily activities and reactions to not only the art exhibitions he attended but the wide variety of materials he read. While his journal entries en route to France were scant, Henri did note an article he read on board ship by William J. Stillman (1828-1901) from Century Magazine.²

Stillman's article entitled "Art Education" ironically condemned the very type of education which Henri was seeking in France. Stillman wrote:

For many years I believed that art education was to be looked for from France alone. I have tried the schools of Paris long enough to see that the system corrupts and makes abortive by far the greater number of those who try it. Its curriculum is too narrow for the intellectual life . . .

Stillman called for the establishment of an art university where not only technical facility was emphasized but the "general influence of the literary life in its subjective aspect - philosophy, poetry, history, all that widens and deepens the character and gives it dignity . . ."³ Stillman's ideal art educational environment closely mirrored

the exemplary art school later envisioned by Henri. "In art school there should be something more profound," asserted Henri ". . . an encouragement to the student . . . to realize that he has got to be a great man mentally, a philosopher, before there is any excuse for him to practice art."⁴

In reference to the teacher/student relationship common to European academies, Stillman argued that the "importance of masters is greatly overrated." Like Thomas Anshutz, Stillman warned of the overshadowing influence of an instructor who "absorbs by his magnetic attractions all the artistic life of his followers and reduces them to an assimilated school of imitators, pursuing a vein of art which is not their own. The true style and method for any painter," he adds, "are those which his own thought and mental conformation evolve . . . "

Stillman advocated a democratic classroom atmosphere where there existed a mutually beneficial association among students, believing that their "helping, criticizing, and encouraging each other . . . " is far more significant than the teaching of the "cleverest master living . . . The individuality of the artist is the most delicate of all intellectual growth, and can only be perfectly developed in a free all-round light."⁵ Stillman's viewpoints would certainly be reflected later in Henri's own attitudes as a teacher.

In a further indictment of the French academies, Stillman complained that the majority of artists who enter the formal European model of art education acquire nothing more than "chic" and "graduate as soon as they get a picture in the Salon," that they:

care only for the qualities which catch the eyes of the buying and uneducated public . . . which is almost invariably a decline towards mere mechanical and exaggeratory [sic] personal qualities, vagaries, and eccentricities, brilliant execution, finishing in glittering . . . mannerisms and inane repetitions of motives . . . which are often utterly frivolous . . .

Stillman continued:

. . . our modern men pride themselves on the narrowness of their training . . . Having no knowledge of the greater principles of art . . . they more vigorously claim inspiration the less they are capable of using their brains, as if art were a jugglery which was the better the less thought had part in it.⁶

This latter comment must have met with Henri's approval as it reiterates a disagreement Henri had with his instructor Thomas Hovenden at the Pennsylvania Academy. Hovenden had been pushing for a technical finish and exactness which Henri summed up as "don't think-just paint." Henri added, "I was told later that day that he [Hovenden] had said Henri had some very queer ideas. I guess he means I am a theorist . . . Good theory with earnest practice is what I want."⁷ Like Stillman, Henri would later evoke the image of a juggler to represent academy trained artists who had acquired only a superficial knowledge of their craft:

I knew men who were students at the Académie Julian in Paris, where I studied in 1888, thirteen years ago. I visited the Académie this year and found some of the same students still there, repeating the same exercises . . . these students have become masters of the trade of drawing . . . them remain little else than clever jugglers of the brush.⁸

In his journal, Henri took issue with Stillman's belief that the art of painting had been lost with the death of Delacroix. "The most powerful painter of our day, of any school," Stillman asserted, "when measured by Velasquez, Rubens, Rembrandt, Tintoret [sic], Veronese, Titian . . . is dwarfed in every technical attainment."⁹ Although he came to greatly admire Velasquez, Rembrandt, and other artists of the past, Henri's appreciation for contemporary art was made evident in a diary entry after reading Stillman's article:

. . . all the world says there is nothing like the Old Masters and that none of the moderns can compete with them. What I have seen makes me think the opposite and I place the painters of today ahead of all others.¹⁰

Henri, however, made no mention of Stillman's dim views of the French academies he was about to enter. One might surmise that his silence signaled contemplation of the subject, if not consensus, since he did not hesitate to record the aforementioned disagreement with Stillman. Whatever Henri's reaction, Stillman's anti-academic sentiments would be reinforced by various individuals whose works Henri read during the next several years.

When Henri and his traveling companions arrived in

London on September 20, they spent a brief two days looking at art. His lack of veneration for the works by the Old Masters was immediately evident. Visiting the National Gallery of Art, Henri noted that "Nothing of Raphael's struck me as being particularly good." He was disappointed in Turner and made disparaging remarks about Rubens but found aspects to admire in Murillo, Ribera, Hogarth, and especially Rembrandt whose portraits "fairly took my breath." On September 22 the group left for Paris. "Oh, what a place! Eureka! I have it! This is what I have longed for," Henri unabashedly exclaimed in his diary. "Who would not be an art student in Paris?" he queried.¹¹

His was certainly a rhetorical question. When Henri arrived in 1888 there were a thousand American artists residing and studying in Paris along with hundreds of other artists from innumerable foreign countries. Late nineteenth century France was also witness to a major transformation of the practices and institutions of art. By 1885, just three years prior to Henri's arrival, the official French Salon system collapsed after two hundred years of operation. The state sponsored annual Salon had been terminated in 1880. Its replacement, the elite Triennale which was operated and juried by Academy artists, ended in 1883.

By 1890 there were three major annual exhibitions - the popular Salons of the Société des artistes français, the

unjuried Salon des Indépendents established in 1884, and the Salons of the Société nationale des beaux-arts. Even though these major exhibitions attracted hundreds of thousands of visitors, many artists increasingly preferred smaller private showings in galleries and clubs where their works could be shown to better advantage.

A multiplicity of artistic attitudes and styles were on view in Paris, particularly within the Salons of the Indépendants where one could see styles of academicism, realism, impressionism, pointillism, and modernism. Just two years prior to Henri's arrival, the eighth and last of the Impressionists Exhibitions had opened in Paris. By this time, the novelty of impressionism had passed and the experimental styles of the early 1880s had begun to mature. Along with works by such previous exhibitors as Mary Cassatt, Edgar Degas, Camille Pissarro, and Paul Gauguin, there were stylistically innovative paintings by Georges Seurat, Paul Signac, and Lucien Pissarro grouped under the title of Neo-Impressionists. Symbolist painter Odilon Redon was also included in this last of the impressionists exhibitions.

Knowledge of the impressionist exhibitions of 1874-1886, held in defiance of the stronghold of the French Salon, certainly influenced Henri as did the continuing exhibitions of "Independents" that he visited while living in Paris. In a letter home he described one such visit:

The society is principally composed of artists who have been continually rejected at the salon, and who, firm in their own convictions as to how and what to paint, will not give up and become followers in the more popular ruts, but institute a salon of their own, where there is no jury and where everyone can express himself in paint as queerly as he sees fit. He can see nature with as wonderful eyes as he will. Can draw as he pleases or is able, and can follow out any eccentricity which takes possession of his paint and palette.¹²

When in 1908 Henri and the group of painters known as the Eight staged their own jury free and prize-free exhibition at Macbeth Galleries in New York they were imitating not only the jury free independent salons but the small private exhibitions that sprang up in late nineteenth century Paris.¹³ Like the French impressionists, it was the Eight's desire to establish themselves as outsiders of an unjust established order - to flaunt their independence in order to reinforce in the public mind their solidarity and draw attention to themselves as representatives of freedom and democracy. Years later Henri acquired a book on Manet in which he underlined the following passage: "Manet allowed himself to be labeled a Revolutionary out of a social need for publicity."¹⁴

The diversity of styles on exhibit in late nineteenth century France was also evidenced by the content of the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1889 which Henri visited. Within the French section alone there was not only a preponderance of works by such bastions of academicism as William Adolphe

Bouguereau (1825-1905), Alexandre Cabanel (1823-1889), and Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904) but naturalist paintings by Jules Breton (1827-1906) and Jules Bastien-Lepage (1848-1884). Also included was a contemporary scene by realist painter Alfred-Philippe Roll (1846-1919) known for his depictions of life in the Third Republic.¹⁵

Of certain interest to Henri was the preoccupation among French artists in contemporaneity, which had been a growing concern since the Revolution of 1848 and a central issue of nineteenth century Realism, exemplified by the paintings of Gustave Courbet. Jules Breton explained the effect the Revolution had upon French artists and writers:

The causes and consequences of that revolution . . . had a keen influence on my spirits, on those of all artists, on the general movement of arts and literature. There was an ardent upsurge of new efforts.

We studied what Gambetta [Léon] would later call the new social strata and the natural setting which surrounded it. We studied the streets and the fields more deeply; we associated ourselves with the passions and feelings of the humble, and art was to do for them the honor formerly reserved exclusively for the gods and the mighty.¹⁶

The notion of depicting modernity had also been stimulated by Baudelaire's aforementioned essay "The Painter of Modern Life," first published in 1863. (see p.43) Baudelaire defined the task of the artist as one of observing life and depicting the uniqueness of the modern age, comparing the artist to "a mirror as vast as the crowd itself

. . . a kaleidoscope gifted with consciousness, which in each of its movements represents the multiplicity of life . . .

"¹⁷ In 1876 Louis Emile Edmond Duranty (1833-1880) stressed in his essay "The New Painting" the worthiness of subjects drawn from modern life. "The idea," he wrote, "was to eliminate the partition separating the artist's studio from everyday life, and to introduce the reality of the street . . . It is necessary to make the painter come out of his skylighted cell, his cloister . . . and to bring him back among men, out into the real world." He addressed the artists who clung to their Beaux-Arts training, writing "it would appear that you are disdainful of the endeavors of an art that tries to capture life and the modern spirit, an art that reacts viscerally to the spectacle of reality and of contemporary life."¹⁸

Similarly, Henri later described his teaching methods as forcing students "out into the whirlpool of New York life . . . and before he knows it he will forget what he hopes to learn and draw what he sees." Like Duranty, he denigrated traditional training, adding that the work resulting from first hand experience has "more vitality and character to it than years of academic puttering . . . "¹⁹

The remainder of this chapter focuses primarily on Henri's literary interests during his initial three year stay in Paris - the books he read not only to improve his mastery

of the French language but for pleasure and intellectual stimulation. Scholars have historically emphasized the importance of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman for Henri early in his career at the exclusion of much of the other literature he was reading in the 1890s. However, Matthew Baigell astutely observed that Henri "found Whitman to be a profound source of inspiration, but certainly not the only one."²⁰ Henri often commented on what he read, not only in his diaries and letters but to his students as well. Surveying the content and style of the books he chose to read, along with his own ruminations about them, can illuminate our understanding of his concurrently developing theories about the interconnectedness of art and life.

During his first week in France, Henri's dedication to reading was apparent when he described his book shelf as "a meagre [sic] display," and then added, "May it grow! . . . a few books on art, a Ruskin, and mythology . . . French language . . . room for plenty more."²¹ His desire to keep up on current events was also apparent early on in a letter to his parents. He declared: "We will read the Paris papers as soon as we are able to do so, which I hope will be soon."²² Along with Grafly, Haefeker, and Finney, he studied French three afternoons a week at the Polyglot Institute in Paris.²³

Henri's attention to the daily newspapers in Paris is

significant. An extensive network of periodicals, newspapers, and pamphlets, generated by the public's interest and involvement in all aspects of political, cultural, and social life, persisted in France throughout the nineteenth century. These vehicles for expression continued to have an impact on the reading public during the Third Republic, arousing debate and providing a forum for not only political concerns but literary, philosophical, and aesthetic issues.

The Artist as Humanist: Phillip Gilbert Hamerton

Upon first arriving in Paris, Henri enrolled in the Académie Julian where he studied with Tony Robert-Fleury and William Bouguereau.²⁴ Yet he also hoped to gain entrance into the prestigious Ecole des Beaux-Arts. Unlike Julian's academy which was open to anyone willing to pay the fee, admission to the Ecole depended upon success in the rigorous "concours de places" and knowledge of the French language.²⁵ This semiannual competition held in the spring and fall included drawing tests in anatomy, perspective, and ornamental design. Some of Henri's reading soon after his arrival in Paris, such as the life of Plutarch and Greek history, was undoubtedly part of his preparation for the world history portion of the entrance exam for the Ecole.

Other writings that interested Henri at the time were presumably of his own choosing. One such book was Human

Intercourse by the English painter Philip Gilbert Hamerton (1834-1894). Aside from being a painter and graphic artist, Hamerton was an essayist, novelist, and art critic. As a young man, Hamerton had left his native England for Paris to study French, art, and literature. He then moved back to the British Isles until the 1860s at which time he permanently settled in France. Human Intercourse, originally published in 1884, was one of numerous books he wrote on art.²⁶

Hamerton's perspectives as an expatriate living in France during the decades of tremendous change in the art world were of obvious interest to Henri.

Hamerton dedicated Human Intercourse to Ralph Waldo Emerson whose writings were already familiar to Henri. (As a young boy, Henri's mother had included quotes from Emerson in the scrapbooks she assembled for him every year on his birthday. When he first moved to France his parents sent him issues of the Century Magazine which contained some of Emerson's early letters.) Henri spent considerable time digesting Hamerton's book, beginning in January of 1889. Several months later he declared Human Intercourse "a great book" and "one of the best things I have ever read" - yet its contents have never been discussed except in terms of the dedication to Emerson that appears in the frontispiece.²⁷

Therein, Hamerton acknowledged the two great lessons he gleaned from Emerson's writings:

To rely confidently on that order of the universe which makes it always really worthwhile to do our best, even though the reward may not be visible; and the second was to have self-reliance enough to trust our own convictions and our own gifts, such as they are, or such as they may become, without either echoing the opinions or desiring the more brilliant gifts of others. Emerson taught much besides; but it is these two doctrines of reliance on the compensations of Nature, and of a self-respectful reliance on our own individuality, that have the most invigorating influence on workers like myself. Emerson knew that each of us can only receive that for which he has an affinity, and can only give forth effectually what is by birthright, or has become, his own.²⁸

The reason for quoting this lengthy excerpt in its entirety is the fact that Henri recorded this very passage in his diary the following year and soon thereafter paraphrased it to explain his own indebtedness to Emerson.²⁹ (see p.80) Hamerton's book, however, is more than an Emersonian "plea for individualism."³⁰ Human Intercourse contains a series of theoretical essays concerned with the artist's relationship to society - a topic that interested Henri throughout his a life. "I don't believe in being inhuman," Henri declared, "I should feel sorry for the man who would not cry for company . . . "³¹

In the first chapter, "On the Difficulty of Discovering Fixed Laws," Hamerton gave an example within the world of art in which men can transcend national boundaries in appreciation for another's culture. He described the effect an art education in Paris can have on the whole man:

The French excel in painting . . . Englishmen and

Americans who value that particular kind of excellence are often strongly drawn towards Paris as an artistic centre or capital; and this opening of their minds to French influence in art may admit other French influences at the same time, so that the ultimate effect of a love of art may be a breaking down of the barrier of nationality.³²

This sentiment aptly describes what transpired during Henri's stay in France as he opened himself up to the richness of the cosmopolitan milieu of Paris. He would later comment that the universality of Paris was its "strength and allure."³³

In another chapter titled "Independence" Hamerton wrestled with the notion of attaining independence while retaining an obligation to humanity and one's own country. Henri, too, came to feel deeply about the role of the artist as both a symbol of autonomy and global humanitarianism - writing of an art spirit entering government and eliminating such vices as greed and war. Hamerton also maintained in this chapter that great writers can borrow from past literature and still be original in their own work. Henri was constantly exhorting his students to look at such great painters as Velázquez, Hals, etc. while at the same time he cautioned them to avoid cloning their style from another. Hamerton promoted the notion of intellectual independence and in so doing evoked the spirit of Emerson. He criticized those who pass "from one conventionalism to another as a traveler changes his train." He continued:

They take their religion, their politics, their

education, their social and literary opinions, all as provided by the brains of others . . . For those who are satisfied with easy, conventional ways the desire for intellectual independence is unintelligible.³⁴

Advising the artist to remain informed of current trends but to avoid aesthetic dependency, Henri would later write: "If a new movement in art comes along be awake to it, study it, but don't belong to it."³⁵ The ideal art student, Henri felt, "would borrow from every source possible, but they would borrow only to invent."³⁶ In this section of his book, Hamerton also described the artist as a "man with a vigorous personality" with "an independent way of seeing things" whom Nature often endows with "powerful talents with which to defend his own originality."³⁷ Henri would later similarly connect original vision with independence, writing that "a man can only paint what he sees, and he can only see according to the individual development which liberates the vision within him."³⁸

As with the French Realist painters and writers of the time, Hamerton found a greater sense of life among the lower classes. He wrote that "those who have refined manners and tastes and a love for intellectual pursuits usually find themselves disqualified for entering with any real heartiness and enjoyment into the social life of classes where these tastes are undeveloped . . . " He also elaborated on his lack of solitude while traveling in foreign places due to his

new acquaintances who "may be the rural postman, the inn-keeper, the stone-breaker on the roadside, the radical cobbler . . . and a few . . . untidy little children . . .

" In this regard, Hamerton evoked not only images by Courbet but Walt Whitman's "Song of the Open Road" in which the poet effuses about communing with strangers.³⁹ Hamerton's comments anticipate Henri's later search in far off corners of the world for what he called "my people," portrait subjects from all walks of life whom he felt expressed the "dignity of life."⁴⁰

Hamerton also mentioned the substance and quality of his conversations with those who are "devoid of the false pretensions [sic] of the upper classes . . . They teach us many things that are worth knowing."⁴¹ Henri's attraction to the lower classes for similar reasons was attested to by Guy Pène de Bois, who studied with Henri years later at the New York School of Art. Pène de Bois recalled how Henri encouraged exploration of the less elite sections of New York:

Here . . . was the panorama of life, an unlimited field, an art bonanza. Here in the Alligator Café on the Bowery, the Haymarket on Sixth Avenue, the ferryboat, the lower East side, in any number of cheap red-ink restaurants, one found subjects as undefiled by good taste or etiquette of behavior . . .⁴²

Stuart Davis, another Henri student, also commented on Henri's encouragement to find subject matter among the lower

classes. "Courbet painted the kitchen maid instead of the woman who hired the maid," Davis declared. "That in itself was a social attitude, so those were Henri's interests."⁴³ Rockwell Kent, who also studied with Henri in later years, wrote that if "he [Henri] showed a greater interest in labor, underprivilege and dilapidation as the subject or background for a picture it was merely because, to him, man at this level was most revealing of his own humanity."⁴⁴

It was Henri's attraction to what he believed was the genuine quality of the lower class that made him such an ardent admirer of Millet. "Millet . . . was great enough to know that the big forces of the world were not *solely* among the rich or on the boulevard," Henri wrote, "he found them out in the French fields, close to the soil, down in the humblest life of the nation. In the merest peasant he discovered the beauty and the tragedy of the human soul."⁴⁵ The presence of marginalized members of society in the art of Henri's followers was not simply an attempt to depict a more "universal American nationalism" but stemmed from European prototypes.⁴⁶

In Human Intercourse Hamerton expressed a belief in autonomy and self direction. "Certainly," Hamerton concludes, "the greatest hardship of all is to be compelled to perform acts of conformity with all the appearance of free choice."⁴⁷

He called this type of tyranny "vile" and damaging to one's self respect. This was the very kind of tyranny which Henri would later object to in the form of juried exhibitions where artists were free to submit their works but acceptance was often based upon their degree of compliance to certain styles and subject matter.

In one of the last chapters of his book, Hamerton expounded on "noble Bohemianism," defending the respectable side of a life style traditionally known for its vices. He suggested Corot as a model of "Bohemianism of the best kind" in terms of his simplicity of living which protected his artistic independence. In short, the ideal bohemian, according to Hamerton, believed that "to follow art is enough" - that life without luxury need not cease to be interesting.⁴⁸ The month after he finished reading Hamerton, Henri wrote home to his parents about his attraction to his current life style with its lack of materialistic cares and focus on art:

There is a charm about this bohemian life, this giving up of comforts and pleasures that other people think so indispensable, this living in the roofs of houses and being happy there in order that one may follow the nobler pursuits, and get the best of life . . .⁴⁹

Clearly, Henri's admiration for Human Intercourse stemmed partly from Hamerton's acknowledged debt to Emerson. The contents of what Henri called a "great book," however, reflected many of Henri's developing concerns as an artist -

not all of which are limited to the domain of Emersonian thought. Hamerton's interests in humanitarianism, intellectual and aesthetic independence, the lower classes as subject matter for art, and bohemian living would all be reinforced by Henri's other reading during his first residency in France.

Rethinking Henri and Emerson

One year after Henri read Hamerton's Human Intercourse, he recorded the following in his diary:

Reading Emerson has taught me two great lessons. The first, to believe implicitly that it is worthwhile to do our best . . . second, to have self-confidence, to trust our own convictions and gifts . . . these two doctrines of respectful self-reliance on one's own originality have had the most invigorating influence on me.⁵⁰

Interestingly, Henri's comments are an almost verbatim extraction from Hamerton's tribute to Emerson that appeared in Human Intercourse. (see p.74) Henri's reaction in France to the transcendentalist writer was, it seems, filtered through the perceptions of a cosmopolitan foreigner.

Joseph J. Kwait has asserted that during Henri's first trip to France he was "deeply immersed in reading Emerson" and declared him a major source of Henri's ideas.⁵¹ In actuality, Emerson was but one of many people Henri read during his lengthy residency in France. Henri actually mentioned in his diary only one of Emerson's books by name,

Representative Men, which he began to read in June of 1889. First published in 1850, this collection of essays paid tribute to a diverse range of individuals known for their intellectualism or intuitive thought including Plato, Swedenborg, Montaigne, Shakespeare, and Goethe. They were men from many eras and places whom Emerson perceived as guides to the greatness which exists in us all.

Emerson explained his selection of this disparate group of men in two seemingly contradictory ways: that "the greatest genius is the most indebted man . . . a heart in unison with his time and country." and that "the great . . . transcend fashions by their fidelity to universal ideas."⁵² For Emerson, the greatness of these individuals lay not within any outstanding accomplishments but in their ability to represent their constituency. Yet he believed a true genius was one who had access to the universal mind. Emerson's choice of such a diverse group of men supports his inclusivity, lack of patriotic fanaticism, and egalitarian belief that all sides of life need to be expressed. Like Emerson, Henri was not bound to patriotic fanaticism. He also believed that genuine artists, like Emerson's "representative men," were in tune with their surroundings and the era in which they lived. "All my life I have refused to be for or against parties, for or against nations, for or against people," Henri wrote. "I seek only, wherever I go,

for symbols of greatness."⁵³

After reading Representative Men Henri applauded Emerson's study of a wide variety of individuals. "A great mind may be buried in a small town because there are no other great minds there to develop it," Henri wrote. "Our own Emerson says 'other men are lenses through which we read our own minds.'" Henri then explained his attraction to such cosmopolitan cities such as Paris and later New York: "I believe him [Emerson] and think one should get where there are plenty of good lenses."⁵⁴

Scholars have frequently related Henri intellectually to Emerson in terms of the "organic principle" in American cultural thought.⁵⁵ Emerson believed a "work of art must perfectly represent its thought." Henri made similar statements concerning the importance of adapting artistic form to the underlying concept. "To start with a deep impression," he wrote, ". . . to preserve this vision throughout the work; to see nothing else . . . will lead to an organic work." He also stated that "Every factor in the painting will have beauty because in its place in the organization it is doing its living part." He further declared that "order is perceived by the man with a creative spirit. It is achieved by the man who sincerely attempts to express himself and thus naturally follows organic law."⁵⁶

Beyond the concepts of self reliance and organicism,

Henri and Emerson share little else in common. Individualism for Emerson had a far more religious and moral significance than it did for Henri. Emerson believed that divinity in man could only be liberated through uncompromising self reliance and that conformity choked the channels of inspiration from God to man. He also believed that works of art mirrored the creative process of the "Infinite Creator" and that man's divinity lay in his hidden powers of creative energy.

"Genius is but a large infusion of Deity," Emerson declared, an attribute which can be endowed upon those who rise above the "low plane of egotism and passion."⁵⁷ While Henri embraced Emersonian individualism, his goal as an artist was not to become a vessel through which divine inspiration flowed. Rather he viewed art as the "byproduct" of one's life experience which may prove "useful, valuable, interesting as a sign of what has passed."⁵⁸ Emerson aspired to float in "infinite space" as a "transparent eyeball" through which "the currents of the Universal Being" could circulate.⁵⁹ Henri's eye was not the transparent, objective, impersonal eye of Emerson but was reflective and personal; rather than seek an ego-less state, Henri admonished his students to cherish and revel in their own very personal perceptions.

Henri's interest in spiritual aspects of the material world was not as much rooted in nineteenth century

transcendental thought as in the antipositivist fascination at the turn of the century with the inner life. Henri wrote of using three-dimensional painting to sight "the mysterious fourth dimension" in order to "reach the inner meaning of things."⁶⁰ The notion of a fourth dimension in which there existed a higher reality had become highly popularized in literary and artistic circles by the turn of the century. (see The Art Spirit and Anti-Positivist Thought, Chapter 6, p. 311)

Emerson and Henri also part company in the former's belief that appreciation of the fine arts can exist to some degree in all people but that the creation of art lies within the capacity of the very few. Henri was far more generous, believing that the artist existed in everyone. This is substantiated in part by his later involvement with the Ferrer School in New York.⁶¹ (See "Henri and the Modern School of the Ferrer Center," Chapter 5.) In addition, Emerson was somewhat of a recluse, desiring to "retire from society" in order to find requisite solitude. "In the wilderness I find something more dear . . . than in the streets and villages," he wrote.⁶² Henri was a social creature, relishing the company of his friends and students, preferring the city lights to Emerson's "heavenly stars."

Henri also lacked the puritanism of Emerson who regarded personal restraint as a necessary factor in receiving

artistic inspiration. Emerson was not only wary of wine, coffee, and narcotics but of music, travel, politics, and love as distractions from "the true nectar, which is the ravishment of the intellect . . . The sublime vision comes to the pure and simple soul in a clean and chaste body."⁶³ (In this sense Emerson's views are the antitheses of the sensuality of Walt Whitman who soon became far more important to Henri than Emerson.) Emerson's belief in self restraint is far cry from the widely traveled Henri who believed that the artist should be fully immersed in life. In the introduction to a brochure accompanying an exhibition of paintings by his students in 1906 Henri wrote: "The class has gone out into New York and discovered it, lived in touch with it, studied it face to face . . . soaked in it, until they know it now, and can picture it."⁶⁴

Unlike Henri, Emerson shrank from the effort to learn another language and insisted it was foolish not to read translated versions of foreign books. Furthermore, Emerson was drawn to the contemplative reverie of the English romantics and his definition of art, as Emerson scholar Foerster explains, was selective, aristocratic, holding the best to be the realist of realities . . . " Foerster has observed that Emerson's "view of art was remote from the equalitarian tendencies of modern realism . . ." the very realism that attracted Henri in both literature and art.⁶⁵

It was thus in a circumscribed way that Emerson impacted Henri, primarily in terms of his doctrine of self reliance and resulting distaste for imitative art. This reassessment does not eradicate the importance of Emerson for Henri but rather puts his influence in perspective as having provided a foundation from which the artist continued to search confidently for his own convictions.

At the time he was reading Emerson in the spring of 1890, Henri was also perusing Thomas Paine's Age of Reason, which certainly complimented Emersonian thought. This book, inspired by events of the French Revolution, condemned all organized religion and scriptural texts which Paine deemed human inventions set on terrifying and enslaving mankind for power and profit. He ultimately declared that when opinions are free in matters of government or religion, truth will prevail.⁶⁶ Henri acknowledged Paine's importance in his own time but felt his relevance had been supplanted by Emerson in the nineteenth century.

Henri was also concurrently reading Robert Browning, admitting that of the two he preferred Paine. His attention to the Victorian poet may have been nothing more than a passing obligatory nod to the poet whom William Morris Hunt had quoted in his publication of 1875, Talks About Art, a book which Henri owned.⁶⁷ Henri explained his preference for

Emerson and denigrated the romanticism of Browning:

. . . we are past his [Paine's] object now with Emerson we do not try to bring people to Reason by disproving the Bible, but by looking clear of everything straight at truth and letting the big fact stand out for itself. Paine served well his day, however. Browning the mystic appears would struggle to prove what Paine disproves and gives us rhetorical enigmas - I don't like that - Shakespeare is a good enough poet for me and he said what he had to say straight out.⁶⁸

Henri's dislike of artificial eloquence and indirectness inherent in romantic poetry is understandable given his attraction at this time to the realism of French Naturalist literature.

Henri and French Naturalist Literature: The Writings of Emile Zola and Alphonse Daudet

In his youth Henri had been drawn to English literature, specifically the writings of Charles Dickens (1812-1870) and William Thackeray (1811-1863). In 1886, while a student at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, he sketched an idea for a painting that had come to him after reading about the murder of Nancy by Sikes in Dicken's Oliver Twist. A diary entry, in fact, describes in detail the specific narrative, its psychological aspects, and how he would interpret it:

The murder done - Sikes looks with fear, horror, regret on the prostate form. Hand clutches his breast, blood on his hands & clothes, long bushy hair in disorder. Old clock marks the time. Dog crouches in corner. Candle, dead fire or ashes in grate. Old floor, bit of rag carpet. Old table, shawl and bonnet, bare walls, cracks and broken places. Beer growler and remains of

scant supper on table - things in disorder after scuffle. Club - general aspect terrible stillness - death. Furniture etc. must suit the time and condition. He is a dark powerful man. Sikes stands with body facing, head turned toward body. He is filled with dread and fear. The tempest is over, the deed done, he feels his guilt, remembers his love etc. etc. He cannot - dare not - take his eyes off her, his body slightly bent forward, muscles distorted shirt sleeves open on breast. Crass dark red shirt, sleeve rolled up. The dog in fear peers out from corner.⁶⁹

Henri never actually gave painterly form to this episode even though his enthusiasm for Dickens was still apparent when he arrived in England on the way to France. He made note of "two little Dickens' boys riding in an old fashioned carriage" and was excited to have accidentally come across Dicken's "Old Curiosity Shop."⁷⁰ Once in France, Henri no longer expressed an interest in painting specific incidents derived from literary narratives. He only created such works within the constraints of academy assignments which were often derived from historical, mythological, and Biblical texts.⁷¹

Henri's avoidance of the picturesque or sentimental, so often the result of literary associations in a painting, belies his growing affinity for the French naturalist aesthetic. French naturalist literature was deemed by its followers to be an antidote to the poetic indulgences of the literary Romanticism and sentimental fiction of the Second Empire, epitomized by the writings of Victor Hugo (1802-1885). Naturalist literature often contained the portrayal

of characters and incidents drawn from everyday life, frequently from previously unexplored sectors of French society, specifically the working class. The Naturalist movement had its beginnings in the works of Honoré de Balzac (1799-1850), Gustave Flaubert (1821-1880), and the Goncourt brothers, Edmond (1822-1896) and Jules (1830-1870) but really solidified in the late 1870s with Emile Zola's seminal naturalist work, L'Assuomoir.

Of significance to this study is the fact that Henri's interest in French Naturalist literature and its emphasis on observed phenomena coincided with the early development of his art theory. Walter Pach recalled years later that when Henri returned from France his head was full of not only the art he saw but "his wide reading of which he could speak with gusto." Pach added, "Among the writers he liked to quote were Emile Zola, Guy de Maupassant, and others who had meant much to the Paris he had known."⁷² W. Francklyn Paris suggested that one reason Henri alluded to Zola and Balzac as frequently as he did Titian and Velasquez was "because he loved life wherever he found it."⁷³

Perhaps the fact that Henri was immersed in the "fresh vision" of naturalist literature at the same time he was required at the academy to create laborious routine artistic exercises contributed to his growing intolerance for the latter. Henri would later comment that "the only important

thing is that a man should have a distinct vision, a new and fresh insight into life, into nature, into human character, that he should see the life about him so clearly . . . "74

As Walter Pach indicated, Henri's choice of literature while residing in Paris expanded from Dickens to the harsher realism of French Naturalists Emile Zola, Guy De Maupassant, and Alphonse Daudet who were likewise concerned with the plight of the oppressed. Henri was also drawn at this time to humanitarian aspects of nonfiction, praising Thomas Carlyle's history of the French Revolution for the very aspects that drew him to French literary naturalism. "[Carlyle's] object," Henri wrote, "was not so much to give us the dates of the various circumstances as to tell us of the conditions of humanity."⁷⁵ Even as a youth of fifteen he complained of authors who "spend so much time describing" and thereby obscure the point of their story.⁷⁶

After one year in France, Henri was feeling very confident with the language. Even during the summer of 1889 when he traveled to Concarneau to paint and sketch in the open air, Henri took private French lessons. He wrote to his parents:

At last I am very hopeful of my french. . . I am learning fast, have passed the worst stage and think it will not be long before I will be on the fair road to a sufficient knowledge of the language . . . I talk a good deal with the models - that is a great help. My teacher says that I pronounce unusually well for a foreigner.⁷⁷

He continued to read not only newspapers but books in French. Several months later he again shared his growing confidence with the French language with his parents. He wrote: "I read a good deal now - it comes more easy and . . . it is not so much labor to study out the meaning. In an ordinary article I do not have to bother at all but read right along almost as well as English."⁷⁸

It may have been Henri's desire to master the French language that initially led him to read contemporary French novels or perhaps vice versa. In January of 1890 Henri began to read Zola's Nana with dictionary in hand, admitting that the experience was akin to having a French lesson. Nana, published in 1877, was the account of a courtesan, her struggles with alcoholism, and her ultimate demise.⁷⁹ Henri discussed with his associates the realism of the book as well as works by other contemporary writers. He noted that during a visit to his apartment one of his friends "picked up Zola's Nana which I am reading and a discussion followed on the realism of Zola, Daudet, Dickens and the value of their work as history."

A few days later he remarked that he did not join in the usual evening banjo playing and poker because he was "too deeply interested in reading 'Nana.'"⁸⁰ It was his attraction to the vivid authenticity of Zola that also drew

him to the French novelist Guy de Maupassant known for his realism and directness. Although his diaries do not mention any particular works by name, Henri would later counsel his students to read de Maupassant, describing him as "frank, generous, strong, kind, appreciator of phases of life; makes you see as much in ten days as others in years."⁸¹

Under the influence of the positivist literary and art critic Hippolyte Taine (1828-1893) who adapted scientific principles to the study of human nature and history, Zola sought to accurately recreate the settings and eras of which he wrote.⁸² He admired Monet, Bazille, and Renoir because "their works are alive . . . they have taken them from life and they have painted them with all the love they feel for modern subjects."⁸³ Zola described one of his novels as being "a work of truth . . . that has the smell of the people."⁸⁴ This comment along with his actual descent into a mining pit in order to write Germinal, a novel about France's coal country, anticipated Henri's charge to his students to go out in the streets of lower Manhattan to experience urban subject matter first hand.

It was Zola's L'Oeuvre (The Masterpiece) that made a deep impression on Henri. While the book was not nearly as popular with the general public as Nana (some thought it the monotonous study of an artist's frustrations) for Henri, it proved very satisfying. "Looking it over again" after having

read the book in its entirety, Henri wrote: "I consider [L'Oeuvre] altogether finer and different from his 'Nana.' His artist is an artist and his artists' friends are young frenchmen."⁸⁵

L'Oeuvre was one of the most controversial novels of the author's Rougon-Macquart series. (See n.79) It was the most autobiographical book of the group and was based largely on Zola's observations of and participation in the impressionist movement. Henri undoubtedly enjoyed the discussions in the novel of aesthetics and technique, criticisms of academic tradition and "official" art, and accounts of the French Salon and the jury system in France. Although published in 1886, the year of the last formal impressionist exhibition in France, the book includes an account of the initial exposure of impressionist painting and the shock waves it sent through the art world and public in general.⁸⁶

Soon after its publication in April of 1886, L'Oeuvre was criticized as an attack on impressionism and the main character labeled an unflattering portrayal of either Manet or Cézanne or a combination of both. Even though the novel revolves around a specific plot, it also explored philosophical art issues, paying attention to broad questions of idealism verses naturalism, theory verses practice, and meditation verses production, all of which must have been of interest to Henri.

Although the story concludes in the year 1876, Zola made constant references in the book to the end of the century, describing movements in literature and music that attest to the fact that he was really depicting those years just prior to and after Henri's arrival in France. Zola, in fact, described the novel as "a picture of the artistic fever of the period" and the "poignant physiology of an artistic temperament in our time" The naturalist writer Edmond de Goncourt saw as its subject the dethroning of classic art by "naturalism." Zola scholar Robert Niess has concluded that the book was more than a fictional depiction of aspects of impressionism. Rather, it is "a prophecy of the coming of 'idealism' - the complex of interests and antipathies," Niess wrote, which constitute symbolism.⁶⁷ Another Zola scholar, William Berg, similarly believes the book to be a condemnation of the aftermath of impressionism, that the new naturalist vision was being "undermined by the neoimpressionists emphasis on technique at the expense of observation."⁶⁸

The main character in Zola's tale is Claude Lantier, an artist from a working class family, whose intense intellectualism resulted in artistic impotence. The philistine mocking of his art eventually led to his suicide. Early on in the novel, Claude Lantier asks "Is there anything else in art . . . than for a man to express what he has

honestly within him?"⁸⁹ Henri placed a similar emphasis on the integrity of artistic expression, writing that "what the modern man finds of interest in life is not precisely the same as of old, and he makes a new approach, deals in another way because the symbol to be made is not the same."⁹⁰

Claude Lantier frequently expressed his desire to free his vision from past artistic conventions. "One has to learn one's trade," he observes, "but it is no good learning it under the iron rule of professors who force *their* vision into your noggin."⁹¹ Like Henri, the character of Lantier does not seek to venerate past artists, preferring to live immersed in contemporaneity. "He began to disclaim against the works in the Louvre," Zola wrote, "he said he'd rather cut his wrists than go back there and spoil his eye on those copies which foul up one's vision of the world where one lives." Although Lantier had great respect for Delacroix and Courbet, he was convinced that "now, something else is needed . . . we need a painting [of] . . . people and things as they are . . . it must be our own painting, what we should do and look at with our own eyes today."⁹²

Lantier continues to ruminate on the subject of art and modernity to his friend Pierre Sandoz, the character considered by scholars to be a representation of Zola himself. "Think of it, Pierre - life as it passes in the

streets, the life of the poor and the rich, in the markets, at the races, on the boulevards, in the alleys of the slums . . . My hands are tingling to get at it - the whole of modern life!"⁹³

In one passage in the book an argument ensues between Lantier and his friends over the merits of a Beaux-Arts education. Following their dispute, Lantier is invigorated by a walk across Paris, a walk which "swung him back into his passion for the living flesh." Like Henri's own decree to paint life and not art, Lantier exclaimed:

It's life that matters. To feel it, to set it down as it really is, to love it for itself-there is the only true beauty, ever-changing and eternal . . . We mustn't have that stupid idea that life is to be ennobled by castrating it; we must understand that the things people call ugly are only the projections of character . . . ⁹⁴

Henri might well have been inspired by Claude Lantier, whose artistic development progressed from academic study to casting his vision to the streets of modern day Paris. Zola writes of Lantier's walks around Paris and "the whole city-its streets, its squares and corners, its bridges, all its lively horizons-seemed to be unrolling before him like a scroll of enormous frescoes."⁹⁵ Zola's vivid descriptions of teeming urban life, William Berg, explained, "moves Zola further into the flow of life."⁹⁶

The notion of lively urban images unrolling before our eyes and catching us up in the life flow is paralleled in the

art of the Ashcan School. In John Sloan's Six O'Clock, Winter (1912) for example, a crowded elevated train fills the "lively horizon" at the rush hour peak, looming above a crowd-filled street. (Fig. 4) George Bellows rendered a composite view of "the whole city-its streets, squares and corners" in his ambitious painting New York of 1911. (Fig.5) Here, multiple aspects of the city are combined in the broad expanse of teeming urban life; the compressed composition accommodates both the crowds in the foreground and the distance high rise buildings as well.⁹⁷ In both this work and Sloan's Six O'Clock, Winter the foregrounds are cropped - there are no pictorial barriers between us and the street activity.

In one episode in Zola's L'Oeuvre, a young artist felt torn between Lantier's influence and that of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. He found himself in the compromising position of painting with the dexterity and control of an academically trained artist yet hoping to achieve "bits of life thrown on the canvas, alive and moving . . ." ⁹⁸

Lantier, with his search for the mingling of art and life, represents, of course, the direct vision of the Impressionists of whom Zola often wrote. In one essay Zola warned the artist against getting caught up "in the small details that remove all freshness from the personal, living observation."⁹⁹ What contrast such reading must have

provided to the academic assignments Henri was struggling to produce such as "Lot and his Wife and Daughter Leave Sodom, and the Wife is turned into a Pillar of Salt." It is little wonder that Henri recorded "I have little interest in the subject of Lot and his wife."¹⁰⁰

Zola's novel also dealt with the juried Salon exhibitions and Claude Lantier's obsession to have his work accepted. The Salon is presented as a necessary evil, one that is both vilified and sought after by the protagonist and his associates. In conversation with an architect friend about his exhibition of predictable architectural renderings Lantier lamented that the drawings were only "a patient mosaic of the Beaux-Arts formulas. Mustn't all the arts march forward?" Lantier asks. "If architecture was ever to develop a style of its own, and of its age, it must surely be in this age which they were about to enter: a new age, swept with a new broom . . . "¹⁰¹

If Henri was influenced by the specifics of the story of an artist rallying against the official art systems of France, he may also have been affected by Zola's very style of prose. Despite Zola's endorsement of journalist accuracy, his novels and those of many other Naturalist writers were rarely literal representations of "reality." Zola's literary theories allowed for a synthesis of analytical and imaginative vision. While obsessive for detail, Zola

believed that "truth takes wing toward the symbol. He acknowledged of a poetic side is further evidenced by his admitted "leap into the stars from the springboard of exact observation." ¹⁰²

This attitude was shared by Baudelaire who defined the artist's task as observing and depicting modern life but who, in the same breath, wrote of distilling ". . . the eternal from the transitory."¹⁰³ While Zola criticized symbolist art and its depiction of ideas and thoughts as "tiresome," there existed in his own work an anti-positivist vein.¹⁰⁴ The same dichotomy exists within Henri's art theories, perhaps a result of his presence in France when realism and naturalism were being challenged by intuitionism and anti-positivism. (See "The Art Spirit and Anti-Positivist Thought," Chapter 6, p.311)

Zola sought the creative amalgamation of that which is "real" and "perceived," articulated in his well-known pronouncement that "art is a corner of nature seen through a temperament." He believed in the existence of a screen between artist and reality and that for the realist painter that screen was extremely thin, nearly transparent and in fact metaphorically reducible to the artist's temperament.¹⁰⁵ "The most important thing I can say to you," Henri told his students, "is that your work shows the artist temperament."¹⁰⁶

Another significant outlook that Henri shared with Zola

was the importance of the powers of observation. William Berg explained that the reader of Zola "is immersed in a purely visual and phenomenal world, where the author is ultimately less interested in describing objects than in describing the human eye as it encounters, records, and grasps these objects."¹⁰⁷ Zola believed that vision was the most critical tool of the writer, declaring that "the gift of seeing is even less common than the gift of creating."¹⁰⁸ Zola's statement echoes Baudelaire's declaration in his essay of 1863, "The Painter of Modern Life," that "few men are gifted with the capacity of seeing."¹⁰⁹ "It is harder to see than it is to express," Henri declared.¹¹⁰ "Work must be original . . . ," he wrote, "for it is all seeing for oneself with one's own eyes in one's own way . . . "¹¹¹ Henri further articulated what he meant by this kind of sight when he stated that one must see:

constructively . . . as a factor in the making of something, a concept, something in his consciousness, something that is not exactly that thing before him which the school has said he should copy. This thing of seeing things. All kinds of seeing. Dead seeing. Live seeing.¹¹²

This aptitude for seeing was attributed to Henri and other members of the Ashcan School by critic Frank Jewett Mather, Jr. who wrote that they all had "wonderfully good eyes." He added:

They see the world that anybody might see if he would look steadily enough, but they see it far better than

the rest of us. We are lucky then to be able to see with their eyes and I suppose the most valuable thing they do is key up to a reasonable conscience and keenness the naturally limpid eyesight of many of their contemporaries . . . these American realists have kept fresh and curious eyes upon our life.¹¹³

In his memoirs artist Guy Pène du Bois recorded: "Henri had just returned from France," he wrote, "where in eleven years of residence he had completely assimilated the new French freedom, learned to see men as men."¹¹⁴ This "new French freedom" to which Pène du Bois referred was expressed by Zola when he wrote that he wished to see a man and not a painting when looking at art.¹¹⁵ Zola's pronouncement in 1866 to "Make something real and I applaud, but above all make something individual and living and I applaud more strongly" was not far removed from Henri's frequent challenges to his students to paint life and not art. Even this major aspect of Henri's philosophy - the inherent connection between art and life - has been attributed primarily to the influence of Emerson and Whitman.¹¹⁶

Numerous alignments of art with politics also appear in L'Oeuvre. Claude Lantier denigrated the art of the official Salon and used a carrot as an emblem of revolution when he implored:

Isn't a bunch of carrots . . . studied directly and painted genuinely and candidly, in one's own personal observation . . . worth more than those eternal lumps-of-dough of the Beaux-Arts, that painting in tobacco juice, that stuff gracefully cooked up according to recipes, that any real artist ought to be ashamed of?¹¹⁷

In "the midst of revolutionary passion," he and his friends speak of reforming the Salon jury, espousing everything from electing a liberal jury to opening the Salon to anyone who wished to enter with no jury at all. The Salon was described as a "battlefield," art as anarchy, and Lantier's painting a "work of revolt." Lantier also condemned the system of art education in Paris to which he had been exposed:

Every time a teacher has tried to impose one of his truths on me, I have recoiled in distrust and rebellion, and I have thought, he is either deceiving himself or deceiving me. Their ideas irritate me beyond endurance; it seems to me that the real truth is broader than all that . . .¹¹⁸

Walter Pach observed that Henri's favorite French writers displayed an "attitude toward life . . . tinged with revolutionary unrest . . ."¹¹⁹ The numerous references to anarchy and rebellion in terms of aesthetics were commonplace in nineteenth century France. (see Chapter 5) Many of the same terms denoting art and rebellion found in Zola's novel would later appear in the press regarding Henri and the Eight's independent exhibition. At the opening of their exhibit at Macbeth Galleries, for example, one critic labeled Henri "the Ajax of the new band of revolutionaries."¹²⁰ Interestingly, a reference to L'Oeuvre was made in a review of the Macbeth exhibition: "An unfortunate impression is abroad," the critic wrote, "that the eight painters are a

howling band of Indians thirsting for scalps of academicians . . . like that noisy crowd . . . portrayed by Zola in 'His Masterpiece.'"¹²¹

Henri, along with other members of the Ashcan School, were also compared to Zola by the critic Charles Vezin in terms of their interest in the unpicturesque. In a derogatory article, Vezin wrote that these artists are:

honest, sincere, and gifted, but they are the forerunners in the art movement of the thing of which Zola was the forerunner in French literature. My criticism is not so much on these men as on the movement in full swing in Europe . . . a movement in which these men form an important part. The cult of the hideous is but the cult of the rotten.¹²²

Henri remained interested in Zola past his days in Paris, frequently speaking to his students of the French author's writings. He later wrote an annotation in a book he owned entitled Promenades of an Impressionist by James Huneker. "Zola saw and had a personal view of life," Henri inscribed in the margin of a chapter on Cézanne.¹²³

In the fall of 1890, some nine months after finishing Zola's L'Oeuvre, Henri began to read a novel entitled Jack by another French naturalist of the time, Alphonse Daudet (1840-1897). Daudet was a contributor to Le Figaro and La Vie Moderne, and was well known for his naturalistic sketches of Provence life. Henri's appreciation of this author may have been reinforced by the painter Marie Bashkirtseff, whose journals he had just finished reading (see Chapter 3, pp. 126-

145). Bashkirtseff recorded:

I prefer Daudet among modern writers; he writes only novels, but they are strewn with just observations, with things that are full of truth and feeling. There is life in his books.¹²⁴

Daudet's powers of observation were also admired by Zola who wrote that his contemporary recorded human experience "having seen everything . . . even the fine details that would have escaped the best of eyes."¹²⁵ Daudet did not, however, embrace the historical determinism of Zola and was more interested in and extremely adept at probing and describing the subtleties of the human experience. The fact that Henri could read and appreciate Daudet's vivid prose confirms his competence at reading French. "I read scarcely any English now - all French," Henri proudly wrote home, "it's my lesson in the language."¹²⁶

Jack, originally published in 1873, was the story of a young illegitimate boy growing into manhood amid the trials beset him by his well meaning but misguided mother. Henri had read one other novel by Daudet in English before his trip to France and referred to Jack as one of the author's best books. It is not surprising that Henri was attracted to this Dickens-like tale partially set in Paris. However, beyond the storyline he admired the author as a "realist" who "writes beautifully." In a letter to his parents Henri further explained: "His books are good - he talks plainly but

he is not so brutally abrupt in telling us what's going on about us as Zola is." He added:

I think I learned a great deal from "Jack." He is one of the best modern French writers. He has a wonderful and a beautiful control of the language . . . It is also one of those books which advances its philosophy in its plain dealing.¹²⁷

A major theme that runs throughout Jack is the contrast between good and evil as represented by the pastoral countryside with its emotionally healing properties and urban industry with its potential threat to the well being of humankind. After running away from the brutality and neglect of a boarding school situated in an industrial part of Paris, a young Jack seeks his mother who has taken up residence in the nearby countryside. He walks the twenty-four mile journey alone at night and, once in the open country, pauses to look back upon the city lit by "the red glare of its furnace light and heat."¹²⁸ As he nears his mother's abode, the day breaks, the rising of a "maternal dawn." Jack is nearing not only in the arms of his mother but the bosom of nature.¹²⁹

Jack spends a glorious few months with his mother in the country only to have it abruptly come to end when her lover arranges an apprenticeship for him in an ironworks. Upon first seeing the workings of the foundry, Jack was struck by "the perpetual commotion of both earth and air, a continual trepidation, something like the striving of a huge beast imprisoned beneath the foundry, whose groans and burning

breath burst hissing out through the yawning chimneys."¹³⁰

This interest in the effects of technological progress on society was found not only in the works of Daudet but other French writers of the time and Dickens as well. The industrialization of America must certainly have been on Henri's mind as it was for many Americans at this time. In 1890 the United States Superintendent of the Census officially declared that the American frontier no longer existed as a viable region, signaling the emergence of an urbanized nation.

For a relatively short period of time in the latter 1890s and early twentieth century Henri painted not only landscapes and cityscapes but aspects of the industrial urban American scene, typified by such works as Factories at Manayunk, 1897, (Fig. 6), North River Coal Pier, New York, 1902, (Fig. 7), Coal Breaker, 1902, (Fig. 8), and Derricks on the North River, 1902, (Fig. 9). All are done in Henri's characteristic dark palette; no ray of impressionist sun supplies relief from the dreary atmosphere. In Derricks on the North River the dark forms of the derricks loom against a gray sky, dwarfing the figures of the workmen. Similarly in Coal Breaker the large industrial complex fills the picture plane and seems as if it is about to engulf the small figures on the path below.

This is not to say that Daudet's narrative directly

influenced Henri's choice of subject matter. However, the dichotomy of city and country expressed in French naturalist literature finds interesting parallels in Henri's paintings of urban and country life. Other artists of the Ashcan School alternated between painting landscapes and cityscapes. While not necessarily embracing the notion of country as "good" and city as "evil," Everett Shinn, for example, depicted the less hospitable aspects of industry and urban life in his Fire on Twenty-fourth Street, 1907. In this dramatic night scene a lone fire fighter on a roof top appears to be battling a fiery blaze by himself. (Fig. 10) George Bellow's Excavation at Night, 1908, a depiction of the construction sight of the Pennsylvania railroad terminal with its vast cavernous pit, also illustrates the hardships of urban labor. Even in the darkest of night, shadowy figures of workmen can be seen against a small fiery blaze in the depth of the pit. (Fig. 11) Such works are a far cry from Anshutz's sun filled The Ironworkers' Noontime (Fig. 3) heralded as the forerunner of Ashcan School painting, with its focus on the physically fit men enjoying a sunny lunchtime break.

In addition to specific contemporary issues implied by Daudet's stories, Henri summed up his attraction to this particular French writer. Commenting on a specific episode in Jack when the protagonist goes to jail for a crime he did not commit, Henri wrote: "one can forgive the theatrical for

the realism of its inner circumstances."¹³¹ In other words, he forgave the story's dramatic excesses in light of the author's sensitivity to human emotions. Henri's remark clarified what he found so compelling about naturalist literature - the merger of the observed with the emotions and sensations which transcended individual stories.

Comparisons have been drawn between the art of the Ashcan School and the contemporary realist novels of American writers Hamlin Garland, Theodore Dreiser, and Stephen Crane.¹³² Any knowledge of the urban realism of these American novelists came on the heels of Henri's admonition to his colleagues and students to read French naturalist literature.¹³³ John Sloan, in fact, denied connections between his art and the American writers, making reference instead to Balzac, another French author admired by Henri and a precursor to the Naturalists. Sloan remarked that their aim was to "paint the life we knew as Balzac had drawn the French world he lived in."¹³⁴ Sloan was undoubtedly making reference to Balzac's avowed objective to depict French society with utmost realism and his particular attention to the routine demands of daily life. The portrayal of unidealized characters from a range of socio/economic backgrounds in French Naturalist Literature and the struggles and challenges of modern urban life would become an integral part of the Ashcan School motif. Also like much of the art

of the Ashcan School, Naturalist literature not only aimed to render reality but to express the life of the moment.

La Vie Moderne

At the same time he was immersed in Zola in January of 1890, Henri mentioned in his diary that he purchased ten "vie Modernes" and that he spent the evening reading them. The following day he bought fifteen more issues. "I consider them a great bargain at two sous each," he commented, "for the literature as well as the pictures." He then mentioned subscribing to the periodical, hoping to assemble a complete collection.¹³⁵

La Vie Moderne, founded in Paris in 1879, enjoyed a lengthy publication, enduring for thirty years until 1909.

The weekly journal published by Georges Charpentier (1846-1905) (who also published Zola) contained journalistic photography, poetry and prose by contemporary writers, as well as reproductions of contemporary art. Henri's interest in the journal's literary and artistic content is significant not only because the periodical dealt with modern life but because its contents changed quite radically between 1890 and 1891 when Henri was a subscriber.

In 1890 the articles and illustrations in La Vie Moderne were by relatively conservative writers and artists, most of whom have become obscure over time. There was, however,

considerable diversity in the topics covered by the magazine. Beginning in early March of 1890, for example, there appeared a series of articles that ran for several months on the philosophy of Auguste Comte (1798-1857), the foremost proponent of positivism. This branch of philosophical thought had dominated western European thought in the 1870s and early 1880s. Positivism embraced scientific method as the only means to discovering truths. Beginning with the March 3, 1890 issue the journal published numerous columns entitled "variétés judiciaires le testament d'Auguste Comte." In October of 1890 La Vie Moderne even contained the writings of Charles Dickens, giving Henri the opportunity to read one of his favorite English writers in French.

By 1891 the literary and artistic content of La Vie Moderne reflected the resurgence of interest in intuition and subjectivity among intellectual and artistic circles in France. In contrast to the articles on Comte of the previous year, for example, much of the content was connected to the symbolist movement. Writings by Remy de Gourmont (1858-1915), foremost Symbolist leader and critic, were included in 1891 along with articles either by or about symbolists poets Stephen Mallarmé, Jean Moréas, Arthur Rimbaud, Pierre Quillard, and Paul Verlaine. Thus, while enmeshed in the duality of the materiality and immaterial in Zola's novels, Henri was also exposed to both positivist and anti-positivist

based literature and art in La Vie Moderne.

The magazine that year also contained the writings of Albert Aurier (1865-1892) who had great praise for the impressionists and was the first critic to champion Paul Gauguin and Vincent Van Gogh. An article on Gauguin by Aurier appeared, in fact, in the May issue of the periodical.¹³⁶ Edgar Allen Poe, much admired by the symbolists, was also represented. His poem "The Raven" appeared in yet another issue of 1891 accompanied by an illustration by Manet, an introduction by Mallarmé, and a tribute to Baudelaire - a remarkable diversity of artists and writers represented in a single entry.¹³⁷

Many of the visual artists represented in La Vie Moderne in 1891 had made (or were making) their reputations outside of the academic mainstream. There were still numerous reproductions of paintings by Paul-Albert Besnard (1849-1934), an impressionist and particular favorite of Henri. Also included were works by Edouard Manet (1832-1883), Pierre Auguste Renoir (1841-1919), and Jean-Baptiste Armand Guillaumin (1841-1927). Works by the Nabis were represented by Pierre Bonnard (1867-1947), Maurice Denis (1870-1943), Edouard Vuillard (1868-1940), and Paul Serusier (1863-1927). The Nabis had been enrolled in the Académie Julian the same time as Henri in 1889 though he makes no mention of them by name. La Vie Moderne may have provided one of Henri's

earliest exposures to this group of avant-garde painters who temporarily influenced his work. (see "Henri and James Wilson Morrice: The Influence of the Nabis and James McNeill Whistler," Chapter 6).

Notes

1. Henri's diaries are housed in the Archives of American Art; his correspondence is part of the Robert Henri Papers located in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

2. Stillman was a former student of Frederic Church and had been aspiring landscape painter when he turned to art criticism. He was an occasional contributor to Century Magazine and in 1855 along with John Durand (the son of painter Asher B. Durand) established the Crayon, the first art journal in America.

3. W.J. Stillman, "Art Education," The Century Magazine 5 (September 1888): 797,798.

4. Henri, "Progress in our National Art," 400,401.

5. Stillman, 98.

6. Ibid, 797.

7. Henri diary, 2 April 1887, Reel 885, AAA, SI

8. Henri, The Art Spirit, 78,79.

9. Stillman, 797.

10. Henri diary, 15 September 1888, Reel 885, AAA, SI.

11. Henri diary, 20 September 1888, 22 September 1888, and 27 September 1888, Reel 885, AAA, SI.

12. Henri letter to parents, 29 March 1889, BRBL. The Société des artistes indépendents was established in 1884 by a group of artists who were rejected that year from the Salon. The inclusive organization agreed to hold no-jury exhibitions.

13. Henri's idea for an independent exhibition actually began in the spring of 1907 when he was serving on the jury for the annual National Academy of Design exhibition. When certain entries by George Luks, Everett Shinn, Carl Sprinchorn, Rockwell Kent, and William Glackens were

rejected, Henri insisted that another vote be taken. The works were voted down a second time. Henri became further enraged when two of his paintings were ranked No. 2, which meant a majority rather than a unanimous vote. Finally, at the time of the hanging of the exhibition, two additional works by his friends Luks and Sprinchorn were omitted because of overcrowding. As a result, Henri and Sloan began discussing the possibility of holding their own exhibition to include their works as well as those by the other artists who came to comprise "the Eight." The exhibit, which opened February 8, 1908 at Macbeth Galleries, was well attended and a financial success largely due to the considerable press coverage it received.

14. J.E. Blanche, Manet (London: John Lane The Bodley Head Limited, 1925) 11; this book remains in the Henri Library at The National Arts Club, New York City. For a thorough discussion of the exhibition of The Eight, particularly in terms of its well orchestrated publicity campaign and press coverage, see Elizabeth Milroy, Painters of a New Century, The Eight, exh. cat. (Milwaukee Art Museum, 1991).

15. Roll's painting was entitled Study for the Festival of the Centennial of the Revolution Celebrated at Versailles in 1889. When the final work was completed four years later, critics declared Roll "an artist who was a man of his time and who painted things exactly as he saw them." See Annette Blaugrund, et al. Paris 1889: American Artists at the Universal Exposition. (New York: Harry N. Abrams for the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, 1989), 250.

16. Jules Breton, La vie d'un artiste (Paris, 1890), 177, cited in Gabriel P. Weisberg, ed., The European Realist Tradition (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1982), 7. Gambetta was a founding father of the Third Republic and political hero of the lower classes.

17. Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," 9.

18. Louis Emile Edmond Duranty, "The New Painting: Concerning the Group of Artists Exhibiting at the Durand-Ruel Galleries," cited in Charles S. Moffett et al. The New Painting, Impressionism 1874-1886, exh. cat. (San Francisco: The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1986), 39, 44. Duranty's essay was written in response to the second independent exhibition of the impressionists in 1876.

19. Izola Forrester, "New York's Art Anarchists: Here is the Revolutionary Creed of Robert Henri and His Followers," New York World (10 June 1906), 6,7.

20. Baigell, "Early Twentieth Century American Art," 127.

21. Henry diary, 27 September 1888, Reel 885, AAA, SI.

22. Henri letter to parents, 6 October 1888, BRBL.

23. The degree to which Robert Henri was committed to learning the French language was apparently greater than many English speaking art students in Paris. British writer Somerset Maugham, who shared a Paris apartment with Ernest Lawson in 1893, wrote of his countrymen in his semi-autobiographical Of Human Bondage, originally published in 1915: ". . . many of the students living in Paris for five years knew no more French than served them in shops and lived as English a life as though they were working in South Kensington." (W. Somerset Maugham, Of Human Bondage (London: Penguin Books, 1963), 231.

24. The Académie Julian was one of the most popular and successful of the private art schools that offered instruction to the growing numbers of aspiring artists in Paris from all over the world. It was founded in 1868 by Rodolphe Julian with the original intent of preparing students for the entrance exams ("concours des places") of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts.

25. The Ecole des Beaux-Arts was the most distinguished French institution for artistic training in the nineteenth century. Since its establishment as the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture by Louis XIV in 1648, this government sponsored school had gone through various name changes according to the prevailing political regime. Only a relatively small number of American artists studying in late nineteenth century Paris gained entrance into the Ecole either due to failure to pass the rigorous entrance exams or reluctance to even try to gain admittance. Henri failed his first attempt in the spring of 1889 to pass the "concours des places" but succeeded in gaining admittance in February of 1891.

26. In addition to Human Intercourse, the prolific Hamerton also wrote Etching and Etchers (1868), Painting in France after the Decline of Classicism (1869, reprinted in 1892), The Intellectual Life (1873), Modern Frenchmen (1878)

and a biography of J.W.M. Turner (1879).

27. Henri diary, 20 May 1889 and 11 March 1889, Reel 885, AAA, SI.

28. Phillip Gilbert Hamerton, Human Intercourse (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1894), v,vi.

29. Henri diary, 23 March 1890, Reel 885, AAA, SI.

30. See Homer, Robert Henri and His Circle, 46.

31. Henri, The Art Spirit, 222.

32. Hamerton, 8.

33. Henri, "What About Art in America?" 36.

34. Hamerton, 15.

35. Henri, The Art Spirit, 232.

36. Henri, "Progress in Our National Art," 391.

37. Hamerton, 18.

38. Henri, "Progress in Our National Art," 389-390.

39. What is it I interchange so suddenly with
strangers?
What with some driver as I ride on the seat
by his side?
What with some fisherman drawing his seine by
the shore as I walk by and pause?
What gives me to be free to a woman's and a
man's good-will? what give them to be free
to mine?

Walt Whitman, "Song of the Open Road," from Leaves of Grass (New York: Airmont Publishing Company, Inc., 1965), 116.

40. Henri, "'My People': By Robert Henri," The Craftsman 26, no. 5 (February 1915): 459.

41. Hamerton, 19.

42. Péne du Bois, Artists Say the Silliest Things, 82.

43. "Interview with Stuart Davis," 7.

44. Kent, It's Me O Lord, 82.
45. Henri, "Progress in Our National Art," 389.
46. See Jane Myers, "Bellows and Portraiture," in Michael Quick et al., The Paintings of George Bellows, exh. cat. (Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum, 1992), 178.
47. Hamerton, 174.
48. Ibid., 306, 310, 311, 314.
49. Henri letter to parents, 8 June 1889, BRBL.
50. Henri diary, 6 April 1890, Reel 885, AAA, SI.
51. Joseph J. Kwiatt, "Robert Henri and the Emerson-Whitman Tradition," Publications of the Modern Language LXXXI (September 1956): 617, 619.
52. Ralph Waldo Emerson, Representative Men (New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1903, reprint New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1968), 26, 189. Representative Men has been seen as a subtle counter-statement to Thomas Carlyle's Heroes and Hero-Worship of 1841 in which the author viewed history as the glorified biography of strong and forceful individuals. See F.O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance, Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1941), 632.
53. Henri, The Art Spirit, 148.
54. Henri letter to parents, 8 June 1889, BRBL.
55. See, for example, Joseph J. Kwiatt, "Robert Henri's Good Theory and Earnest Practice," Prospects 4 (1979), 395; and Rebecca Zurier, "Picturing the City," 42-46.
56. Henri, The Art Spirit, 20, 21, 133.
57. Norman Foerster, "Emerson on the Organic Principle in Art," in Emerson, A Collection of Critical Essays, Milton Konvitz and Stephen Whicher, eds. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962), 118.
58. Henri, The Art Spirit, 159.
59. Emerson wrote: "Standing on the bare ground - my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space - all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent

eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part and parcel of God." See Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nature; An Essay and Lectures on the Times (London: H.C. Clarke and Co., 1844), 11. This particular essay was written in 1836.

60. Henri, The Art Spirit, 54.

61. At the invitation of Emma Goldman, Henri taught at the Modern School of the Ferrer Society in New York from 1911-1916. Founded in 1910, the center was named after Francisco Ferrer y Guardia, a Spanish anarchist who had been falsely accused of government insurrection in 1909 and executed. The school in New York was modeled after schools Ferrer had established in Spain. Ferrer was interested in libertarian education that was free from institutional restraints. His particular interest in bringing enlightenment to the laboring classes was echoed in the New York center where artists and non-artists from all walks of life were welcome.

62. Emerson, Nature, 9, 11.

63. Cited in Foerster, "Emerson on the Organic Principle in Art," 117.

64. Cited in Forrester, "New York's Art Anarchists," 6, 7.

65. Emerson transcribed the following quotation from Edmund Burke in his college dissertation: "Nature is never more truly herself than in her grandest forms; the Apollo Belvedere is as much in nature as any figure from the pencil of Rembrandt." Foerster, 114.

66. Thomas Paine wrote Age of Reason while imprisoned in France. Paine had offended Maximilien de Robespierre because he favored the exile, rather than the execution, of King Louis XVI. Age of Reason was published in parts, between 1794 and 1807.

67. Perlman, 28.

68. Henri diary, 11 March 1890, Reel 885, AAA, SI.

69. Henri diary, 22 November 1886, Reel 885, AAA, SI.

70. Henri diary, 20 September 1888, Reel 885, AAA, SI.

71. Subject matter assigned to Henri's class at the Académie Julian included "Pyrrhus and Thesbe", "Venus Discovering the Body of Adonis in the Woods", "Antony Brought to Cleopatra to Die", "David Before Saul with the Head of Goliath," and "Christ Blessing the Little Children." See Henri Diary, 8 February 1889, AAA, SI; Perlman, 13.

72. Walter Pach, Queer Thing Painting, 42.

73. W. Francklyn Paris, The Hall of American Artists (New York: The Alexander Press, 1948), no pagination.

74. Henri, The Art Spirit, 221.

75. Philadelphia Recorder (December 25, 1910), newspaper clipping, Reel 887, AAA, SI. Carlyle's two volume A History of the French Revolution, published in 1837, concentrated on the oppression of the poor.

76. Henri diary, 21 September 1880, Reel 885, AAA, SI.

77. Henri letter to parents, 4 September 1889, BRBL.

78. Henri letter to parents, 25 January 1890, BRBL.

79. The book was one of twenty novels Zola wrote between 1871 and 1893 under the title Les Rougon-Macquart: Histoire naturelle et sociale d'une famille sous le Second Empire; the series illustrated his new naturalist fiction by following the five generation saga of one family under the Second Empire. The stories centered around the lives and trials of men and women of the working class and exposed the crimes and scandal of that era in French history.

80. Henri letter to parents, 14 January and 19 January 1890, BRBL.

81. "The Teachings of Robert Henri: The Alice Klauber Manuscript," cited in Perlman, Robert Henri, His Life and Art, 141. In 1912 Alice Klauber, one of Henri's students, transcribed Henri's critiques and lectures during a series of his classes. Unlike the similar notes recorded by another Henri student, Margery Ryerson, which were published as The Art Spirit in 1923, Klauber's manuscript remains unpublished in the collection of the Klauber family. It was printed for the first time in 1991 in Bennard B. Perlman's book, Robert Henri, His Life and Art.

82. Henri was at least indirectly familiar with Taine's writings. In The Art Spirit, 86, Henri quoted Walt Whitman who in turn quoted the following phrase from Taine: "All original art is self-regulated; and no original art can be regulated from without. It carries its own counterpoise and does not receive it from elsewhere - lives on its own blood."

83. Quoted in Linda Nochlin, Realism (New York: Pelican Books, 1971; reprint New York: Penguin Books USA Inc., 1990), 28.

84. Cited in Judy Sund, True to Temperament, Van Gogh and French Naturalist Literature (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 3.

85. Henri diary, 13 January 1890, Reel 885, AAA, SI.

86. Journalist Fernand Xau anticipated the novel's subject matter: "A work which he [Zola] will have less trouble collecting the documents is the novel which he intends to write on art. Here he will only have to remember what he saw in our circle and what he felt himself. His principal character . . . is that painter, in love with modern beauty . . . Around the central man of genius . . . other artists will move, painters, sculptors, musicians, men of letters, a whole band of ambitious young men who have also come to conquer Paris." Quoted in Robert J. Niess, Zola, Cézanne, and Manet, A Study of L'Oeuvre (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1968), 2.

87. Ibid., 2, 4, 245.

88. William J. Berg, The Visual Novel, Emile Zola and the Art of His Times (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania University Press, 1992), 44.

89. Emile Zola, The Masterpiece, trans. Katherine Woods (n.p.: Howell, Soskin Publishers, 1946), 62.

90. Henri, The Art Spirit, 63.

91. Zola, The Masterpiece, 83.

92. Ibid., 62, 64, 65.

93. Ibid., 66.

94. Ibid., 113.

95. Ibid., 239.

96. Berg, The Visual Novel, 287.

97. Marianne Doezema notes some similarities between the painting and Union Square but also identifies aspects that do not correspond to photographs of that site in 1911. See Marianne Doezema, "The Real New York," The Paintings of George Bellows, exh. cat. (Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum, 1993), 111-114.

98. Zola, The Masterpiece, 112.

99. Emile Zola, Salons collected and edited by F.W.J. Hemmings and R. J. Niess (Geneva: Droz, 1959), cited in Berg, 35.

100. Henri letter to parents, 20 February 1890, BRBL.

101. Zola, The Masterpiece, 174.

102. Emile Zola, Oeuvres complètes, ed. Maurice Le Blond, Volume entitled Correspondance, (Paris: Typographic Françoise Bernouard, 1927-1929), 635,636; cited in Berg, 4.

103. Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," 12.

104. Zola's engagement with the immaterial is characterized by the following passage from L'Oeuvre, 171, 172. Claude Lantier, having just left the disquieting atmosphere of the Salon where one of his paintings was ridiculed, sat at an outdoor café observing "Paris passing by in a sort of glory; the carriage wheels had haloes like stars, the great yellow buses were more golden than triumphal chariots, the horsemen's mounts seemed to strike sparks into the air; and even the pedestrians were transfigured and made resplendent by this late afternoon light."

105. cited in Berg, The Visual Novel, 267, n. 78.

106. Henri, The Art Spirit, 180. Henri was familiar with Zola's declaration of art as "nature seen through a temperament." He quotes it in The Art Spirit but misattributes it, writing that he thought Corot had made the statement (see The Art Spirit, 84).

107. Berg, The Visual Novel, 286,287.

108. Emile Zola, Le Roman expérimental (1880), 169, cited in Berg, The Visual Novel, 47.

109. Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," 12.

110. Henri, The Art Spirit, 87.

111. Henri letter to parents, 29 June 1891, BRBL.

112. Henri, The Art Spirit, 168.

113. Frank Jewett Mather, Jr. "Some American Realists," Arts and Decoration 7 (November 1916): 13,14.

114. Guy Péne du Bois, It's Me O Lord, 82.

115. "What I seek above all in a picture is a man and not a picture." Mon Salon/Manet/Écrits sur l'art. ed. Antoinette Ehrard Paris: Garnier Flammarion, 1970) 60, cited in Richard Schiff, "The End of Impressionism," chapter in The New Painting, Impressionism 1874-1886, 75.

116. Emile Zola, Mes haines of 1866, cited in Sund, 5; Joseph J. Kwiatt, "Robert Henri and the Emerson Whitman Tradition," 623.

117. Zola, The Masterpiece, 62,63.

118. Ibid., 114, 241, 242, and 65, respectively.

119. Pach, 42.

120. James B. Townsend, "The Eight Arrive," American Art News (8 February 1908): 6.

121. See "Eight Painters: First Article," New York Sun (9 February 1908): 8.

122. Charles Vezin, "Protests Against Psychopathic Art, Mr. Vezin Breaks a Lance for Beauty Against What He Considers Ugliness," New York Herald (4 April 1907), clipping, Henri vertical files, National Museum of American Art library, Washington, D.C. Vezin is making reference to not only Henri but William Glackens, Jerome Meyers, and John Sloan.

123. In the same chapter, Huneker claimed Zola was simply an imitator of the naturalist writers, brothers Edmond and Jules Goncourt. (He was undoubtedly referring to the Goncourt brothers' book Manette Salomon of 1867 which

some scholars believe may have inspired L'Oeuvre.) Manifesting his acquaintance with Zola's novel and perhaps the Goncourts' writings as well, Henri defended Zola's originality despite the possible borrowing of the novel's basic theme, writing in the margin: "Zola's book is like Goncourts as Manet's Olympia is like Goya's Maja." James Huneker, Promenades of an Impressionist (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), 5. Robert Henri library, National Arts Club, New York.

124. Marie Bashkirtseff, The Journal of a Young Artist, 1860-1884 (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, Inc., 1919), 508.

125. Emile Zola, Les Romanciers naturalistes, 216, cited in Berg, The Visual Novel, 49.

126. Henri letter to parents, 14 September 1890, BRBL.

127. Henri letter to parents, 13 September 1890, BRBL.

128. Alphonse Daudet, Jack, trans. Laura Ensorvol, vol. 1 (London: J.M. Dent and Co., 1896), 177.

129. Ibid., 187, 188. Daudet writes: "The forest is all awakening. The great green curtain stretched along the road quivers. It is full of chirping, and cooing and warbling re-echoing from the hawthorn in the hedge to the venerable oak trees, in the depths. The branches rustle, bend under the flapping of wings; and while the lingering shadows are evaporating into space, and the night-birds with their silent and heavy flight return to their mysterious haunts, a lark rises from the plain, with delicate and widespread wings-rises with sonorous vibrations, tracing that first invisible line in which are blended, in the glorious days of summer, the holy quiet of the skies, and all the stirring sounds of earthy activity."

130. Ibid., 290.

131. Henri diary, 7 September 1890, Reel 885, AAA, SI.

132. See, for example, James Gibbons Huneker, "Eight Painters," New York Sun (9 February 1908): 8 and Milton Brown, American Painting From the Armory Show to the Depression (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1955), 9.

133. Dreiser's first novel, *Sister Carrie*, was published in 1900 about the time Henri settled permanently in New York after years of foreign residency. Henri did suggest to his students that they side with Dreiser "when he came along." Pène du Bois, Artists Say the Silliest Things, 82.

134. Quoted (but no reference given) in Homer, Robert Henri and His Circle, 84. Like Zola and his Rougon-Macquart series, Balzac had spent twenty years of his career writing La comédie humaine, a multi-volume set of novels and short stories that reproduced every social class and profession in nineteenth century France.

135. Henri diary, 23 January 1890, Reel 885, AAA, SI; the magazine had a reasonable subscription rate of 24 francs per year.

136. G. Albert Aurier, "Gauguin," La Vie Moderne (24 May 1891): 95.

137. See La Vie Moderne (30 May 1891): 106. During his first teaching job at the Philadelphia School of Design for Women, Henri assigned his students to illustrate in charcoal Poe's "The Raven." Henri also praised the French writer Guy de Maupassant (1850-1893), calling him a "master of wit, a literary descendent of Edgar Allan Poe." See "The Teachings of Robert Henri: The Alice Klauber Manuscript," in Perlman, Robert Henri, His Life and Art, 141.

CHAPTER 3

HENRI AND THE RUSSIANS: MARIE BASHKIRTSEFF AND LEO TOLSTOY

In 1886, just two years before Henri's arrival in Paris, Russian literature had made a considerable impact in France. The Russian writer Ivan Sergeyevich Turgenev (1818-1883), an established member of the French literary scene since 1856, helped pave the way for the reception in Paris of the Russian novelists Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910) and Feodor Dostoyevsky (1821-1881).¹ For a brief time in the latter 1880s Russian authors influenced the literary course of France toward a more moralistic, anti-positivist art. To be acquainted with Russian literature was considered the mark of a cultivated mind.

Russian realist writers tended to be more sympathetic than the French toward their characters, a quality which appealed to a large body of critics and readers, including Henri. As an avid reader and one who desired to keep current, it is not surprising that Henri became interested in Tolstoy in France where his writings had become a topic of great discussion by the late 1880s. At this time he also became attracted to Russian nonfiction, specifically the autobiography of a Russian painter whose reactions as an art

student in Paris would parallel his own.

The Journals of Marie Bashkirtseff

Just prior to subscribing to La Vie Moderne Henri expressed curiosity about the recently published journal of the Russian painter Marie Bashkirtseff (born Mariya Konstantinovna Bashkirtzeva, 1859-1884). In December of 1889 he wrote:

. . . in the Frank Leslie I was very much interested in the article on Marie Bashkirtseff. She was a wonderful girl. I would like very much to read her diary. It would be especially interesting to an art student and one who would know more about human nature. Underneath her brilliant work one sees the careful study - the patient trying after truth that brought about such ease and brilliancy.²

In March of the following year, soon after he began reading Zola's L'Oeuvre, he purchased Bashkirtseff's two volume journal "in French of course," he noted.³ Her search for modern urban subject matter paralleled that of Zola's fictional Claude Lantier and anticipated the themes that would characterize the paintings of the Ashcan School. Henri's reading of Bashkirtseff has received scant attention by previous Henri scholars and her possible influence on him has been unexplored.

The diary of the Russian born Bashkirtseff was published in France in 1887, the year before Henri's arrival in Paris. It quickly became a best seller and spread through Europe as

well as the United States. In 1888 a writer in the periodical The Nineteenth Century proclaimed it "a book without parallel."⁴ French author Mathilde Blind, writing about Bashkirtseff in a book on the artist's mentor Jules Bastien-Lepage, wrote that "all the world has read her famous journal."⁵ Bashkirtseff was declared a true genius and she was written about and discussed by writers, artists, and psychologists alike. Everyone marveled at the self revelations of a woman living in a time of female repression, resignation, and intense domesticity. Bashkirtseff declared her own writings "very interesting as a human document" and summoning forth the approval of the premier French naturalist writers of her time, she added, "ask M. Zola, or M. de Goncourt or Maupassant."⁶

Bashkirtseff had left her native Russia in 1872 with her mother and siblings when her parents became estranged. They moved to Nice where the family, of minor nobility, enjoyed considerable luxury, traveling throughout Italy. Five years later they were living in Paris where Marie enrolled in the Académie Julian. There she studied briefly with Tony Robert-Fleury (with whom Henri would study) and Jules Bastien-Lepage, whose work was considered daringly realistic at the time. She succeeded in having several paintings exhibited at the Salon and produced a significant number of works despite her early death at the age of twenty-five from tuberculosis.

Henri read the Bashkirtseff journals concurrently with Zola's L'Oeuvre, making numerous references to their content in his diary. Unlike Zola's quasi-fictional L'Oeuvre, Bashkirtseff's journals were an actual contemporary account of an art student in Paris. "Marie Bashkirtseff is very interesting," Henri wrote, "and real in her day to day study."⁷ Her interest in contemporary urban subject matter and other commentary on the current state of French art strongly reflects Henri's developing anti-academicism.

Henri undoubtedly related to Bashkirtseff's enthusiastic dedication to pursuing a career as an artist. "Art! I imagine it as a great light away off in the distance," she exclaimed, "and I will forget everything else and press on with my eyes fixed upon that light." Like Henri, she also had "a real passion for books. I arrange them, count them, look at them; . . . that pile of old books can rejoice my heart." Her desire to "listen to the discourse of learned men . . . I want to see all together and to know all, to learn all" was also echoed by Henri's own desires to obtain a breadth of knowledge. Both Henri and Bashkirtseff were interested in the art work reproduced in the periodical La Vie Moderne. "When I see the drawings in the Vie Moderne," she wrote, "I turn red, and then pale, and wish, at the first stroke, to do as those do who have been drawing for ten years . . ."⁸

At times the journals proved difficult translating and

Henri admitted to fatigue. "When she philosophizes it's hard to read - my knowledge of french is yet too slim to get at philosophy fervently." Henri may have been referring to passages when Bashkirtseff expounded upon Kantian thought, yet he persevered, pouring through the volumes over a six-month period. Henri admired Bashkirtseff's self confidence, commenting "what a great girl she was - People say 'How she was stuck on herself' - no more than people are - almost everyone if they would only own it as she did . . . "

So much of Bashkirtseff's attitudes concerning art and the official academies resemble those later expounded by Henri and it is reasonable to assume she provided an early theoretical lens through which he gazed. Some of the discourse written about her, in fact, could have been written about Henri or other members of the Ashcan School. Mathilde Blind, who knew Bashkirtseff personally, wrote the following observation after visiting the artist in her studio:

As the eye rested on these portraits where the key-note of character had been so unmistakably struck, on these bits of city life in their shabbier aspects, on these Paris street children with faces so prematurely sharpened or saddened, you became aware that this artist was a naturalist . . . her chief object was to seize life . . .
¹⁰

On a trip to Spain in 1881, Bashkirtseff praised Velázquez and Ribera as true naturalists, two artists whom Henri also admired. While there, she raved over the chance to draw "gypsy types."¹¹ Henri, too, would later revel in doing

portraiture of exotic types whom he referred to as "my people," defining them as "people through whom dignity of life is manifest . . . who are in some ways expressing themselves naturally along the lines nature intended for them . . . the Indian at work . . . the Spanish gypsy moving back to the freedom of the hills . . . "12

Henri's admiration for Bashkirtseff undoubtedly extended beyond her feelings about art. He noted her "humain [sic] doctrine" in his journal.¹³ For Bashkirtseff, Hamerton, and Henri, nationalism was an issue of little consequence in terms of their identity as citizens or artists. "Country comes only after humanity," she wrote. "Distinctions between nations are, in fact, but shadows," she added.¹⁴ "Because we are saturated with life, because we are human," Henri later expressed, "our strongest motive is life, humanity."¹⁵

Bashkirtseff's outspoken criticism of the Salon jury may have also impressed Henri, who would later challenge the jury selection of the Academy of Design. Bashkirtseff recounted the occasion of entering the Salon of 1884. "Villevielle has told me that I did not receive a medal because of the fuss I made about last year's mention," she writes, "and because I spoke publicly of the committee as idiots. It is true that I did say that."¹⁶

Bashkirtseff was a well-respected member of the Union des Femmes Peintres et Sculpteurs and was also involved in

feminist politics. Henri's own interest in women's rights had been manifest early. In 1887, after attending a lecture in Philadelphia on women's rights entitled "Women of France and America," he wrote: "At last the age of reason, the kindling of a spark that will grow to enlighten the world. I will not miss any more lectures of that sort."¹⁷

Unlike some of his male contemporaries, Henri never displayed any evidence of condescension toward women artists.¹⁸ Perhaps reading Bashkirtseff further sensitized Henri to the limitations placed upon women artists by society. A most poignant entry in Bashkirtseff's journal related her frustration at being a female painter:

What I long for, is the liberty to ramble alone, to come and go . . . to ramble at night in the old streets . . . that is the liberty without which one can not become a true artist. Do you believe that we profit by what we see when accompanied, or when going to the Louvre, we must await our carriage, our chaperone, or our family? . . . That is one of the great reasons why there are no women artists.¹⁹

It is as if Henri took Bashkirtseff's plea to heart when he later made a point of pushing his female as well as male students into questionable parts of New York City. This fact did not go unnoticed by critics of the time. Izola Forrester observed in 1906 that under Henri's tutelage, "girls as well as men have taken rooms in tenements down on the lower east side" where they are "absorbing and studying . . . life as earnestly and enthusiastically as though they were in Latin

Quarter studios."²⁰

In his interview with Forrester, Henri seemed proud of the fact that the work of his female students was indistinguishable from that of his male students. In the article, he devoted considerable attention to one student, Bessie Marsh, explaining that after her move to the lower east side there appeared a certain "vigor" in her work. In her studio, Henri declared, "there are no signs of the eternal 'he and she.'" He continued:

The walls are covered with linen tacked on the wall by herself. Everywhere hang studies of east side types, women staggering along under loads of sweatshop work, of Italians with huge bundles of wood . . . women hanging out over fire escapes gossiping from court to court . . . men playing cards about a table in a backyard at night by the light of a candle. Strange work for a girl art student to be turning out.

Marsh, herself, is later quoted in the article, asserting that "Henri is perfectly right. Life is grand and virile and the only way to get at it is to go after it . . ." Henri commented on the work of another student Carl Springhorn whom he felt added "more virility" to his work after looking at "plain New York life." Henri added, "It is the same with all the students . . . Coleman, Bellows . . . and the girls too." Henri then described a depiction of "a fire engine coming full tilt along a lower east side street . . . painted by a girl . . ."²¹

These allusions to vigor and virility in art produced by

women contradict the notion in current art historical scholarship that such references were gender based, tied up with notions of masculinity, and thus reserved exclusively to describe art created by men. Vigorous painting has been described as a crusade by male artists at the time against what was perceived as the growing feminization of art. This realization thus brings into question the popular belief that the energetic painting style and sometimes gritty subject matter of Ashcan School painting were conscious efforts on the part of the artists to assert their manhood.²²

Henri's and Bashkirtseff's interest in vigorous painting had to do with the desire to achieve the sensation of real life in art brought about by an active search for subject matter and strength of vision. Commenting about the Salon of 1878 Bashkirtseff differentiated between her preferences for "Carolus Duran for life, and Bonnat for skill."²³ After visiting the Salon of 1879 she wrote:

I fear that I am going to utter an enormity, but you must acknowledge that we have not a single great artist. There is Bastien-Lepage; where are the rest? Plenty of knowledge, technique, and conventionality . . . There is nothing true, vibrating, soaring, nothing to take hold of you . . .²⁴

Her only praise, other than for the naturalist painter Jules Bastien-Lepage, was for a portrait by Léon Bonnat of Victor Hugo. The following year she commended Aimé Nicolas Morot's Good Samaritan because it is "simple, true, appropriate . . .

and nothing in it recalls the atrocious academic and conventional beauties." In 1883 she disliked most of what she saw at the Salon, calling Meissonier a "cunning trickster."²⁵ Like Bashkirtseff, Henri occasionally found aspects to admire in works by Carolus-Duran and Léon Bonnat and disliked Jean Louis Ernest Meissonier, once praising a figure study by the impressionist Paul-Albert Besnard because it "had no Meissonieresque detail."²⁶

Henri, like Bashkirtseff, had little good to say about art at the Salon. Salon art, he once declared, was "no where."²⁷ He praised the paintings at the Paris Exposition Universelle, particularly admiring works by naturalist painters Jean François Millet, Jean Baptiste Camille Corot and Charles Daubigny. Like Bashkirtseff he was drawn to the naturalism and anti-academicism of Jules Bastien-Lepage. In 1884 Bashkirtseff praised Bastien-Lepage's Joan of Arc, complaining that the critics do not consider it "high art because she is depicted as a peasant in her natural surroundings, and not with white hands and clad in armor." The artist further queried:

Would you prefer the execution of Lady Jane Grey or a Bajazet to the animated living glance of a little girl running along the street? . . . have you never had day dreams, which transported you into unknown worlds? If you have not, you will never comprehend Bastien-Lepage, and I advise you to purchase an "Aurora" of Bouguereau or an historical picture by Cabanal.²⁸

When Henri visited the Exposition Universelle

Internationale in the spring of 1889 he noted that of the hundreds of works on exhibition, his favorite painting was Bastien-Lepage's Joan of Arc. The following year he praised a painting by Henri Martin, comparing it to Bastien-Lepage's Joan of Arc. "It is not a picture one sees, is pleased with perhaps, and stops there," he wrote. "It is life - the great Human drama." Like Bashkirtseff, Henri also had misgivings about Bouguereau and did not allow himself to be dissuaded by his instructor's comments about his own leaning toward a naturalist aesthetic. "Bouguereau . . . said I was going the wrong way . . . He was especially earnest . . . but I am not convinced. I think I am nearer right than ever before." The following year he wrote to his family:

The style of the work of which Bouguereau is the leader is in an unhappy state with all this young school of more hardy realistic paintings . . . they want sentiment that is more genuine . . . less pretty finish and more truth . . .²⁹

Just as Henri struggled with his academy assignment to paint the Biblical narrative of Lot and his wife while reading Zola, he rebelled against having to paint a classical scene, "Homer Wandering," while reading Bashkirtseff's exuberant diary. "Not much sympathy with the subject," he wrote. "Gave up and read the Journal of Marie Bashkirtseff, found it very absorbing."³⁰

Bashkirtseff's aversion to the artificial in art was made clear in a journal entry recorded after she read Stendhal's

history of painting. She took issue with Stendhal's declaration that to paint grief "one ought to be well-posted in physiology." Conversely, she believed that artists should paint only what they know personally and have experienced, adding: "a painter who attempts to depict grief physiologically, without having seen it, understood it, felt it (literally), will never be anything but a cold dry artist."³¹ Henri would similarly state that "if you want to be a historical painter, let your history be of your own time, of what you can get to know personally - of manners and customs within your own experience."³²

Bashkirtseff had to put up with philistine criticism from the press, who deemed her choice of subject matter "ugly," a term that would later be applied to the works of Henri and the Ashcan School. The use of the word *ugly* to describe paintings of everyday life was widespread in the latter nineteenth century. Ugly was synonymous with the ordinary or dull. Bashkirtseff mentioned a critic in La Liberté who "detests my style of painting . . . confessing he could not understand how I, surrounded by luxury and refinement, could care for what was ugly."³³ She goes on to record that he thought her painting of street boys ugly, undoubtedly making reference to her work The Meeting, 1884.³⁴ (Fig. 12) In defense of her choice of subjects she writes:

I choose expressive faces . . . Where can you find the action? Where is the wild primitive liberty? Where is real expression? Well brought-up children are always more or less affected.³⁵

Bashkirtseff, in fact, used the word "ugly" to praise Manet. After viewing his works in 1884 at the Ecole des Beaux Arts she observed: "His subjects are almost always ugly . . . but they are always living."³⁶

Such an alliance of modern urban reality with a sense of "aliveness" was evident in early critiques of paintings by of the Ashcan School. The works of George Bellows and William Glackens, for example, were criticized for focusing on "ugly truths" of the city. Yet the reviewer wrote: "They err, perhaps, on the side of brutal frankness . . . but it is indubitably life . . . Ugliness has a tonic quality in their hands, because it is vigorous, not anaemic [sic] or debased."³⁷ Rebecca Zurier observed that "while the ringside crowds and street children [of Bellows' paintings] appear slightly grotesque they are also indisputably alive."³⁸

One French writer noted in 1886 that "the tendency of the younger school of French artists during the last fifteen years has been toward depicting the every-day life of our great cities and rural districts in its naked truth, and often in its intense ugliness . . ."³⁹ In 1890, Swedish playwright August Strindberg (1849-1912), published a defense of realism in the theater while living in France that has parallels in

the visual arts: "The Realists have been accused of seeking the ugly . . . we hate what is contrived . . . we like to call things by their name, and we believe that the present society will collapse, unless the most noble consensus, on which all societies rest, is restored: honesty itself."⁴⁰ While it is not known whether Henri ever read Strindberg, they both perceived ugliness as a guarantee of authenticity, an attribute of honesty and truth in art.

When German artist Max Lieberman (1847-1935) painted Woman Plucking Geese and Women Cleaning Vegetables in 1872 he was referred to as the "painter of dirt" and "apostle of ugliness." The term "apostle of ugliness" had previously been applied to the realist painter Gustave Courbet and was subsequently attached to the Eight. In an article entitled "'The Eight' -- Insurgent Realists" Sam Hunter remarked that the work of the Eight was greeted in the press with "the same vindictive glee that the artistic innovations in Europe had aroused, and such epithets were produced . . . 'the apostles of ugliness,' 'the revolutionary gang' . . ."⁴¹ One critic wrote that Henri and his proteges painted "the ugly, sordid or commonplace . . . they are often harsh, crude, and raw."⁴² Another remarked that Henri "does not fear the ugly . . ."⁴³ George Luks was hailed as a painter "who found excitement where weaker souls saw only ugliness."⁴⁴ Such sensational journalism was not invented by American journalists to attract

attention to the Eight but had legitimate precedents in the European press similarly used to describe realist painters.

Bashkirtseff's fondness for observing life outside the studio was reiterated often in her journals. She elaborated on the small human incidents that attracted her attention:

Have you ever noticed the streets and the passers-by? . . . What a drama one of those benches contains! The broken-down outcast with his shifting look, one arm thrown over the back of the bench . . . the woman with the child upon her lap . . . the grocer's boy, who is reading a cheap newspaper, the sleeping workman . . .⁴⁵

Describing one such experience as she left the atelier for the streets, she wrote: "It needs Zola to describe this exasperating, busy, disgusting crowd, running, bustling, with nose ahead and wandering eyes." In another entry she proclaimed: "Ah! How we who have read Balzac and read Zola enjoy our powers of observation!" She praised Balzac's realism and the fact that he wrote "without affectation."⁴⁶ Such comments must have struck a chord with Henri who was concurrently reading Zola and possibly Balzac as well.

Like Bashkirtseff, Henri recorded the exhilaration he felt when wandering the streets of Paris. On one particular "fete" day, when the streets were uncharacteristically quiet, he remarked on how much he missed the usual crowds and motion:

. . . all the stores are closed. This morning I missed the usual hurry of people over the bridge des Arts and on the narrow little street which cuts its way from the Louvre up to the Porte St. Denis in a diagonal through the blocks. That street . . . is always the scene of most active life filled to overflowing with the people .

. . Its really dramatic - squirming humanity.⁴⁷

"Oh, the street! Alas!" Bashkirtseff wrote. "I have the faculty to see, and I am still dazzled by all that I have seen - the attitudes, the gestures, life taken in the act of living, true living . . ."⁴⁸ She further explained: " . . . what charms me in painting are the life, the modernness, and the movements of the things one sees."⁴⁹ Such exuberance for the urban scene is reminiscent of Zola's character Charles Lantier in L'Oeuvre when he expounds upon the thrill of observing "life as it passes in the streets." Bashkirtseff also described "the things we see by chance" as "open windows on the lives of people . . . it has a definite, palpitating interest!"⁵⁰ This notion of metaphorically peering through open windows on the lives of people took literal form in such paintings of the Ashcan School such as John Sloan's Hairdresser's Window, 1907, (Fig. 13) and Three A.M., 1909, (Fig.14).

Bashkirtseff's journals repeatedly mentioned her interest in the urban spectacle as fitting subject matter for art. Revealing her disdain for academic art, and at the same time evoking images that might have attracted the Ashcan painters, she exclaimed:

How interesting the streets are! The faces of the passers-by, the peculiarities of each one . . . to endow all these with life, or rather, to picture the life of each one! We paint, with the aid of Parisian models, a combat of Roman gladiators, which we have never seen.

Why not paint the strugglers of Paris from the life?⁵¹

In another entry she declared:

The street! . . . we drove by the avenues which surround the Arc de Triomphe [sic], it was toward half-past 6 of a summer evening; there were porters, children running, waiters, workmen, and women . . . What admirable subjects for pictures! . . . in the every-day life of the streets are to be found capital subjects.⁵²

Helen Appleton Read, a student and early biographer of Henri, recalled the importance he placed on seeking subject matter in everyday life. "Advising his pupils to go to the life about them for subject," she wrote " . . . was heady theory to the youth of the first decade of this century, brought up on the T-square method of instruction and to whom subject had been more or less a peg on which to hang technique."⁵³

Henri explained this aspect of his teaching approach years later during an interview:

We have a fight with the student to make him understand that he must get outside himself, must put himself in sympathetic touch with the life around him; if he would reproduce it . . . The class has gone out into New York and discovered it, live in touch with it, studied it face to face, as one of the boys said, soaked in it, until they know it now, and can picture it.⁵⁴

Bashkirtseff recorded another instance when she was captivated by seemingly insignificant vignettes:

I . . . made several sketches of things I have seen - bench in the street with several little girls talking and playing together . . . then a café table with two men whose characteristic attitudes are engraved on my memory . . . the mistress of the café is lounging in the doorway . . . and a young girl . . . leaning against her

counter."⁵⁵

This comment suggests Bashkirtseff's reliance on memory to help secure in her mind the fleeting imagery of her observations. This anti-academic method of working is linked to Baudelaire's painter of modern life who "never ceases to drink it [the fantastic reality of life] in; his eyes and memory are full of it." Baudelaire attributed the "living force" of the artist's "translation of external life" to a reliance on memory.⁵⁶

As a teacher, Henri became convinced of the importance of memory in distilling the imagery pertinent to the artist. In a letter to an unidentified artist, he wrote:

I am particularly glad to hear that you have been painting from memory. I am quite certain your best work will come from dealing with memories which have stuck after what is unessential to you in experiences has dropped away . . . I know one beautiful street scene . . . that I have always felt was done in a trance of memories undisturbed by the material presences . . .⁵⁷

Bashkirtseff made it clear in her journal that it was the existence of the lower class that most interested her as a painter. She loved the bourgeois atmosphere of the Latin Quarter. Recalling the sentiments of Hamerton and other artists whom Henri admired such as Millet and Courbet, she wrote:

. . . a public bench upon an outer boulevard has a very different character from a bench of the Champs Elysee . . . In the latter case there is no subject for a picture, -no soul, no dramatic feeling . . . But what poetry there is in the outcast . . . There the man is real . . .⁵⁸

Her attraction to such subjects was also articulated by Mathilde Blind who wrote:

Her subjects . . . are usually taken from the everyday life. . . as you meet it round every street corner . . . The faces of weary people sitting on public benches . . . had hints and suggestions of meaning which she missed in the sleek features of the swells whom she met in the drawing rooms of her friends . . . instead of painting the pretty, neat, carefully brushed children . . . she chose . . . the unkempt ragamuffins running wild in the streets. They cannot be called beautiful . . . but they are interesting, vivid, quick with life.⁵⁹

Bashkirtseff described her interest in depicting ordinary children of the laboring class:

I work in the garden, where I have a good view of the grass and trees in the Parc Monceau. I am doing a street boy, twelve years old, in blouse and apron, seated on a bench, and reading an illustrated paper, with his empty basket beside him. One sees this continually at the park and in the streets about here.⁶⁰

Henri student Helen Appleton Read revealed his similar emphasis on depicting the lower social stratus:

Slum subjects were preferable to the more smiling aspects of life, for somehow life seemed to flow richer and freer in the Bowery bars and flop houses than at Sherry's or the Waldorf, and the mother who wrapped her baby in a tattered shawl seemed a more poignant symbol of maternity than her more fortunate sisters who could afford to buy a layette at the Lilliputian Bazaar.⁶¹

The artist John Sloan, much influenced by Henri, held a comparable view. In 1908 he wrote:

Thinking how necessary it is for an artist of any creative sort to go among common people - not waste his time among his fellows, for it must be from the other class - not creators, nor Bohemians nor dilettantes that he will get his knowledge of life.⁶²

George Luks also shared this attitude, having once declared that "A child of the slums will make a better painting than in a drawing room lady gone over by a beauty shop."⁶³ When George Bellows left Ohio and came under Henri's tutelage in New York in 1904 his choice of subject matter almost immediately changed to include such ungentle subject matter as Kids, 1906, a depiction of streetwise youngsters of the working class. (Fig. 15)

While such attitudes might seem patronizing, many realist writers and artists of the late nineteenth century tended to romanticize the lower classes, believing that their unpretentious existence brought them closer to the raw aspects of life. This attitude grew from the general disdain among French artists for anything connected with the bourgeois. The influential novelist and critic Jules Champfleury (pseudonym, 1821-1889) honored sincerity in art above all other qualities and believed that the more humble ranks of society exhibited more sincerity in their emotions, behavior, and speech than those of a higher rank.

The attraction on the part of artists and writers to the supposed genuineness of character and unfeigned behavior among the lower social strata might explain, in part, the optimism in much of the Ashcan School's depictions of the lower class. A joyfulness permeates George Luks' The Spielers, 1905, a spirited depiction of two smiling slum children cavorting in

dance. (Fig.16) In Scrubwomen, Astor Library, 1910-11, Sloan portrayed a robust woman on her hands and knees who, undaunted by her menial task, returns the smile of another scrubwoman going up the stairs with bucket and rags in hand. (Fig. 16) As John Sloan walked past tenements on the Lower east side of Manhattan he noted "healthy-faced children, solid-legged . . . Happiness rather than misery in the whole life. Fifth Avenue faces are unhappy in comparison."⁶⁴

Henri and Tolstoy

After reading the much talked about journals of Marie Bashkirtseff, Henri was drawn to the writings of another Russian, Leo Tolstoy. As soon as Tolstoy's novels were translated into French in 1885 they were quickly devoured by the reading public. In October of 1890 Henri was reading Tolstoy's Kreutzer Sonata which had been quite differently received in the United States than the journals of the much admired Russian Marie Bashkirtseff.

Kreutzer Sonata, Henri explained in his diary, was being "made fun of in America" and has been called "a mass of trash."⁶⁵ Henri's parents were unable to send the book since it had been banned in the mail by the United States postal authorities. Henri secured his own copy, presumably in Paris where the author had become quite popular. In a letter to his parents he wrote the following statement perhaps with Thomas

Paine's Age of Reason fresh on his mind:

. . . the book which I asked you to send me - the Tolstoi [sic] is one of the principal ones to which pious John Wanamaker had decided too immoral for the weak American mind so I suppose you can't send it. What a state America is getting into! What were the principals of our freedom! Are we to be tied down to what John Wanamaker thinks is richousness [sic]! Or are we to be free to think on religion as our own judgements dictate to us - are we to be prevented from hearing the opinions on our social questions, that the great thinkers have given out . . . if the whole nation could only travel and read and see everything - good and bad it would dispense many cramped illusions. . .⁶⁶

The Kreutzer Sonata, published in 1889, caused more public furor than any of Tolstoy's previous works and became hotly debated everywhere. The tale of infidelity and murder was considered contraband literature even in France when Henri was reading it and remained so until the following year in 1891. The book had actually been banned by Tsar Aleksander III and priests denounced the writer in their sermons.

Tolstoy claimed that he was told when friends met, instead of saying, "How do you do" they would ask "Have you read the Kreutzer Sonata?"⁶⁷ Tolstoy's daughter Aleksandra recorded that as soon as the book came off the press it was "read everywhere with incredible passion."⁶⁸ As an advocate of freedom of expression, Henri may very well have been attracted to the controversy surrounding the shocking realism of the novel yet he may have also been drawn to its stimulating content. Russian playwright Anton Chekhov (1860-1904) wrote that "apart from its artistic merits, which are in

places amazing, we should be grateful for the story alone, for it stimulates thought extremely."⁶⁹

The genesis for the book came from a story divulged by a stranger on a train to a friend of Tolstoy. The tale involved the man's unfaithful wife and in 1887 Tolstoy began writing a story about adultery. The following year Beethoven's "Kreutzer Sonata" was performed at the Tolstoy family home for a group of friends including the man who had told him the train story. On that occasion Tolstoy decided to utilize the sonata in his novel's plot. He incorporated the piece not only into his text but it became the novel's title.

Like the story which inspired it, the entire narrative of the book takes place on a train. The dialogue is almost exclusively an account by the husband of the events and emotions which led him to murder his wife whom he suspected was having an affair with her music teacher. The murder occurred when the wife and her lover were playing Beethoven's sonata together. The book has been attributed to Tolstoy's moral and religious existential crisis that led to his ultimate abandonment of literary fiction.

Tolstoy's writing was challenging for Henri who was not willing to take Kreutzer Sonata at face value. "I only wish I would get my head all around his whole idea - but since he writes mainly to be read between the lines I find that too much to do at once." Even though he found the book hard to

follow he wrote that since "finishing this morning I concluded that I had read a good book." He discussed the subject matter as "terrible, horrible, naked but I can see nothing in it profane." Notwithstanding the complexity of the issues in the novel, Henri saw through the sensational story line to Tolstoy's underlying themes, observing that "all that he [Tolstoy] proposes touches directly on our social state."⁷⁰

Henri defended Tolstoy's straightforward approach to his subject, asserting that "undelicate things are represented as undelicate." Upon completing the story in several days Henri referred to the subject matter as "timely." Above all, he praised the book's lack of idealization:

What I have read is a wonderful plea for virtue - realistic storytelling . . . It takes off the gold fringe and the pretty facings and lays bare some pretty hard facts - facts are good . . . it goes further and touches the inequalities, incompleteness, inconsistencies of humans - Tolstoy knows that the feelings humane are not definable - are abstract. What is love - how much - when? ---I suppose if I could say what I mean I would be a writer . . .⁷¹

Henri was drawn to Tolstoy's novel because "it has the twang of fact - It's in our own language - right up to the times."⁷² He admired the same qualities in Tolstoy that he admired in the naturalist writers and painters - not only the lack of romantic idealization ("gold fringe") but the contemporaneity and the humanitarian aspects of their writing and imagery. Zola had declared: "I would like to lay humanity out on a white page, see all, know all, tell all."⁷³ Henri's

student Rockwell Kent wrote of his teacher's "dominating interest" in humanity and "emphasis on human values."⁷⁴ Stuart Davis credited Henri with developing in his students "a critical sense toward social values."⁷⁵ Henri frequently expressed his humanitarian concerns epitomized by his statement that "the very essential quality of all really great men is their intense humanity."⁷⁶

In a letter home, Henri mentioned a passage in the appendix of Kreutze Sonata that particularly affected him. The excerpt described two methods of giving someone directions to a destination. The first was highly detailed and specific, the latter was abstract and involved being guided by the "inaccessible sun or the stars." Henri was interested in Tolstoy's explanation of the two different approaches to finding one's way in life:

The former of these methods is that of transitory religions with their detailed prescriptions and instructions. The latter is that of the inner consciousness of eternal, incorruptible truth. In the former case certain actions are described as having to be performed or avoided; in the latter the goal only is pointed out - a goal which forever unattainable is recognized by our inner consciousness as the true one, and communicates the right direction to our life work.⁷⁷

Tolstoy was referring to spiritual development, complaining that religion was so clogged with "detailed prescriptions and instructions as to hide from sight the goal." Yet the passage contains the perfect metaphor for what would become Henri's approach to learning and teaching art - an avoidance of overly

prescribed methodology and technique and an insistence on self-direction and natural evolution of artistic sensibilities.

Tolstoy's circle of friends included a group of artists known as the Peredizhniki who were committed to realism in art and who had declared their independence from the Russian Academy of Arts in 1870. Like the Eight they were not united by stylistic similarities but by their desire to exhibit outside the bureaucratic control of an official agency.

The Peredizhniki did share certain philosophical attitudes regarding the noble purposes of art, characterized by Tolstoy's belief that he had a moral responsibility as a writer to go beyond objective factual recording in his stories. One of the original leaders of the group, Ivan Kramskoi, had told the painter Ilya Repin as a young man:

If you want to serve society, you should know and understand it in all its concerns, all its phenomena . . . [A painting] will be merely a photograph from nature, an étude, unless it is illuminated by the artist's philosophical outlook, and is the bearer of a profound idea of life."⁷⁸

This statement recalls Henri's pronouncement that an artist should exhibit an "unusual power of thinking" and be "capable of profound contemplation."⁷⁹

Tolstoy's treatise What Is Art?, published in 1896, was undoubtedly influenced by his association with the Peredizhniki who shared his interests in art as a reflection

of real life. In turn, Henri came to share many similar concerns. It is highly probable that Henri became familiar with this text during his subsequent residency in France in the latter 1890s. Henri's acquaintance with Tolstoy's aesthetic ideologies can be substantiated by the fact that he owned a book entitled Artists and Thinkers in which Tolstoy's views on art are summarized.

In that book, author William Flacius summarized the basic tenets of Tolstoy's philosophy of art, as outlined in What Is Art? Flacius wrote that for Tolstoy "an artist must first understand life in all its elemental force." He also explained that behind Tolstoy's art criticisms lies "a definite and thoughtful theory of art and its relation to life."⁸⁰ Tolstoy's idea of artistic genius is described as one who has "intense strenuous attention" necessary to achieve a fresh view. It was perhaps this notion of strenuousness as concentrated vision that is connected to Henri and not the aggressive masculinity of Roosevelt's call for a strenuous life.

What Is Art?, a culmination of fifteen years of thought and study, was an attempt by Tolstoy to reconcile his views on art with his burgeoning moral philosophy. Vincent Tomas has suggested that when Tolstoy asked the question, What Is Art? he was really asking "what noble purpose are the arts fit to serve in the life of man?"⁸¹ For Tolstoy this was the only

valid inquiry concerning art since he deemed questions of taste (good verses bad art) to be subjective and arbitrary. Because art was a human activity, Tolstoy reasoned, it cannot exist for its own sake. In the essay he defined his topic as follows:

Art is a human activity consisting of this, that one man consciously by means of certain external signs, hands on to others feelings he has lived through . . . it is a means of union among men joining them together in the same feelings, and indispensable for the life and progress towards well-being of individuals and humanity.⁸²

Henri espoused very similar ideals concerning the artist and society. In The Art Spirit he stated:

What is the relationship of the artist to the community? What good does a man's art do? . . . The true artist regards his work as a means of talking with men, of saying his say to himself and to others . . . Art in the community has a subtle, unconscious, refining influence.⁸³

Henri shared Tolstoy's interest in the humanizing potential of art and for this very reason could never personally adopt an abstract style of painting. It was this notion of art as communication that Rockwell Kent referred to when he wrote that for Henri "Art was a means of speech and not of picture making." Kent described Henri's view of art as "freedom with responsibility . . . to discover and exalt its therapeutic values . . ."⁸⁴

Tolstoy also believed that "no school can evoke feelings in a man, and still less can it teach him how to manifest it in the one particular manner natural to him alone."⁸⁵

Similarly, Henri would later write that "all education must be self-education . . . a school should be an offering of opportunity, not a direction . . ." ⁸⁶ Evoking Emerson's organicism, Tolstoy stated that art should be generated spontaneously from the inner self, that it should avoid imitation and too much detail which can attack the senses or absorb the mind. Soon after reading Tolstoy, Henri wrote in a letter home that the artist "must work after the manner his own mind and nature leads him . . . Ancient and Modern and new schools will teach him but to last we must belong to none of them - bind by no creed." ⁸⁷

Much of What Is Art? was directed at French symbolist art and what Tolstoy deemed its "premeditated obscurity." ⁸⁸ He rejected what he perceived as the dehumanizing tendencies of much modern art, believing that its unintelligibility and exclusivity were a movement toward a divorcement of art from life. After visiting the Salon des Indépendants of 1890, a jury-free exhibition of avant-garde art that included Neoimpressionist and Symbolist painting, Henri was struck somewhat adversely by the avant-garde painting and described one artist as painting like a "maniac." Henri, however, was attracted to Van Gogh, but the attraction was more to his apparent humanity than for his striking color and style. "What a study of human nature a talk with him would be," Henri remarked. ⁸⁹

Tolstoy's attitude toward avant garde art, like that of Henri when he visited the Salon des Indépendants, was neither simple-minded nor merely reactionary. Rather, their resistance to art that appeared divorced from life stemmed from an intense humanitarianism. Tolstoy described this aspect of his philosophy when he wrote that "an art product is only a genuine art product when it brings a new feeling into the current of human life."⁹⁰ "Life and art cannot be disassociated," similarly declared Henri. "We are all wrapped up in life, in human feelings . . . "⁹¹ Years later, Henri remarked that his hopefulness for American art lay in the fact that there appeared to be a "tendency of art . . . to attain a power of human sympathy and understanding . . . to become truly social."⁹² This search for the human side of art had been articulated decades earlier by Emile Zola. "What touches and enchants me among human creations and works of art," he wrote in 1867, "is rediscovering in each an artist-a brother who shows me a new side of nature with all the power or gentleness of his temperament . . . this work . . . tells me a story of a heart and a body . . . "⁹³

Tolstoy and Henri were both, however, committed to the notion of artistic autonomy. "One of the chief conditions of artistic creation," Tolstoy wrote, "is the complete freedom of the artist from every kind of preconceived demand."⁹⁴ This

attitude might explain why Henri and such fellow members of the Ashcan School as John Sloan refused to acknowledge political overtones in their paintings and even their illustrations. Such an outlook caused a rift between the artists and the editor of The Masses, Art Young, who complained that the dissenting artists were opposed to any official policy and wanted

to run pictures of ash cans and girls hitching up their skirts in Horatio Street regardless of ideas and without title . . . For my part, I do not care to be connected with a publication that does not try to point out the way out of a sordid materialist world. And it looks unreasonable to me for artists who delight in portraying sordid and bourgeois ugliness to object to a policy.'⁹⁵

This insistence on the part of Tolstoy and Henri that art be both free from all restrictions and accessible in style and subject to the masses might seem a contradiction. Yet in French political thought of the nineteenth century there was an acknowledged distinction between **individuality** and **individualism**. The former stood for human dignity and fraternity and the latter for mean egoism. The concept of individuality held humanitarian connotations as expressed by the socialist Pierre Leroux who asserted "We believe in individuality, personality, liberty; but we also believe in society."⁹⁶ In other words, Tolstoy and Henri believed that artists had a responsibility to produce work that was "truly social" and added "new feeling to the current of human life."

In What Is Art? Tolstoy reiterated the feelings of Hamerton, Zola, and Bashkirtseff in terms of valuing the sincere existence of the lower class. "The range of feelings experienced by the powerful and rich . . . is far poorer, more limited," he wrote, "and more insignificant than the range of feelings natural to working people."⁹⁷ Henri student Helen Appleton Read observed that Henri's "Tolstoyan point of view, which advocated all life as subject matter for art, brought in its wake the belief that the working classes and the slums were nearer the realities and, therefore, more fitting subjects for art."⁹⁸

Tolstoy looked forward to a time when art would be created by all members of a community who felt the need for such an endeavor. He imagined a time when:

. . . the artists producing art will also not be, as now, merely a few people selected from a small sector of the nation . . . artistic activity will then be accessible to all men. . . all the artists of genius now hidden among the masses will become producers of art."⁹⁹

Tolstoy did not approve of an art of the genteel but a universal art of the people. Great art must be accessible to everyone. "For the majority of working people - art . . . is strange in its very nature," he wrote, "transmuting as it does the feelings of people far removed from those conditions of laborious life which are natural to the great body of humanity."¹⁰⁰

This non-elitist attitude toward art was certainly shared

by Henri. His book The Art Spirit begins with the following declaration: "Art when really understood is the province of every human being." He further declared that "to some degree every human being is an artist."¹⁰¹ His students at the Ferrer School in New York came from all walks of life. In a diary entry years after his involvement there he delighted in a visit by a former student who had gone on to work on a barge.¹⁰² In an article for The Touchstone magazine in 1917, Henri acknowledged the artist in everyone:

We must get over the idea that the study of the fine arts is to be relegated to the few . . . it is up to each individual(to) be as much artist as he can . . . a searcher for the underlying principles of nature, for the true basis of order and construction as they are evidenced in nature.

Further text from that article illuminates Henri's continued respect for Tolstoy's emphasis on the importance of artists and their non-materialist influence on society:

I cannot believe with the present war in evidence that our social institutions have the same fundamental basis (as nature) . . . I believe the bloodless revolution in Russia was brought about by artists, Tolstoy, Kropotkin, Gorky and other creative spirits who by their works first spread to the awakened students and finally to the very peasants themselves, the spirit of nature-order.¹⁰³

Tolstoy, along with Hamerton, Emerson, Bashkirtseff, Zola, and others, provided Henri during his formative years with a conceptual framework which helped him articulate his own opinions and theories. As Henri prepared to return to the United States in May of 1891, he became nostalgic about his

impending departure from the associations that had enriched his experience in France. He recorded:

There have been great talks . . . I have learned from the others much that I did not know . . . We talk art, life, and chaff . . . the theory of painting and the theory of life and of all good things are the same.¹⁰⁴

Years later, in his treatise The Art Spirit, Henri recalled that among the students at the Académie Julian "there were those who searched each other out and formed little groups which met independently of the school, and with art as the central interest talked, and developed ideas about everything under the sun."¹⁰⁵ Such a remark underscores the significance of the many undocumentable influences which impacted Henri in France - those which came via the discussions held among friends and associates at the academies and cafés.

In the same letter Henri also lamented the fact that he would miss the many opportunities in Paris to view a breadth of contemporary art. He even wrote nostalgically about the Salon exhibitions which he had occasionally maligned and the small independent shows he enjoyed:

What a loss it will be when back home to miss these great Salons - to say nothing of the constant little exhibitions that go on always in the dealers galleries or in the art clubs.¹⁰⁶

In April of 1891 Henri expounded upon the great attraction Paris held for him. In a letter to his parents he wrote:

You ask me if I think I will want to come back to Paris again. I will want to come back again very badly . . . Paris is the one place to study and I shall want to be a student in its full sense for many years yet . . . to study in Paris is to be up to the times, ancient and modern . . . We have the Louvre with its Ancients, the Luxembourg with the men of this century and then better than all we have continual exhibitions by the men of today . . . It is art everywhere.¹⁰⁷

Indeed, several months later when he returned to the United States he longed for the artistic environment of Paris. A success in Philadelphia is not much," he wrote to his parents. "Art is of the least consequence here - no wonder Philadelphia artists . . . begin to wonder if their lives are not wasted. How different in Paris where the artist is the Great Man."¹⁰⁸

Notes

1. In 1885, French critic Ernest Dupuy declared in an article entitled "La Grande Maîtres de la littérature russe," that Russian literature was superior to that of the French, with the exception of Alphonse Daudet. In an article the following year entitled "La Mode russe" that appeared in a popular journal, the author declared that "Everyone knows that . . . any man of taste and education is obliged to exclaim, no sooner than the first compliments have been exchanged: 'Ah, my dear sir, are you reading the Russians?'" See F.W.J. Hemmings, The Russian Novel in France, 1884-1914 (Oxford University Press, 1950), 227.

2. Henri letter to parents, 28 December 1889, BRBL.

3. Henri diary, 10 March 1890, AAA, SI.

4. William Gladstone, "Journal de Marie Bashkirtseff," The Nineteenth Century (1888), cited in Dormer Creston, The Life of Marie Bashkirtseff (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, Inc., 1937), 12.

5. André Theuriet, Jules Bastien-Lepage and His Art, A Memoir (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1892), 154.

6. Marie Bashkirtseff, Journal of Marie Bashkirtseff trans. A.D. Hall and G.B. Heckel (Chicago and New York: Rand, McNally & Company, Publishers, 1890), 9.

7. Henri diary, 23 October 1890, AAA, SI.

8. Bashkirtseff, 328, 531, 399, 621, respectively.

9. Henri diary, 13 July and 21 May 1890, AAA, SI.

10. Theuriet, Jules Bastien-Lepage and His Art, 149-150.

11. Ibid., 535.

12. Henri, The Art Spirit, 143. The entire "My People" essay, originally published in Craftsman, XXVII (February 1915), 459-469, is reproduced in its entirety in The Art

Spirit, pp. 143-152.

13. Henri diary, 28 March 1890, AAA, SI.

14. Bashkirtseff, 535.

15. Henri, The Art Spirit, 111.

16. Bashkirtseff, 795.

17. Henri dairy, 7 February 1887, AAA, SI.

18. Many of Henri's own contemporaries exhibited highly prejudiced attitudes against women artists. The art critic George Moore, whose writings were admired by Henri, declared in 1893: "Women do things more easily than men, but they do not penetrate below the surface, and if they attempt to do so the attempt is but a clumsy masquerade . . . women have created nothing, they have carried the art of men across their fans charmingly, with exquisite taste, delicacy, and subtlety of feeling, and they have hideously and most mournfully parodied the art of men." See George Moore, Modern Painting (London: Walter Scott, Ltd., 1893), 227.

William Merritt Chase, who left the New York School of Art as a result of Henri's growing popularity, went on to teach at the Arts Students League. He responded defensively about his departure and very possibly intended to denigrate Henri's popularity among his many female students when he remarked: "My classes at the League are large, and, what seems to me more flattering and hopeful for the future of art, there are more men in my classes than I have ever had before. Art may be a fad with women, but unmistakably it is a serious consideration with men who have the strength and courage to fight for it." See "William M. Chase Forced Out of N.Y. Art School: Triumph for the 'New Movement' Led By Robert Henri," New York American (20 November 1907), p. 3.

19. Bashkirtseff, 416.

20. Forrester, 6.

21. Ibid.

22. Critic Charles Wisner Barrell, in reference to Henri's students, wrote "His men lose nothing of their native dignity and masculinity by translation through the Henri paint." Charles Wisner Barrell, "Robert Henri-Revolutionary," The Independent 64 (25 June 1908): 1427.

Bennard B. Perlman made reference to the students at the New York School of Art as "Henri's he-men." Perlman, The Immortal Eight, 89. Critic Robert Hughes recently wrote that the "masculine realism of Winslow Homer inspired all the Ashcan artists." Robert Hughes, "The Epic of the City," Time (19 February 1996): 62. For discussions of the notion of virility and masculinity in turn of the century American art see Bruce Robertson, Reckoning with Winslow Homer, 63, 63, 66, 180, (n.12), Sarah Burns, Inventing the Modern Artist (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 116, 117, 163, and T.J. Jackson Lears, No Place of Grace, Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), 103, 104.

23. Bashkirtseff, 378.

24. Ibid., 438.

25. Ibid., 484, 739. Morot was a Prix de Rome winner and one of the better known French pupils of Alexandre Cabanel. Meissonier (1815-1891), whose realist style is characterized by fastidiously rendered detail, earned his reputation under the July Monarchy. His paintings of eighteenth century French subject matter were largely patronized by the haute bourgeoisie.

26. Henri diary, 2 March 1891, AAA, SI.

27. Henri diary, 12 May 1889, AAA, SI.

28. Bashkirtseff, 770, 771.

29. Henri letter to parents, 9 May 1891, BRBL.

30. Henri letter to parents, 20 March 1890, BRBL.

31. Bashkirtseff, 739; Stendhal is the pseudonym of French novelist and essayist Marie-Henri Beyle, 1783-1842; the book Bashkirtseff makes reference to was probably Stendhal's History of Italian Painting.

32. Henri, The Art Spirit, 218.

33. Bashkirtseff, 756.

34. Bashkirtseff's best known painting, A Meeting, was purchased in 1884 by the Musée du Luxembourg, the new museum of modern art in Paris. Several engravings and lithographs were made after it. This acquisition by a government museum

of a painting depicting street urchins "met in council at a street corner" and others like it signaled the official acceptance of the naturalist aesthetic in France during the late nineteenth century. The following decade one of Henri's own paintings, La Neige, (Fig. 49) joined Bashkirtseff's work in that museum collection.

35. Bashkirtseff, 757.

36. Ibid., 765.

37. "Much Individuality Seen This Year in the Central Gallery at the Watercolor Exhibition," New York Times (9 May 1909), sec. 10, p. 6.

38. Zurier, "The Making of Six New York Artists," in Metropolitan Lives, 83.

39. Sophia Beale, "French Art," Connoisseur I (Fall 1886), 23, cited in William H. Gerds, Lasting Impressions, American Painters in France, 1865-1915 (Evanston, Illinois: Terra Foundation for the Arts, 1992), 19.

40. August Strindberg, "Realismus," Freie Bühne für modernes Leben, I (Berlin, 1890), 1243, cited in Weisberg, The European Realist Tradition, 141.

41. For the reference to Lieberman see Max Liebermann in seiner Zeit (Nationalgalerie Berlin, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, 1979), cited in Weisberg, The European Realist Tradition, 140; for the reference to the Eight see Sam Hunter, "'The Eight' - - Insurgent Realists," Art in America (Fall 1956), 58. The epithets appeared in "Eight Independent Painters to Give an Exhibition of Their Own Next Winter," New York Sun (May 15, 1907): 5.

42. James Gibbons Huneker, "Eight Painters," 8.

43. "Robert Henri and Others," 21 January 1907, unidentified clipping, Henri scrapbooks, Reel 887, AAA, SI.

44. J. Nilsen Laurvik, "The Winter Exhibition of the National Academy of Design," International Studio 33 (February 1908): CXLII.

45. Bashkirtseff, 810.

46. Ibid., 462, 620, 404, respectively.

47. Henri letter to parents, 5 April 1890, BRBL.
48. Bashkirtseff, 646.
49. Ibid., 652.
50. Ibid., 646, 652, 647, respectively.
51. Ibid., 801.
52. Ibid., 640.
53. Helen Appleton Read, Robert Henri (New York: Whitney Museum of Art, 1931), 10.
54. Izola Forrester, "New York's Art Anarchists," 6.
55. Bashkirtseff, 647.
56. Baudelaire, The Painter of Modern Life, 15,16.
57. Henri, The Art Spirit, 170.
58. Bashkirtseff, 813.
59. Theuriet, 167,168, 171.
60. Bashkirtseff, 646.
61. Helen Appleton Read, "Introduction," New York Realists, 1900-1914, exh. cat. (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1937), n.p.
62. Bruce St. John, ed. John Sloan's New York Scene, 185.
63. Philadelphia Ledger (30 October 1933), cited in Perlman, The Immortal Eight, 78.
64. St. John, 13.
65. Henri diary, 11 October 1890, AAA, SI.
66. Henri letter to parents, 18 October 1890, BRBL.
John Wanamaker (1838-1922), a successful American businessman, declared Tolstoy's book immoral to read during his tenure as postmaster general from 1889-1993.
67. Ernest J. Simmons, Introduction to Tolstoy's Writings (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968),

157.

68. David McDuff, "Introduction," to Leo Tolstoy, The Kreutzer Sonata and Other Stories (London: Penguin Books, 1965), 17.

69. Simmons, 158.

70. Henri letter to parents, 18 October 1890, BRBL.

71. Henri diary, 11 October 1890, AAA, SI.

72. Henri letter to parents, 18 October 1890, BRBL.

73. Armand Lanoux, Bonjour Monsieur Zola (Paris: Hachette, 1954), 136, 37.

74. Rockwell Kent, It's Me O Lord, 81, 82.

75. Stuart Davis, in "Autobiography," New York: American Artists Group Monograph, 6, 1945, n.p., cited in Diane Kelder, "Stuart Davis and Modernism: An Overview," in Lowrey Stokes Sims, Stuart Davis, American Painter (New York: Harry Abrams, Inc, 1991), 18.

76. Henri, The Art Spirit, 93. Henri evoked Dickens in a compliment he paid to a work of art in terms of its inherent humanity. "I like it," he said, "its Dickens-like interest in the people and their life, the point of view of a . . . respecter of humanity. I meant a great deal when I said it was Dicken's-like. I didn't mean his errors but his sympathy with human beings." Alice Klauber, "The Teachings of Robert Henri," unpublished manuscript, cited in Perlman, 147.

77. Henri letter to parents, 18 October 1890, BRBL.

78. Ilya Repin, Dalekor blizkoe (Moscow, 1953), 165, 166, cited in Gabriel Weisberg, The European Realist Tradition, 189.

79. Henri, The Art Spirit, 93, 17.

80. William Flacius, Artists and Thinkers (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1916), 143.

81. Vincent Tomas, "Introduction," in Leo Tolstoy, What is Art?, trans. Almyer Maude (Indianapolis & New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1960), n.p.

82. Simmons, 121; and Leo Tolstoy, What Is Art?, 51.

83. Henri, The Art Spirit, 116, 117. Ironically, the conservative critic Thomas Craven criticized Henri's love of beauty as "hedonistic, a purely sensorial pastime." He then quoted Tolstoy's philosophy of art, defining it as admirable by comparison to that of Henri, making reference to the Russian writer's belief that art "should be a stimulant to spiritual enlightenment, a means to communicate from man to man certain states of the soul; unidentified clipping, Henri papers, BRBL.

84. Rockwell Kent, 82.

85. Tolstoy, What Is Art?, 115.

86. Henri, The Art Spirit, 120, 121.

87. Henri letter to parents, 25 April 1891, BRBL.

88. Tolstoy, What Is Art?, 73.

89. Henri letter to parents, 29 March 1890, BRBL.

90. Tolstoy, What Is Art?, 72.

91. Henri, The Art Spirit, 111.

92. Robert Henri, "Have We Grown Up in Art?" The Literary Digest (28 November 1925), 25.

93. Cited in Louis Emile Edmond Duranty, "The New Painting," in The New Painting, Impressionism 1874-1886, 47.

94. Tolstoy, What Is Art?, 120.

95. Sims, Stuart Davis, American Painter, 36.

96. Roger Soltau, French Political Thought in the Nineteenth Century (New York: Russell & Russell, 1959), 233.

97. Tolstoy, What Is Art?, 73.

98. Helen Appleton Read, Robert Henri, 11.

99. Tolstoy, What Is Art?, 174.

100. Ibid., 70.

101. Henri, The Art Spirit, 1, 67.

102. Henri diary, 25 March 1926, AAA, SI.
103. Robert Henri, "The 'Big Exhibition,' the Artist and the Public" The Touchstone 1 (June 1917): 174.
104. Henri letter to parents, 9 May 1891, BRBL.
105. Henri, The Art Spirit, 105.
106. Henri letter to parents, 9 May 1891, BRBL.
107. Henri letter to parents, 18 April 1891, BRBL.
108. Henri letter to parents, 6 March 1892, BRBL.

CHAPTER 4

HENRI AND THE WRITINGS OF WALT WHITMAN AND GEORGE MOORE

In September of 1891, after three years abroad, Henri returned home to live once again in Philadelphia. He continued his studies at the Pennsylvania Academy, taking courses in portraiture and life drawing under his former teachers Anshutz, Kelly, and now Robert Vonnoh (1858-1933). He postponed a return trip to France in order to accept his first formal teaching job at the Women's School of Design in Philadelphia in May of 1892.¹ This time period also marked the beginning of his friendships with John Sloan, William Glackens, Everett Shinn, and George Luks who would later comprise the group known as the Ashcan School.

However, it was not so much Philadelphia that influenced Henri's continued growth as an artist and theoretician and his evolution as mentor to the young newspaper artists who gathered around him. Despite his distance from Europe, Henri remained immersed in cosmopolitan thought through the writings of a British art critic, a Russian anarchist (who will be discussed in Chapter 5), and, ironically, an American poet whose ideologies and poetic form were profoundly connected to France.

Henri and Walt Whitman: Fellow Americans/Fellow Francophiles

Robert Henri first met aspiring artist John Sloan at a studio party thrown by Charles Grafly in December of 1892 for Pennsylvania Academy alumni and students.² During this first meeting of what would become a lifelong friendship and professional association, Henri and Sloan spoke of their shared interest in Walt Whitman who had passed away earlier that year. Soon thereafter Sloan presented Henri with the most recent (and final) edition of Leaves of Grass which replaced the 1884 volume already in Henri's possession. (Whitman revised and added poems to the book up until the time of his death.) It is not known exactly when Henri first read Whitman but his interest in the poet certainly preceded his return to Philadelphia in 1891. Given Whitman's popularity in France, he was undoubtedly a topic of conversation between Henri and his friends in Paris.

Whitman gradually supplanted Emerson as a major source of influence for Henri. This change of allegiance was not unique to Henri. By the early twentieth century Emerson's popularity was usurped by Whitman who personified qualities which appealed to a more modern sensibility - energy, emotions, physicality, and democratic interests. Although a fan of Emerson himself, Whitman attempted to explain this phenomenon, writing rather mercilessly that Emerson lacked passion and imagination and embodied a "cold and bloodless

intellectuality."³ Whitman celebrated the body and the sensations of being alive unlike Emerson who emphasized nature, and thus humankind, as the inferior incarnation of God. Whitman's consciousness of self was extremely important to Henri who believed in the cultivation of the senses as a critical component of artistic creation.

Scholars have paid considerable attention to the significant impact Whitman's poetry and persona had on Henri.⁴ His personal library contained a 1905 biography of the poet, A Life of Walt Whitman by the English scholar Henry Bryan Binns. The anarchist Emma Goldman recorded in her autobiography that in 1911 Henri told her "I love Walt, and I follow everything that is written about him."⁵ Henri admired the self revelatory aspects of Whitman's poetry. He even declared that the "confessions" of Jean Jacques Rousseau and Marie Bashkirtseff were "thin by comparison."⁶

In the Art Spirit Henri evoked Whitman's name more often than any other writer or artist with the exception of Rembrandt. Therein he also quoted a passage from Leaves of Grass in which Whitman declared that his writing should not be valued and studied merely as "literary performance" but as a "piece out of a man's life."⁷ Such a sentiment parallels Henri's conclusion that "the object of painting a picture is not to make a picture." Rather, art is a "trace," a "footprint," a "by-product" of an artist's state of being.⁸

This study adds several dimensions to the Henri/Whitman discourse. Henri was reading and discussing Whitman in Paris at precisely the time when the poet was enjoying great acclaim in France, and they both exhibited a lifelong affinity for French culture and politics. Such factors bring Henri's attraction to Whitman into an arena of cosmopolitanism. This study also identifies other parallels between the two men that have not previously been mentioned such as their attraction to France's liberal moral code, their connections to the French symbolist movement, and the Whitmanesque prose found in Henri's writings.

Whitman and his democratic libertarian ideals received a more sympathetic response in France than in the United States beginning with the establishment of the Third Republic in the early 1870s. The French were the first to recognize the socio-political implications of the poet's work and he remained far more appreciated in France than in the United States for many years. Articles on Whitman appeared in French periodicals as early as 1861. In 1888, just months before Henri's arrival in Paris, French Symbolist critic Gabriel Sarrazin published an article on Whitman's literary achievement in Leaves of Grass which initiated a "Whitman cult" in France.⁹ The poet's popularity would not peak in America for another quarter of a century.

Numerous articles on Whitman appeared in French journals

after Sarrazin's article and they proliferated in number between April and June of 1892, when Henri was in Paris. Whitman was undoubtedly a topic of discussion among art circles. It is probable that in Paris, where Whitman was becoming an increasingly important cultural influence, Henri's admiration for the American poet became enlarged and cemented.

Whitman, like Henri, was far more cosmopolitan than traditional scholarship has indicated. Albert Boime, writing about Whitman's internationalism, stated that scholars have acknowledged his reliance on foreign sources but tended to view this dependence "mainly as grist for the national mill."¹⁰

Boime further argued that Whitman was not the quintessential American writer - that he has been far too contextualized in terms of nationality (not unlike Henri). Whitman was not an "unread American rough," explained Betsy Erkkila, but an avid reader of French literature and philosophy of the Enlightenment and Romantic periods and an admirer of the works of Voltaire and Rousseau. "He was not only literate," wrote the French critic Sarrazin, "but he had read all that we ourselves had read."¹¹

Even though Whitman never set foot in France, he deeply sympathized with French politics, celebrating French revolutionary history numerous times in his poetry.¹² Paris was, for Whitman, the capital of democracy in the Old World that had given refuge to Thomas Paine. France symbolized his

hopes for liberty and brotherhood throughout all of society. In "O Star of France" Whitman expressed his empathy for the revolutionary spirit of France:

The struggle and the daring, rage divine
for liberty,
Of aspirations toward the far ideal,
enthusiast's dreams of brotherhood . . . ¹³

Henri's political sympathies for France were evident when he participated in the publication of a book entitled For France in 1917. Its contents were provided by authors and artists who wished to express a collective American sentiment toward France the year of America's entrance into World War I. While other artists submitted innocuous landscapes, Henri's contributed Night, Fourteenth of July, c.1895-97, a work he had painted years earlier commemorating Bastille Day.¹⁴ (Fig. 18) It was placed in the volume along with such essays as Frank H. Simonds' article "On Bastille Day." "Her equality is our equality, her ideals are our ideals," Simonds wrote. "Her Revolution and ours have permeated and penetrated the whole structure of our respective national lives."¹⁵ Henri's representation has a personal vantage point - that of someone in the midst of the people in the street. Like Simmond's discourse, the work implies feelings of solidarity with the French as they celebrated a crucial event in the history of their political freedom.

Along with celebrating the political history of France,

both Whitman and Henri defended the country's liberal moral code. Whitman wrote "I am aware of what our puritans think of the French . . . the main difference between us and the French in sex directions is their frankness as opposed to our hypocrisy."¹⁶ Henri, similarly put off by American prudishness, once reminisced about a costume ball he had attended in Paris where two girls came as Adam and Eve "practically nude as were many others. 'Morals' are so much a matter of custom that maybe people will eventually find it out."¹⁷ The more puritan Emerson, by comparison, had actually suggested to Whitman that he eliminate one poem from the 1860 edition of Leaves of Grass which he found offensive.¹⁸

Whitman and Henri both acknowledged the potential for art to enhance society. Recalling Henri's desires for an "art spirit" to enter governments and abolish greed and vices of political aggression, Whitman wrote "the very stability of good government and the well being of society rest on no surer foundation than when it is cemented by these ties that bind all men in one bond of sentiment and felling kindled by the admiration excited within them at the glories of art."¹⁹ These sentiments echo Tolstoy's belief that in art as "a means of union among men joining them together in the same feelings . . ."²⁰ Both Whitman and Henri also stressed the artist's social obligations. Whitman believed in the artist as "a kind of new priest and prophet who has the orphic mission of

inspiring and guiding humanity in its march toward a democratic future."²¹ Henri believed that the work of an artist is "of vital importance to the world . . ." that it is the pronouncement of "our real beliefs, aspirations and hopes as a people . . ." ²²

Recalling the viewpoints expressed by Hamerton, Bashkirtseff, and others whom Henri read, Whitman likewise voiced his attraction to "the common people." He denoted the "freshness and candor of their physiognomy - the picturesque looseness of their carriage . . . their deathless attachment to freedom."²³ Both Whitman and Henri were great admirers of Millet's themes drawn from the lower classes. Whitman found Millet's "commonplace" subject matter "vivid and powerful."²⁴ Henri praised the painter for turning away from such subject matter as goddesses and war.

Whitman grappled with the notion of the subjective soul of man dwelling in an objective world, an ideological split that has parallels in the aesthetic theories of Baudelaire, Zola, and Henri. Baudelaire stated that the purpose of modern art was "to create a suggestive magic that contains, at one and the same time, the object and subject, the world exterior to the artist and the artist."²⁵ Betsy Erkkila's observation that "Whitman's pose as an observer, reporter, and participant in the life of his times was inextricably linked with the spiritual flight of his fluid and expanding soul" recalls

Zola's occasional "leap into the stars from the springboard of exact observation" (see Chapter 2, p.99).

Whitman even made reference to the positivist debate in Leaves of Grass. In "Song of Myself" Whitman applauds the merits of empiricism yet proclaims he cannot wholly embrace such a prescribed philosophy and approach to life which he feels negates the intangible aspects of life.²⁶ While reading Whitman's Leaves of Grass in France, Henri was concurrently exposed to the forementioned empirical/metaphysical dialectic in La Vie Moderne. (see Chapter 2, pp. 109-112)

Just as Whitman's poetry (as well as the writings of Baudelaire and Zola) is at once mimetic and transcendental, Henri's art theories embraced the temporal and spiritual worlds. Of the positivist side he wrote of the "sketch hunter . . . drifting about among people, in and out of the city . . ." who "moves through life as he finds it, not passing negligently the things he loves, but stopping to know them . . ." Yet he also counseled his students to "reveal the spirit you have about the thing, not the materials you are going to paint."²⁷ Whitman's fusion of matter and spirit in Leaves of Grass held great significance for modern art and literature. Henri's similar dual interests endeared him to students of both realist and modernist sensibilities.

Whitman's interest in matter and spirit connects him with the Symbolist movement in France, particularly a faction known

as the naturists who sought vital contact with the natural, human, and social world. The French, in fact, have credited Whitman's poetry with injecting a constructive and affirmative impulse into the decadent tone of the early Symbolist movement. The naturists rejected the notion of art for art's sake and represented a movement from art back to life.

Naturism was characterized by a vitalism that called for action, spontaneity, and the direct expression of feeling in keeping with the quickened pace of modern life. The primary theorist of the *école naturaliste*, the poet Maurice Le Blond, explained: "It is by embracing the universe that we want to rejuvenate and magnify our individual self . . . We seek healthy and sublime emotion. We laugh at art for art's sake." Henri expressed similar sentiments, writing that "In moments of great happiness we seem to be with the universe . . ." ²⁸ Like the naturists, he also eschewed the aestheticism of the art for art's sake philosophy.

Whitman's exuberant poetry included an optimistic celebration of urban life, as did the writings of the naturists. Thus the absence of biting social commentary in the imagery of the Ashcan School exhibited the artists' proclivity for the upbeat mood of turn of the century vitalism rather than demonstrating blind idealism in the face of urban ills or simply the "American tendency toward euphemism and optimism." ²⁹

As Matthew Baigell has observed "Whitman must have also touched the same nerve as the popular French philosopher Henri Bergson . . . Whitman's sense of energy, his willingness . . . to pour himself into other people, and . . . to trust his intuitions, links him to Bergson's concept of the *élan vital*."³⁰ (Henri and the vitalism of Bergson will be explored in Chapter IV)

Many avant-garde writers and artists were inspired by Whitman's poetic free verse structure. Yet it was Whitman's personal integrity and the exuberant tone of his work rather than its form that had the most effect on Henri. Whitman's exhilarated attitude toward life is reflected in Henri's belief that "the pursuit of happiness is a great activity. One must be open and alive. All real works of art look as though they were done in joy."³¹

There are even hints of Whitmanesque phraseology in The Art Spirit, as when Henri writes of "transmitting through your free body and hand" while painting. Henri made numerous references to the song within us, recalling Whitman's "Song of Myself" and his use of the image of "singing" as a metaphor for joyous celebration of life. "It is the desire to express the song within us," Henri explained, ". . . which motivates the masters of all art."³² Whitman is also evoked in Henri's description of an artist who "paints like a man going over the

top of a hill, singing" or his advice to his students to "pretend you are dancing or singing a picture." In an article of 1912, a critic suggested, consciously or not, Whitman's "Song of the Open Road" when he wrote that the "ivory tower of Bougeureau was not for Henri. Rather, he preferred the broad democracy of the open road . . . "33

Whitman, like Henri, admired Tolstoy for the humanitarian aspects of his writing. "Tolstoy . . . who is not French, yet human with Hugo," Whitman wrote, ". . . their great purpose is human: their purpose is communication, understanding . . ."34 Henri also shared with Whitman (and Tolstoy) the belief that the main purpose of art was not to create a beautiful object but to communicate with one's fellow beings.

One might wonder how Henri (and Whitman) can be aligned at the same time with French Symbolism and Tolstoy who took a decidedly anti-symbolist position in his treatise What is Art?. Such a paradoxical posture can perhaps be explained by Joan Ungersma Halperin's assessment of the French critic and painter Félix Fénéon, a contemporary of Henri's who exhibited similar theoretical inconsistencies. "How can one live a philosophy of integrity in a tumultuous, evolving society?" Halperin asked. Echoing Peter Conn's assessment of the ideological split of the American mind at the turn of the century (see Introduction, p.13), Halperin further described Fénéon in a manner that could readily be applied to Henri:

"Fénéon took a bipolar or even a tripolar stance, a logical emblem of the multivalent, modern world, where people live with complex and even contradictory value systems."³⁵

Henri and the Writings of George Moore

In December of 1893 Henri received as a Christmas gift a copy of George Moore's ruminations on contemporary art entitled Modern Painting. The Irish born Moore (1852-1933), poet, novelist, and art critic, had taken art classes as a young man at the Kensington Museum in London. "There, of course, I learned nothing," Moore wrote, "and, from a merely art point of view, I had much better have continued my sketches in the streets . . . "³⁶ Moore's past was much like that of Henri's former instructor at the Pennsylvania Academy, Thomas Hovenden. Both men were from Ireland, had studied in England at the Kensington Museum, and both had been studying in Paris in the 1870s. Yet Moore's attitudes toward art took a decidedly more liberal turn than those of Hovenden. In Paris Moore became personally acquainted with the critic and champion of impressionist painting Louis Edmond Duranty, naturalist writers Gustave Flaubert and Emile Zola, many of the impressionist painters, and the symbolist poet Stephen Mallarmé.

When Moore arrived in Paris in 1873 at the age of twenty-one he quickly became disillusioned with academic training.

He described his experience at the Académie Julian, expressing much the same attitude Henri soon shared:

We were introduced to the nude model, propped up on boxes, or standing in a convention pose . . . We were told to count the number of heads, and to mark them off on our paper; then with the plumb-line we were shown how to determine the sway of the figure . . . This was the way, and the only way, to learn to draw, we were assured; we needed not to think of anything but the studio model; the world in the fields and the streets, that living world full of passionate color and joyous movement, was but an illusive temptation . . .³⁷

Moore's affinity for the transcendent realism of Honoré Balzac and for the symbolist writers Mallarmé and Verlaine might have contributed to his anti-positivist feelings about the purpose of art. He complained that much of the contemporary art was "mildly realistic" and "not the winged realism of Balzac." The "winged realism" of Balzac which he admired is akin not only to Zola's "leap into the stars from the springboard of exact observation" but finds a correlation in Henri's admonition to "paint the flying spirit of the bird [rather] than its feathers."³⁸ Evoking an aspect of Symbolism, Moore also wrote:

Schopenhauer was right; we do not want the thing, but the idea of the thing. The thing itself is worthless . . . The symbol, that is the great artistic question . . .³⁹

Henri was very interested in the "idea" of material things, writing of the "mistaken idea that the subject of a painting is the object painted."⁴⁰ The notion of transcendence through aesthetic experience was also evoked by Henri

throughout The Art Spirit and will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 6.

In 1888 Moore published his autobiographical Confessions of a Young Man, a defiance of aesthetic orthodoxy and cry for naturalism. Although Henri does not mention this particular book, he may very well have been aware of it since it was published the year he arrived in France. It was a popular book and was reprinted in 1889 and later in 1904, 1917, and 1918.⁴¹ In Confessions of a Young Man Moore recorded that "the idea of a new art . . . that should . . . embrace modern life in its entirety . . . filled me with wonder," he wrote, "and I stood dumb before the vastness of the conception."⁴² His statement was one more of the many passionate references to depicting modern life that Henri had encountered in his readings. His words recall Marie Bashkirtseff when she wrote of being "dazzled" by the "attitudes, the gestures, life taken in the act of living" to be found in the street. (see Chapter 3, p.140) Moore's exhilaration also brings to mind Claude Lantier in Zola's L'Oeuvre when he declares that his "hands are tingling to get at it - the whole of modern life." (see Chapter 2, p.96)

In Confessions Moore wrote of his skepticism for the emphasis in academic training on teaching the "grammar of art." Written the same year as W.J. Stillman's derogatory article on French academies, and reiterating the sentiments of

Bashkirtseff, Moore's book likewise condemned their inability to teach anything beyond the mere mechanics of art:

Education is fatal to anyone with a spark of artistic feeling . . . Is it impossible to teach people . . . that there is no such thing as correct drawing, and that if drawing were correct it would be wrong? Art is not mathematics, it is individuality. It does not matter how badly you paint, so long as you don't paint like other people . . . The great studio of Julian's is a sphinx, and all the poor folk that go there for artistic education are devoured. After two years they all paint and draw alike . . .⁴³

This negative outlook toward "systemised [sic] art education" was reiterated in Moore's Modern Painting. Finding it antithetical to the very essence of art, he wrote:

The general mind of our century is with education and organisation [sic] of every kind . . . Art, that poor little gipsy [sic] whose very condition of existence is freedom, who owns no code of laws, who evades all regulations, who groups himself under no standard . . . finds himself forced into a uniform . . .⁴⁴

Henri's growing distaste for rigid art education was certainly reinforced by Moore's negative feelings about the repetitive and painstaking aspects of learning the craft of painting. "Oh! Those long and dreary years of learning to draw!" Henri wrote. "How can a student after the drudgery of it, look at a man or an antique statue with any other emotion than a plumbob estimate of how many lengths of head he has."⁴⁵ Years later Henri made the following notation in the margin of book he owned, Charles Woodbury's Painting and the Personal Equation. In a chapter on technique, he inscribed: "All that part of training that is a drudgery is non-productive, where

the interest is alive there is no drudgery - There are difficulties - pain perhaps - but there is no drudgery."⁴⁶

In Confessions of a Young Man, Moore also stated his quest for naturalism in art, writing that "an art that is not redolent of the spirit of its age is an artificial flower." For this reason, he saw, as did Henri (and Whitman) merit in art that embodied a "national character." Moore's emphasis on the natural development of aesthetic form may have provided yet another articulation for Henri of the organic principle of art he had encountered in the writings of Emerson and Taine. Moore also made reference to organicism in art when he asserted that "the separation of the method of expression from the idea to be expressed is the sure sign of decadence."⁴⁷ Henri likewise stated that a specific technique "belongs to the idea" ⁴⁸

In Modern Painting Moore criticized the tendency of students in the academies to imitate their teachers, writing that the time has come for the artist "to do what he likes. He already suspects that the mere imitation of M.M. Bouguereau and Lefebvre will bring him neither fame nor money . . . but he is like a man whose limbs have been kept too long in splints - they are frozen."⁴⁹ His reiteration of the diatribes of Stillman, Hamerton, and Bashkirtseff's against the stronghold of the French academy and its instructors must

certainly have reinforced Henri's growing sense of artistic independence.

In a subsequent chapter, "Artistic Education in France and England" Moore wrote despairingly of Beaux Arts training in which the artist is "taught to measure the model with his pencil . . . how to draw by the masses rather than by the character . . . to produce at the end of two years' hard labour a measured, angular, constipated drawing . . . " His use of the term "constipated drawing" resulting from academia is consistent with his statement in Confessions that "Art is not nature. Art is nature digested . . . art is sublime excrement," a somewhat coarser version of Zola's art as a "corner of nature seen through a temperament."⁵⁰

Moore also criticized the Royal Academy in England for creating false standards in the public mind when an "ordinary visitor thinks a picture very bad, and finds R.A. or A. after the painter's name, he concludes that he must be mistaken." Moore further castigated academic titles and prestige when he inquired:

Why should not every artist go into the market without title or masquerade that blinds the public to the value of what he has to see? I would turn art adrift, titleless, R.A.-less, out into the street and field, where, under the light of his original stars, the impassioned vagrant might dream once more . . .⁵¹

Henri would similarly condemn juries and awards, backing up his opinion with his first hand knowledge that "practically

every artist who today stands glory to French art was rejected and repudiated by the committees and juries." Regarding the awarding of prizes, Henri declared:

To award prizes is to attempt to control the course of another man's work. It is a bid to have him do what you will approve . . . It is an effort to stop evolution, to hold things back to the plane of your judgment.

As usual, Henri then brought the topic of art back into the realm of life, adding that the bestowing of awards "is a check on a great adventure of human life."⁵²

Moore asserted that art of a "national character" could only be 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."⁵³ An ironic comment coming from a British expatriate living in France but a similar irony existed within Henri. He never saw any contradiction in the fact that after living abroad for years he could write that the flowering of American art demanded "deep roots, stretching far down into the soil of the nation." Such thinking can be partially linked to the pervasive influence of the theories of Hippolyte Taine (see Chapter 2, p.92 and n.82). Yet such ideas also dealt with a belief in art based on authentic experience. Henri reiterated Moore's reference to an artist's saturation in the spirit of the land:

. . . before art is possible to a land, the men who

become the artists must feel within themselves the need of expressing the virile ideas of their country . . . they must possess that patriotism of soul which causes the real genius . . . to vindicate the beauty of his own environment . . . and put into their work all the strength of body and soul.⁵⁴

In Modern Painting, Moore praised the artists Puvis de Chavannes, Millet, Degas, and declared his great admiration for Manet. Henri was a great admirer of not only Millet but Puvis de Chavannes and Manet. Moore explained that as an art student at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts students were taught "to consider Manet an absurd person or else an épateur who, not being able to paint like M. Gérôme, determined to astonish." Moore praised Manet for seeing the visible world of Paris "truly, frankly, and fearlessly." Having personally visited Manet's studio and observed him painting, Moore was struck with his lack of method, describing his painting style as "pure instinct." Again evoking the notion of organicism, Moore wrote of Manet that "never was an artist's inner nature in more direct conformity with his work."⁵⁵

In a chapter in Modern Painting entitled "The Failure of the Nineteenth Century" Moore elaborated on his distaste for academic art education which he first expounded upon in Confessions. He lamented the fact that academic painters of his age have lived in libraries rather than studios and that academy catalogues contain extracts from the Bible, Shakespeare, Goethe, and Dante. Moore also blamed what he saw

as the decline of art in France (as well as England and Germany) on the importance placed on subject matter. Again, taking an anti-positivist stance, Moore maintained: "Great art dreams, imagines, sees, feels, expresses - never reasons."⁵⁶

Moore had high praise for Whistler, writing that "more than any other man Mr. Whistler has helped purge art of the vice of subject and belief that the mission of art is to copy nature."⁵⁷ Henri does not appear to have been influenced by Whistler until after he read Moore's Modern Painting and was back in France for the second extended period of time. There in 1895, partially through the influence of his friend, the cosmopolitan Canadian painter James Wilson Morrice, he began to adopt certain Whistlerian affects in his painting. (see Chapter 6, "Henri and James Wilson Morrice: The Influence of the Nabis and Whistler")

Moore wrote of "exalted individualism" in the preface of the 1904 edition of Confessions of a Young Man. Such a sentiment was embellished by Whitman who admonished his readers to "re-examine all you have been told at school or church or in any book, dismiss whatever insults your own soul . . ."⁵⁸ Both men, along with Emerson, anticipated the notion of autonomy that runs throughout Henri's writings. "We must only paint what is important to us," he wrote, "must not respond to outside demands."⁵⁹ It is a significant fact that at the same time Henri was reading Whitman and Moore, he began

studying the philosophy of the Russian anarchist Mikhail Bakunin. This may seem an odd alliance of authors until one considers the prevalence of anarchist thought in **both** political and artistic circles of fin-de-siècle France, circles which often overlapped and intersected and did so within Henri's experience in Paris.

Notes

1. The School of Design, founded in 1842, was established to "give women an opportunity to gain thorough and systematic instruction in practical design as applied to manufactures." Emphasis was on the industrial arts and included classes in china painting, designing carpets, silks, and wallpaper. At the time of Henri's arrival the fine arts received equal representation. "The Philadelphia School of Design for Women," announcement, 1892-93, p. 7, cited in Bennard B. Perlman, Robert Henri, His Life and Art, 24.

2. Sloan had enrolled in the Pennsylvania Academy earlier that year where Grafly had since become a teacher.

3. Walt Whitman, "Emerson's Books (The Shadow of Them)," cited in Matthew Baigell, "Whitman and Early Twentieth Century Art," Mickle Street Review 12 (Camden, N.J.: Walt Whitman Association, 1990): 101. Other more objective reasons for Whitman's growing popularity exist as well. Whitman's celebration of self was interpreted as a celebration of country during the rise of cultural nationalism in the first few decades of the twentieth century. To say Whitman was a fan of Emerson is perhaps an understatement. The well respected Emerson's public praise of Leaves of Grass was largely responsible for its getting published.

4. See Joseph J. Kwiatt, "Robert Henri and the Emerson Whitman Tradition" and Matthew Baigell, "Walt Whitman and Early Twentieth Century American Art, in Walt Whitman and the Visual Arts, Geoffrey M. Sill and Roberta K. Tarbell, eds. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 121-141.

Kwiatt identifies several factors of Whitman's life that influenced Henri, particularly Whitman's artistic and intellectual independence and the fact that his work was an honest reflection of his own life and thoughts. Kwiatt also cites Henri and Whitman's similar interests in helping to create a national art and their commitment to the integral relationship of art to life.

5. Emma Goldman, Living My Life (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1931; reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), 96.
6. Henri, The Art Spirit, 85.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., 159.
9. Gabriel Sarrazin, "Poètes modernes de l'Amérique-Walt Whitman," Nouvelle Revue 52 (May 1888), 164-184, cited in Erkkila, 92-95. Articles on Whitman had appeared in French journals as early as 1861.
10. Albert Boime, "Courbet and Whitman: A Case Study in International Rebellion," Mickle Street Review 12 (Camden, N.J.: Walt Whitman Association, 1990): 68.
11. Gabriel Sarrazin, 165, cited in Erkkila, 93.
12. One of his earliest free verse poems, "Resurgemous" was partially inspired by the revolution in France of 1848 when Louis Phillippe was dethroned and the second French Republic declared. In "O Star of France" he expressed his personal identification with the French Revolution. In yet another poem "France, The 18th Year of these States," he defended the bloodshed of the Reign of Terror as just retribution for years of oppression. As late in his life as 1889 he wrote a poem in honor of the Paris Exposition, "Bravo, Paris Exposition" in which he acknowledges his philosophical debts to France. See Erkkila, 9,10.
13. Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass: Comprehensive Readers Edition, ed. Harold Blodgett and Sculley Bradley (New York, 1965), quoted in Erkkila, 9.
14. Other paintings reproduced in the book included William Glackens In the Bois and Ernest Lawson's The Road. Henri painted at least two other works depicting Bastille Day, Les illuminations, Bastille (Santa Barbara Museum of Art) and The Illumination - Fourteenth of July, Boulevard Saint Michel, Paris, current location unknown.
15. Charles Hanson Towne, ed. For France, forward by Theodore Roosevelt. (New York: Doubleday, Page, & Company, 1917), 295,296. The Bastille was a French prison fortress which became a symbol of royal tyranny. Since its construction in 1370, citizens could be imprisoned there

without accusation or trial. At the outbreak of the French Revolution of 1789, it was attacked and captured by a mob assisted by sympathetic royal troops. Two days later it was destroyed. Bastille Day, celebrated in France every July 14, commemorates the capture and destruction of this symbol of political oppression.

16. Horace Traubel, With Walt Whitman in Camden vol 4, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1953), 223, cited in Roger Asselineau, "When Walt Whitman Was a Parisian", Walt Whitman of Mickle Street, A Centennial Collection, ed. Geoffrey M. Sill (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1994), 271.

17. unidentified clipping, 5 March 1926, Henri Srapbooks, Reel 887, AAA, SI.

18. The poem was "Children of Adam." See Erkkila, Walt Whitman Among the French, 7.

19. David S. Reynolds, Walt Whitman, A Cultural Biography (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 286.

20. Tolstoy, What Is Art?, 51.

21. Erkkila, 25.

22. Henri, "Progress in Our National Art," 392,403.

23. Whitman, Leaves of Grass, 6.

24. Horace Traubel, With Walt Whitman in Camden I: 63, quoted in Laura Meixner, "'The Best of Democracy,' Walt Whitman, Jean-François Millet, and Popular Culture in Post-Civil War America," Walt Whitman and the Visual Arts, 39.

25. See Charles Baudelaire, "L'Art romantique," in Oeuvres complètes, II, 119, cited in Erkkila, 56.

26. Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass (New York: Viking Penguin Inc., 1959), 47. The passages reads:

"Hurrah for positivist science!
Long live exact demonstration!
Fetch stonecrop and mix it with cedar and branches of lilac;
This is the lexicographer or chemist . . . this made a
grammar of the old cartouches,
These mariners put the ship through dangerous unknown seas,
This is the geologist, and this works with the scalpel, and

this is a mathematician.

Gentlemen I receive you, and attach and clasp hands with you,
The facts are useful and real . . . they are not my dwelling
. . . I enter by them to an area of dwelling.
I am less the remainder of property or qualities, and more
the remainder of life . . .

27. Henri, The Art Spirit, 17, 265.

28. Henri, The Art Spirit, 50.

29. 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), 13.

30. Matthew Baigell, "Early Twentieth Century American Art," 125.

31. Henri, The Art Spirit, 265.

32. Henri, The Art Spirit, 72, 108, 45, respectively.

33. The quote continues: "He preferred the democracy of the open road where one could rub elbows with the descendants of the soldiers and gypsies of Velasquez, the picturesque beggars and market folks of Rembrandt, or pass harvest fields where toiled Millet's somber peasants, or country inns, from whose windows laughed the ruddy barmaids of Franz Hals." See "Robert Henri, An Apostle of Artistic Individuality: 'His Critics Call Him an Artistic Anarchist,'" Current Literature LII (April 1912): 464.

34. Horace Traubel, With Walt Whitman in Camden vol. 3 (New York: Mitchell Kennerly, 1914), 360, cited in Roger Asselineau, "When Walt Whitman Was a Parisian," 271.

35. Joan Ungersma Halperin, Félix Fénéon, Aesthete and Anarchist in Fin-de-Siecle Paris (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), 6.

36. George Moore, Confessions of a Young Man, ed., Susan Dick (Montreal and London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1972), 52.

37. George Moore, Impressions and Opinions (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891), 199, 200.

38. Henri, The Art Spirit, 265.

39. Moore, Confessions, 147.

40. Henri, The Art Spirit, 128.

41. Henri's acquaintance with Moore's writings beyond Modern Painting is evident in The Art Spirit, 47,48, in which he describes a fictional story by Moore.

42. Moore, Confessions, 74.

43. Ibid., 100,101.

44. Moore, Modern Painting, 131.

45. Henri, The Art Spirit, 80.

46. Charles H. Woodbury, Painting and the Personal Equation (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1919), 43. A copy of this book is housed in the Robert Henri Library, National Arts Club, New York.

47. Moore, Confessions, 164, 96.

48. Henri, "Progress in Our National Art," 392.

49. Moore, Modern Painting, 62.

50. Ibid., 61, 105.

51. Moore, Modern Painting, 99, 133.

52. Henri, The Art Spirit, 139.

53. Moore, Modern Painting, 213,214.

54. Henri, "Progress in Our National Art," 388.

55. Moore, Modern Painting, 38, 41, 31, respectively.

56. Moore, Modern Painting, 96.

57. Ibid., 24.

58. Whitman, Leaves of Grass, 11.

59. Henri, The Art Spirit, 51.

PART II
MIXING POLITICS, PHILOSOPHY, AND PAINTING

CHAPTER 5

THE CULT OF INDIVIDUALISM: HENRI AND ANARCHISM

He [Henri] was in fact an anarchist in his conception of art and its relation to life.

Emma Goldman¹

Was Henri an anarchist? A woman who had her portrait painted by him concluded the following:

To Henri life is his art. That's what made him go to the Ferrer School and awaken talent and even genius where no one else would have seen anything to awaken . . . His greatest worth is his sense of freedom . . . he is really an anarchist though he does not label himself one.²

Henri's apparent unwillingness to give himself a political label did not mean he refused to identify with a particular ideology. At one point in his life Henri described himself as a "sympathetic socialist," believing its doctrine was an "intermediate for greater freedom of the individual," a phrase which implies anarchism.³ John Sloan recorded that "Henri was an anarchist and had no sympathy with my devotion to socialism and the time it took away from my painting."⁴ Even Sloan, who openly acknowledged his socialist ties, recorded in his diary, "I am of no party. I'm for change - for the operating knife when a party rots in power."⁵

Henri's reticence to openly align himself with a particular creed extended to other artists whom he admired and

in whom he recognized political affiliations. "Millet was a socialist," he declared, "though he would not have called himself such," explaining further that in his "atmosphere, in his colors, in his sentiment, one feels the social movement of the proletariat." He also described Rodin as "an anarchist, though he does not call himself so." This was evident, Henri explained, in Rodin's scrutiny and review of "all laws."⁶ Students of Henri also acknowledged his interests in social aspects of artists he admired. Stuart Davis, for example, spoke of his teacher's interest in Goya who:

besides being a great painter was a thinking and a political man who made a lot of savage comments on the times that he lived in. Well, that was part of Henri's interests. Henri's admiration for Goya included this intellectual part of Goya that was politically and socially critical and alive.⁷

Like most everything else about Robert Henri, his philosophical anarchism or so called "religion of individuality" has been described as "thoroughly American."⁸ It is true that America has a history of anarchist thinkers and activists and that Henri participated in certain anarchist affairs in the United States. However, as anarchist scholar Paul Avrich has noted "[Henri's] interest in anarchism was aroused during his student days in Paris, when the movement was at the height of its influence."⁹ French anarchist ideology and other political issues affected the way in which Henri viewed the role of the artist in society and propelled

his rejection of academicism in favor of a more spontaneous and independent approach to art. His exposure to the anarchist and general political milieu of fin-de-siecle Paris is critical to review in order to more fully understand his commitment to aesthetic autonomy and rejection of institutional authority.

Of further significance is the extension of politics into aesthetic discourse in nineteenth century France. Patricia Mainardi has, in fact, asserted that "every political debate of nineteenth century France found its analogue in the Salon." She further writes that the "Academy and the entire French political Right . . . consistently attacked 'liberty' in all its many manifestations, seeing it as leading inevitably to anarchy and disorder."¹⁰ It is thus not surprising that the debates over the privileged structure of the Salon peaked in the early 1880s when the structure of the French legislature was also under scrutiny for elitism and entrenched authority.

The Paris Henri stepped into in the late 1880s was not only a site of major artistic variance and innovation but was beset with social and political unrest. It was the era of the Third Republic, a regime of liberal parliamentarianism established in 1875 under the guidance of Léon Gambetta (1838-1882).¹¹ For the first time France had a democracy as the base of its political authority. From the beginning and during the ensuing three decades, however, the Republicans in

power repeatedly dealt with enemies from outside their constituency.

Workers began to organize unions and parties, insisting that the conservative policies of the ruling middle-class did not represent their interests. By the mid 1880s the government had to constantly ward off threats from the conservatives and the revolutionaries, whose conflicting demands could not possibly be met. These factions, with varying motives, had rallied behind one General Georges Boulanger (1837-1891), a high government official and dashing military hero. In 1886 he was appointed Minister of War by Georges Clemenceau who headed the radical contingency within the Chamber of Deputies.¹² By 1888, the year of Henri's arrival, it seemed Boulanger might succeed in leading this diverse group of followers from both the Left (socialists and radicals) and the Right (monarchists and clericals) in a coup against the Republic. The resulting series of political uprisings were frequently mentioned by Henri in his diary and letters and provide an interesting backdrop to his evolving theories about art.

When Henri moved to France in 1888, Paris had recently become the intellectual base of anarchism. Just three years prior to his arrival, the anarchist journal La Révolté was transferred from its base in Geneva to Paris, designating the French Capitol as the new nerve center of the movement.¹³ In

France the various implications of anarchism were explored with unparalleled passion. Anarchism took on significant aesthetic implications in Paris, a city with pervasive interest in the arts, and it quickly became an ideology which attracted both the literary and artistic avant-garde.

Anarchism opposed the Marxist theory of economic determinism as well as the authoritarian aspects of socialism. It was a social philosophy, one of nongovernmental cooperation between free individuals. The movement was more an attitude than a dogma, a belief in the sole authority of the creative mind. Symbolist poet Adolphe Rette explained "anarchism is the very negation of all politics. It is a purely human philosophy, appealing to nothing for its observations but the lone faculties of man."¹⁴ Symbolist critic Remy de Gourmont articulated the sympathetic bonds between artists and anarchists in their shared belief that each person had the right to his or her own visions and ideals without fear of external restraint.

If Democracy advocated the sovereignty of the people, anarchism advocated the sovereignty of the person. Writing in the 1890s, Gourmont declared: "One individual is one world, a hundred individuals make a hundred worlds, each as legitimate as the others."¹⁵ Gourmont's words were, in fact, echoed by Helen Appleton Read, who stated that Henri encouraged his students to "find that inner thing that made one particular

man or woman different from any other man or woman."¹⁶

Anarchism first gained prominence in France in the 1860s largely through the efforts of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809-1865). Proudhon was a pacifist and internationalist, wary of patriotism which he believed led to exploitation of laborers and eventually to war. With the help of his followers in the First International, the first massive international organization of the proletariat, Proudhon organized an anarchist movement.¹⁷ By 1865 the Paris bureau of the First International had opened and on the eve of the Franco-Prussian war in 1870 there were 245,000 members of the International in France.

With the defeat of the Paris Commune uprising of 1871, the International was banned in France as a subversive organization.¹⁸ For more than a decade anarchist activity was illegal and thus secretive. By 1878 Parisian anarchist groups began to reappear, owing largely to the activities of the Russian expatriate Peter Kropotkin (1842-1921). Kropotkin, a Russian prince who renounced his aristocratic heritage, became a leader and theorist of the movement after the death of Proudhon in 1865.

Like Proudhon, Kropotkin was optimistic by nature and interested in the positive aspects of anarchism. He sought to humanize anarchism, attempting to relate theory to aspects of actual living. Kropotkin also believed, as did Proudhon and

another Russian of anarchist leanings, Leo Tolstoy, that much of contemporary art was decadent because it had lost all roots in the life of the people.¹⁹ Both Proudhon and Tolstoy believed that art should have a social purpose, and acknowledged, as did Henri, that the artist existed in everyone. Anarchist periodicals of the time such as Le Révolte were also sympathetic to art movements that attempted to reintegrate art into everyday life and had little sympathy for imagery that was incomprehensible to the public at large.

Kropotkin, as well as other anarchists, believed that children should learn from direct experience and not rely solely on reading texts for education. This outlook certainly attracted Henri to the anarchist-based Ferrer Center in New York. (see p. 237) Kropotkin practiced what he preached and in order to educate himself on the life of the underprivileged, he traveled through Siberia to acquaint himself with its people and their life styles. One might say Kropotkin's attitudes took form in Henri's admonition to his students to leave the studio and wander the lower east side of New York in order to paint life and not art. Henri's acquaintance with Kropotkin and admiration for his tenets is substantiated by a comment he made later in life in an article he wrote on the anarchist Emma Goldman:

The present horrible war [WWI] is only one of the plain proofs of ineffectiveness on the part of the institutions of our civilization. It seems time to listen to other

reason than that which has failed; to other students of the causes of crime, of poverty and the scant fulfillment of man's promise. It is time to let them talk plainly to us. Whitman, Ibsen, Tolstoi, Kropotkin, many others, have set an undercurrent of new and stronger thought . . .²⁰

During the 1880s there were about fifty anarchist groups in France; despite their numbers there was considerable communication and solidarity between them. In 1881 the anarchist movement separated itself from the general socialist trend in France and began its independent career. After the legalization in France of labor unions in 1884, anarchists began to enter organized labor. Their participation resulted in a doctrine called "anarcho-syndicalism," an ideology that rejected political action and called for direct action through nonviolent strikes and other means to overthrow the Republic and capitalism.

By 1888, the year of Henri's arrival in Paris, the anarchist presence in the labor movement was firmly in place.²¹ French workers were drawn to anarchist ideals as they became increasingly suspicious of the authoritarian aspects of socialism. By the early 1890s, anarchism had emerged as an important presence in French life, nurtured by the intellectual influences of both Proudhon and Kropotkin. The writings and ideologies of the Russian anarchist Mikhail Bakunin (1814-1876), who had been greatly influenced by Proudhon, were also accessible in France at this time through the efforts of Kropotkin. It was probably in France that

Henri became acquainted with Bakunin's writings which he began reading soon after returning home to the United States in 1892. (see p. 227)

In the 1890s anarchism in Paris became more than an expression of utopian dreams or terrorist violence, developing into a culture of bohemian individualism. Like Henri, these later anarchists were more interested in belief than knowledge, valued immediate experience over critical reflection, and intuition over intellectualism. Their objections went beyond political arenas to include all hierarchical structures including the orthodoxies of art. They naturally embraced artistic freedom and held a dim view of officially sanctioned art and exhibitions and their connection with institutional power. The observed link between officially sanctioned art and institutional power increased the likelihood that alternative exhibitions such as those held by the Société des Indépendants would affront bourgeois social as well as aesthetic standards.²² Indeed, by 1890 when anarchism was at its height in Paris the hegemony of the French Salon exhibition was broken. After two centuries of regulating the presentation of contemporary art to the public the Salon's centralized authority had begun to dissipate.²³ At this same time, Henri became increasingly disillusioned with the academies and Salon, and visited many of the independent exhibitions held throughout Paris.

Art and Anarchism in Fin-de-Siecle France

To understand the impact anarchism had upon Henri in Paris, it is important to review the degree to which anarchist ideologies became blended with aesthetics during the late nineteenth century. Anarchists met and spoke freely at the cafes away from the surveillance of the government. Politics were discussed along with art in the studios of late nineteenth century Paris. Henri, in fact, commented on the reading of an anarchist proclamation by a fellow student during class at the Ecole des Beaux Arts. (see pp. 220,221.)

The freedom and spontaneity associated with the artistic process brought art and anarchy together and by 1890 it became fashionable for painters and writers in Paris to become affiliated with anarchist ideology. In 1893, for example, a performance in Paris of a play by the Norwegian dramatist Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) was compared to the throwing of an anarchist bomb.²⁴ Many artists who felt ostracized by an uncomprehending public for painting outside the academic mainstream identified with the workers who suffered social and political injustices.

Artistic responses to anarchism fell within one of two camps: propagandism and individualism. The former was inspired by the call of Kropotkin for artists to place their work in the service of revolutionary ideals by depicting the plight of the lower classes.²⁵ Proudhon (and Tolstoy) were one

step removed from the stringency of Kropotkin's ideals. They both desired art to be humanistically inclined and thus representational, an art that emphasized social relationships over style and form. Henri likewise did not require art to serve as an instrument of any political agenda. Yet, in keeping with Proudhon and Tolstoy's views, he remained a realist in style and embraced the principles of anarchism in terms of rejecting authority. French painter and avowed anarchist Paul Signac (1863-1935) explained "the anarchist painter is not he who produces anarchist paintings but he who . . . will struggle with all his individuality against bourgeois and official conventions."²⁶

Leading French anarchist writers such as Jean Grave, particularly in the 1880s and 1890s, saw art as a potential force that could uplift the ordinary man or woman. Anarchism was seen as the hope for a utopian society in its championing of free creativity and local autonomy; art that achieved freedom from restraint became a symbol of utopia. The French artist and self-proclaimed anarchist Félix Fénéon (1861-1944), who mocked the idea of official art exhibitions, looked forward to a time when "art will be part of the life of ordinary men."²⁷ Perhaps inspired by the ideals of French utopian socialist Henri de Saint-Simon (see Introduction, n.66), he also believed that art had socially regenerative powers. Henri shared both aspects of Fénéon's view of art,

believing that art was the "province of every human being" and in an art spirit entering all aspects of public and private life and eradicating such social ills as greed and war.²⁸

The emphasis on individualism in art verses the social application of art was vigorously debated in the anarchist press in the early 1890s. Anarchist Jean Grave and Leo Tolstoy, for example, considered art a necessary part of the ideal society but also believed that every artist should have perfect freedom to express his own concept of beauty. Many artists who aligned themselves with anarchist individualism rejected the notion of addressing contemporary social issues in their art. Instead, their anarchism took the form of radical painting styles.

Henri and the artists of the Ashcan School never abandoned realism for the more avant garde styles that were beginning to surface in Europe and the United States. Their paintings, characterized by a non-didactic social humanism, relate back to the ideals of Proudhon who advocated an art that was rooted in daily life experience. However, like the politically active painter Paul Signac in France, the painters of the Ashcan School believed in keeping their social views essentially separate from the subject matter of their painting. Any of their art with a blatant social message was reserved for illustrations produced for such politicized periodicals as The Masses.²⁹

John Sloan always denied any connection between his socialist views and the subject matter of his paintings, an assertion that some scholars have certainly argued.³⁰ "I was never interested in putting propaganda into my paintings," insisted Sloan," so it annoys me when art historians try to interpret my city life pictures as 'socially conscious.' I saw the everyday life of the people, and on the whole I picked out bits of joy in human life for my subject matter."³¹

Although a realist in style, Henri was true to anarchism's embrace of individuality. He was never critical of those students who chose a more avant-garde path and was, in fact, extremely supportive. George Bellows explained that "Henri helped me to realize that a work of art can be any imaginable thing, and this is the beginning of modern painting."³² American modernist painter Morgan Russell (1886-1953) credited Henri with a "lasting and valuable influence. All you ever taught or said was so intelligent and undogmatic . . . You gave us your own heat and inspired us with what I like to call the habit of creative spunk."³³ The following year Henri wrote to Russell: "I was glad to hear you had not abandoned your synchronies and that you are looking forward to an extension of that study."³⁴

Likewise, American modernist painter Arthur B. Frost, Jr. (1887-1917), who had studied with Henri at the New York School of Art, expressed a profound appreciation for Henri's

encouragement to become self-directed. In a letter to Henri, Frost wrote:

You were the first person who suggested to my mind the possibility of doing exactly what I wanted to do right now instead of waiting until I reached a certain age and had gained a certain recognized proficiency in a life class. It was never suggested to me, either, that any of my ideas might be put into a life study before I met you . . . I did not know I had any ideas until you told me I had.³⁵

Henri related to philosophical anarchism which represented the more intellectual and pacifist aspects of the movement; its adherents eschewed violence and social militancy and were prepared for gradual reform and evolution of a self-governing society. Philosophical anarchists advocated the removal of any restrictions placed upon ethical and legitimate conduct. They insisted upon the suppression of all aggression or invasion and emphasized the primacy of individual judgement over the rights of community. It was a fashionable political position, particularly attractive to those like Henri who wished to espouse radical ideas yet maintain a fairly conventional life. "We don't need any government or any churches," Henri declared, "we need more imagination, more need to help and not to interfere."³⁶ It was anarchism's emphasis on individualism combined with an essential humanitarianism that proved so attractive to Henri.

Henri in the Midst of Anarchist France

Within the political climate of fin-de-siècle France two major crises occurred - the one associated with General Georges Boulanger in the late 1880s (see p. 199) and the other with Alfred Dreyfus (1859-1935) in the late 1890s. Robert Henri was a witness to both incidents and his letters and diaries attest to his knowledge of and interest in the highly charged political environment of late nineteenth century Paris. His observations of political activity in France and concurrent ruminations about various social issues in the United States form an interesting mix along with his growing dissatisfaction with the structure and regulations of the French art academies and Salon exhibitions.

At the outset of his first trip to France, Henri was too absorbed in his art training to pay much attention to the political turmoil around him. Writing to his parents in December of 1888 he stated:

One would think that, living in Paris, we would know all the great political moves, etc. that are taking place . . . Of all this we know nothing. We live in our quarter and in our art student's element as quietly as if Paris with its Boulanger and its riots were 3000 miles away.³⁷

Boulanger was originally perceived an ally of the Third Republic who would rid the army of its royalist members. However, his growing alliance with the ultrapatriots who sought revenge for the defeat of France in 1871 won him disfavor with the government and in 1888 he was retired from

the army. The year of Henri's arrival in France, Boulanger was free to run for political office and was soon elected to the Chamber of Deputies. His platform proposing drastic constitutional revisions rallied those in the populace (including former enemies of one another - the Bonapartists and monarchists) who were dissatisfied with the current Republic. In the late 1880s's Boulanger's diverse antiparliamentary forces attempted to overthrow the republican government.

Amidst this turmoil Henri's interest in political events soon increased. At the time he was living in the northeast quadrant of Paris where most of the anarchists lived. In January of 1889 Henri observed the warring party factions and the anarchist activity as well:

Politics appear to be the important gossip and interest all over the city now. Flaming bills with the names of Boulanger and Jacque (?) are to be seen everywhere . . . the anarchists address the people with flaming bills also.³⁸

The following week he wrote: "next Sunday is election day here . . . The English papers say that a riot or revolution is expected."³⁹ Election day would have been a difficult day to ignore. Edouard Dujardin, symbolist writer and editor of numerous petit journals, described the post election evening as having "enthusiasm such as I have never seen in Paris . . ."⁴⁰

Boulanger won the election and the mobs begged him to

lead them to the Elysées to take possession of the president's palace. The former army general, however, soon realized his inability to lead a nation. He eventually fled the country when the minister of the interior ordered his arrest on conspiracy charges.⁴¹ As a result, the government and the people became polarized and a newly strengthened Right gained control over the more radical Leftist party that had supported Boulanger. This political subterfuge, worsened by a deepening economic slump, fueled the anarchist ideal to abolish government all together.

Like many artists who spent the academic year sequestered in their Paris studios, Henri left the environs of the city in the summer for the French countryside. He spent the summer of 1889 in the town of Concarneau, a small coastal village in Brittany where Boulanger's followers were a formidable presence. Just prior to nationwide legislative elections in France, Henri attended a political meeting at the town hall. According to French law, candidates organized debating sessions nearly every day during the election campaign which lasts two months. The fact that these debates were often confrontational may account for Henri's description of the meeting as "red hot."⁴²

In a letter to his parents, Henri described the meeting in considerable detail:

The quaint old French town was fairly astir with the

subject [of the election] and for once people stopped thinking of fish and stood in groups painfully studying the flaming red, white, and blue posters which announced the names and various virtues of the candidates. In the hall there was a great throng of fishermen and peasants in clattering sabers, local politicians were laying down cold facts in vehement french or guttural bretagne to doubting voters . . . the tougher element of Concarneau stimulated itself for the reception of the political ideas and sallied forth well prepared over the drawbridge into the newer town where the hall is situated, giving vent to their rising feelings with shouts 'Vive Boulanger!' 'A bas Hamon!' . . . there was a small minority who shouted for Hamon the Republican candidate. Grilleau the Boulangist seemed to be the favorite. The hall soon became the scene of the liveliest excitement . . . The opening speech by M. Hamon, republican candidate for deputy, a clever orator who won the attention of the crowd . . . He was followed by his opponent M. De Grilleau the Boulangist who had no more mounted the stand and commenced his speech . . . than his words were drowned by wild shouts and cries of 'a bas Boulanger abas de Grilleau' . . . a french artist stood on the table and led the fishermen and peasants in the uproar . . .

The following Sunday was election day. All the Saloons were going . . . and the shouts for Boulanger were so much revived that it looked after all that Boulanger was to be the winner of the day in Concarneau."⁴³

The French artist standing in the midst of and helping to incite the heated political debate provides an interesting backdrop for what happened to Henri artistically that summer in Concarneau. A far less dramatic yet significant incident took place, one which William Inness Homer describes as "the beginning of [Henri's] full scale rebellion against the academic mode."⁴⁴

Homer was referring to an account recorded by Henri biographers William Yarrow and Louis Bouche. They wrote of an

instance when Henri went to visit a fellow artist from Philadelphia, Alexander Harrison, whose studio in Brittany was in the loft of an old granary. Through a crack in the wall of the granary Henri saw a canvas illuminated by a direct ray of sun streaming into the dark interior from a hole high on an adjacent wall. The bright light distorted the image of a crouching nude woman, obliterating detail and finish and causing the appearance of an "ever-changing modulation of ruddy flesh tones, the whole painted apparently with a single broad brush stroke"45 This revelation of seeing the essence of form, coupled with the summer's experience of painting in the open air, had a lasting affect upon Henri's feelings about producing art in the studio and toward academic art in general.

When Henri returned to Paris from Concarneau in the fall of 1889, he wrote increasingly about political activity in the city and about his growing dissatisfaction with the French art academies and Salon. As Henri observed political disturbances into the following year, he was reading Thomas Paine (see Chapter 2, p. 86), whose ideologies have been connected with anarchist thought. In early 1890 while reading Paine's History of the French Revolution, Henri observed "Being on the spot and knowing so many of the places mentioned gives me a great interest to the narrative."⁴⁶

Following a meeting in Paris in July of 1889, the

International Socialist Congress designated May 1 as a universal holiday for workers to publicize their demands for increased humane working conditions. That particular date was chosen because it was the anniversary of the McCormick Strike of 1886 in Chicago which resulted in the Haymarket Massacre and the eventual hanging of four strike leaders who were avowed anarchists.⁴⁷ The first of May celebration in 1890 Paris was replete with parades, arrests, and subsequent executions and marked the beginning of a new decade of advocacy for worker's rights. A couple of months before the May 1 observance, Henri recorded that he and his colleagues had been discussing capital punishment. "The subject of the Chicago anarchists came up," he wrote, "we opposed their hanging because even though opposing their creed, we might hang under other circumstances."⁴⁸

In April of 1890 Henri not only commented on the rumblings of unrest as May 1 approached but seemed to relish the prospect of being a witness to it:

There is a great deal of talk about the first of May now. I've been told that the Socialists prepare a demonstration on that day . . . The authorities warn them not to parade and say they will be met with gattling [Gatling] guns if they do. It's all over Europe that the movement is expected . . . It looks like there is to be fun. We shall see.⁴⁹

On the eve of the anticipated uprising, Henri observed that "there is a deep interest everywhere about what is to occur tomorrow . . ."⁵⁰ When the day actually arrived, he

dutifully fulfilled his obligations at school but in his spare time went into the street to watch the activities. He recorded in his diary:

. . . streets full of people and soldiers - after working at school all day go down to the Place de la Concorde at Madelaine - hear sounds of shooting as I go. On the Place squads of policemen and calvary kept everyone moving - not the smallest group allowed to collect. Met [Benjamin] Fox who had been there all afternoon . . . we saw many men . . . roughly handled, many arrests, the police using swords and fists, at any cries of "Vive" or "A bas"; after dinner went back out in streets to observe near riot conditions . . .⁵¹

Several days later he was in Fontainbleau in Barbizon where his attention to the political disturbances of Paris did not dissipate. His interest was such that he wrote to his parents about an article in Le Figaro:

I read . . . that Paris was to be under a strong military surveillance, that the Madelaine was to stow away a regiment in her basement, that another was to camp in the Tricleries (Tuilleries) garden . . . and that besides all these great ambushes there were to be small [possees?] of soldiers in houses here and there - that the active police force was to be something tremendous and formidable to wrongdoers and that they were to be assisted by cavalry who were to parade the streets, break up even the smallest collection of people . . . the manifestation was not to be given a chance to get a first breath.⁵²

After returning to Paris, Henri attempted to bury himself in his studies but noted the reports brought back to the atelier by fellow students of "great crowds kept constantly in motion by the police of extra strong forces of hits from their sabers - not always so flat but that they sometimes cut. They run on the pavement as well as the street making a clean sweep

as they went."⁵³

Henri then described his own experience of walking home that day from school through crowds of people and police:

The laboring class was beaten by police . . . they (the police) would rush up a street with drawn swords driving the people before them, giving occasionally flat sided hits from their sabers . . . In the afternoon a delegation of prominent Socialists were escorted by the police through the Place de Concorde over the Seine to the Chamber of Deputies where they were received and heard by the government.⁵⁴

In the same letter, Henri discussed an occurrence of "a little more spice" that was written up in the newspapers and "perhaps even appeared in the American reports." He added that "it is not second hand news - we had a representative in that scrimmage - no less than Reddy."⁵⁵

American art student Edward Redfield, whom Henri had known at the Pennsylvania Academy and who had since joined him in Paris, was caught in the police brutality trying to get home. Redfield ran into a calvary on horseback who were driving a crowd of people down a narrow street "swinging swords, shouting and swearing." Henri added that it was "all he [Reddy] could do to keep from being trampled . . . It seemed the police and soldiers were trying to force them into a resistance that they might have an excuse to slaughter them." The police were apparently responding to a rumor that a "body of men were forming up the Champs Elyseés to come down and sack some office."⁵⁶

Redfield escaped injury and later that evening he and Henri ventured out into the streets to observe the riotous conditions. "There was a great mass of them [people] between the Place [de la Concorde] and the Madeleine . . . and [we] watched some fierce rushes by the police on the street."⁵⁷ He further described the evening as one in which military force literally invaded the Parisian art world:

The vigilance was so strong that no one could stop - cavalry in companies everywhere. In the garden of the Tuilleries a regiment of infantry was camped - the Salon was full of soldiers and they were all in public buildings - a regiment is said to be stationed in the basement of the Madeleine and there are soldiers too in the basements of the statues on the Place. They say the exterior of the city is also heavily guarded.⁵⁸

The image of soldiers in the Salon provides a striking symbol of the stronghold the French Salon had formerly held over art and artists in France.

Perhaps the brutal treatment Henri witnessed of the working class by the Parisian police increased his sympathy for the lower classes back in the United States. Having read an article in an American newspaper about the release of a white collar criminal from prison, Henri expressed his support for the rights of the lower classes. In a letter to his parents in the late summer of 1890, he wrote that "men who have been born of mean parents, reared in the midst of vice, illiterate and poverty stricken" are thrown into prison without sympathy, "when the crimes they have committed are the

natural result of their unfortunate education and poverty."⁵⁹

Henri's concern for the underprivileged in America surfaced again the following month. In this instance, Paris provided a positive contrast to an event that occurred in his former place of residence. He was astounded to learn from Redfield that someone had proposed that whistling be outlawed in Philadelphia's Fairmont Park. After expounding upon the freedom and gaiety to be seen at the parks in Paris, he wrote:

Many of those people like many of those who find their pleasure in Fairmont Park are poor, are people with whom life is a struggle, who have few opportunities to drown the bitterness of their fates in the healthy delightful intoxication which green trees and outdoors give them.⁶⁰

Henri's anger that someone would wish to legally curtail a harmless activity like whistling extended toward all forms of censorship. At this time in Paris he expressed a desire to read Leo Tolstoy's controversial novel The Kreutze Sonata (see Chapter 3, p.145) but complained that American businessman John Wanamaker (1838-1922) had declared it immoral for Americans to read. He also declared his disdain for Anthony Comstock (1844-1915), organizer of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice. Comstock's vigorous campaign against publications and imagery he considered injurious to public virtue resulted in the convictions of twenty-five hundred people on morals charges.

Henri's awareness of anarchist activity in Paris persisted in 1891. In January he noted an incident he

observed while on an errand to purchase art supplies. "Police squads on bridge, and blockade of Avenue de l'Opera - student riots threatened," he wrote. "If more is written [about them in the paper] they say they will destroy the whole place and burn the office down." In the same letter, Henri also noted the death of Boulanger.⁶¹

In late April of 1891, one year after his earliest written observations of the first of May demonstrations in Paris, Henri again made mention of the forthcoming protests. This time, however, information about the demonstrations was disseminated within his classroom at Ecole des Beaux-Arts. Henri wrote of anarchism literally entering his artistic domain:

This morning . . . one of the students got up and read the Anarchists Proclamation which is being passed secretly to people in the streets. It is a large sheet and contains very strong reading . . . the announcement of the coming demonstration which they propose to hold on 'la place de la Republique' the first of May.⁶²

The proclamation addressed to the "Simples Soldiers" was an appeal by "la Jeunesse anti-patriote, anarchistes" to any sympathetic soldiers in the government to aid their cause for freedom. The anarchists declared that it was not for honor, nor for patriotism that society has soldiers but rather to protect exploiters, monopolists, "the true thieves." The statement continued: "Honor consists of refusing to serve . . . honor is in disobedience, in rebellion, in revolt . . ."⁶³

The proclamation concluded with an emphatic assertion:

Man is free! By . . . experiencing freedom, man will learn what is good, useful, wise, prosperous, and profitable for him . . . also in moral aspects if he is free he will separate himself from bad because what is bad is catastrophic to his existence. Authority stops man from knowing which is good for him while freedom teaches him . . . because . . . we [the anarchists] . . . are the only ones who know about this . . . we have thought to come on the first of May before your fire station in Chateau d'Eau. You see very well you are slaves! Liberate yourselves! Liberate us! Until Friday!⁶⁴

In the same letter home in which he mentioned the anarchist proclamation, Henri complained bitterly of being rejected by the Salon:

To really reach anything superior one must not be influenced by Salon jury and judgements. Damn the public - and the jury, do as one feels, follow ones own impressions and do ones own judging. When one feels that he has said what he wants to say very near as he wanted to say it he must be satisfied.⁶⁵

The rejection came relatively soon after he won admittance to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, having failed to pass the entrance exams on two previous occasions. He also wrote about criticism given by his instructor Adolph-William Bouguereau who classified Henri in the 'modern school.' Resistant to any labeling, Henri stated:

One must work after the manner his own mind and nature leads him if he wants to 'last' - what he says and does must be the result of his individual contact with nature - Ancient and Modern and new schools will teach him but to last one must belong to none of them - bind by no creed.⁶⁶

The parallelisms between anarchist philosophy which surrounded Henri in Paris and his growing discontent with the

academic instruction and restrictions placed upon artists are obvious. The notion of being bound by no creed was precisely the anarchist agenda. Just as Kropotkin believed that the natural goodness of people would come forth if they were left to their own devices, Henri sought conditions which allowed art to evolve naturally from the disposition and temperament of its maker. He admonished the art student to:

be careful of the influence of those with whom he consorts . . . for large bodies tend toward the leveling of individuality to a common consent, the forming and adherence to a creed. And a member must be ever in unnecessary broil or pretend agreement which he cannot permit himself to do, for it is his principle as an art student to have and to defend his personal impressions.⁶⁷

By the spring of 1891 Henri became increasingly critical of the art produced by the teachers in the French academies. He found fault, for example, with a painting of Sampson by Léon Bonnat which he had viewed at the April Salon. Using harsh terms, he observed:

There is no feeling of truth in the light and color. The man and the lion are rigid - it lacks impression - life. Bonnat is a brutal painter. I like him less all the time.⁶⁸

He did attempt to give them some credit, stating that many of the exhibitors are "great men . . . and either at present are or have been pathfinders in the progress of art. He mentioned, for example, a painting "Death of Babylon" by Georges Antoine Rochegrosse (1859-1938), describing it a "wonderful bit of painting but not lasting - to me it has not

the quality that all great works of art have - a living interest."⁶⁹ His preoccupation with "living interest" is understandable given the contemporaneity of the novels by Zola and Tolstoy he had been reading as well as the journals of Marie Bashkirtseff in which the artist expressed her aversion to the artificiality in much of Salon art.

In the spring of 1891 Henri became interested in a utopian fantasy written by Edward Bellamy (1850-1898) and by the summer was reading the novelist's Looking Backward, 2000-1887. Like so many of the books which attracted Henri, Looking Backward wove a philosophy of life into its narrative. The book, which propelled the little known American journalist into overnight fame, soon became a topic of discussion among Henri's friends in Paris. Published in 1888, the novel grew out of the author's concerns with industrialism, his sympathy for the deprived, and support for the worker in a capitalist society.

Like the philosophical anarchists with whom Henri is aligned, Bellamy's ideal society was a self-regulating community in which organized political force was no longer needed. Bellamy was also concerned about preserving individualism within his ideal interdependent "organic society." Bellamy's tale centers around Julian West, a member of the upper class in 1887 Boston. West became increasingly distraught over disruptions in his personal life brought on by

the incessant strikes held by the laboring classes. As "one of the wealthy, with a large stake in the existing order of things" he became alarmed by the talk of a "small band of men who call themselves anarchists."⁷⁰ Early in the novel West is mystically transmitted to the year 2000 where he becomes converted to a new society characterized by peaceful coexistence and cooperation.

The book undoubtedly added to the discourse of Henri and his colleagues as they concerned themselves with issues of individualism in both the arts and politics. Henri's friend in Paris, the American artist Ernest Seton Thompson, wrote to Henri that summer about the book and "Bellamyism as applied to the fine arts."⁷¹ In the novel, West inquires of Dr. Leete, his host in the year 2000, how genius in the arts is recognized in an equitable society. Referring to aptitudes in the fields of painting, sculpture, and literature Dr. Leete replied that "as soon as exceptional talent is recognized . . . release it from all trammels and let it have free course."⁷²

Henri's letters home at this time continued to include alternate remarks about political unrest and artistic observations. This was partially due to the fact that the May 1st uprisings came on the heels of the opening of the annual April Salon. Henri observed:

Today is the first of May, the day for its Socialist Manifestation . . . there has been very little stir . . . in the morning newspaper peddlers were selling a

publication - the 'Socialist' . . .⁷³

Writing the following day, he further remarked:

But as we have seen since [Monday] there was quite a first of May manifestation after all. About Paris in several places there was trouble. The city was under military order . . . outside of Paris there . . . were more serious occurrences, occasional fights with some deaths.⁷⁴

The "more serious occurrence" to which Henri made reference was an attempt by a group of anarchists to hold a demonstration on the outskirts of Paris in the suburb of Levallois. The police dispersed the rioters and pursued their leaders which resulted in the wounding and capturing of several anarchists who were later brought to trial. The prosecutor asked for the death penalty but the wounded man was acquitted and two others sentenced to long prison terms. This seemingly insignificant incident began a chain of events that led to numerous anarchist acts of terrorism between 1892 and 1894.⁷⁵

Henri was back home during most of this violent era of French anarchism. Yet his concern for the rights of the laboring classes, perhaps ignited by what he had seen in France, extended to events happening in the United States. In the summer of 1892 he wrote to his parents from Philadelphia about his support for the Homestead rioters who organized one of the most violent labor strikes in United States history. The strike was instigated when Henry Clay Frick, the manager

of the Homestead mills and chairman of the board of Carnegie Steel, declared a wage reduction and instituted a lockout in an attempt to crush the union. After the union refused to accept the wage cut, the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel, and Tin Workers went on strike. Four months later on July 6, company guards (Pinkerton detectives) opened fire on the picket lines, causing a riot and killing and wounding several men. Henri had the following comment concerning the strike:

I have heard some spirited debates on the question [of the riots]. I favor the strikers . . . A large percentage of the laborers under monopoly do not dare vote as they feel - if they do they lose employment which is to them life - and many voters not directly pinched lack the brightness to see whence comes the pinching and so though freer to vote are no service to themselves or their more suffering brothers. The votes of dishonest men are bought and honest men are afraid to vote against their wishes. Hence the law is not the law of the people but the law of might and money . . . ⁷⁶

The letter was probably written in the spring of 1892 before the four-month strike came to its violent end in July since Henri made no mention of the tragic deaths of several strikers.

At this time Henri kept current of political affairs in France as well. In July of 1893 while teaching a summer oil painting class in Avalon, New Jersey, he noted in a letter to his parents that "the Paris riots are centered right around my old haunts."⁷⁷ He was probably making reference to the aftermath of the assassination of French president Carnot who

had died just two weeks previously from a stab wound inflicted by an Italian anarchist. In Philadelphia Henri also remained connected to European political theory through the writings of one of the greatest champions of the individual in the history of political thought - Mikhail Bakunin.

Henri and Mikhail Bakunin

In the closing chapter of Son of a Gambler's Man: The Youth of an Artist, Mari Sandoz's account of Henri's early life in the Midwest, the author takes a leap into the future, twenty-one years from the time the Cozad family fled Nebraska. She imagines what might have transpired if John Cozad had then agreed to have his portrait painted by his well-known artist/son. Sandoz writes:

He [John Cozad] did not understand his [son's] leaning toward a writer like Bakunin and the philosophical anarchism that Robert and his students and the other artists gathered around him read and chewed over for long hours. At the suggestion of Robert and the others, he had read God and State and then realized even more that his son was a stranger, an alien . . . "78

Henri's interest in both art and politics may have been a strange notion to his father but it certainly was not an uncommon concept in fin-de-siecle Paris, as has been noted. After his return to Philadelphia in the fall of 1891 Henri enrolled again at the Pennsylvania Academy and accepted a teaching job at the School of Design for Women. At this same time he began to read Bakunin's God and State.

Mikhail Bakunin began his career as an officer in the Russian Imperial Guard. After resigning from duty he traveled to France, Switzerland, and finally Germany where he took part in a revolutionary movement from 1848-49. He was arrested in Germany and spent the next eight years in prison. Originally condemned to death, his sentence was commuted to a lifetime of Siberian exile but he escaped his captors. From that point on he was dedicated to spreading his anarchist views throughout Europe.

Bakunin's God and the State was published posthumously in 1882 by Benjamin Tucker, a major spokesman for anarchism in the United States. Tucker advertised the book as a consolidation and improvement of Thomas Paine's Age of Reason and Rights of Man. In the treatise Bakunin displayed an absolute disregard for Christianity and any religion which, in his words, enslaves mankind to some divine benefit. He began the essay with the query "Who are right, the idealists or the materialists?" a question which may have held interesting corollaries for Henri in terms of late nineteenth century aesthetics.⁷⁹

For Bakunin, the very idea of God is the abdication of human liberty, an antithetical view to Emerson who saw conformity as an evil because it smothered the potential for divine inspiration. What Bakunin did share with Emerson and what Henri admired in both was a rejection of authority.

"There is no fixed and constant authority," wrote Bakunin in God and the State "but a continual exchange of mutual, temporary, and, above all, voluntary authority and subordination."⁸⁰

In his diatribe against religion, Bakunin interestingly addressed the subject of art. After extolling science as the only "legitimate authority" because it was concerned with natural laws, Bakunin stated that science was inferior to art. Science, he explained, dealt in abstractions which he defined as general types and situations. Art, he claimed, dealt with similar generalizations but was superior because it:

. . . incarnates them by an artifice of its own forms which, if they were not living in the sense of real life, none the less excite in our imagination the memory and sentiment of life: art . . . individualizes the types and situations which it conceives . . . Art, then, is . . . the return of abstraction to life.⁸¹

Bakunin continued by stating that science, unlike art, can have no dealings with the real and living because it has no heart. His belief that art represented a "return from abstraction to life" because it has the power to call to mind the sensations aroused by living is very consistent with Henri's views of the importance of conjoining of art and life. Bakunin's statement also implies a bias for realism in art shared by other anarchist leaders such as Kropotkin and Goldman; his reference to memory and sentiment suggests the aesthetics of Henri Bergson whose theories also parallel those

of Henri (see Chapter 6, pp. 269-293). Like Philip Gilbert Hamerton, Marie Bashkirtseff, and others whom Henri read, Bakunin romanticized the lower classes, commending what he perceived as their primitive spontaneity and freshness.

Henri, Anarchism, and the late 1890s

During Henri's subsequent trips to France in the late 1890s, anarchism had evolved into a more benign and less inflammatory movement. Nevertheless, he continued to comment on political affairs. In the fall of 1898 he noted in his diary that there is a "general strike of working men been going on in Paris . . . soldiers guarding work everywhere . . . nothing serious happened."⁸² The following February he wrote home of the great disturbances that followed the death of French President Félix Faure and the immediate establishment of a successor, Emil Loubet. "There have been manifestations, anti-Dreyfus, the Anarchists, the Royalists and all the vieing [sic] factions . . . "⁸³ Six days later he described the political climate again to his family at home:

Political events here have been having their fling . . . there is a great deal of demonstration . . . as for instance this last affair of [Paul] Deroulede of which you no doubt have read.⁸⁴

It is not surprising that Henri displayed interest in the Dreyfus Affair, the singular most important public issue in France during the volatile 1890s. Many artists in France

openly took sides in the case involving a French army officer, Alfred Dreyfus, who had been convicted of treason in 1894 and consequently sentenced to life in prison on Devils Island. In 1898 new evidence brought into question Dreyfus's innocence and by 1899 a new trial was ordered by the Supreme Court of Appeal.⁸⁵ Many anarchists were opposed to Dreyfus at the onset of the Affair because he was both a soldier and wealthy but they quickly became convinced of his innocence.

Henri first mentioned the Dreyfus case on July 18, 1899. He remarked on how the unsettling political state put a damper on the fête of July 14. The following month Henri's own feelings about the trial were made clear, noting the:

Dreyfus trial which is the engrossing subject of all France just now. Labou the brilliant lawyer was shot yesterday. It is a terrible thing to see a man of genius cut down that way, just when he was most needed in his great cause.⁸⁶

He kept current on the proceedings of the trial, informing his parents that:

The terms of the judgement seem to [have] a vague hope of half satisfying everybody - but I am hopeful that they will never let up until that man is free or proven guilty. We, being here, could not help but get greatly interested. For a long time I have been more or less current on the case . . .⁸⁷

Several days later he displayed strong feelings about who should ultimately determine the trial's outcome:

I have read the papers considerably . . . the proceeding beat any novel . . . In Paris all is quiet . . . notwithstanding the goings on of the trial . . . [which] have a decided political character. The arrest of

a certain number of leaders of the Royalist, Anti-Jew, and ultra republicans in opposition to government all very sensational . . . Paul Deroulede seems to play to the gallery . . . the gallery is the people and it is the people who do and should rule.⁸⁸

He continued to comment on Dreyfus related disturbances in August, writing:

A riot of which you will have read occurred Sunday afternoon between the Anarchists and Anti-Jews, and with the police between them there was many wounded - all this was in a quarter far from ours and only apparent here in the heavy headlines of the papers . . .⁸⁹

In September he wrote again of the Dreyfus affair, stating his desire to know all the facts and events of the case:

For a long time I have been more or less current of the development of the case and during the trial I've read nearly all the stenographer reports of the trial . . . I see that today Zola came out with a brilliant article in the "L' Aurore."⁹⁰

Henri's continual interest in French politics and anarchist events converted into more active participation in anarchist affairs in the United States after 1900 when he settled in New York City. This involvement was manifest primarily through his friendship with anarchist leader Emma Goldman and his lengthy tenure teaching at the anarchist based Modern School of the Ferrer Center.

Anarchism in America: Henri and Emma Goldman

In 1885, the year before Henri began formal art training in Philadelphia, there were about 80 organized anarchist groups in the United States with members totaling 7,000, many

of whom were of immigrant origin.⁹¹ There is no indication that Henri was aligned with any facet of the anarchist movement at this point in his life. Soon after enrolling at the Pennsylvania Academy he did boast of being a "revolutioniser" [sic] and "agitator" among the students. It should be remembered, however, that Henri did encounter anarchism rooted in American thought during his years abroad. It was while living in Paris that he read Thomas Paine and Ralph Waldo Emerson, both of whom are ideologically connected to the anarchist movement. Paine was, in fact, honored by the Ferrer Association in New York as the "earliest apostle of anarchism."⁹²

Emerson, along with Thoreau, forms an important part of native anarchist history. While he did not condemn the state as thoroughly as Thoreau, Emerson did consider governmental laws to be enemies of liberty and virtue. Although a devotee of individualism, Emerson embraced a transcendental "cosmic optimism" to which American anarchist leaders such as Josiah Warren and Benjamin Tucker were opposed on the grounds that it was blinded to social suffering. Henri's affiliation with American anarchism lies not so much with Emerson but with individuals and groups who were much more politically involved and active in anarchist affairs.

The anarchist movement in the United States was unable to elicit much in the way of a mass following after the Haymarket

affair. A few dynamic personalities such as the Russian born Emma Goldman (1869-1940) kept anarchism in the public eye. Having immigrated to the United States in 1885, she established herself in New York City three years later and soon became a leader of the anarchist movement in America. Goldman spoke openly against the government and in 1893 was imprisoned for a year in the penitentiary at Blackwell Island (now Roosevelt Island) for inciting riots.

In 1900 Henri would unknowingly paint the locale of her incarceration in Blackwell's Island, East River, 1900, the view from his apartment on East Fifty-Eighth Street. (Fig. 19) The structure visible in the painting was Charity Hospital which was built, as William H. Gerds has pointed out, from stone quarried by the prisoners from the penitentiary just north of the hospital. The dreary colors are befitting not only the winter season but the unglamorous vista with its factory silhouettes. Henri would not meet Goldman, however, for another decade.

When Henri first heard Emma Goldman speak in January 1911 he admitted that he attended her lecture out of curiosity to see the woman many called a "violent and dangerous agitator." On the contrary, he found her a "cool, logical and brilliant speaker." He wrote:

Since that day I have heard her speak many times, have read her works; and I believe her to be one of the world's greatest fighters for the freedom and growth of

the human spirit. Her arguments are for order and for human kindness . . . she provokes thought; straight, frank, facing, with the facts and the emotional problems of life . . . she is here to talk plainly to us as though we were free-thinking creatures and not the children of Puritans.⁹³

Henri's reference to Puritans may have been taken from Goldman's book Anarchism and Other Essays, which he began to read the day after he first heard her lecture. Goldman quoted both Hippolyte Taine, who described puritanism as "the death of culture," and the sculptor Gutzom Borglum who complained that because of puritanism "there can be neither truth nor individuality in our [American] art."⁹⁴ After reading her book, Henri proclaimed it "a great work by a great woman."⁹⁵ It may even have been Goldman's influence which prompted Henri to denigrate the puritan sensibility the previous month in an article for the Craftsman. (see Introduction, p. 14)

Goldman recounted her first contact with Henri in her autobiography:

At a lecture in Toledo a visiting-card had been left on my table. It was from Robert Henri, who had requested that I let him know what lectures I was planning to deliver in New York. I had heard of Henri, had seen his exhibitions, and had been told that he was a man of advanced social views.⁹⁶

They met soon thereafter in New York at which time Henri told her how much he enjoyed her magazine Mother Earth.⁹⁷ She agreed to sit for her portrait and fondly recalled their "talks on art, literature, and libertarian education" in his Gramercy Park studio. "Henri was well-versed in these

subjects," remarked, "he possessed, moreover, unusual intuition for every sincere striving . . . I never saw the [finished] painting, but I prized the memory of the sittings, which had given me so much of value." The work was completed after she was deported to Russia in December 1919 after at the end of WWI. (Fig. 20)⁹⁸

It is not surprising that Henri was attracted to Goldman whose individualist doctrines and writings had been inspired by Emerson and Thoreau as well as Whitman whom she described as "universal and cosmopolitan."⁹⁹ "Anarchism," she wrote, "is the only philosophy which brings to man the consciousness of himself." She defined anarchism as "the open defiance of, and resistance to, all laws and restrictions . . . direct action . . . is equally potent in the environment of the individual."¹⁰⁰ This naturally translated to an advocacy of artistic freedom. "Life is sufficiently complex," she asserted, "to give each [artist] his place . . ." ¹⁰¹

Goldman evoked the names of other anarchist leaders whom Henri admired in her description of the compliant nature of anarchism which:

does not comprise an iron-clad program to be carried out under all circumstances. Methods must grow out of the economic needs of each place and time, and of the intellectual and temperamental requirements of the individual. The serene, calm character of a Tolstoy will wash different methods for social reconstitution than the intense, overflowing personality of a Michael Bakunin or a Peter Kropotkin . . . Anarchism does not stand for military drill and uniformity.¹⁰²

Believing patriotism was born of conceit, arrogance, and egotism, Goldman revered Tolstoy as a great anti-patriot. When Henri declared that "every great artist is freed from his family, his nation, his race," he was expressing a similar anarchist ideal.¹⁰³ Stuart Davis recalled his student days at Henri's School of Art where there existed a "tendency toward anarchistic individualism." He added, "any preconceived ideas about racial, national, or class superiorities could not thrive in its atmosphere."¹⁰⁴ Even when writing about art in America Henri referred to a "patriotism of the soul" which enabled artists to "vindicate the beauty of their environment."¹⁰⁵

As did many anarchists who were against constraints placed upon creativity, Goldman condemned the Marxist concept of art as a vehicle to promote revolution. Yet, also like many others involved with the anarchist movement she did not believe that art should be so innovative as to make it incomprehensible to the general public. Henri shared Goldman's ideals for an art that was neither subservient to political causes nor so abstract as to lose a basis in reality. As with Tolstoy, they both saw art as a vehicle for communication among humankind.

Henri and the Modern School of the Ferrer Center

During Emma Goldman's portrait sittings, Henri shared

with her details about the art school he had instigated some years before, telling her that the students were left to work independently and naturally develop their talents.¹⁰⁶ It was probably this interchange that resulted in Goldman's invitation to Henri in 1911 to join the faculty of the Modern School at the Ferrer Center in New York, of which she was a founding member. His classes there were so popular by 1912 that he had to enlist the help of his former student George Bellows and later John Sloan. Of the trio Goldman recalled, "they helped to create a spirit of freedom in the art class which probably did not exist anywhere else in New York at that time."¹⁰⁷

Henri's interest in and commitment to anarchist ideals culminated in his involvement with the Ferrer Center from 1911-1918, almost the entire length of its existence.¹⁰⁸ The Center was named for Francisco Ferrer y Guardia, a free-thinking Spanish educator and government agitator. After taking part in an abortive republican uprising in Spain he took refuge in France in 1885 where he lived until he returned to Barcelona in 1901. In Paris Ferrer frequented anarchist clubs, read anarchist literature, and met many prominent anarchists. By the end of the 1890s he had developed an educational philosophy based upon the sovereignty of the individual, free from institutional restraints. "The real educator," Ferrer wrote, "is he who can best protect the child

against his (the teacher's) own ideas . . . who can best appeal to the child's own energies."¹⁰⁹

Influenced by the educational theories of French anarchist Jean Grave who championed libertarian education, Ferrer opened a "free" school in Barcelona in 1900. His desire was to bring literacy and enlightenment to the laboring classes. Having also come under the influence of Rousseau, Kropotkin, and Tolstoy, Carl Zigrosser, who taught English at the Ferrer Center, had corresponded with Kropotkin, and under his influence expressed a desire "to know people, all kinds of people in every walk of life . . . I felt that there was more to society than its upper segment."¹¹⁰ This belief that the richest of life experiences were to be found among the lower classes was shared, it seems, by artists and anarchists alike.

Ferrer shifted the emphasis on instruction to the process of learning, from rote memorization to teaching by example and experience. He stressed individuality, spontaneity, and self realization. There were no awards or prizes, nothing to stimulate rivalry which he believed encouraged deception rather than sincerity. Ferrer's disapproval of competition may have stemmed from nineteenth century French political thought, specifically the Saint-Simonians who rejected self-serving aspects of individualism in favor of cooperation and purposeful social action that would benefit everyone. Such a position mirrored Henri's condemnation of medals and juries as

a threat to personal evolution and Emma Goldman's definition of anarchism as a "spirit of revolt against anything that hinders human growth."¹¹¹

The Spanish government accurately suspected Ferrer's schools were, in part, fronts for a revolutionary underground. In 1909 he was executed after being convicted of instigating an insurrection in Barcelona. His death provoked an international outcry and numerous associations sprang up in honor of his theories. The Francisco Ferrer Association in New York was quickly formed by two disparate organizations - the Thomas Paine National Historical Association and the Pro-Spanish Revolutionary Committee. The former was composed of American civil libertarians, the latter a group of foreign-born radicals out to overthrow the Spanish monarchy. At the Modern School "most of the students came from the ranks of the socially revolutionary."¹¹²

Anarchism was the guiding light of the Modern School of the Ferrer Center and its ties to European revolutionary politics were acknowledged. The Center believed the Paris Commune to be a model of social revolution and even hosted a centennial celebration of the birth of Mikhail Bakunin. The alliance of art and anarchy was also openly acknowledged by Bayard Boyesen, the director of the center who had been fired from the English faculty at Columbia University for his involvement with Emma Goldman. His ideals for art were the

focus of a newspaper article entitled "Sees Artists' Hope in Anarchic Ideas."

The interview for the article was conducted at the Ferrer Center when an exhibition of Henri's paintings had been placed throughout the hallways of the school. Boyesen praised Henri, stating that he stood for freedom. "Only in revolutions has there been an open door for art," he stated. Condemning Anthony Comstock, as had Henri, Boyesen admonished his audience to read "the Russian makers of literature . . . Tolstoy of whom the Government was afraid." Furthermore, he declared, "the artist demands absolute freedom for the play of his imagination that dominates him and drives him on and right there he joins hands with philosophic anarchy."¹¹³

In keeping with anarchism's belief that life should not be controlled by logic and reason, many of these nineteenth-century thinkers who influenced Ferrer were fond of using the spontaneous development of a tree or flower as a metaphor for the proper nurturing of a student. Proudhon implied organicism when he stated his belief that government interrupts the natural order inherent in society. Such references attest to anarchism's own use of the popular turn-of-the-century concept of organicism to explain or support their educational theories.

In a speech given in 1907 to the International Anarchist Congress in Amsterdam, Goldman spoke of her hopes for a

society "based primarily on freedom . . . the harmony of organic growth . . . the complete whole we admire in the flower . . . the organized activity of free human beings . . . [which] results in the perfection of social harmony, which we call Anarchism."¹¹⁴ Perhaps under the influence of Kropotkin, whom Emma Goldman described as having had the "deepest faith in the people, in their innate possibilities to reconstruct society in harmony with their needs," she termed anarchism a new social organism that "leaves posterity free to develop its own particular systems, in harmony with its needs."¹¹⁵

Henri discussed art in similar organic terms (see Chapter 2, p.82), writing that "art can never be created from the outside in . . . for successful flowering it demands deep roots . . . art will grow as individual men develop . . ." ¹¹⁶ In another article he declared, "We only ask for each person the freedom which we accord nature."¹¹⁷ Even Henri's use of the rhetoric of organicism thus has ties to anarchist discourse.

The Modern School afforded a perfect atmosphere for Henri to utilize his non-intrusive teaching approach with its lack of emphasis on technical fundamentals. The avant-garde artist Man Ray (1890-1976), one of Henri's students at the Ferrer Center, recalled:

He never criticized our works, he'd pick up a drawing of

ours that would inspire him to talk-and he'd say: don't take what I say literally today, because tomorrow I'll say the contrary of what I said today . . .¹¹⁸

Henri's seeming ambivalence was reiterated by his declaration that "there is nothing new in my philosophy but the truth, which is always new."¹¹⁹ What might appear to be double talk actually derived from Henri's unwillingness to project authority and makes perfect sense when one considers the anarchist context of such a comment. Just as Proudhon proudly displayed the fluctuations and contradictions within his thought as evidence of his vitality, Henri disregarded technical flaws which he deemed a desired sign of life in his art and that of his students.

The Modern School was not only a place of instruction but an exhibition site. Adolf Wolff, a Belgian poet and sculptor and fervent participant in the Ferrer Center, reported on the school's inaugural art exhibition:

. . . Had the walls eyes, as they are said to have ears, they would probably have been scandalized by the efforts in color and in black and white . . . These efforts at self expression through the medium of color and line were the work of young men and women who take advantage of the opportunity the Modern School offers them to use their eyes and their hands in accordance with the dictates of their own minds and hearts; they work under the guidance and inspiration of Robert Henri and George Bellows, the sum total of whose teaching amounts to the command, 'Be thyself.'¹²⁰

Wolff proclaimed that the importance of the exhibition lay not in any display of artistic virtuosity but in the "variety of personalities manifested . . . the tendency of each one to be

himself or herself." He concluded by stating that "the only thing that is sacred private property is our individuality, and he who tries to put his hands on it is a thief . . . "121 Leonard Abbott, another teacher at the Ferrer Center, wrote about the exhibition which "attracted large crowds and interested criticism."¹²²

In this same article Wolff countered a statement made by the artist Marius De Zayas that had appeared in a recent issue of Alfred Stieglitz's Camera Work. Speaking on his own behalf as well as his associates at the Ferrer Center, Wolff offered a rebuttal to De Zayas's declaration that art was dead:

. . . art is alive . . . art will come forth into the world, reincarnated, reborn, to live in a world with a new faith, a faith built on fact, not on fiction, in a world of peace that is not war taking a nap. Its patrons, its admirers, shall no longer be a handful of exploiting tyrants but a world of appreciative free men and free women.¹²³

The utopian implications of Wolff's statement are indicative of the anarchist connection with Henri de Saint-Simon previously mentioned in connection with Henri's faith in the power of art to change society. Saint-Simon believed that artists were best suited to further the betterment of mankind, writing, "What a most beautiful destiny for the arts, that of exercising over society a positive power, a true priestly function, and of marching forceful in the van of all the intellectual faculties . . . "124 Henri similarly hoped that the art students would believe their works were of "vital

importance to the world."¹²⁵ Furthermore, Henri looked forward to a future in which art would be "absolutely necessary for the progress of our existence."¹²⁶

During his years at the Ferrer Center, Henri openly supported several anarchist causes. In 1916 he was part of a committee which fought for the release of Emma Goldman when she was arrested for lecturing on birth control. On the eve of her arrest, Henri also attended a pretrial banquet at a New York hotel in a show of support for his longtime friend. In 1917 he served on a committee to prevent Alexander Berkman's extradition to California where he faced charges of complicity in a San Francisco bombing case.

The Ferrer Center was a gathering place for labor militants and syndicalists, whose ideologies rooted in French anarchism would have undoubtedly been familiar to Henri. During his association with the Ferrer Center, Henri became acquainted with the controversial American labor leader Bill Haywood (1869-1928). Haywood, one of the founders of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), was a major instigator of the Lawrence textile strike of 1912. When the Ferrer Center championed the Lawrence strike, Henri and Bellows donated paintings in its support. Following his successful orchestration of that walkout Haywood paid Henri a call in his Gramercy Park studio. The newspapers were alerted of the visit and noted that Henri and Haywood had certain

characteristics in common - "one wished to force life into contemporary art and the other force people through 'industrial structures' into life."¹²⁷

Hutchins Hapgood, a founding member of the Ferrer Association and professional writer with anarchist sympathies, described Haywood's visit to Henri's studio in a New York newspaper. This account, full of vague illusion, appeared in Hapgood's autobiography:

What did he [Haywood] find at Henri's? Did he find a new view of life, a way in which he could refresh himself by another kind of reality, the reality of art? If he had been allowed to look quietly at the pictures . . . he might have got this freshening broadening view of new life. But, no, he was not allowed to. The people in the studio gathered around him and made him talk about the strike. He was still the man of one thing. Henri and his friends wanted new life, too. They wanted Haywood's life.¹²⁸

Given Hapgood's association with anarchism, it is not surprising that he entitled a newspaper article about Henri and his students "The Insurgents in Art." In that article Hapgood drew parallels between their art and radical politics, stating that "just as in politics the insurgents seek a simple principle which seems revolutionary, but is a harkening back to a simpler and clearer more fundamental principle." In that article, Hapgood quoted Henri's reference to the struggle among his colleagues in New York "for principles as opposed to rules and regulations," evoking the very core of anarchism.¹²⁹

Art and anarchy were mentioned together in other American

art criticism of the early twentieth century. In an article on the Exhibition of Independent Artists in New York in 1910, the reviewer wrote disparagingly of "all the lads and lasses, the insurgents, revolutionists, anarchs [sic], socialists, all the opponents to any form of government, to any method of discipline, are to be seen at this vaudeville of color" He continued to lament the lack of draftsmanship and composition of those who "tug at the coattails" of painters like Henri, Davies, Lawson, Glackens, Bellows. "But the gesture is brave," he added, "as they say in Parisian anarchist circles when some imbecile throws a bomb at a gendarme."¹³⁰

Henri's anarchist sympathies were evident into the 1920s when he signed a petition calling for justice in the famous Sacco and Vanzetti case.¹³¹ When the two Italian immigrants were convicted of murder and executed an outcry arose from socialists, radicals, and many prominent intellectuals throughout the world who believed they had been condemned because of their ties to anarchism. Rather than merely sign his name on the appeal to Massachusetts Governor Alvan Tufts Fuller, Henri inscribed it with the following:

Where such a great proportion of the public believe these men have not full justice I join in an appeal to you for a public investigation of the entire case. I am an American and my father and mother and fathers were Americans and I like to think that in America so great a doubt as to guilt will always mean a thorough investigation.¹³²

Henri's overt involvement with anarchist causes and organizations are only part of his connection to the anarchist movement. Far more subtle relationships exist between the tenets of the movement and his theories of art.

Anarchist Theory and Henri's Aesthetics

There were other places in New York besides the Modern School of the Ferrer Center where individuals interested in social, intellectual, and artist revolt congregated. One such site was the Greenwich Village apartment of Mabel Dodge (1879-1962), another active member of the anarchist circle in New York in the early 1900s and friend of Emma Goldman. When journalist and fellow liberal Lincoln Steffens (1866-1936) first suggested to Dodge that she utilize her gift for bringing people together by organizing evening salons, she reproached him with the reminder that "I thought we don't believe in 'organization' . . . organizations and institutions are only the crystals of living ideas-and as soon as an idea is crystallized, it is dead."¹³³

Dodge's comment typified the anarchist rejection of formal structure and systematic theory. Bakunin, himself, had declared "I cleave to no system."¹³⁴ Her conviction that the power and impact of an idea is dissipated when it takes a final form parallels Henri's assertion that a work of art "that is finished is dead," suggesting anarchist implications

in Henri's very attitude toward the act of painting.¹³⁵ Such an viewpoint transferred to Henri's feelings toward formalized exhibitions. Concerning the possibility of subsequent Independent Exhibitions, the first of which he helped organize in 1910, Henri wrote, "I have not the slightest doubt that the idea will go on, but I personally have no interest whatever in forming it into a society, and if an institution were formed and I were to become a member of it, I would probably be the first man to secede from it . . . the thing that interests me . . . is the idea of independence . . ." ¹³⁶

Even Henri's approach to painting - to work quickly to achieve a desired result - has political parallels in anarchism's advocacy of direct action, epitomized by strikes. He told his students:

Work with great speed. Have your energies alert, up and active. Finish as quickly as you can. There is not virtue in delaying . . . Do it all in one sitting if you can. In one minute if you can.¹³⁷

Just as there was no place in anarchy for methodical and systematic social change by means of patient campaigning and voting neither was there a place in Henri's teaching methods for detailed preparatory sketches nor careful under-painting in order to predetermine a painting's outcome.¹³⁸

To better appreciate the social and moral implications of Henri's advocacy of a direct and rapid approach to painting in the early twentieth century, one need only review a sampling

of commentary on the subject of style by contemporary artists, writers, and critics. The French writer André Gide (1869-1951) pondered the connection between morality and artistic style. "The qualities which it pleases us to call classic are chiefly moral qualities," he wrote, and if classicism is "a harmonious bundle of virtues" then what do we connote with nonclassical art?¹³⁹ A critic writing in 1907 discussed a "quality of restraint" in American painting, a restraint that was "a desideratum of the fine arts, as it is of the refined social life."¹⁴⁰

In his book "The Classic Point of View" of 1911, the academic American painter Kenyon Cox (1856-1919), defended traditional values in art, defining the goal of painting to be "a beautiful surface, beautifully divided into interesting shapes, enlivened with noble lines, varied with lovely and harmonious color." The classic spirit, Cox reminded the reader, demanded an art with "disciplined emotion and individuality restrained by law." For Cox, aesthetics found its rationale in ethical terms. In his negative response to the Armory Show, Cox referred to modern painters as "artistic anarchists" and declared "there are still commandments in art as in morals."¹⁴¹ "Poor Kenyon Cox," declared Henri, ". . . he is industrious but he has no wit, no will."¹⁴²

Cox's use of such terms as "noble lines" and "restrained by law," to describe art implies an alliance between social

and political values of order and control and painterly values. His declaration that the classic spirit "loves impersonality more than personality" is the antithesis of Henri's anarchist philosophy of art grounded in humanism and individualism.¹⁴³ "The things that spring from the strength of your nature," he told his students, "its great passions of life, must come into your work at last!"¹⁴⁴

Anarchism as a movement began to wither after WWI. By that time, appreciation for the paintings by members of the Ashcan School had dwindled, a fact which has been largely attributed to the Armory Show of 1913 and its introduction of modern art to America.¹⁴⁵ While it is true that works by such artists as Vincent van Gogh, Georges Braque, Paul Cézanne, and Marcel Duchamp immediately rendered the subject matter and style of Henri and his circle passé, this alone does not account for the dissolution of the group. Their optimistic humanist vision had been part of a utopian hope that became hopelessly outdated when World War I broke out.

Near the end of his life, Henri succumbed to the pessimism that was rampant after the first World War. His hope of a world infiltrated by an "art spirit" dissipated as did the momentum of the anarchist movement. When asked in 1927 to become a director of a society to develop a Bureau of Art in Washington, Henri graciously declined and cautioned those involved. "Don't be too sure mixing art with politics

will prove beneficial to artists. Of course it would be if an ideal art society could be hoped for, but as things are now art mixed with politics might prove a very negative compound.¹⁴⁶

Notes

1. Emma Goldman, Living My Life, 529.
2. Quoted in C.A.Z. (Carl A. Zigrosser), "Henri and Manship," The Little Review, II (October 1915): 39.
3. Violet Organ, "Robert Henri, His Life and Letters," unpublished manuscript, p. 122, collection of Mrs. Janet LeClair. Violet Organ was the sister of Henri's second wife Marjorie. I am grateful to Mrs. LeClair for sharing a copy of this portion of the manuscript with me.
4. Cited in Dianne Perry Vanderlip, John Sloan/Robert Henri, Their Philadelphia Years (1886-1904), exh. cat. (Philadelphia: Moore College of Art Gallery, 1 October - 12 November 1976), 31.
5. John Sloan's diary entry for November 3, 1908 published in Bruce St. John, ed., John Sloan's New York Scene: From the Diaries, Notes, and Correspondence, 1906-1913 (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 258.
6. Hutchins Hapgood, "The Insurgents in Art," New York Globe and Commercial Advertiser, 24 October 1911, p. 6.
7. "An Interview with Stuart Davis," Archives of American Art Journal 31, no. 2 (2 November 1991): 7.
8. Donald Kuspit, "Individuality and Mass Identity in Urban Art," Art in America LXV (September/October 1977): 69. Kuspit is actually referring to the art of the Eight in general. He further writes that this individualism is "transcendental in origin," emphasizing the importance for Henri and his circle of Emerson and Thoreau.
9. Paul Avrich, The Modern School Movement (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 147.
10. Patricia Mainardi, The End of the Salon, Art and the State in the Early Third Republic (New York: Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 1993), 20, 21.
11. The Third Republic came into existence following the Paris Commune of 1871 when radical Republicans rebelled and

set up an independent municipal government for two months. Government troops recaptured the city but the Royalist majority in the assembly failed to restore the monarchy when differences between the Bourbon and Orleanist pretenders to the throne could not be resolved. In 1875 the Republicans won enough votes to approve a republican constitution.

12. Chamber of Deputies was the "lower" of the two legislative bodies in the evolving system of government during the Third Republic.

13. The title of the journal was La Révolté from 1885-1887, then La Révolte 1887-1894, and finally Les Temps Nouveau, 1895-1914, all published in Paris.

14. Cited in Eugenia W. Herbert, The Artist and Social Reform in France and Belgium, 1885-1898 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), 130.

15. Jacques Monferrier, "Symbolisme et anarchie," Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de la France LXV (1965), 237, cited in Jerrold Seigel, Bohemian Paris, Culture, Politics, and the Boundaries of Bourgeois Life, 1830-1930 (New York: Viking Press, 1986), 311.

16. "'I Paint My People' Is Robert Henri's Art Key," Brooklyn Eagle, 12 February 1916, cited in Homer, 150.

17. Also known as the International Workingmen's Association, the First International first met in Switzerland in 1869. At their initial meeting the anarchists were outvoted by the socialists.

18. Just after the Franco Prussian war, radical Republicans in Paris set up an independent municipal government known as the Commune of Paris of 1871. After two months and bloody street fighting which resulted in 20,000 deaths, government troops recaptured the city.

19. In Kropotkin's Paroles d'un révolté, published in Paris in 1885, he challenged artists to "show the people the ugliness of contemporary life" in the hope it would inspire them to better their condition. See Eugenia W. Herbert, The Artist and Social Reform in France and Belgium, 1885-1898 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), 13.

20. Henri, "An Appreciation by an Artist," 415. Henri's acquaintance with Kropotkin's teachings may have occurred after his trips to France. The Russian anarchist was highly revered at the Ferrer Center where Henri taught from 1911-

1918.

21. In 1888 the labor unions in Paris founded a labor exchange called the Bourse de Travail to compete with the "bureaux de placement" which operated in the interests of the employers. The anarchists quickly took control of many branches of the Bourse de Travail in order to place more economic power in the hands of the workers.

22. The Salon des Indépendents was a vast jury free exhibition that was held annually in Paris beginning in 1884. It was intended to replace the Salon des Refusés which had terminated several years before. Numerous other independent art exhibitions arose in the 1880s including those sponsored by the Union liberale des Artistes Français and the Société nouvelle de Peinture et de Sculpture.

23. The schism of 1890 which finally broke the stronghold of the Salon exhibition began when Meissonier, who had chaired the Fine Arts jury at the Universal Exposition of 1889, proposed that foreign award winners should be allowed automatic entrance into the Salon with having their works submitted to a jury. There was tremendous resistance to this idea, led by William Bouguereau and Tony Robert-Fleury who feared that if the five hundred medalists from the Exposition were automatically admitted entrance to the Salon, there would be no more room for anyone else. Henri referred to the opposing sides in social and political terms, calling them "the aristocrats of art against the strugglers." No compromise or solution was reached and by the summer of 1890 Paris hosted two "official" Salons.

24. "What dynamism and what dynamite!" proclaimed seventeen year old Francis Jourdain after viewing Ibsen's "Enemy of the People. What bombs did we not intend to explode, charged with new explosives, new art . . . ". Cited in Richard D. Sonn, Anarchism and Cultural Politics in Fin de Siecle France (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 76. Henri was a great fan of Ibsen and encouraged his students to attend his plays in New York. The playwright, considered the father of modern drama, was famous for his portrayals of psychological and social problems. His plays marked an end to the romantic and artificial melodramas popular in the nineteenth century.

25. "Painters, poets, musicians, if you have understood your real mission and the interests of art itself, come then, put your pen, your brush, your burin in the service of revolution. Tell us in your vivid style or in your thrilling

pictures the titanic struggle of the people against their oppressors . . . Show the people the ugliness of real life, and make us understand the cause of ugliness . . ." Peter Kropotkin, Paroles d'un revolté (Paris, 1885), 66,67, quoted in Shearer West, Fin de Siecle, 36.

26. Robert L. Herbert and Eugenia W. Herbert, "Artists and Anarchism: Unpublished Letters of Pissarro, Signac and Others," Burlington Magazine 102 (November 1960): 60, cited in West, 47.

27. Félix Fénéon, Le Symboliste (Paris, 1886), cited in West, 36.

28. Henri, The Art Spirit, 15; and Henri, "Robert Henri Calls Art the Manifestation of the Race," 7.

29. The Masses, first published in New York in January 1911, was a Socialist magazine, yet its articles covered a multitude of topics and represented a variety of radical political viewpoints including anarchism. In an editorial manifesto, The Masses billed itself as a "Magazine directed against Rigidity and Dogma." See Avrich, The Modern School Movement, 130.

30. Several scholars have explored the political aspects of the subject matter found in Sloan's paintings. See, for example, Joseph J. Kwait, "John Sloan: An American Artist as Social Critic, 1900-1917," Arizona Quarterly 10 (Spring 1954): 52-64; Patricia Hills, "John Sloan's Images of Working-Class Women: A Case Study of the Roles and Interrelationships of Politics, Personality, and Patrons in the Development of Sloan's Art, 1905-16," Prospects 5 (1980):156-196; and Suzanne L. Kinser, "Prostitutes in the Art of John Sloan," Prospects 9 (1985): 231-254.

31. See John Sloan, "Early Days," in Helen Farr Sloan, ed., American Art Nouveau: The Poster Period of John Sloan (Lock Haven, Pa.: privately published, 1967), unpagued.

32. George Bellows, "'The Art Spirit,' By Robert Henri In Which He Makes Clear the Relationship of Art to Life," Arts & Decoration XX (December 1923): 87.

33. Morgan Russell letter to Robert Henri, 21 June 1925, BRBL.

34. Henri letter to Morgan Russell, 6 March 1926, BRBL. "Synchromies" referred to synchromism, the style developed by Russell and Stanton MacDonald-Wright (1890-1973) in Paris in

1913. Russell and MacDonald-Wright were interested in the use of color to generate form, meaning, and composition. Henri's personal library contains a program to the Synchromist exhibition in Paris in 1913. It is inscribed by Morgan Russell to "A mon cher maitre, Robert Henri."

35. Arthur B. Frost, Jr. letter to Robert Henri, 24 September 1906, BRBL.

36. Alice Klauber, "The Teachings of Robert Henri," unpublished manuscript, cited in Perlman, 140.

37. Henri letter to parents, 10 December 1888, BRBL.

38. Henri, letter to parents, 19 January 1889, BRBL

39. Henri letter to parents, 25 January 1889, BRBL.

40. Edouard Dujardin letter to his parents, 27 January 1889, formerly in the collection of Mme Marie Dujardin, cited in Joan Ungersma Halperin, Félix Fénéon, Aesthete & Anarchist in Fin-de-Siecle Paris (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), 204.

41. Convicted of treason in absentia, Boulanger committed suicide two years later.

42. I am grateful to Monsieur Claude Fagnen, Le Directeur des Archives départementales du Finistère, Quimper, France, for his insight on the nature of the meeting in Concarneau that Henri attended. Claude Fagnen letter to Linda Jones Gibbs, 19 August 1996.

43. Henri letter to parents, 20 August 1889, BRBL; this same entry appeared in a letter to William Taylor, 24 September 1889, BRBL. Taylor was a newspaper editor in Philadelphia who apparently asked Henri for permission to publish some of his letters. On October 4, 1890 Henri wrote to his parents "I had supposed that Mr. Taylor had ceased coming for letters since I have not received his papers. I have never received but two or three of them. I should be interested in seeing what he is making of them."

44. Homer, 48.

45. William Yarrow and Louis Bouche, eds. Robert Henri, His Life and Works (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1921), 22,23.

46. "Student Days of Robert Henri," unpublished manuscript, compiled from correspondences by Violet Organ,

Henri's sister-in-law, 30 January 1889, BRBL.

47. The Haymarket affair was a pivotal event in both anarchist and labor movements in the United States and brought anarchism to the attention of the American public. On May 1, 1886, 25,000 workers in Chicago walked off of their jobs, calling for better working conditions including an 8 hour work day. Two days later their numbers doubled and by the fourth day almost all Chicago was on strike. There were bloody encounters between the police and strikers, culminating at the McCormick Reaper Works where police and Pinkerton detectives shot a volley of ammunition through the crowd of strikers, killing and wounding several men. A peaceful protest meeting was called the following evening in Haymarket Square. During the last speech, police arrived and ordered the meeting closed. The speaker, Samuel Fielden, objected on the grounds that the meeting was without incident and was almost over. The police captain insisted.

A bomb was thrown into the police causing severe injuries. The officers opened fire on the crowd, killing and wounding numerous civilians as well as some of their own men. Eight Chicago anarchists were brought to trial and convicted of murder. In November of 1887 four were hanged. Six years later the governor pardoned the three survivors due to lack of evidence that any one of them had actually thrown the bomb. See Alexander Berkman, "The Causes of Chicago Martyrdom," Mother Earth, (November 1912): 283 and Paul Avrich, The Haymarket Tragedy (Princeton University Press, 1984), xi, xii.

48. "Student Days of Robert Henri," 6 March 1890, BRBL. Henri was undoubtedly objecting to the anarchists' violent acts and not their right to strike. The "other conditions" to which he referred that might precipitate his own hanging was clarified when he added, "all Democrats in America might hang after a Republican election."

49. Henri diary, 25 April 1890, Reel 885, AAA, SI; a "Gatling" gun was a machine gun with a number of barrels arranged cylindrically, which are fired successively when rotated by means of a crank.

50. Henri diary, 30 April 1890, Reel 885, AAA, SI.

51. Henri diary, 1 May 1 1890, Reel 885, AAA, SI. Benjamin Fox was an American artist with whom Henri became friendly at the Julian Academy.

52. Henri letter to parents, 3 May 1890, BRBL.

53. Henri letter to parents, 9 May 1890, BRBL.

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid.

58. "Student Days of Robert Henri," 9 May 1890, BRBL.

59. Henri letter to parents, 30 August 1890, BRBL.

60. Henri letter to parents, 13 September 1890, BRBL.

61. Henri letter to parents, 30 January 1891, BRBL.

62. Henri letter to parents, 25 April 1891, BRBL.

63. ". . . ce n'est ni pour l'honneur, ni pour la patrie, que les mauvaises sociétés veulent avoir des soldats. La vérité est qu'il en faut pour défendre les fortunes scandaleuses . . . pour protéger les exploiters, les accapareurs . . . les vrais voleurs! . . . L'honneur consiste à refuser de servir . . . l'honneur est dans la désobéissance, dans la rébellion, dans la révolte . . ." See "Le 1er Mai," La Révolte, Organe Communiste-Anarchiste, 8 May 91, no pagination. I am grateful to Marianne Enckell of C.I.R.A. (Centre International De Recherches Sur L'Anarchisme) in Lausanne, Switzerland for identifying the published source of the proclamation. Marianne Enckell letter to Linda Jones Gibbs, 10 October 1996.

64. Ibid. "L'homme est libre! Par . . . l'expérience de la liberté, l'homme apprendra ce qui lui est bon, utile, sage, prospère, fructueux; et, de même dans l'ordre moral, s'il était libre, il s'éloignerait du mal, puisque le mal est funeste à son existence. L'autorité empêche l'homme de savoir ce qui lui est bien, la liberté le lui apprendra. C'est parce que, le anarchistes, nous sommes les seuls à savoir cela, que nous avons songé à venir le 1er mai devant votre caserne du Château-d'Eau . . . Vous voyez bien que vous êtes des esclaves! Délivrez-vous! Délivrez-nous! A vendredi!"

65. Henri letter to parents, 25 April 1891, BRBL.

66. Ibid.

67. Henri, The Art Spirit, 84.

68. Henri letter to parents, 2 May 1891, BRBL.

69. Ibid. Rochegrosse had studied with Gustave-Rodolphe Boulanger and Jules-Joseph Lefebvre at the Académie Julian.

70. Edward Bellamy, Looking Backward, 2000-1887 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967), 102.

71. Ernest Seton Thompson letter to Robert Henri, 20 June 1891, BRBL.

72. Bellamy, 200, 201.

73. Henri letter to parents, 1 May 1891, BRBL.

74. Henri letter to parents, 2 May 1891, BRBL.

75. The most dramatic and controversial passage in the history of French anarchism occurred between March 1892 and June 1894. During that time there were eleven dynamite explosions in Paris in which nine people were killed. These acts of terrorism culminated with the assassination by an anarchist of the head of the republic, President Carnot. Several assassins were executed and repressive laws were passed against revolutionary groups. The anarchist movement underwent fundamental changes, emerging in a more moderate form, committed to participating in constructive rather than destructive acts.

76. Henri, letter to parents, undated, BRBL.

77. Henri letter to parents, 6 July 1893, BRBL.

78. Sandoz, 317.

79. Mikhail Bakunin, God and The State (Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1916; reprint 1971), 9.

80. Ibid., 33.

81. Ibid., 56, 57.

82. Henri diary, 17 October 1898, Reel 885, AAA, SI.

83. Henri letter to parents, 20 February 1899, BRBL.

84. Henri, letter to parents, 26 February 1899, BRBL.

85. The Dreyfus affair exposed anti-Semitism in the army and generated extraordinary political and social controversy, polarizing the liberal, intellectual, and progressive elements

in the government against the Roman Catholic Church, the army, and the conservative political climate. The case influenced the election of a more liberal French government in 1899 and helped bring about the decline of the French military's power and prestige and the separation of Church and State.

The artists who sided with Dreyfus included Claude Monet, Camille Pissarro, Paul Signac, Maximilian Luce, Félix Vallotton, and the American Mary Cassatt. Monet actually signed a Manifesto of the Intellectuals on Dreyfus's behalf. Those artists who joined the anti-Dreyfus side included Paul Cézanne, Auguste Rodin, Pierre Auguste Renoir, and Edgar Degas. See Linda Nochlin, The Politics of Vision, Essays on Nineteenth Century Art and Society (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), 141.

86. Henri letter to parents, 15 August 1899, BRBL.

87. Henri letter to parents, 12 August 1899, BRBL.

88. Ibid.

89. Henri letter to parents, 23 August 1899, BRBL.

90. Henri letter to parents, 12 September 1899, BRBL. Henri was, of course, referring to Zola's famous open letter "J'Accuse" in which he attacked French officials for persecuting Dreyfus.

91. American anarchism was rooted in both native and immigrant tradition. Immigrant anarchism took form in 1880 with the split between revolutionaries and reformists in the Socialist Labor party which consisted primarily of German immigrants centered in Chicago. After the famous Haymarket affair (see n.47) American prejudice against anarchism escalated and there was little anarchist violence in the United States. Two notable exceptions were Alexander Berkman's attempt on the life of financier Henry Clay Frick in 1892 and the assassination of President William McKinley in 1901 by the American born son of Polish immigrants.

92. Avrich, 43,44.

93. Robert Henri, "An Appreciation by an Artist," Mother Earth 1 (March 1915): 415.

94. Goldman, Anarchism and Other Essays, 182.

95. Henri diary, 30 January 1911, Reel 885, AAA, SI.

96. Emma Goldman, Living My Life, 528.

97. Mother Earth was a monthly magazine devoted to anarchist ideals in life and literature published by Emma Goldman from 1906-1917. It was created to fill the void left when the weekly anarchist journal Free Society suspended publication in 1904.

98. Goldman, Living My Life, 529. In 1934, Violet Organ, Henri's sister-in-law and heir to his estate, reviewed the large cache of unsold paintings after his death and destroyed over five hundred works. Among them was the portrait of Emma Goldman.

99. Drinnon, 160.

100. Goldman, Anarchism and Other Essays, 69,71.

101. Drinnon, 159

102. Goldman, Anarchism and Other Essays, 69.

103. Henri, "As To Books and Writers," The (Philadelphia) Conservator XXVI May 1915): 40.

104. James Johnson Sweeny, Stuart Davis (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1945): 8,9.

105. Henri, "Progress in Our National Art," 388.

106. The school which Henri referred to was the Henri School of Art. Following a dispute with the administrators at the New York School of Art over perpetual delays in receiving his salary, he resigned and at the urging of his students opened his own school in January of 1909.

107. Goldman, Living My Life, 529. Henri's students at the Ferrer Center included Man Ray, Ben Benn, William Gropper, and Manuel Komroff. Max Weber and Samuel Halpert visited the school and participated in exhibitions.

108. While Henri taught primarily adults and a few older children at the Ferrer Center he did occasionally drop in on children's classes. One student recalled, "He would talk to us about Paris, about art." (Interview between Paul Avrich and Révolte Bercovici, September 29, 1977, cited in Avrich, The Modern School Movement: 152.) He took children from the center to see Isadora Duncan perform and also instigated a children's art exhibit in 1915 at the Macdowell Gallery in New York.

109. Quoted in Goldman, Anarchism and Other Essays, 169.

110. Carl Zigrosser, My Own Shall Come to Me (Haarlem: J. Enshedé en Zonen, 1971), 72-78, cited in Avrich, 116.

111. Ibid., 69.

112. Hapgood, Hutchins, A Victorian in the Modern World (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1939): 279.

113. "Sees Artists' Hope in Anarchic Ideas," New York Times (18 March 1912), p. 8.

114. cited in Drinnon, 106.

115. Emma Goldman, "Peter Kropotkin," Mother Earth (December 1912): 325.

116. Henri, "Progress in Our National Art," 388.

117. Henri, "My People," 460.

118. Arturo Schwarz, New York Dada: Duchamp, Man Ray (Munich Städtische Gallery, 1973), 79, quoted in Ann Uhry Abrams, "The Ferrer Center: New York's Unique Meeting of Anarchism and the Arts," New York History (July 1978): 320.

119. "William M. Chase Forced Out of N.Y. Art School: Triumph for the 'new Movement' Led by Robert Henri," New York American (20 November 1907), unpagued.

120. Adolf Wolff, "The Art Exhibit," The Modern School 4, (1913): 10.

121. Ibid.

122. Mother Earth, October 1913, cited in Avrich, The Modern School Movement, 152.

123. Ibid.

124. Egbert, Donald D., "The Idea of 'Avant-garde' in Art and Politics," American Historical Review 2 (December 1967): 343.

125. Henri, "Progress in Our National Art," 392.

126. Henri, "The New York Exhibition of Independent Artists," 161.

127. Cited in Charles H. Morgan, George Bellows, Painter of America (New York: Reynal & Company, 1965), 154.

128. Hapgood, 295.

129. Ibid.

130. "Around the Galleries," New York Sun (7 April 1910): 6. Unable to book a second exhibition of the Eight in Macbeth's gallery, Henri became anxious to keep the idea of the independent exhibition alive. Along with Walt Kuhn and John Sloan, Henri organized the Exhibition of Independent Artists which opened in April of 1910. At Henri's insistence, it was a non-juried show containing the works of 103 invited artists who worked in a variety of styles, many of whom were students of Henri.

131. The Sacco and Vanzetti case was a controversial murder investigation in Massachusetts that lasted from 1920 until 1927. Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, Italian immigrants who had arrived in the United States in 1908, were charged by the state with the murders of a paymaster and a guard and the theft of more than \$15,000 from a shoe factory. Their supporters claim that evidence implicating them was flimsy. The execution of Sacco, a shoe worker, and Vanzetti, a fish peddler, caused a world-wide protest.

132. Robert Henri papers, Sacco and Vanzetti petition, undated, BRBL.

133. Mabel Dodge held evening salons in her Manhattan apartment. Her good friend Lincoln Steffens commented that while she "managed her evenings . . . no one felt they were managed." Her salons commenced in 1913, the same time that Henri was teaching at the Ferrer Center. She attracted a similar group of individuals as the Ferrer Center - Socialists, Trade-Unionists, Anarchists, Suffragists, Psychoanalysts, I.W.W.'s, Birth Controlists, etc.; see Mabel Dodge Luhan, Movers and Shakers (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1963; reprint, 1985), 81. See also Paul Avrich, The Modern School, 129,130.

134. Edward Hallet Carr, Michael Bakunin (London, 1937), 167, cited in Paul Avrich, The Russian Anarchists (Princeton University Press, 1967), 21.

135. Henri, "The New York Exhibition of Independent Artists," 167. The desire to create a work of art that maintained a "sketchy" or unfinished appearance, also stems from nineteenth century French naturalist aesthetics. In his treatise Talks on Art, William Morris Hunt who had worked with the French landscapes painters at Barbizon, declared that "there is force and vitality in a first sketch from life which

the after-work rarely has." (p.3) "To finish, stop fooling over your work! Don't blister it all over with facts! (p.27) Naturalist writer Emile Zola found fault with a painting by Franoise Bonvin, writing he had put in too many minute details, "robbing the painting of its life." See Emile Zola, "Le Bon combat," in Gaetan Picon and Jean-Paul Bouillon, De Courbet aux Impressionnistes (Paris, 1974), 68, cited in Weisberg, The European Realist Tradition, 231.

136. Henri, "The New York Exhibition of Independent Artists," 170,171.

137. Henri, The Art Spirit, 26.

138. In 1909 Henri did become interested in a formulaic more premeditated approach to painting when he made the acquaintance of Hardesty Gillmore Maratta, an unsuccessful painter who developed a rationally ordered system of color harmony. Henri's experiments with Maratta's system, however, first resulted in small broadly painted color studies that over time became increasingly abstract. Maratta's method of arranging colors allowed Henri to visualize color harmonies easily and to assign to those colors equivalent notes on the musical scale. Analogies were drawn between musical notes, chords, and keys and the artists' use of value, hue, and intensity. Maratta also later got Henri interested in his newly developed geometric systems of proportion. Henri was quite diligent for a number of years in applying these principles of color and design to his paintings.

William Inness Homer explains the seeming contradiction between an anarchist mind and an adherence to a set of guidelines. "As a philosophical anarchist," Homer wrote, "Henri (and Bellows, too) might be thought to disdain the imposition of rigid systems of control upon any realm of activity. But actually just the opposite was the case when it came to art and design. As Professor Donald D. Egbert has pointed out, social radicals repeatedly tend to apply reason to human problems in a way thought to be completely scientific, and to praise those arts, especially the art of music, which best exemplify harmony created by human beings.'" Cited in Homer, 193.

139. Cited in Claude Roger Marx, Vuillard, His Life and Work (Paris: Franoise Maspero, 1983), 190.

140. Ernest Knaufft, "American Painting Today," Review of Reviews, XXXVI (Dec. 1907): 689, quoted in Alexander, Here the Country Lies, 18.

141. Kenyon Cox, "The 'Modern Spirit' in Art," Harper's Weekly, 57 (15 March), 1913): 10.

142. Klauber, "The Teachings of Robert Henri," cited in Perlman, 142.

143. Kenyon Cox, The Classic Point of View, 1911, reprint New York: Norton, 1980), 4.

144. Klauber, "The Teachings of Robert Henri," cited in Perlman, Robert Henri and His Life, 145.

145. The Armory Show was the popular name given to the International Exhibition of Modern Art sponsored by the Association of American Painters and Sculptors. It was held at the 69th Infantry Regiment Armory in New York City from February 17 - March 15. About one third of the 1300 works of art shown were done by foreign artists. The works represented a wide range of styles from neoclassicism and romanticism through Cubism, Fauvism, and various expressionist styles.

146. Violet Organ, "Robert Henri, His Life and Letters," 123.

CHAPTER 6

THE CULT OF SPONTANEITY:
HENRI AND THE VITALIST IMPULSE

[Edward] Davis recalled the way we polished up details in our art school days at the Pennsylvania Academy. Such a contrast to the free boldness that Henri encourages in pupils.

- John Sloan¹

Van Wyck Brooks, an early proponent of cultural nationalism in the United States, believed that the typical American personality was restrained and not emotional, self-conscious and not spontaneous. He maintained that American artists needed to overcome their rational inclinations and submit to experience in order to record it.²

Brooks certainly had an advocate for spontaneity in Robert Henri. In the introduction to The Art Spirit, critic Forbes Watson wrote that Henri "sought, above all things, to cultivate spontaneity."³ "Work with great speed," Henri told his students. "Have your energies alert, up and active." While working from a model he counseled them to "do it all in one sitting if you can. In one minute if you can."⁴ "It seems to me," Henri pondered, "that the present day man, with all his reverence for the old master, is interested in seizing other qualities, far more fleeting."⁵ John Sloan recalled that Henri "wanted the technique that could most quickly respond to

life."⁶ Henri practiced what he preached. His Street Scene with Snow, 1902, for example, was finished in one afternoon and was one of five major paintings completed over the next ten days. (Fig. 21)

Henri's interest in spontaneity may have been reinforced by the anarchist movement to which he had been exposed early in his career. The anarchist regard for spontaneity was manifest in a distrust of static institutions and positivist science. The free and spontaneous inner life of the individual was regarded by the anarchists as the greatest source of both pleasure and progress, and even social change.

Henri's emphasis on spontaneity can be linked not only to anarchism but to contemporary French philosophy. On numerous occasions his attraction to philosophical thought was evident. In January of 1890 Henri wrote in his Paris journal of "speaking philosophically for a couple of hours" with a fellow art student whom he described as one "who is more philosopher than artist. He is a great friend of mine. We often have long talks."⁷ Later that summer he remarked that he "wrote part of a letter home but got stalled philosophizing and gave it up."⁸ In later years Henri told his students "if you are to make great art it will be because you have become a deep thinker."⁹

Henri also declared that in addition to being creators and experimenters, "our artists must be philosophers" and that "art has relations to science, religions, and philosophies."¹⁰

His emphasis on the importance of the more philosophical aspects of being an artist was clarified throughout The Art Spirit. The book includes several "Letters of Criticism" specifically written to individuals but general enough to benefit a wide audience. In one such letter, Henri expounded for several pages on his philosophies of art. More than half way through the correspondence he informed his reader: "What is past in this letter is the most important part of my advice to you in regard to your work. What follows probably will be more technical."¹¹ Henri cautioned the artist to take their work as a "matter of vital importance . . . to the world, considering their technic [sic] as a medium of utterance of their most personal philosophy of life."¹²

Henri and Bergsonian Thought

Henri's art theories have historically been linked with a variety of American sources - the individualism of Ralph Waldo Emerson, the sensuality of Walt Whitman, the organicism of architect Louis Sullivan, even the manliness of Theodore Roosevelt. In recent years several scholars have mentioned a possible connection between Henri's early painting style and the turn-of-the-century doctrine known as vitalism, a term associated with the French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859-1941).¹³ Vitalism was the antithesis of the nineteenth century stoicism that so disturbed Van Wyck Brooks.

Bergson was publishing his ideas of a "fluid reality" at a time when French education was dominated by faith in science and progress upon which the militant secularism of the Third Republic rested. His belief that life was imbued with an organic consciousness that lay beyond biological and physical determinacy was a reaction against the positivist celebration of science. Bergson rebelled against the rigidities that materialists ascribed to reality and which seemed antithetical to the dynamic changing society in which he lived.

At the core of vitalism was the "*élan vital*," a phrase coined by Bergson to denote the essential interior element or dynamic energy in all living beings. Barbara Rose stated that "many of Henri's ideas regarding the virtue of a 'lively' style remind one of certain passages in the writing of Henri Bergson, in which he described the necessity for transmitting the *élan vital* or the life force in art."¹⁴ Douglas Picht evoked Bergson's notion of the *élan vital* when he determined that "Henri believed there was a persistent life force . . . which illuminated reality and inspired the artist to create."¹⁵ Judith Zilczer suggested a relationship between Henri's preoccupation with immediacy and Bergson's vitalism, defining the latter as a belief that life is "caused and sustained by a vital principle that is distinct from all physical and chemical forces and that life is, in part, self-determining

and self-evolving."¹⁶

Hubert Beck connected Bergson's concept of the *élan vital* or "reality as becoming" to the rapid and vigorous painting process advocated by Henri. "The most prominent characteristic of early urban Realism (the Ashcan School) is its vitalism," Beck observed.¹⁷ Bruce Chambers' description of Henri's early urban scenes as "the idea of the city energized and in flux" rather than a literal record of urban life recalls Bergson's notion of continuous duration, the ongoing unstable fluctuating sensations which constitute our felt impressions of the world.¹⁸ Matthew Baigell wrote about a more circuitous influence of Bergson on Henri via Walt Whitman. It was the energy of Whitman's poetry, Baigell maintained, with its relationship to Bergson's concept of the "*élan vital*" that had an effect upon Henri and other American artists of the early twentieth century.¹⁹

Despite these numerous allusions to a connection between Henri and Bergson, the striking parallel issues and ideas found in their philosophies have not been examined. Perhaps this is due to the minimal evidence directly linking the two men. However, as Shiv K. Kumar stated: "Bergson influenced many minds if only by putting into words something then dawning within the human consciousness." Kumar further explained: "In his (Bergson's) philosophy one finds an effective articulation of an intuitive sense of fluid reality

of which sensitive minds were becoming aware in the early years of this century."²⁰

Henri Bergson advanced a theory of evolution based on the spiritual dimension of human life that had widespread influence in a variety of disciplines. His earliest books, along with his many papers and lectures, had a tremendous impact on philosophers, artists, and writers of the 20th century.²¹ Although difficult to categorize, Bergson has been associated with the intuitionist school of philosophy because of his emphasis on intuition over intellect in striving for free creative action. Bergson never wrote a specific treatise on aesthetics. However, as Arthur Szathmary has indicated, "there is scarcely a work of his in which he does not display keen sensitivity to aesthetic issues."²²

Henri Bergson and Robert Henri were contemporaries. Bergson was born in Paris just six years before Henri's birth in Cincinnati, Ohio. The year after Henri came to France, Bergson published his first book, Time and Free Will, in which he described the relationship of creative freedom to human consciousness. During Robert Henri's second residency in France (1895-1897) the metaphysician became increasingly well known with the publication in 1896 of his second treatise, Mind and Matter. In this book, Bergson affirmed his belief in the reality of both spirit and matter and in memory as the site of their intersection.

Bergson lectured regularly in Paris in the 1890s, drawing large crowds that included socialists and anarchists. The latter were attracted to his focus on the experience of the individual and the importance of autonomy. "Every voluntary act in which there is freedom," Bergson wrote, "every movement of an organism that manifests spontaneity, brings something new into the world . . . in the composition of a work of genius, as in a simple free decision, we . . . stretch the spring of our activity to the utmost and create what no mere assemblage of materials could have given." Bergson would, in fact, refer to artists as authentic revolutionaries, breaking through the "encrustations of society."²³

The French labor movement was attracted to Bergson's emphasis on spontaneous action and the progressive political implications of the "élan vital." Very often translated as "vital impulse," the *élan vital* has a broad meaning in French to include momentum, surge, vigor. Vitalism's view of life as perpetual dynamic flux seemed to sanction the reform or removal of anachronistic institutions. Thus, in France, Henri may have heard reference to Bergson during discussions of art and politics, particularly during the latter 1890s.²⁴

If Bergson's theories somehow escaped Henri during his years in France, he certainly became aware of the philosopher later in New York. Bergson's ideas became very popular in Manhattan's intellectual circles after he delivered a series

of lectures at Columbia University in 1913. Hubert Beck recently wrote that New York in the 1910s inaugurated contact between the new ideas of Freud, Bergson, Baudelaire, and Nietzsche. "Although the relationship has not yet been analyzed in full detail," Beck observed, "there can be little doubt that there are strong ties between the Ashcan School and the literary rebels."²⁵

Hutchins Hapgood, the writer and journalist who befriended Henri at the Ferrer Center, heard Bergson speak at one such lecture. His reaction to Bergson is enlightening in terms of the attraction the philosopher held for those in the arts. "A lecture by Henri Bergson affected me as Post-Impressionist painting did," Hapgood exclaimed, "giving me an excited sense of freedom." He further stated:

As I listened to this French philosopher it seemed to me that I was in the presence of an artist rather than a metaphysician. He seemed intent, not on the logic of this thought, but on the picture which he was trying to convey . . . He was intensely striving to present the facts of consciousness, the conditions of our inner life.²⁶

The only concrete evidence of Henri's familiarity with Bergsonian thought, heretofore unmentioned in Henri scholarship, arose during an interview in 1919 with E. Ralph Cheyney for Touchstone magazine. During that exchange, Henri discussed his belief in such Bergsonian concepts as the life force and "élan vital" and their importance for creative freedom:

We must learn to let our vital energy operate unimpeded through us-whether we called it "Life Force" or "élan vital" "libido" or "God," it does not matter, if only we work its will. This simply means that we should learn to play, to let go. If we do this, we may be creators, artists.²⁷

Most of the investigations into the correlations between Bergson's theories and aesthetics have been in the realm of modernism. Scholars have examined the relationships between Bergsonian thought and Cubist, Futurist, and Orphist circles.²⁸ Such connections are natural ones given the fact that Cubist painters Albert Gleizes (1881-1953) and Jean Metzinger (1883-1956) and the Italian Futurist Gino Severini (1883-1966) openly appropriated Bergson's ideas, particularly those of continuous duration and qualitative space and time. These European modernists adopted Bergson's philosophy without his endorsement (which is not to say he did not help shape it) and attempted to engage him as an advocate for their art.

Bergson, however, tended to apply his intuitionist aesthetics to more traditional painting. The painter Jacques Emile Blanche (1861-1942) who had been to school with Bergson was asked by the editing committee of the Revue de Metaphysique et de Morale to paint the philosopher's portrait. Blanche recalled the following interchange with Bergson during a portrait sitting in 1912:

[A] polite little man in a lecturer's morning coat took his stand before me and started to question me about Cubism. The theoretical painters of the fourth dimension were at that time hoping that the philosopher of

intuition would provide the exegesis for their plastic ideas. Bergson, the plastic, led me gently towards the Gioconda's smile. Insidiously I sidetracked him towards Creative Evolution, but he, unperturbed, reverted to Leonardo and Raphael.²⁹

Bergson, in fact, applied his theories to the art of Leonardo da Vinci and, at the same time, denounced the impersonality of abstraction:

For Leonardo da Vinci, the painter's art does not consist in taking details each trait of the model in order to transfer it to the canvas and reproduce portion by portion, its materiality. Neither does it consist in picturing some impersonal and abstract type, where the model one sees and touches is dissolved into a vague ideality. True art aims at portraying the individuality of the model and to that end it will seek behind the lines, one sees the movement the eye does not see . . . the original intention, the fundamental aspiration of the person: a simple thought equivalent to all the indefinite richness of form and color.³⁰

Henri also wrote of the importance of recognizing the individuality of the model that lies beyond physical appearance and in the preservation of the original intent. "Realize that your sitter has a state of being, that this state of being manifests itself to you through form, color and gesture, that your appreciation of him has depended on your perception of these things . . . To start with a deep impression . . . to preserve this vision throughout the work; to see nothing else . . . will lead to an organic work."³¹

While Bergson did not resist alignment with more avant garde artistic trends he noted that such comparisons created the erroneous idea that he was opposed to more conventional

modes of art. Bergson's theories, as applied to art, do not require a withdrawal from objective reality but involve a realization of experience as a process of dynamic renewal. When Bergson stated that he felt art should seize upon the internal rhythms of reality he was not necessarily envisioning the abstractions of the modernist artists and writers who were attracted to his metaphysical theories. "Some discover affinities between [my ideas] and Symbolist poetry," he wrote in 1913. "That is quite possible, but that is how I am accused of . . . taking a position against the classical aesthetic, of introducing into art some subversive doctrines."³²

Before comparing Bergson's precepts with Henri's art philosophy it is important to review two of the French philosopher's theories that have relevance to aesthetics. They are: 1) his conception of reality as a flux of interpenetrated elements unseizable by the intellect; and 2) his belief that in ordinary perception we never fully grasp things as they are but see them as types (instead of seeing "the table" we see "a table"). Bergson felt it was the function of the artist to pierce through the veil that stands in the way of true perception of reality.

In order to successfully pierce the veil, Bergson believed the artist must transcend logic and intellect (artistic conventions) and attain access to one's deep self. "Let us concentrate attention on that which is the least

penetrated with intellectuality," he maintained. "Let us see, in the depths of our experience, the point where we feel ourselves most intimately within our own life."³³ Such comments can perhaps illuminate what Henri meant when he said that art was not an end in itself but a "means of living a life" because it brought the artist to an acute sense of self awareness.

Bergson asserted that the creative artist dives below the surface of things to expose the "stream of inner life."³⁴ Bergson's "stream of the inner life" or belief in a reality beyond materiality is comparable to Henri's reference to:

an undercurrent, the real life, beneath all appearances everywhere. It is this sense of the persistent life force back of things which makes the eye see and the hand move in ways that result in true masterpieces . . . The artist of the surface does not see further than material fact. He describes appearances and illustrates events. Some fractional part of him flows in the undercurrent. It is the best part of him. . . ³⁵

Henri's statement also recalls Bergson's discussion of da Vinci in which he wrote that "true art . . . will seek behind the lines [where] one sees the movement the eye does not see."³⁶

The idea of "continuous duration" - which so attracted the Cubists and Futurists - was defined by Bergson as the continuous process of the past which gnaws into the future and which swells as it advances. Bergson believed that we experience life not as a sequence of individual states but a

seamless whole in which each state is permeated by all the others. We are equipped with memory which preserves the past into the present and makes possible their mutual interpenetration. Henri evoked Bergson's concept of continuous duration when he wrote of nature in terms of its "sequences and sequences, untold numbers of them overlapping, intermingling."³⁷

Henri further recalled Bergsonian ideas when he wrote: "There seem to be moments of revelation, moments when we see in the transition of one part to another the unification of the whole. If one could but record the vision of these moments by some sort of sign! It was in this hope that the arts were invented." He also mentioned the challenge of painting a live model who is "consistent to one mental state during the moment of its duration" and who "is always changing . . . the picture must remain in the one chosen moment."³⁸ Such statements certainly warrant an analysis of the realist style of Henri in terms of Bergsonian philosophy as well as the splintered or fractured space of the Cubists and Futurists.

T.E. Hulme stated that Bergson's thoughts on aesthetics are of little use to art criticism as he does not use metaphors specifically invented for describing art. Hulme maintained, however, that Bergson's chief contribution to philosophy was his emphasis on the aesthetic aspect of

experience. Bergson's art theories are "of distinct advantages to anyone who wants to place art definitely in relation to other human activities," Hulme concluded, a concept of great interest to Henri.³⁹ For Bergson art and life were naturally aligned because both meant "invention, the creation of forms, the continual elaboration of the absolutely new."⁴⁰

Henri was engrossed in the making of art as it related to life and in the inherent parallels between the creative aspects of art making and "the fun of making (or creating) ourselves." "I am not interested in art as a means of making a living," Henri wrote, "but I am interested in art as a means of living a life."⁴¹ John Sloan shared similar attitudes, declaring "Art makes living worthwhile, it makes living, living . . . it brings life to life."⁴²

Bergson attempted to make metaphysics a rigorous discipline by employing intuition as a true method of inquiry. Indeed, under Bergson's influence, as well as that of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) and his doctrine of phenomenology, sensation and perception assumed a renewed status in the late nineteenth century.⁴³ Bergson argued for the use of intuition to gain truth and knowledge of the essence of things and gave persistent attention to the data of subjective experience. For Bergson, because reality is in a constant state of flux it can only be grasped by intuition, the "faculty able to emulate the generative activity of the *élan vital*."⁴⁴ "The true

artist," Henri wrote, "in viewing a landscape, renders it upon his canvas as a living thing."⁴⁵ Bergson believed intuition was not some mystical ethereal communion but rather was merely "clear seeing."⁴⁶

"Let us try to see, no longer with the eyes of the intellect alone," wrote Bergson, "which grasps only the already made and which looks from the outside, but with the spirit . . . "⁴⁷ This statement is reminiscent of Helen Appleton Read's recollection of Henri's belief that "art can never be created from the outside in" and his advice to his students to "paint from the inside out."⁴⁸ Henri shared Bergson's distrust of the intellect, stating that "intellectuality steps in and as the song within us is of the utmost sensitiveness, it retires in the presence of the cold, material intellect."⁴⁹

Bergson believed aesthetic methods should arise from a direct and lived intuition that was to be gained in the living of life; to intuit was to be caught up in life, to bathe "in the full stream of experience."⁵⁰ In a plea for the use of instinct over intellect, Bergson explained that the former enters into life instead of going all round life as does intellect. Evoking Tolstoy's view of art as a means of uniting mankind through the communication of shared feelings, Bergson wrote of this intention of life as:

just what the artist tries to regain . . . in breaking

down, by an effort of intuition, the barrier that space puts up between him and his model . . . we can conceive an inquiry . . . which would take in life in general as its object . . . by the sympathetic communication which it [intuition] establishes between us and the rest of the living, by the expansion of our consciousness which it brings about, it introduces us into life's own domain, which is reciprocal communication, endlessly continued creation.⁵¹

Bergson summoned the artist as an ally for his theories of intuition. He wrote in Perception du changement:

There have been for centuries men whose function it has been to see what we should not perceive under natural conditions. These are artists . . . What is the object of art if not to make us discover . . . outside and within ourselves, a vast number of things which did not clearly strike our senses.⁵²

Henri wrote a similar statement regarding intuitive vision and the true value of art. The frontispiece of The Art Spirit contains the following passage:

There are moments in our lives, there are moments in a day, when we seem to see beyond the usual. Such are the moments of our greatest happiness. Such are the moments of our greatest wisdom. If one could but recall his vision by some sort of sign. It was in this hope that the arts were invented . . . Sign-posts toward greater knowledge.⁵³

In another passage, Henri described this seeing "beyond the usual" as clairvoyant and that "it is only a rare few who are able to continue in the experience and find expression for it."⁵⁴

Zola scholar William J. Berg characterized this kind of extrasensory sight when he wrote that "Art in the last years of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth

century seemed less concerned with the intuition of pure, rational form . . . than with the expansion of that moment of contact with the exterior universe where separation and even identity are absorbed.⁵⁵ "After all," Henri declared, "the error rests in the mistaken idea that the subject of a painting is the object painted."⁵⁶

What was the subject of a painting for Henri if not the object painted? He made it very clear when he stated:

The object, which is back of every true work of art, is the attainment of a state of being, a state of high functioning, a more than ordinary moment of existence. In such moments activity is inevitable, and whether this activity is with brush, pen, chisel, or tongue, its result is but a by-product of the state . . . We will be happy if we can get around to the idea that art is not an outside and extra thing; that it is a natural outcome of a state of being.⁵⁷

Furthermore, Henri wrote that the "value of a work of art are the traces of states of greater living."⁵⁸ Bergson implied a similar state of high functioning. "Let us seek, in the depths of our experience, the point where we feel ourselves most intimately within our own life," he wrote. "Rare indeed are the moments when we are self possessed . . . it is then that our actions are truly free."⁵⁹

Both Henri and Bergson were interested in the search for fundamental reality discovered through the immediate awareness of one's own continuous self. "He who has contemplated," Henri remarked, "has met with himself, is in a state to see

into the realities beyond the surfaces . . .⁶⁰ Samuel Stumpf, in his history of philosophy, explained that for Bergson, evolution is creative because there is no preordained goal - life continued to revolve "producing genuinely novel events like an artist who never knows precisely what he will create until he has created his work."⁶¹

Henri evoked Stumpf's assessment of Bergson's ideas of creativity when he wrote "The brush stroke at the moment of contact carries inevitably the exact state of being of the artist at that exact moment into the work, and there it is, to be seen . . . and to be read later by the artist himself, with perhaps some surprise, as a revelation of himself."⁶² Thus, as Henri declared, the artist is surprised to discover self revelatory qualities of a work of art after its creation. John Sloan recalled Henri's "taking a stand that man's highest form of intellect is the subconscious - that it is discredited by being called 'instinct.'"⁶³

Bergson believed that in order to find truth one must intimately feel the pulsing movement of life itself. He felt that intellectualism, which affords only a superficial image of the self, must be replaced with a more empathetic relation to one's inner self. He sought complete identification between artist and subject in order to adopt "the very movement of the inward life of things."⁶⁴ As an artist searches for self knowledge, "transcending the intellect's

passive, fragmentary view of the self, one experiences the self in the process of self-creating . . ."⁶⁵ He further wrote that "we are all artisans of the moments of our lives - we are continually creating ourselves."⁶⁶ This statement is remarkably similar to a comment Henri made to his students: "Understand that in no work will you find the final word. The fun of living is that we have to make ourselves, after all."⁶⁷

Henri believed that the artist who rejects formula and rules stands at the juncture of openness and freshness. "The best art the world has ever had," he wrote, "is but the impress left by men who have thought less of making great art than of living full and completely with all their faculties in the enjoyment of full play. In every human being there is an artist," he declared, "and whatever his activity, he has an equal chance with any to express his . . . contact with life."⁶⁸

According to Bergson, the use of intuition enables one to grasp the physicality of an object but also its "spiritual fullness."⁶⁹ Bergson believed that

art . . . has no other object than to brush aside the utilitarian symbols [the habit of the intellect], the conventional and socially accepted generalities . . . everything that veils reality from us, in order to bring us face to face with reality itself . . . Art is certainly only a more direct vision of reality. But this purity of perception implies . . . a certain immateriality of life.⁷⁰

Bergson's commentary on the artist's search for the

"immateriality of life" brought about by a "purity of perception," is echoed by Henri's declaration to his students in 1901, just one year after Bergson's statement was published: "We have little interest in the material person or the material thing. All our valuation of them is based on the sensations their presence and existence arose in us."⁷¹

Several years earlier in 1897, the year after Bergson's Matter and Memory was published, Henri challenged his students at the School of Design for Women to "strive for an indefinite something." His remark elicited derision from at least one critic in Philadelphia who, not surprisingly, failed to comprehend the metaphysical underpinnings of such a statement. The writer responded to Henri's lecture by declaring that "A definite nothing is bound to result." Tracing Henri's cryptic phraseology to his French training, the critic continued:

[Henri] has not yet been able to rid his habiliments of the perfume of the Quartier Latin. When Henri shakes off his mysterious French and returns to his good old American self, he cannot help but acknowledge that there is absolutely nothing in 'indefinite somethings' but a desire to appall, and mystify the dear young creatures who would not recognize an 'indefinite something' if they saw it.⁷²

Henri was not trying to confound impressionable students but was attempting to articulate fairly sophisticated phenomenological ways of thinking about art.

Bergson believed the artist left the level "where things are crystallized . . . and, diving down into the inner flux,

comes back with a new shape which he endeavors to fix." He saw the surface of the mind as a sea in continual motion. True artists are capable of making a fixed model of one of these transient waves. "He [the artist] cannot said to have created it, but to have discovered it."⁷³ Bergson further explained that these images "can direct consciousness to a precise point where there is a certain intuition to seize on."⁷⁴

Henri similarly wrote of the artist "in pursuit of something more real which he knows but has not as yet fully realized, which appears, permits a thrilling appreciation, and is gone in an instant."⁷⁵ Spontaneity was thus important to Henri in the artist's ability to "fix" the new shape as it was initially experienced. For this reason Bergson and Henri both believed creative impulse should never be given over to regimentation and formula.

There is no finality in Bergson's vitalist consciousness - his belief in a reality composed of the intermingling or flux of experience rather than a sequence of separate discernible "stills" has aesthetic parallels in Henri's statement: "What a mistake we have made in life in seeking the finished product," he wrote. "A thing that is finished is dead. That is why the student interests me so. He is in the process of growth."⁷⁶ "No good work of art is really ever finished," he reiterated. "They only stop at good places."⁷⁷

Such an attitude can be linked back to Baudelaire ("a thing that is *finished* need not be *complete* at all") as well as forward to existential thought which embraced spontaneous modes of expression in the search for authenticity. This latter connection is not surprising given the fact that Bergsonian philosophy is deemed a precursor to the existential movement.⁷⁸

Henri believed that humanity could be divided into two groups - those who live with the "billions of ideas which clutter up the surface of life" and those who "tend toward a simplicity of sight, are conscious of a main current, are related to the past, see into the future, are not of the time present, but extend forward and back."⁷⁹ Henri's statement recalls not only Bergson's concept of continuous duration but his description of two distinct systems to which images belong. Bergson described them as a scientific one where images each possess an absolute value and the world of consciousness in which images depend upon memories which "supplant our actual perceptions, of which we then retain only a few hints, thus using them as 'signs' that recall to us former images."⁸⁰ For Henri, the arts are "the sign" which capture fleeting "moments of revelation," moments termed by Bergson as "clear seeing."

Memory, for Bergson, was not an inert faculty, a "putting

away recollections in a drawer," but rather a living functional focusing of energies.⁸¹ Henri echoed Bergson's views on time and memory, applying them to art when he wrote:

What were the signs in the landscape, in the air, in the motion, in our companionship, that so excited our imagination and made us so happy? If we only knew what were those signs we could paint . . . what it was to us . . . What is that memory? We do not remember it, nor did we see it as any single thing, place or time. Somehow times, places, things overlapped. Memories carried into each other.

On another occasion he complimented a student on a "beautiful street scene," adding that "I always felt [it] was done in a trance of memories undisturbed by the material presences."⁸²

"The most vital things in the look of a face or of a landscape endure only for a moment," Henri wrote. "Work should be done from memory. The memory is of that vital movement. The subject is now in another mood." Henri even suggested an art school where the model posed in one room and the work was done in another. "This class of work would demand such activity of mind," he wrote. In The Art Spirit he mentioned the "tentative efforts" made in "memory study" and advocated five, ten, and thirty minute poses which stimulate "the quick seizing of essentials." In such a "system of quick action," Henri stated, "seeing must be certain, selective, and the memory must be good."⁸³

For Bergson, a painting, as the product of creative intuition, is comparable to an organism whose growth is a

durational event. Such a belief evoked the notion of organicism, a common philosophical thread running through those minds to which Henri was attracted. (See Chapter 2, p.82 and Chapter 5, pp.241,242) Making reference to a novelist, Bergson wrote that "the harmony he seeks is a correspondence between the comings and goings of his mind and the phrasing of his speech, a correspondence so perfect that . . . there is nothing left by the flow of meaning . . . " ⁸⁴ Henri similarly insisted that "there must be the creation of specific technique . . . a method which belongs to the idea . . . " ⁸⁵

Historian T.J. Jackson Lears has called vitalism an "antimodern impulse" in its assault against secularism. Alluding to Bergson, Lears explained that antimodernism took many forms in America, including the "philosophical vitalist's rejection of all static systems in the name of the flux of 'pure experience.'" Amidst the social and psychic tensions of modern life was a search for "real life" or "authentic experience." Henri's ideals embody this turn of the century phenomenon described by Lears as a shift from a Protestant (or Puritan) ethic of salvation through self denial "to a therapeutic ideal of self-fulfillment in this world through exuberant health and intense experience." ⁸⁶ This Whitmanesque credo of self absorption (or what Lears terms "cult of inner experience") in the face of the increasing bureaucracy and

secularism of the twentieth century finds articulation in Henri's assertion that it is the rare art student "whose life is spent in the love and culture of his personal sensations, the cherishing of his emotions."⁸⁷

Likewise, Bergson emphasized the importance of the artist's direct sensual absorption of the world:

What is the purpose of art? If reality came and struck our senses and consciousness directly, if we could enter into immediate communication with things and with ourselves, I believe indeed that art would be useless, or rather that we would all be artists, since then our soul would vibrate continually in unison with nature. Our eyes, aided by memory, would select out of space and fix in time inimitable paintings.⁸⁸

Not unlike Lears' "cult of inner experience," Bergson believed that the artist must first get into a sympathetic mode with his or her own being before creating art. His philosophy, founded upon an immediate knowledge of the self, can elucidate Henri's dictum to paint life and not art. Both Bergson and Henri desired the convergence of art and life. Henri was constantly exhorting his students to leave the confines of the studio and experience life. Bergson believed that metaphysical intuition can only be gained after we have "won the confidence" of reality by "long fellowship with its superficial manifestations."⁸⁹

On one level Henri's desire to paint one's own time derived from the realism of Gustave Courbet. On a more philosophical plane, this notion of the convergence of art and

life was not about picture making at all but about being in touch with oneself and one's perceptions of reality. "An artist has got to get acquainted with himself just as much as he can," Henri declared. "Find out what you really like . . . what is really important to you. Then sing your song."⁹⁰

The modernist painter Stuart Davis, who had studied at Henri's School of Art, recalled:

The questions of finish, or prettiness were of no importance whatsoever . . . It's not only a matter of seeing, but a matter of all your responses to the act of seeing which would include your ideas, your memories of other things, etc. . . . Henri said in effect 'To hell with the artistic values! . . . What we want are your own fresh reactions to what you see and in relation to what you read, what you know, and your general experience.'⁹¹

Although Davis rejected traditional three dimensional space and experimented with color and form, he always believed the act of painting to be an "extension of experience."⁹² He acknowledged that because of Henri's influence he never totally relinquished realism as a style and remained aesthetically sensitive to his environment.

Reality for Bergson resided in movement and intuition and a desire for sympathetic communion with objects and people. Bergson believed the essential attribute of art to be its "life-communicating quality."⁹³ For Bergson, the aesthetic problem facing writers (or for our purposes, artists) was how to catch and pass a vital thought, still alive, into the soul of another, an idea shared by Tolstoy and Henri. "The true

artist," wrote Henri, "regards his work as a means of talking with men, of saying his say to himself and to others." He also wrote "Through art mysterious bonds of understanding and knowledge are established among men. They are the bonds of a great Brotherhood."⁹⁴ Bergson similarly believed that artists should not only internalize perceptions but sympathize with humanity itself, that the "artist, philosopher must feel himself carried by a spirit common to those of their generation."⁹⁵

Bergson felt it was the faculty of intuition which gave artists authority, almost prophetic powers. Henri, likewise, wrote that the artist who should "develop as a seer . . . as well as a craftsman."⁹⁶ Both Henri and Bergson were optimists in their belief that humanity's problems could be solved by encouraging creative freedom among individuals. Such idealism and confidence in the noble purposes of art would not survive the devastation of WWI.

Henri and Late Nineteenth Century French Symbolist Theory

There were other influences related to Bergson's vitalist theories that impacted Henri while residing in France in the late 1890s. Bergsonian philosophy was but part of a resurgence of interest during the last fifteen years of the nineteenth century in subjectivist intuitive approaches to questions of human behavior. By the mid 1880s, just prior to

Henri's arrival in France, the positivist concerns that had dominated western European thought since the 1870s began to wane. Likewise, the realist/naturalist aesthetic, which had been given impetus by the positivist theories of August Comte and Hippolyte Taine, was becoming passé. Many artists and writers objected to what they deemed the oppressive nature of empirical observation and scientific inquiry. Their renewed interest in metaphysics became manifest in the Symbolist movement.

Henri was familiar with the popular Taine and included a quotation from him in The Art Spirit: "All original art is self-regulated; and no original art can be regulated from without. It carries its own counterpoise and does not receive it from elsewhere - it lives on its own blood."⁹⁷ Given his dislike for artifice, Henri was undoubtedly attracted to Taine's belief that psychological and environmental factors give rise to the development of art - in other words, art based upon one's own time and place. Taine believed that artists had but little choice in painting their own time. Such art was the inevitable result of such dominant determinants as race and milieu. Henri, however, would not have embraced the notion that we are bound by genetics and environment to behave or react in a certain way.

Henri's prevailing search for an "indefinite something" and his references to real life as the "undercurrent . . .

beneath all appearances" connects him more significantly to the symbolist movement than the positivist aesthetics of Taine.⁹⁸ The Symbolists desired to seek truths and express themselves through suggestion rather than specific narration. Like Bergson, they relied on intuitive experience for comprehension.

The Symbolist movement had roots in Baudelaire's writings as early as the 1850s. His discussions of the interior, subjective soul of man had a powerful influence on the aesthetic theories of the symbolist artists. Baudelaire defined modern art as the creation of "a suggestive magic that contains, at one and the same time, the object and subject, the world exterior to the artist and the artist himself."⁹⁹ His embrace of the spiritual dimensions of a modern world and belief in a mystical way of seeing and knowing life (what Bergson called intuiting) anticipated the Symbolist reaction against Realism, Naturalism, and Positivism.

Henri admired many of the same writers and artists that were respected by the Symbolists, including Thomas Carlyle, Leo Tolstoy, Henrik Ibsen, Walt Whitman, Balzac, and Pierre Puvis de Chavannes. The influence of Symbolism on Henri may very well have come circuitously, at least in part, through his idol Walt Whitman. Whitman not only drew upon French literature and philosophy as sources for his own work but he, in turn, had a direct impact on French Symbolist writers and

poets of the late nineteenth century.

By the 1890s Henri became exposed to the poetry of Paul Verlaine (1844-1896), a leader of the Symbolist movement. Suspicious of formulas, Verlaine was known for the immediacy and vividness of his verse. In the summer of 1898 Henri noted in his diary that he and his friends were entertaining a guest who recited some of his own poetry and "one most beautiful bit of Verlaine too."¹⁰⁰ Henri's acquaintance with the writings of Verlaine may have stemmed back to the early 1890s in his readings of the periodical La Vie Moderne. (see p.109) He may even have met Verlaine through his Canadian friend in Paris, James Wilson Morrice (see p.299), who was personally acquainted with not only Verlaine but the Symbolist poet Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898). Henri and Morrice spent many evenings with other foreign students at the Closerie des Lilas café, also frequented at the time by the Symbolist poets. Henri later encouraged John Sloan and others in his New York circle to read Verlaine's writings. Sloan's personal library, in fact, contained a 1895 edition of The Poems of Verlaine.¹⁰¹

"Paul Verlaine was our rallying point," wrote French novelist Maurice Barrès, "for all of us who sought a free space, outside of the academies, outside of success . . ." ¹⁰² Literary theorist Stuart Merrill asserted: "What makes the strength of symbolist theory is precisely its anarchy."¹⁰³ Such remarks bring up the fact that many poets and painters of

the Symbolist movement identified with anarchism, a further reason why its tenets attracted Henri. Symbolism, along with the Bergsonian philosophy, came to be associated with anarchism's creed of individualism.¹⁰⁴ The Symbolists rejected the materialism of naturalism and along with Bergson, considered individual experience as the measure of all things. Jean Blum observed as early as 1906 that symbolism was a natural compliment to Bergsonian thought in their shared emphasis on the creative role of the individual consciousness. In this regard they also shared sympathies with anarchism in terms of a desire to bring man to state of consciousness of self.

Furthermore, symbolist theory as evidenced in literature and art evolved in the mid 1890s from a solitary revery to an increasing humanitarianism. "Symbolist poetry asks that we assume and enjoy our humanity to the utmost," explained Joan Ungersmas Halperin. Rather than being obscure, she added, "symbolist poetry was intended to "jolt the reader into a closer intimacy with themselves and the rest of the world."¹⁰⁵ Henri desired to humanize all art, even those works void of human subject matter. "In all great paintings of still-life, flowers, fruit, landscape," he wrote, "you will find the appearance of interweaving human forms . . . We do but humanize, see ourselves in all we look at."¹⁰⁶

American artists have frequently imitated the look of a

transplanted European style with little regard or understanding for any underlying philosophical basis.¹⁰⁷ Henri, however, seemed aware of the philosophical implications of the form of his art in the latter 1890s and early 1900s. After the opening of his first solo exhibition in New York in 1902, Henri verbalized his concern over the critical response to his paintings:

[The critics] so often know so little about the real use and meaning of art that not only many critics as well as artists mistake my leavings out and my accentuations and suppressions for lack of completion, they being so set in their belief that art is the business of reproducing *things* - they have not learned yet that the *idea* is what is intended to be presented and the thing is but the material *used* for its expression . . . I am really beyond that point (the mere reproduction of things), having shed the unnecessary, and passed on into the freer field of expression.¹⁰⁸

Henri's remark recalls Albert Aurier's definition of Symbolist art in which he proclaimed that "the object will never be considered as an object, but as the sign of an idea perceived by the subject."¹⁰⁹ "Landscape is a medium for ideas," Henri wrote. "We want men's thoughts."¹¹⁰ This comment is reminiscent of Jean Moréas's belief that the world was a "pretext for the idea."¹¹¹

Henri and James Wilson Morrice: The Influence of the Nabis and James McNeill Whistler

While there exist parallels between Henri's ideology and the tenets of Symbolist theory, the actual style of Henri's

paintings was briefly connected to the art of the Nabis in the late 1890s.¹¹² The Nabis were a group of painters associated with Synthetism who were active in Paris at that time and included Paul Sérusier (1863-1927), Maurice Denis (1870-1943), Edouard Vuillard (1868-1940), and Pierre Bonnard (1867-1947).¹¹³ Their art is characterized by flat areas of color devoid of observed light and shadow. Henri may have met these artists who were studying at the Académie Julian in 1888-90 when Henri was also enrolled. Most of them had previously attended the Lycée Condorcet where Stéphane Mallarmé was on the faculty. Thus, their own exposure to symbolist thought predated their student days at Julian's.

Although he does not mention it, Henri also may have seen the Nabis first group show in Paris in 1891. They also exhibited, although not as a formal group, in the Salon des Indépendants which Henri visited. Henri's brief adoption of the Nabis aesthetic, however, was most probably connected to his association with the Canadian artist James Wilson Morrice (1865-1924) whom he met in Paris in 1895. Although not formally aligned with the Nabis, Morrice's works at this time resembled the Nabis style.¹¹⁴ It was the beginning of an important and influential friendship for Henri that continued for many years. What this study contributes to existing scholarship is a more complete account of Morrice's background, a survey of the varying opinions regarding the

extent of Morrice's influence on Henri, and a comparison of paintings by the two artists heretofore unmentioned.

Morrice was Henri's exact contemporary, born in Montreal in 1865, a mere six weeks after Henri's birth. After finishing law school he decided to pursue a career in art and in 1890 left for France. After attending the Académie Julian, Morrice became a student of the French landscape painter Henri Harpignies (1819-1916), who encouraged spontaneity, declaring the artist should "meditate for two hours, draw for one and three quarter hours, and paint for fifteen minutes."¹¹⁵ Morrice also learned from Harpignies to paint a limb or entire figure with a single stroke of color and may have also adopted the French man's palette which was more somber than that of the impressionists. Perhaps Henri's advocacy of similar methods of spontaneity and his use of a subdued palette was reinforced by Harpignies' influence on Morrice.

"Morrice seemed to have a particularly warm friendship with Henri," wrote Morrice scholar Kathleen Daly Pepper.¹¹⁶ Henri's diary and letters contain numerous references to Morrice, particularly in 1898 and 1899 when he mentioned dining and spending evenings with one another.¹¹⁷ They also painted each other's portrait.¹¹⁸ Unfortunately, surviving correspondence between the two after Henri left France is scarce, making it difficult to ascertain the extent to which they continued to affect one another's work after 1900.¹¹⁹

Henri kept up on his friend's activities after he settled back in the United States. "We hear that Morrice is to have an exhibit at George Petits Paris this winter," he recorded in 1901.¹²⁰ Morrice, who remained living abroad for most of his life, visited Henri frequently in New York until 1914. Henri made sure that his well-connected colleague became acquainted with his friends whenever he came to visit. Thus, Morrice's cosmopolitanism may have reached into the circle of the Ashcan School artists.¹²¹

Scholars disagree on whether Morrice influenced Henri or vice versa.¹²² William R. Johnston stated that Morrice, who remained in France for most of his life, was the more cosmopolitan of the two artists and acted as a mentor from abroad to Henri for many years after he returned to live in the United States.¹²³ Bennard B. Perlman alleged that Henri followed Morrice's practice of carrying tiny wooden panels, a few tubes of paint, and some brushes in his pocket which enabled the two friends to make small on-the-spot oil sketches together.¹²⁴ Cecily Langdale believes the influence of the Nabis was transmitted to Henri through Morrice. Furthermore, she believes that it was "under Morrice's influence that Henri also used pochades . . . "¹²⁵

Conversely, Nicole Cloutier stated that "it was probably under Henri's influence that, in about 1896, Morrice began to paint typically urban subjects, such as café scenes."¹²⁶

Morrice's interest in the less than picturesque parts of city life was substantiated by the British critic Clive Bell (1881-1964). When escorted around Paris in 1904 by Morrice, Bell was "made to feel beauty in the strangest places; not in cafés and music halls only . . . but on hoardings and in shop windows."¹²⁷ Regardless of who influenced whom, they both painted small urban scenes in the manner of Baudelaire's flaneur. No doubt recalling the practice he began with Morrice, he later wrote:

The sketch hunter has delightful days of drifting about among people, in and out of the city, going anywhere, everywhere. . . he moves through life as he finds it, not passing negligently the things he loves, but stopping to know them, and to note them down in the shorthand of his sketchbook, a box of oils with a few small panels, the fit of his pocket . . .¹²⁸

Henri greatly admired Morrice and it is unlikely that he considered himself a significant influence on the Canadian. "Morrice is an exceptionally strong painter," Henri wrote his family. "He does landscape and Paris life scenes, cafés, etc. remarkably well. Had two of the very best in the Salon this last time."¹²⁹ Morrice was well connected and well thought of in Parisian circles. He counted among his friends not only Rodin, Renoir, Matisse, and Whistler but the writers Paul Verlaine and George Moore. The well known French critic Louis Vauxcelles wrote, in fact, that since the death of Whistler, Morrice had become "the American painter who had achieved in France and in Paris the most notable and well-merited place in

the world of art."¹³⁰

Morrice and Henri were actually mentioned in the same French newspaper review of the Champ-de-Mars Salon where they both had works accepted.¹³¹ The critic's description of an urban snow scene by Morrice could well be applied to some of Henri's works of this period. "Imitating in part Manet," the reviewer wrote, "the brown harmonies of M. Morrice suggest the exact atmosphere of the city, a little heavy. We feel the air circulate . . . elsewhere the effect of the snow gives a muddy whiteness from the sky to the railed sidewalk . . ."¹³²

Nicole Cloutier is probably most accurate when she concluded that "the mutual influence that occurred between these two painters from 1896 to 1900 had a decisive effect on them both. It seems that there was some actual collaboration at times between Henri and Morrice which might account, in part, for the remarkable similarity of their work in the late 1890s. In a letter to his family Henri wrote:

He [Morrice] has lately been at work on a fete picture. Night, crowded street, trees and as a centre of interest, a brilliantly illuminated booth where the performers of the show within are displaying themselves to the interested public without. It is a fine thing. We stayed long and arranged that.¹³³

The existence of a symbiotic relationship between the two men is evidenced by their shared interest in loose and vigorous brushwork and, at times, the flat areas of paint associated with the Nabis.¹³⁴ Henri's Les illuminations,

Bastille, c.1898, (Fig. 22) with its Nabis-like patterning of figures and street lights is comparable to Morrice's The Juggler, c.1899-1900, (Fig. 21) with its similar flat arrangement of forms. In Henri's painting brilliant deep red lanterns decoratively arranged animate the otherwise darkened colors of evening. Morrice used the bright colored balls of the juggler to similarly enhance the frieze of dark clothed onlookers and the subdued tones of the background.

Examples of their summary use of brush strokes to suggest a fleeting moment can be seen, for example, in Henri's pochade Houses on the Quai Bouloigne, 1898, (Fig. 24) and Morrice's Barge on the Seine, c.1892-93 (Fig. 25). In Henri's painting we are given a glimpse of a boat slipping out of view on the right of the picture plane. The entire pictorial surface containing boat, river, and background houses are equally absorbed by the quickly applied paint. In Morrice's work a barge, indicated by a few simple strokes, floats past a similar backdrop of flatly painted architectural structures. This loose brushwork, which prior to Impressionist art was typically relegated to the distance, is applied in both works to the foreground and suggests perpetual mobility.

Another Henri-like painting by Morrice, Street Scene in Brittany, 1896, (Fig. 26) was originally owned by Henri. Although retaining the loosened brushwork there is an indication of depth in this work as there is in some of

Henri's larger paintings of this time such as Paris Café, Montparnasse, 1898, (Fig. 27). At times, the painters employed considerable perspectival space as in Henri's Notre Dame and the Seine, 1900, (Fig. 28) and Morrice's painting of the same subject and similar vantage points, Notre Dame, c. 1898 (Fig. 29). In both works there is a sense of recessional space between the small loosely indicated foreground figures and the distant cathedral. They also painted scenes of rivers in winter. Morrice's Study for "The Ferry, Quebec", 1897, (Fig. 30) although painted with a lighter palette, resembles the simple composition of Henri's East River Embankment, 1900, (Fig. 31) with its expanse of water and sky enlivened only by a small boat or two.

A most striking example of the similarity of their work can be seen in Henri's Café Bleu, St.-Cloud, c.1897, (Fig. 32) and Morrice's Café, Paris, c.1896-97, (Fig. 33). Neither work is precisely dated but it is likely they were done at the same time and at the same café. Henri's slightly smaller work is more abstract yet there remains evident a mustached man in a derby hat seated with another man and a woman adorned with a large plumed hat. In Morrice's painting a similar looking male figure is seated with two woman, also wearing hats sporting large feathers. Both images are cropped closely to focus on the table gathering. All detail including facial features are obscured by the rough and loosely applied brush

strokes.

For the most part, the painting styles of both Henri and Morrice are more vigorous than that of the Nabis and lacking in the decorative line and color that the Nabis admired in Japanese prints and stained glass. Perhaps exposure to the Nabis and their unconventional realism served to further free Henri (and Morrice) from academic restraints and to engage in a more animated style.

The influence of James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834-1903) on Henri's landscapes and urban scenes during the late 1890s in Paris was also a likely result of his association with Morrice who had an indirect association if not acquaintance with the American expatriate painter.¹³⁵ Whistler, as a friend of Gustave Courbet, Charles Baudelaire, and Stéphane Mallarmé, encompassed the varied aspects of French nineteenth century painting from realism to symbolism that appealed to Henri.

Henri's attraction to Whistlerian motifs may have been enhanced earlier by his reading of George Moore's Modern Painting in 1892-93. (see Chapter 4, p.180) Moore highly praised Whistler, claiming that "more than any other man, Mr. Whistler has helped purge art of the vice of subject and belief that the mission of art is to copy nature."¹³⁶ Late in 1899 Henri viewed Whistler paintings at the Galerie Georges Petit, perhaps with Morrice, but did not comment on the

experience.¹³⁷ In a letter to his parents in early 1897, however, he declared Whistler "a great artist."¹³⁸

Whistler's connection to Symbolism's interest in the immaterial was manifest in his evocative mist laden landscapes and urban scenes often entitled simply as Arrangements, Harmonies, or Symphonies. His depictions of the effects produced by atmospheric conditions and evening light, both real and artificial, distinguished him from the Impressionists' concern with the brilliance of noonday sun. In the late 1890s Morrice and Henri both adopted Whistler's method of laying forms in an monotonal "soup" in order to capture nature's effects such as wind, rain, and snow. Two examples are Henri's Boulevard in Wet Weather, 1899, (Fig. 34) and Morrice's A Wet Night on the Boulevard Saint-Germain, Paris, c.1895-96, (Fig. 35). Henri was especially fond of giving his paintings titles with succinct Whistlerian-like references to weather or times of day such as "Night - Rain Effect, Place d'Observatoire," "Yellow Fog, East River," "A Bridge - Grey Effect," "Twilight on the Seine," "The Storm - La Rue in Paris," "Night - the Café" or simply "Nocturne."

Henri began painting New York urban scenes soon after returning to the United States in August of 1900. One such painting, On the East River, c.1900-02, (Fig. 36) depicts the coal-loading piers near his residence. The work is reminiscent of an early monotonal painting by Whistler, The

Thames in Ice, 1861, (Fig. 37), done near the artist's residence in London. The paintings are similar in terms of the urban river front subject matter in winter and the muted tones and composition. Like Whistler's image, Henri's painting contains a ship docked to the left, its mast thrusting into a cloudy and low keyed sky. In both works distant forms are seen through the foggy haze and the small figures in the foreground have been painted in summary fashion. The stark outline of the ship's mast against the dreary sky recalls other urban industrial river scenes by Henri such as Derricks on the North River, 1902, (Fig. 9).

Henri's Paris Street, Summer Evening, Dust Haze, 1901, (Fig. 38) with its murky brown atmosphere with hints of blue sky and ambiguous forms emerging from the dusty night air evokes a later painting by Whistler's Nocturne in Gray and Gold, Chelsea Snow, 1876, (Fig. 39) in which a distant dark figure heads into a indistinct brownish bluish distance. In both works spots of artificial lighting subtly animate the surface which otherwise contains a very limited tonal and color range. The subject in both paintings is neither the city nor its inhabitants but the mood created by the dim light and hazy atmosphere.

A very different work from On the East River, c.1900-02, (Fig. 36) and Paris Street, Summer Evening, Dust Haze, 1901, (Fig. 38) is Henri's more radical Figures on Boardwalk, 1892,

(Fig. 40) painted in Atlantic City in 1892. The composition is constructed with subtle horizontal bands of slightly varying degrees of color, the loosely painted figures and pier supports supply vertical contrast and visual interest to the flatly painted scene. The human forms appear in some instances as areas of near pure abstraction, often indicated by little more than daubs of paint.

The painting recalls certain works by Whistler in its reduction of form and tones. Cremorne Gardens No. 2, 1872-77, (Fig. 41), for example, is similarly constructed with bands of subdued color broken only by elongated strolling figures created by slashes of thinly applied paint. The painting's unreal light and vague figures elicited comparison to "an atmosphere out of [Symbolist poet] Paul Verlaine's poems."¹³⁹ The group of seated figures in the far left, scumbled on the canvas, resemble the abstracted groupings on Henri's boardwalk. Further similarities are evident in Whistler's reductive ocean views such as Harmony in Blue and Silver: Trouville, 1865, (Fig. 42) in its absence of observed light and shadow and the flat bands of color. The same flat bands of color and loosely indicated human forms in Henri's painting of the Atlantic City boardwalk also appear in James Wilson Morrice's Roadside and Beach, Concarneau, undated, (Fig. 43).

Henri shared the interest of both the Nabis and Whistler in memory drawing, a fact which also connects him

ideologically to the Symbolist movement in terms of adjusting a scene to express its underlying reality. The Nabis were influenced by Gauguin's use of memory to enhance expressive qualities. Whistler was exposed to memory drawing through his friends Alphonse Legros and Henri Fantin-Latour, both students of Lecoq de Boisbaudran, the foremost proponent of the technique. (see Chapter 1, n.36). He seemed to have relied strongly on memory during his later years when painting the *Nocturnes*.¹⁴⁰ Henri attested to his own reliance on memory time and again, mentioning "memory sketches" and "mental sketches" in his diary entries of 1898 and 1899. In his journal in the summer of 1898, for example, he recorded that he was making "pencil sketches of street memories in the evening."¹⁴¹ Henri later advised his students to close their paint box after making a sketch, then walk away and reopen the box. "Maybe you will see that you have deflected from your original idea," and evoking Bergson's *élan vital*, added that "a vital impulse has been lost."¹⁴²

The art of the Nabis and that of Whistler seems to have impacted Henri's style at a time when his anti-positivist theories about art were evolving. Henri read Whistler's book of 1890, The Gentle Art of Making Enemies, which contained his famous "Ten O'Clock Lecture" in which he emphatically declared that artists should do more than imitate nature.¹⁴³ Henri believed, as did Whistler, that the subject of a painting was

not the object painted, yet he argued for "art for experience sake" rather than for Whistler's "art for art's sake."

Henri eschewed Whistler's underlying aestheticism as well as the purely decorative aspects of the Nabis art. Yet there was something satisfying about the abbreviated form and color of the Nabis and the evocative atmospheric effects of Whistler that enabled him to convey his interests in the intangible and immaterial aspects of reality. Such deep felt concerns repeatedly appear in the published compilation of Henri's thoughts and aesthetic philosophies, appropriately titled The Art Spirit.

The Art Spirit and Anti-Positivist Thought

In Chaim Potok's popular novel, My Name is Asher Lev, an aspiring young artist searching for direction is given a copy of The Art Spirit by his mother. She tells him:

You said to me once that you liked the paintings of Robert Henri. A professor in the art department gave me this for you to read. She put the book on my desk . . . It was called The Art Spirit. I finished my homework quickly. In bed, I leafed idly through the book, reading passages at random. I liked this man. I liked the warm and honest way he wrote . . . ¹⁴⁴

Henri's philosophies are articulated most completely, albeit in a fragmentary manner, in The Art Spirit. This collection of lecture notes, articles, and letters was assembled by Margery Ryerson, who had studied with Henri at the Arts Students League for two years. The book is

reminiscent of William Morris Hunt's Talks About Art of 1878, a similar compilation of class notes collected by a former student. The Art Spirit has been widely read since its first publication in 1923 and its immense popularity attested to by many artists - both fictional, as with Asher Lev, and real.¹⁴⁵

Soon after the book's publication, Henri's close friend, the painter George Bellows (1882-1925) wrote a review of the book in which he lamented "I would give anything to have come by this book years ago." He then compared it to the notes of Leonardo and Sir Joshua Reynolds but called it "infinitely more suggestive" in its ability to inspire as well as impart technique. The wide appeal of The Art Spirit was explained in part by Bellows when he explained: "Henri's interest in the world extends to the phenomena of other people in relation to life as well as to art. His philosophy . . . encompasses the world."¹⁴⁶ Upon its publication, the poet Vachel Lindsay called it one of the "great textbooks on real Americanism."¹⁴⁷ It was also praised by modernist critic Forbes Watson and the British critic, Thomas Wright, who wrote that "Mr. Henri has Nietzsche's love for an aphorism."¹⁴⁸ He, too, compared The Art Spirit to Leonardo's writings as well as the letters of Van Gogh.

A few years after its publication Ryerson informed Henri that Alice Snyder, an English teacher at Vassar College, was using the book as a classroom text.¹⁴⁹ "Informal as Mr.

Henri's comments are," Snyder wrote, ". . . they show an integrity of thinking that few of us achieve; and their philosophy is one that will stand the test of application by teachers in fields other than painting."¹⁵⁰ Only the conservative critic Thomas Craven found fault with Henri's published declarations, describing his love of beauty as "hedonistic" and a "purely sensorial pastime." Ironically, Craven evoked Tolstoy (whom Henri admired) as the antithesis to Henri in his belief that art should be a stimulant to spiritual enlightenment.¹⁵¹

The Art Spirit continues to have an affect on those in the creative arts today. A recent testament to its ongoing influence came from the innovative and unconventional television and movie filmmaker David Lynch (b. 1946), a known advocate of freedom of expression. Fellow film director Jack Fisk recalled that when he and Lynch were in high school they discovered Henri's book and that it quickly became Lynch's Bible.¹⁵² In his memoirs, Irish American author Pete Hamill (b. 1935) had a similar experience after receiving the book from a friend. "I devoured it," he wrote. Referring to the passage in which Henri wrote that "few artists have the courage and stamina to see it through," Hamill wrote: "He seemed to be speaking directly to me . . . I would sometimes remember these words . . . until I read Henri, it had never occurred to me that [to be an artist] there could be a

cost."¹⁵³ In the early 1980s, the contemporary painter Keith Haring (1958-1990) recalled that "The Art Spirit was almost like a Bible to me for a while . . . I still read it sometimes."¹⁵⁴

There are many references in The Art Spirit which are related to a vitalist outlook, as outlined earlier in this chapter. Such comments signify Henri's importance among American artists in the complex progression from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. The Art Spirit has a decidedly more modern voice than Hunt's Talks About Art despite their similarities in format and content. It is this sense of contemporaneity that attracted such a tremendous audience among artists in the twentieth century.

What is perhaps most modern about Henri's writings (and what most distinguishes his thoughts from Hunt's) are the recurring references to the immaterial or spiritual in art as denoted in The Art Spirit's very title. "Reality does not exist in material things," Henri declared. "Rather paint the flying spirit of the bird than its feathers."¹⁵⁵ It is interesting to note the resemblance between this statement and one by William Morris Hunt that appeared on the first page of Talks about Art. "When a bird flies through the air you see no feathers!" he wrote. "You are to draw *not reality, but the appearance of reality!*"¹⁵⁶

Clearly, Henri borrowed Hunt's metaphor but he altered its meaning significantly with a slight change of terminology. Hunt maintained a concern for the appearance of material reality, which he believed is best captured by painting without too much detail. Henri is interested in the same means to a different end. His reference to the "flying spirit" suggests those aspects of life that cannot be seen but rather sensed, or in Bergson's terms, intuited. "Look for the spirit line that runs through everything," Henri wrote.¹⁵⁷

A more specific reference in The Art Spirit to modern ideas of anti-positivist thought is Henri's mention of his belief in the existence of a fourth dimension. Partially born out of Symbolist ideology, the idea of a fourth dimension in terms of the fine arts emerged by the turn of the century.¹⁵⁸ As with Bergson's theories, interest in the fourth dimension has been primarily connected with those artists who cultivated a more abstract style than Henri. Like these modern painters, Henri used the term fourth dimension to denote a higher reality beyond visual perception. He declared:

I am certain that we do deal in an unconscious way with another dimension than the well-known three. It does not matter much to me now if it is the fourth dimension or what its number is, but I know that deep in us there is always a grasp of proportions which exist over and through the obvious three, and it is by this power of super-proportioning that we reach the inner meaning of things.¹⁵⁹

The metaphysical concerns outlined in The Art Spirit are

antithetical to American literary critic Lionel Trilling's judgement that "in the American metaphysics, reality is always material reality, hard, resistant, unformed, impenetrable, and unpleasant."¹⁶⁰ Just as Henri's emphasis on spontaneity contradicted Van Wyck Brook's assessment of the American penchant for a rational and intellectual approach to life, his search for the "inner meaning of things" and belief in an "undercurrent" as the site of "real life" countered traditional American perceptions of the nature of reality.

Notes

1. John Sloan, diary entry, Dec. 11, 1909, cited in Bruce St. John, John Sloan's New York Art Scene, 359. Sloan was referring to Edward Wyatt Davis, Philadelphia newspaper artist and art editor and father of the American modernist painter Stuart Davis.

2. James Hoopes, Van Wyck Brooks, In Search of American Culture (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1977), xiii.

3. Henri, The Art Spirit, 5.

4. Ibid., 26.

5. Ibid., 63.

6. Cited in Helen Farr Sloan, "Robert Henri: An Appreciation," Robert Henri, Painter exh. cat. (Wilmington, Delaware: Delaware Art Museum, 1984), xi.

7. Henri diary, 24 January 1890, Reel 885, AAA, SI; Henri letter to parents, 25 January 1890, Robert Henri Papers, BRBL.

8. Henri diary, 12 July 1890, Reel 885, AAA, SI.

9. Henri, The Art Spirit, 186.

10. Henri, "The New York Exhibition of Independent Artists," Craftsman XVIII (May 1910): 162; and Henri, The Art Spirit, 105.

11. Henri, The Art Spirit, 163.

12. "Robert Henri's New School," Art News VII (16 January 1909): 2.

13. Vitalism was a reaction to the pervasive mechanistic and materialistic theories that followed Cartesian and Marxist rationalist thought in the latter nineteenth century. In the 20th century, vitalism found its most significant expression in Bergson. His belief that

life is not only biological but psychic and psychological eluded analytic scientific intelligence. The term "vitalism" actually originated in the mid-eighteenth century with Joseph Barthez, a professor at the School of Medicine of Montpellier. "I call the vital principle of man the cause which generates all living phenomena in the human body" as distinguished from the body and soul. See Joseph Chiari, "Vitalism and Contemporary Thought," The Crisis in Modernism, Bergson and the Vitalist Controversy, eds. Frederick Barwick and Paul Douglass (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 245.

14. Barbara Rose, American Painting, The Twentieth Century, (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1986), 23.

15. Douglas R. Picht, "Robert Henri and the Transcendental Spirit," Research Studies 36 (March 1968): 54.

16. Zilcer, 47.

17. Hubert Beck, "Urban Iconography in Nineteenth-Century American Painting, from Impressionism to the Ashcan School," American Icons, 336. The term "reality as becoming" refers to Bergson's belief in the élan vital as a creative power that moves in unbroken continuity through all things.

18. Bruce Chambers, "Robert Henri's Street Scene with Snow (57th Street, N.Y.C.): An Idea of City 'In Snow Effect,'" Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin (Winter 1986), 35. Bergson wrote that "matter, looked at as an undivided whole, must be flux rather than a thing. In this way we were preparing the way for a reconciliation between the inert and the living." Henri Bergson, Creative Evolution, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1911), 204.

19. Matthew Baigell, "Walt Whitman and Early Twentieth-Century American Art," Walt Whitman and the Visual Arts, 125.

20. Shiv. K. Kumar, Bergson and the Stream of Consciousness Novel (New York: New York University Press, 1963), vii, 9.

21. His books included Time and Free Will (1889), Matter and Memory (1896), Laughter (1900), An Introduction

to Metaphysics (1903) and Creative Evolution (1907).

22. Arthur Szathmary, The Aesthetic Theory of Bergson, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1937), xi.

23. Bergson, Creative Evolution, 261, 23.

24. After his first extended residency in France from September of 1888 until September of 1891, Henri spent most of the next few years in Philadelphia. (The exception was a summer trip to Concarneau in 1894.) In the summer of 1895 he again moved to Paris where he lived until September of 1897. In June of 1898 he was again in France, this time with his new bride Linda Craige where he remained until August of 1900.

25. Beck, 338.

26. Cited in Hapgood, A Victorian in a Modern World, 342, 343.

27. Cheyney, E. Ralph, "The Philosophy of a Portrait Painter: An Interview with Robert Henri," Touchstone V (5 June 1919): 217.

28. The cubists and futurists were interested in Bergson's notion of a temporal continuity connecting the remembered past to a dynamic present. See Robert Mark Antliff, "Bergson and Cubism: A Reassessment," Art Journal, Winter 1988, 341-349; Robert Mark Antliff, Inventing Bergson, Cultural Politics and the Parisian Avant-Garde; Ivor Davies, "Western European Art Forms Influenced by Nietzsche and Bergson Before 1914, Particularly Italian Futurism and French Orphism," Art International, 19:3 (March 1975), 49-55; George Beck, "Movement and Reality: Bergson and Cubism," The Structuralist, 15/16 (1975-76), 109-16; Timothy Mitchell, "Bergson, Le Bon, and Hermetic Cubism," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, 34 (Winter 1977), 175-84; Virginia Spate, Orphism, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979; Sherry A. Buckberrough, Robert Delauney: The Discovery of Simultaneity, Ann Arbor, 1982; and Paul Douglas, "The Gold Coin: Bergsonian Intuition and Modernist Aesthetics," Thought 58 No. 229, 1983, 234-250. Arlette Klaric looks at an American modernist and Bergson in "Arthur G. Dove's Abstract Style of 1912: Dimensions of the Decorative and Bergsonian Time," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1984.

29. Jacques-Emile Blanche, Portraits of a Lifetime (New York: Coward-McCann Inc., 1938), 244-245.

30. Henri Bergson, Introduction to Metaphysics, 273.

31. Henri, The Art Spirit, 21,26.

32. Gilbert Maire, Bergson, mon maître (Paris, 1935), 27, cited in Antliff, Inventing Bergson, 117.

33. Bergson, Creative Evolution, 218-219.

34. Hulme, 149.

35. Henri, The Art Spirit, 92,94.

36. Bergson, The Creative Mind, 273.

37. Henri, The Art Spirit, 50.

38. Ibid., 32, 81.

39. T.E. Hulme, Speculations, Essays on Humanism and The Philosophy of Art (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1954), 169.

40. Bergson, Creative Evolution, 176.

41. Henri, The Art Spirit, 60, 158.

42. Sloan, Gist of Art, 35.

43. Phenomenologists believe that philosophy should be concerned with the exploration of the subjective inner life. Phenomenology studies and describes the intrinsic traits of phenomena as they reveal themselves to consciousness without recourse to theory, deduction, or assumptions from other disciplines such as empirical science; it provides an introspective analysis of all forms of consciousness and immediate experiences be they religious, moral, aesthetic, conceptual, etc. Developed by Edmund Husserl, born precisely the same year as Bergson in 1859, phenomenology was profoundly influential in the early twentieth century, giving rise to the existentialist movement.

44. Mark Antliff, Inventing Bergson, Cultural Politics and the Parisian Avant-Garde (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), 11,12.

45. "What Is Art Answered by Robert Henri 'Art Insurgent,'" Philadelphia Recorder (25 December 1910). Henri scrapbook, Reel 887, AAA, SI.

46. Szathmary, 21.

47. Bergson, Creative Evolution, 273.

48. Read, "I Paint My People is Henri's Art Key."

49. Henri, The Art Spirit, 45.

50. Bergson, Creative Evolution, 7.

51. Ibid., 194.

52. Cited in Szarthmary, 38-39.

53. Henri, The Art Spirit, 13.

54. Ibid, 45.

55. Berg, 268.

56. Henri, The Art Spirit, 128.

57. Ibid., 159, 227.

58. Ibid., 160.

59. Bergson, Creative Evolution, 218, 219.

60. Henri, The Art Spirit, 17.

61. Samuel Enoch Stumpf, Socrates to Sartres, A History of Philosophy (New York: McGraw-Hill Inc., 1982), 374.

62. Henri, The Art Spirit, 16, 17.

63. John Sloan diary, 9 December 1906, cited in St. John, 86.

64. Bergson, Introduction to Metaphysics, 59.

65. Robert Mark Antliff, "Bergson and Cubism: A Reaccessment," Art Journal (Winter 1988): 343.

66. Bergson, Creative Evolution, 7.

67. Henri, The Art Spirit, 60.

68. Ibid., 122, 226.
69. Szathmary, 9.
70. Bergson, Laughter, 157.
71. microfilm clipping, Philadelphia Press (12 May 1901), reprint of talk given at the School of Design for Women, Henri scrapbook, Reel 887, AAA, SI; the talk was also published in The Art Spirit, 79,80.
72. "Robert Henri Fresh from the Art Atmosphere of Paris," Philadelphia Item (12 October 1897), newspaper clipping, Henri scrapbook, Reel 887, AAA, SI.
73. Hulme, 149.
74. Bergson, Introduction to Metaphysics, 195, cited in Robert mark Antliff, "Bergson and Cubism: A Reassessment," Art Journal (Winter 1988): 341.
75. Henri, The Art Spirit, 63.
76. Henri, "The New York Exhibition of Independent Artists," The Craftsman XVIII no. 2 (May 1910): 167.
77. Henri, The Art Spirit, 179.
78. Intellectual historians agree that the immediate predecessor of 20th century existentialism was "Lebensphilosophie," or philosophy of life, of which Bergson was a major proponent along with Friedrich Nietzsche and Wilhelm Dilthey. They agreed upon the actuality of the individual, the uniqueness of creativity, and the richness of experience.
79. Ibid., The Art Spirit, 206.
80. Henri Bergson, Matter and Memory, trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and William Scott Palmer (New York: Humanities Press, Inc., 19??), 24.
81. Bergson, Creative Evolution, 7.
82. Henri, The Art Spirit, 33.
83. Ibid., 27,30.
84. Bergson, Mind Energy (London, 1920), 44.

85. Henri, "Progress in Our National Art," 392.
86. Lears, xiv, 5.
87. Henri, The Art Spirit, 79,80.
88. Henri Bergson, Le Rire, (Paris 1928), 152-153, cited in Berg, 267, n. 77.
89. Cited in Szarthmary, 36.
90. Henri, The Art Spirit, 125,126.
91. "An Interview with Stuart Davis," Archives of American Art Journal 31, no. 2 (2 November 1991): 6.
92. cited in Diane Kelder "Stuart Davis and Modernism: An Overview," essay in Lowery Stokes Sims, Stuart Davis, American Painter 17.
93. Hulme, 169.
94. Henri, The Art Spirit, 117, 19 respectively.
95. "M. Henri Bergson et l'esprit de la nation," Gil Blas (11 July 1912), cited in Antliff, Inventing Bergson, 104.
96. Henri, The Art Spirit, 26.
97. Ibid., 86. Interestingly, Henri quoted Walt Whitman quoting Taine.
98. William Innes Homer briefly mentioned Henri's connection to the Symbolist movement in Robert Henri and His Circle, 5, 160. See also Bruce Chambers, "Robert Henri's Street Scene with Snow (57th Street, NYC): An Idea of City 'In Snow Effect,'" Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin (Winter 1986): 32-35.
99. Charles Baudelaire, "L'Art Philosophique," Oeuvres complètes, n. 119, cited in Erkkila, 56.
100. Henri diary, 23 July 1898, Reel 885, AAA, SI.
101. This volume, translated and illustrated by Henry McCarter and published in Chicago, is part of the John Sloan Memorial Library, Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington. John Sloan's widow, Helen Farr Sloan, also told this author in an

interview, February 20, 1993, that Sloan's appreciation for the poetry of Verlaine was a result of Henri's influence.

102. Cited in Seigel, 254.

103. "Chroniques," L'Ermitage (August 1893): 107, cited in Herbert, 59.

104. Verlaine admitted feeling a kinship with the Russian anarchist Mikhail Bakunin. Stéphane Mallarmé subscribed to the anarchist journal La Révolte and participated in anarchist causes.

105. Halperin, 96.

106. Henri, The Art Spirit, 111.

107. American impressionists, for example, adopted the appearance of French impressionist painting in terms of the loose brushwork, light palette, and subject matter. Yet they were not particularly interested in the science of optics that was initially the basis for the French style. Christian Brinton indicated the differences between American Impressionism and French Impressionism when he wrote: "The American painter accepted the spirit, not the letter of the new doctrine. He adapted the division of tones to local taste and conditions and ultimately evolved a species of compromise technique." Christian Brinton, Impressions of the Art of the Panama-Pacific Exposition (New York: John Lane Co., 1916), 16, cited in William H. Gerds, American Impressionism (New York: Abbeville Press, 1984), 302.

108. Henri letter to parents, 7 April 1902, BRBL.

109. Aurier's succinct definition of Symbolist art first appeared in an article in Mercure de France in 1890. It was later broadened into a lengthy discussion of Gauguin and appeared in G.-Albert Aurier, 'Le Symbolisme en peinture: Paul Gauguin,' in Oeuvres posthumes (Paris, 1893), 215-216, cited in Shearer West, Fin De Siecle, Art and Society in an Age of Uncertainty, 106.

110. Henri, The Art Spirit, 118.

111. Herbert, 60.

112. This correlation has been previously noted by several scholars. See, for example, Homer, Robert Henri and His Circle, 86, 220; Judith Zilczer, "Anti-Realism and the

Ashcan School," 46; and Bruce Chambers, "Street Scene with Snow," 34.

113. Paul Sérusier instigated the formation of the group after relaying the stylistic and philosophical inspiration of Paul Gauguin and the Pont-Aven School to his fellow students at the Académie Julian.

114. Morrice has been mentioned in connection with Henri and the Nabis in previous scholarship although rarely in any depth. The most extended discussion of the interrelationship of Henri, Morrice and the Nabis, although by no means complete, appears in Cecily Langdale, Charles Condor, Robert Henri, James Morrice, Maurice Prendergast: The Formative Years, Paris 1890s (New York: Davis & Long Company, 1975).

115. Lèonce Bénédite, "Harpignies," Gazette des Beaux Arts 13 (1917), cited in William R. Johnston, "James Wilson Morrice: a Canadian Abroad," 452-453 and Bennard B. Perlman, Robert Henri, His Life and Art, 32.

116. Kathleen Daly Pepper, James Wilson Morrice (Toronto & Vancouver: Clarke, Irwin & Company Limited, 1966), 36.

117. See, for example, Henri diary, 19 July 1898, 26 July 1898, 1 November 1898, 12 January 1899, and 28 March 1898, Reel 885, AAA, SI.

118. Morrice's portrait of Henri, painted in 1896, is in the collection of the London Regional Art Gallery, London, Ontario, Canada. See Nicole Cloutier, et al, James Wilson Morrice, 1865-1924 (Montreal: The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 1985), 114. Henri painted several portraits of Morrice, the first one in 1896, possibly around the same time that Morrice painted him. Henri also recorded in his diary on January 12, 1899 that he had painted Morrice's portrait on January 1. The first portrait and possibly the second were destroyed by Violet Organ. However, a sketch Henri made of Morrice in 1907 is in the collection of the Musée des beaux-arts du Canada. See Charles C. Hill, Morrice, Un don à la patrie, (Ottawa: Musée des beaux-arts du Canada, 1992), 39.

119. The Robert Henri Papers at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University include only four letters from Morrice to Henri dated in the summer 1896 when Morrice was in Cancale and Saint-Malo and Henri was in

Paris. The James Wilson Morrice Letter-books: 1897-1913 at the Art Gallery of Ontario contain no correspondence from Henri. However, the addresses of Henri and other members of the Ashcan School whom Morrice met, remained in the Canadian painter's address book until WWI.

120. Henri diary, 1 December 1900, Reel 885, AAA, SI.

121. Morrice's influence upon John Sloan, for example, is a topic that needs further research. Morrice's painting Venice, vue sur la lagune (c. 1904, Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal) bears a striking resemblance in composition and mood to Sloan's The Wake of the Ferry (1907, The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.). Sloan's The Coffee Line (1905, The Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh) is also reminiscent of Morrice's Winter Scene Quebec (c. 1905, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto) in terms of style and composition. Sloan never traveled to Europe but Morrice not only visited New York numerous times but exhibited in Pittsburgh and had at least one painting in a collection in Philadelphia. See Charles C. Hill, Morrice, Un don à la patrie, La Collection G. Blair Laing (Ottawa: Musée Des Beaux-Arts Du Canada, 1992), 30.

122. Interestingly, it seems the American scholars wish to give Morrice the majority of the credit for influencing Henri and the Canadians recognize Henri as an influence on Morrice.

123. See William R. Johnston, "James Wilson Morrice: a Canadian Abroad," Apollo (June 1968): 455.

124. Perlman, Robert Henri, His Life and Art, 32.

125. Langdale, unpagued.

126. Nicole Cloutier, James Wilson Morrice, 1865-1924, exh. cat. (Montreal: The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 1985), 22.

127. Clive Bell, Old Friends: Personal Acquaintances (London, 1956), 65-66.

128. Henri, The Art Spirit, 17.

129. Henri letter to parents, 16 December 1898, BRBL.

130. Louis Vauxcelles, "The Art of James Wilson Morrice," The Canadian Magazine 34 (December 1909): 169,

cited in Cloutier, 89.

131. The Société Nationale des Beaux Arts was formed ten years earlier in 1889 when Bouguereau, Henri's teacher at the time, contested the decision that the men who had received medals in the 1889 Exposition should be exempt from the jury at the spring Salon. In opposition were the French academicians headed by Meissonier. The new organization, the Société Nationale des Beaux Arts, held exhibitions in the Champ-de-Mars to accommodate the younger painters. They eliminated the awarding of medals altogether.

132. De Manet M. Robert Henri a retrouvé toute la technique. L'Echarpe rouge . . . c'est une des belles choses exposées . . . Imitées en partie de Manet, les harmonies brunâtres de M. Morrice suggèrent exactement l'atmosphère de cité, un peu lourde. On sent l'air circuler vers les voiles roides de la communicante, vers le dessin de sa mère en noir . . . ailleurs, l'effet de neige donne du riel à la blancheur bourbeuse du trottoir, qui longe la grille . . . "Société Nationale Des Beaux Arts," Le Petit Bleu (8 Mai 1899).

133. Henri letter to parents, 16 December 1891, BRBL. The painting is believed to be Fête foraine, Montmartre currently in the collection of the Hermitage Museum, Leningrad. See Cloutier, 23-24.

134. William Inness compares Henri's Fourteenth of July-"La Place" with Pierre Bonnard's Le Moulin Rouge of 1896 and Edouard Vuillard's At the Pastry Cooks', c 1898. See Homer, 220-223.

135. Morrice may have met Whistler through his close friend Joseph Pennell (1857-1926), an American printmaker and illustrator who lived in London. Pennell was well acquainted with Whistler and, in fact, co-authored a two volume biography in 1908 of the American expatriate painter.

136. George Moore, Modern Painting, 24.

137. Henri letter to his parents, 11 December 1899, BRBL. The exhibition at the Galerie George Petit was the Exposition Internationale de Peinture et de Sculpture.

138. Henri letter to parents, 18 February 1897, BRBL.

139. Pierre Cabanne, Whistler (New York: Crown Publishing Inc., 1994), 48.

140. A friend of Whistler witnessed the artist's use of memory on an evening walk. Whistler stopped for some time to admire the glow in the misty twilight of a group of buildings lit from within. Refusing a sketch pad, Whistler then asked his companion, "Now see if I have learned it." He proceeded to fully describe the scene "as one might recite a poem" and a few days later completed a painting. T.R. Way, Memories of James McNeill Whistler, the Artist (London, 1912), 67-68, cited in Weisberg, The European Realist Tradition, 285 and Whistler, A Retrospective, ed. by Robin Spencer (Sydney and London: Bay Books, 1989), 106.

141. Henri diary, 18 July 1898, Reel 885, AAA, SI. An emphasis on drawing from memory can also be found in Baudelaire's essay "The Painter of Modern Life." Baudelaire wrote that "all good and true draftsmen draw from the image imprinted on their brains, and not from nature." He continued, "men such as Daumier and Monsieur G. [Guys], for long accustomed to exercising their memory and storing it with images, find that the physical presence of the model and its multiplicity of details disconcerts and as it were paralyses their principal faculty." See Baudelaire, The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays, 16.

142. Henri, The Art Spirit, 196.

143. Whistler's "Ten O'Clock Lecture" was first delivered in 1885. In that talk he maintained: "To say to the painter, that Nature is to be taken as she is, is to say to the player, that he may sit on the piano." See James Abbott McNeill Whistler, The Gentle Art of Making Enemies (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1967), 135-159.

144. Chaim Potok, My Name is Asher Lev. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), 201-203.

145. The idea for The Art Spirit was initiated by Ryerson when she asked Henri's permission to publish her class notes. He agreed and expanded the concept of the book to include excerpts from other writings derived largely from the years 1900-1923. See William Inness Homer, Robert Henri and His Circle, 182-184, and Perlman, Robert Henri, His Life and Art, 132, 133. The contents for William Morris Hunt's Talks About Art is a very similar compilation of class notes recorded by one of Hunt's students, Helen M. Knowlton. According to Bennard B. Perlman in 1991, over 200,000 copies of The Art Spirit have been sold since the time of its publication in 1923. See Perlman, Robert Henri, His Life and Art, 133.

146. Bellows, "The Art Spirit," by Robert Henri in which He Makes Clear the Relationship of Art to Life," Arts and Decoration XX (December 1923): 26.

146. Quoted in Neil Martin, "More Than Just a Book," The Christian Science Monitor 43, no. 57 (1 February 1951): 15A.

148. Thomas Wright, review of The Art Spirit, by Robert Henri, The (London) Literary Guide (April 1926): 73.

149. Margery Ryerson letter to Robert Henri, 24 March 1926, Reel 886, AAA, SI.

149. Alice Snyder, "Art and the English Classroom," The English Journal XIV, no. 10 (December 1925): 803.

151. unidentified clipping, Robert Henri Papers, BRBL.

152. See David Ansen, "The Kid From Mars," Newsweek, 9 April 1990, 68. Lynch is best known for his quirky television series "Twin Peaks" of the 1990 and such eccentric films as "Eraserhead" (1978) and "Blue Velvet" (1986).

153. Pete Hamill, A Drinking Life, A Memoir (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1994), 168, 169.

154. Keith Haring interview with Vince Aletti in 1981, cited in Keith Haring: Future Primeval, exh. cat. (Normal, Ill: University Galleries, Illinois State University, 1990), 95.

155. Henri, The Art Spirit, 265.

156. Hunt, Talks About Art, 1.

157. Henri, The Art Spirit, 245.

158. During the first half of the nineteenth century there was an interest in a fourth dimension as it related to n-dimensional geometry. See Linda Dalrymple Henderson, "Mysticism, Romanticism, and the Fourth Dimension," ed. Maurice Tuchman The Spiritual in Art, Abstract Painting 1890-1985, exh. cat. (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1986), 219. An interest in the fourth dimension in the early twentieth century has often been associated with Cubism, the Russian suprematist painter Kasimer Malevich (1878-1935), and the Russian born American painter Max Weber (1881-1961).

For a thorough discussion of the topic see Linda Dalrymple Henderson, The Fourth Dimension and non-Euclidean Geometry in Modern Art (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983).

158. Henri, The Art Spirit, 54.

160. Eric J. Sundquist, ed., American Realism: New Essays (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 16. Lionel Tilling (1905-1975), an influential educator and literary critic, was concerned with the relationship between the self and society.

CHAPTER 7

THE EARLY PAINTINGS OF ROBERT HENRI

Architectural historian Robert Macleod observed that "a consideration of the ideals and intentions of designers" can at times be "more illuminative of their architecture than conventional stylistic analysis."¹ This is certainly applicable to Henri who devoted much of his time and energy to thinking and writing about the nature and purpose of art. The focus of this dissertation has thus far been an investigation of Henri's ideals and intentions and their many possible sources of cosmopolitan influences. To consider Macleod's statement in its entirety, however, is to also raise the question of illumination.

Are the complexities of Henri's theories about art and life manifest in his early paintings and if so, how? Was he a naturalist, an impressionist, a vitalist, or symbolist? Was he an urban realist, as he and other members of the Ashcan School have frequently been called, or an "anti-realist" as Judith K. Zilczer has suggested?² Did his ideals and intentions as derived from his experiences abroad influence his early paintings and ultimately impact the formation of the Ashcan School?

Such questions are far easier to ask than they are to answer. As with many art theories, particularly of the twentieth century, it can be challenging to match word or ideology with actual form. However, as I looked at Henri's paintings after completing my research I was struck by the fact that his art and that of the Ashcan School had literally acquired a new dimension. Looking through the lenses of the different writers and thinkers who influenced Henri and his colleagues altered the way in which I experienced their paintings. I saw the humanity, the search for genuine experience, the sense of aliveness, and I was able to more easily overlook the absence of well-honed technique, sacrificed for the sake of authentic expression. This last chapter will attempt to explicate the often subtle relationship between Henri's varied interests and his paintings as well as those other members of the Ashcan School.

Henri remained in Paris until the summer of 1900, having spent nearly seven of the previous twelve years abroad. Perhaps it was his wife's poor health that necessitated a return to the United States.³ It seems he had hoped to remain in France for a longer period of time as indicated in a letter to his parents written the previous year. He wrote of his desire for:

continued connection with Paris . . . if my more liberal art is to be appreciated it is only at the greatest center that it will have early notice . . . I have always

fared better here than at home and it is certainly here that I make my progress.⁴

How did Henri fare at home? By August he had settled in New York City on East 58th Street where he began painting primarily urban scenes and landscapes as he had done in France. John Sloan would later assess these paintings: "Some of Henri's greatest work will be found in the landscapes and city streets painted in Paris and New York back in the Nineties and the turn of the century. The finest work was of the early dark period when he had less facility with the brush."⁵ The degree to which Henri's theories found form in his art can initially be addressed through examining the early critical responses to his work.

Critical Reception of Henri's Paintings, 1897-1902

Many of Henri's early paintings praised by Sloan were exhibited in the three one-person exhibitions he had between 1897 and 1902.⁶ They embody much of the vigor which was later sacrificed, as Sloan explained, when Henri became a more proficient painter.⁷ Examining the critical response to these works help reveal the degree to which Henri's cosmopolitanism was recognized. Such a review also informs our understanding of the intersection of European influence with the style and subjects of his early paintings. Most reviews were positive but several critics grappled with how to categorize his works

and still others were blatantly displeased.

In 1897, during a ten month return to Philadelphia, Henri held his first one man show at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. The exhibition was comprised of eighty seven street scenes, landscapes, portraits, and figure studies primarily done in France. The style of the works ranged from the conservative Normandie Fireplace, 1897, (Fig. 44) to the Nabis-like Night-Fourteenth of July, c.1895-97 (Fig. 18).

The majority of the paintings were urban views and about thirty were pochades, small oil compositions on wooden panels painted quickly on site. The inclusion of these dramatic and loosely painted panels suggest that Henri considered them exhibitable as completed works of art despite their spontaneous rough appearance and small scale. Two examples of the early pochades shown in this first exhibition are Café Bleu, St.-Cloud, c.1897, (Fig. 32) and Houses on the Quai Bouloigne, 1898, (Fig. 24). Both works are characterized by a minimal delineation of form and animated brush strokes. Henri's decision to exhibit such works did not go unnoticed and his lack of "finish" viewed by some as a sign of vitality and by others as an indicator, for better or worse, of impressionism.

Interestingly, Henri chose not to exhibit those works which reflect significant impressionist influence. Girl Seated

by the Sea, 1893, (Fig. 45) and Woman in Pink on the Beach, 1893, (Fig. 46) were excluded. Both were painted in 1893 at Avalon on the New Jersey coast and contain such impressionist aspects as light colors, a sun-filled atmosphere, and genteel figurative subject matter. Perhaps Henri felt they were no longer representative of his style since by 1895 he had abandoned the use of bright colors and elegant figures posed in the landscape.

Henri's ability to capture a sense of life was consistently mentioned in the early reviews. One Philadelphia newspaper critic prefaced his remarks by calling attention to a Philadelphia street scene that Henri had shown in the Academy's annual show earlier that year. The writer applauded the vitality of what was probably a pochade, describing its tonality in Whistlerian terms:

. . . Mr. Henri surprised observers among the sincere, useful but inevitable echoes, imitations and commonplaces of the annual student exhibition by a small study, original, closely considered, but poetic, of Broad Street on a wet day. If most Philadelphians do not appreciate and never see the poetry of this splendid thoroughfare in dawn, dusk, and dark; if they have not left the singular charm . . . on a damp and misty day, when values are heightened and the wet asphalt or pavement gives to the picture its central core of luminous but deadened gray . . . yet full of the feeling of human life and the dusty uses of daily toil - it is not the fault of the street which spells this, but of the eyes which look and do not see . . . Mr. Henri expressed in the brief compass and few square inches of his student effort . . . to the bound and limit of his power of expression.

The author then commented on Henri's one-man show, noting

again the sense of movement and life in the works:

The strength of the exhibition lies in the capacity all through to exclude the accidental, and nowhere is this more apparent than in street scenes, like 'In the Street' (*Dans la Rue*) where a certain sense of feeling, movement, mass, and color are united to make an integral whole and convey a single impression.⁸

Dans la Rue, 1897, (Fig. 47) was one of the larger works on exhibit but in spite of its more conventional size Henri employed a loose technique similar to that of his pochades. Individuals are scarcely delineated, constructed in a summary fashion as are the trees and architectural backdrop. As in impressionist paintings, the fact that the figures are loosely painted suggests their constant mobility.

Another reviewer, after aligning Henri's portraits with those of Manet and Velasquez, mentioned Henri's street scenes "to which more than half of the display is devoted." He wrote:

It can only be said that they are full of life. They have all the bustle . . . of the Parisian boulevards. The people in them have movement; the old buildings are faithfully reproduced and the very air in them breathes the life of human beings . . . they have the fleeting subtle little things that are impossible to photograph.⁹

One other critic called the exhibition a "remarkable collection" and commended Henri's street scenes, comparing them to works by the French painter Jean François Raffaelli (1850-1924), a French realist known for not only picturesque views of Paris but its industrial side as well.¹⁰

One other writer was more hesitant in his compliments,

stating that the paintings were praiseworthy but incomprehensible to the general public and would only appeal to artists. "When in good form he produces good results," the critic wrote, "but when nature makes an attack upon his digestive apparatus the effect is transmitted through his brush to the canvas" However this same critic took issue with any comparison to Raffaelli, complimenting Henri on his looser approach:

If he [Henri] paints a city there is the spirit and movement of the work-a-day world . . . He differs from Raffaelli inasmuch as the Frenchman is a man of touch. Henri's brush is broader. Raffaelli is full of tricks. Henri is frank, open, free" ¹¹

Henri's small cityscapes were singled out by yet another writer who alluded to his use of an impressionist technique:

It is in his street pictures and tiny park views that his real skill asserts itself . . . a collection of very small landscapes executed, apparently with marvelous speed, upon wood, are particularly interesting. Mr. Henri's greatest gain . . . since his work was last seen here has been a certain alertness of vision which makes it possible for him to translate into pigment the light and color and motive of a crowded thoroughfare. ¹²

The persistent references to impressionism were in response to such works as Jardin de Luxembourg, 1899, (Fig. 48), one of eight views Henri painted during different times of day and seasons of the famous Paris gardens. As in Dans la Rue, 1897, (Fig. 47) the figures are constructed with slashes of paint but there is a greater sense of space and atmosphere and significant color in the lawn and sky that enlivens the

dark bank of trees in the distance.

Negative comments about Henri's connection to impressionism surfaced as well. One critic admitted to Henri's ability but that he "only needed to escape from the eccentricities and affectations of Impressionism to make him an excellent artist."¹³ The use of such terms as "eccentricities" and "affectations" undoubtedly resulted from such images in the exhibition as Night - 14th of July in Paris, c.1895-97 (Fig. 18). The style was derived from the manner of the Nabis whose paintings in 1897 were unfamiliar to most Americans. The entire surface of the painting - people, trees, distant buildings - are all treated as part of a flat decorative pattern. Without sufficient vocabulary to apply to this and other canvases, critics undoubtedly used the only term they knew to describe works of art characterized by loose brush strokes and diffused edges - impressionism.

In between Henri's first and second one-person exhibitions at home, commentary on his art also appeared in French newspapers. In May of 1899 Henri had works accepted into the Champs-de-Mars exhibition. "From Manet, M. Robert Henri has found all his technique," wrote one reviewer probably in reference to The Red Scarf, for which Henri's wife Linda Craige had posed. The writer found it to be "one of the most beautiful things exhibited." Another critic wrote of "painters who are fully possessed by their art and appreciated

by the public for their awareness as much as for their talent and among them I have the pleasure to mention M. Robert Henri"¹⁴

The French writer also mentioned Henri's "four witty canvases" in the exhibition which included La Neige, 1899, an urban snow scene which was purchased the following month by the French government for the Musée National du Luxembourg.¹⁵ (Fig. 49) The painting with its murky sky and overall somber tones, a recessional street somewhat centrally placed in the composition, and lack of specific narrative would become a prototype for several of his New York street scenes of the following decade such as Snow in New York and Street Scene with Snow both of 1902. (Figs. 50, 21).

In 1901 Henri exhibited at the second annual exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. One critic reviewing the show mentioned Henri's A Café Night as "among those works of interest but not readily classified."¹⁶ This work depicted the Closerie des Lilas, a favorite gathering spot on the edge of Montparnasse of not only Henri and his colleagues but the Symbolist poets as well. Since he painted several similar works of this outdoor café prior to 1900, giving them nearly identical titles, it is difficult to know precisely which one was being referred to in the article. (see Figs. 51, 52, 53) It is not surprising that an American critic in 1901 found such paintings hard to label as they appear to

be an amalgam of Whistler's dark tones of evening enlivened by accents of light, the flattened perspective of the Nabis, and sketchy brushwork of Manet.

At least one critic, Riter Fitzgerald, was disturbed by such paintings and titled his review in part, "Folly of Sending American Students to Paris to Study." Fitzgerald singled out another café scene by Henri and wrote about it in disparaging terms:

Another victim of Whistler is Robert Henri, a clever young artist who went to Paris, where he has been persistently painting shadowy figures in dark backgrounds . . . Mr. Henri has . . . a picture "The Café Terrace." A few figures are seated around a table . . . the faces are those of corpses, and the tone of the picture is so low and depressing that it might be called an episode in Dante's "Inferno." Mr. Henri no doubt painted it in Paris and possibly on a very gloomy day - for it is dark enough to give anyone the horrors.¹⁷

FitzGerald's reference to corpses was probably a response to not only the featureless faces but the stiffness of the figures. (Fig. 51) The vitality found in many of his street scenes of the 1890s dissipated in the decorative flat patterning of forms found in this and other works of the same theme. (Fig. 52) Sidewalk Café, c.1899, (Fig. 53), for example, appears static in its geometric structure. The background in particular is composed of rectangular shapes formed by the support beams of the café and the distant buildings.

In 1902 Henri had a second one-man show, this one

containing seventeen paintings at the Macbeth Gallery in New York. Again, French and American cityscapes and landscapes were dominant. One critic noted that Henri's work was "forcibly individual" and that he "carries with him only what is worth remembering and in placing it on a canvas employs his brains as well as his brush."¹⁸ Another New York newspaper critic related the following:

Modernity without eccentricity marks the exhibition of Robert Henri's landscapes and figure pictures at the Macbeth Gallery. He is modern in that all his work discloses positive impulse and personal emotion. In landscape, it is not only the pattern that interests him; it is the play of light and color, and especially the movement of the air . . . the dynamic, rather than the static aspect of nature . . . he paints so as to recall vividly the emotions induced.¹⁹

A critic for the New York Evening Post considered the landscapes superior to his portraits at the Macbeth show.²⁰ Another reviewer qualified his labeling of Henri as an impressionist, observing that "He is an impressionist in his view though in method he is bolder and more spirited than most of the impressionists . . . careless of detail, he aims only at the effect . . ."²¹ Another critic evoked Bergson's notions of the life force when he wrote: "His works are full of the spirit of life, of the great struggle of nature, and the power of moving forces . . . All his canvases have the sparkle and vitality of living matter."²²

Critic Charles FitzGerald described the public criticism of the Macbeth show in terms of the unfinished appearance of

the works:

In dealing with nature he is in the habit of making a version of his own, and the results seem to be disconcerting to many minds . . . It is a curious thing that a certain mechanical polish is commonly associated with the idea of finish, and from a few remarks dropped by casual visitors to Mr. Henri's exhibition it is evident that his landscapes are regarded by many as sketches, or thoughts half-expressed.

FitzGerald went on to defend such works such as "A Sudden Shower" and "The Hill-Top," declaring that they were "worth all the hands that ever niggled over a surface for the sake of explaining and polishing what from the first conception was meaningless and worthless." Exonerating Henri's quickly painted oils, the critic stated that "most of the landscapes (by other painters) commended for their completeness and finish have, in reality, never even been begun." His comment parallels Henri's own declaration that "a thing that has not been begun cannot be finished."²³

Henri again exhibited in the Pennsylvania Academy's annual exhibition early in 1902. His work was singled out by the prominent art critic Charles Caffin who observed Henri's attempt to capture both the temporal and the immaterial aspects of life. Caffin found "evidence of qualities very individual" and described Henri's goal as "an expression thoroughly artistic, at once masculine and tender, and an interpretation of humanity that takes count of the spiritual as well as the physical graces."²⁴

In November of 1902 Henri had his third one-man show at the Pennsylvania Academy. The exhibition comprised forty two paintings including portraiture, European and American landscapes, and a few Parisian cityscapes. Unlike his first one person show, this exhibition had more landscapes than urban scenes yet was distinguished by the inclusion of one of his recently painted industrial scenes, The Coal Breaker, 1902. (Fig. 8) This bleak depiction of a coal processing plant in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania contrasts starkly with the light-hearted Picnic, 4th of July, Meshoppen, Pennsylvania, July 4, 1902, painted the same month and also shown in the exhibition. (Fig. 54)

The latter work reflects similar themes of outdoor leisure that Henri may have seen in Paris by Manet, Monet, or any number of other French Impressionist painters. He had, in fact, visited an exhibit of Monet's paintings at Durand-Ruel Galleries in 1891. He described the works as "fine landscapes as I have ever seen in sentiment and the other important qualities of art . . . on close examination the work is masses of rough pure color . . . what realism! Claude Monet has taken up a branch of art and utterly fearless of the opinions of his conventional brethren."²⁵

In response to the exhibition one critic described Henri as "cosmopolitan"; another called him an impressionist but added that he was "less interested in what is expressed than

in what is felt . . . Mr. Henri is prodigiously interested in what he is seeing, but sees it rather with his head than with his fingers." Like Caffin, the reviewer sensed a dimension beyond the physicality of nature:

These tumultuous stormy landscapes, these drifting clouds, and swaying trees, this sense of suffused color, perpetually return to that one message which nature has for the centered and thinking soul with an overwhelming consciousness of the mood rather than the manner of the material world.²⁶

The show also elicited a review by Riter Fitzgerald who had criticized Henri's past work for its lack of delineated form. (see p.340) FitzGerald, however, found something pleasing about his new works on exhibit, possibly due to the inclusion of several very fine portraits and increased number of landscapes.²⁷ He cited a rather implausible reason for the apparent change in style, correlating Henri's marital status with the mood of his paintings:

I am glad to say the Robert Henri is improving . . . A few years since Mr. Henri had a exhibition of his works at the Academy, and they were so foggy and incomprehensible that several of them were hung upside down, and until the artist requested that they be changed no one seemed to observe the faux-pas. Mr. Henri was formerly in the deepest kind of Impressionist fog, which hides (to a certain degree) bad drawing . . . funereal in its blackness . . . But since then he has married and his art has grown more cheerful, which shows that married life has been a success for him.²⁸

Henri's exhibition traveled to the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn the following month. One writer there also linked Henri with impressionism and expressed concerns that he might

loose himself in the formlessness of the style. The critic declared:

Mr. Henri is an impressionist. In the hasty, vigorous brushwork, the clay colored mixtures of pigment, the absence of sharp lights, there are suggestions of Manet, Sisley, and others of that ilk . . . If Mr. Henri will keep his touch of nature, if he will keep his hand firm and his eye in practice . . . one may expect an art from him that will be ever better and sound. Most of the impressionists have gone to pieces, getting more and more sloppy, careless, unveracious, and at last producing nothing but daubs.²⁹

This recurring aversion to what was deemed impressionism is somewhat surprising given the fact that Americans had, by this time, been exposed to the style for almost two decades.³⁰ Perhaps, as scholar William H. Gerdts has indicated, this negative reaction was due to the fact that Americans responded more positively to the sun-filled landscapes of Claude Monet than to the figurative works of Renoir, Degas, and the darker tones of Manet whom Henri sought to emulate.³¹

Yet another reviewer was disconcerted by the license Henri took with observable phenomenon:

The spirit of the artist was in it, but a link was missing somewhere between vision and expression, his work did not appear to be quite firmly planted in nature.³²

A writer for another New York newspaper called into question the comparison of Henri to Velasquez. "Such a statement should be backed up with a reason and it is rather difficult to give one," he wrote. In place of the "suave sobriety" and "courtliness of manner" of Velasquez, this

critic found in Henri's works a "nervous feeling of modernity . . . clothed in extreme subtlety in an outward show of brusqueness." However, the critic could not dismiss Henri's paintings as merely careless or crude but "the result of originality of impulse seeking its most direct expression of a vigorous nature releasing itself naturally."³³

Perhaps the most positive commentary was printed in the Pratt Institute exhibition catalogue. The text included references to Henri's interest in metaphysical reality:

Mr. Henri has acquired a vocabulary of art that enables him to express his thoughts in simple and eloquent terms, eliminating details and concentrating upon the vital and philosophical truths that nature discloses to those who penetrate the surface of things. His works are full of the spirit of life . . . to him nature is life, and art serves its true purpose only as it expresses the eternal truths of existence.³⁴

Roots of an Eclectic Style

Those individuals who reviewed Henri's early works consistently noted aspects about his paintings that can be directly related to the variety of cosmopolitan influences discussed throughout this study. The multiplicity of such phrases as "feeling of human life," "sense of movement," "full of life," "spirit of life," "nervous feeling of modernity" and words like "dynamic," "vital," and "vigorous" signifies Henri's rejection in Paris of academic technique.

More important, such terminology evokes the vitalist

philosophy of Henri Bergson. Aspects of dynamism are visible in the quickly applied animated brush strokes of such pochades as Breton Market Scene, 1899, (Fig. 55) and Pont Neuf and Houses, 1898, (Fig. 56). His "nervous feeling of modernity" is also evident in larger landscapes and cityscapes. The sensation of vortical motion is apparent in Sansom Street, 1897 (Fig. 57), a depiction of the block just north of Henri's studio in Philadelphia. Swirling mist and rain envelopes the streetcar, sidewalk shops, and the pedestrians who are barely distinguishable in the darkness of the evening. Haloes of light, reminiscent of the stars in Van Gogh's swirling night sky, encircle the street lamps. In Windblown Trees, Paris, 1899, (Fig. 58) the entire pictorial surface is painted with the same vigorous strokes. Even the solid mass of a building set in the landscape seems enveloped in the surrounding movement.

Numerous references by critics to Henri's "street pictures" and their "spirit of the work-a-day world," "dusty toil," "crowded thoroughfares," and "the bustle of the Parisian boulevards" recall the literary images of Zola.³⁵ When walking the streets of Paris, Marie Bashkirtseff exclaimed that the urban commotion around her needed Zola to describe it. In L'Oeuvre Zola wrote of Paris and its "vast congeries of activity, through its thoroughfares and little streets." Many of Henri's paintings done in France and soon

after his return to Philadelphia include city dwellers in motion such as Dans la Rue, 1897, (Fig. 47), Rue des Rennes, 1899, (Fig. 59), Street Corner, 1899, (Fig. 60), and the Pissaro-like Walnut Street Seen from "806", 1893, (Fig. 61).

However, unlike many of his Parisian scenes, Henri's New York City paintings have minimal signs of human life.³⁶ "Vast congeries of activity" were left for the imagery of fellow members of the Ashcan School who, at Henri's encouragement, were also reading Zola and seeking out "real life" in the city. John Sloan's Election Night, 1907, (Fig. 62), George Luks' Hester Street, 1905, (Fig. 63), Everett Shinn's Sixth Avenue Shoppers, undated, (Fig. 64), and George Bellows Cliff Dwellers, 1913, (Fig. 65) are just a few of their works that give pictorial form to the crowded streets of New York City. Henri seemed far more interested in relaying a conceptual rather than reportorial approach to urban experience, perhaps as a result of the influence of Symbolist theory and Bergsonian philosophy.

Other paintings by the Ashcan School which involve a more tranquil encompassing view of the city also parallel the writings of Zola. If one substitutes a bridge for a rooftop and New York for Paris, John Sloan's Pigeons, 1910, (Fig. 66) and the panoramic The City From Greenwich Village, 1922, (Fig. 67), both evoke a passage from Zola's L'Oeuvre. From his high vantage point Claude Lantier experienced the "life of the

streets . . . a light wind was blowing, and a little troop of clouds drifted, very high, across the paling blue of the sky . . . one could listen to the vast slow breathing of Paris itself . . .³⁷

Some of the early criticism reflected Henri's antipositivist interests in the immaterial essences of reality as promulgated by the French Symbolist movement. There was reference to his seeking the "spiritual as well as the physical." Mention was also made that Henri's paintings were about the "mood rather than the manner of the material world" and that his works were "not firmly planted in nature." Yet another critic wrote that the purpose of his art was to express "the eternal truths of existence."

In terms of labeling Henri's art, the critics repeatedly used the word impressionism or suggested it as in the text about Henri capturing the "fleeting subtle little things that are impossible to photograph." Even when Henri exhibited together with Glackens, Sloan, Luks, and Prendergast prior to the exhibition of the Eight, they were called impressionists. Charles DeKay titled a review of their show at the National Arts Club in 1904 "Six Impressionists, Startling Works by Red-Hot American Painters." DeKay declared Henri the leader of the group and the "very lively" fifty works on exhibit as representative of "all the stages of impressionism." He then went on to describe one landscape as "a vivid little

memorandum . . . slapped on a canvas in thick welts of paint." DeKay summarized the paintings as representative of "the vigorous school of picture-making which tries to get the objects on the canvas before the enthusiasm that caused their selection has had time to evaporate and the red-hot impression time to cool."³⁸

It seems it was the appearance of having worked quickly that gave Henri and his colleagues the attribution of impressionist. But was Henri truly an impressionist? If impressionism can be defined as a movement which "disdains established hierarchies of subject, order, and finish; avoids clear narrative; embraces the spontaneous; is alert to the trivial incident; and empowers the ordinary viewer, insisting on his or her engagement with . . . fragments of the familiar-specifically local and national-experience" then it could certainly be said that Henri and fellow members of the Ashcan School were impressionists.³⁹ Indeed, as William H. Gerdtz recently asserted, the Ashcan School painters borrowed significantly "from French Impressionist concerns."⁴⁰

However, Henri repeatedly told his students that the subject wasn't the important thing but what you feel about it. This emphasis on what is perceived and felt was manifest time and again in Henri's theories and differentiates his approach to art from what Robert L. Herbert has referred to as the

"neutral vision" and detachment of the impressionists. Furthermore, impressionist paintings are also characterized by "bright chromatic harmonies . . . used to give the illusion that natural light was being recorded instinctively."⁴¹ Henri's deemphasis on color and light, except for a brief period in 1893, distinguishes his work formally from impressionism.

Paintings such as East River Embankment, Winter, 1900, (Fig. 31) is related more to the muted tones of a naturalist rather than an impressionist palette, as exemplified by the American Lionel Walden's Docks at Cardiff, 1894, (Fig. 68) In both depictions of shipping and harbor life, the somber brown tones seem appropriate for the industrial subject matter. Walden's painting was acquired by the Luxembourg Museum at around the same time as Henri's La Neige, an indication of the French government's enthusiasm for the naturalist aesthetic at that time.

The term naturalism was first applied to painting by French art critic Jules-Antoine Castagnary in his review of the 1859 French Salon. Castagnary used the designation to distinguish the naturalist instinct of a new generation of French artists from their predecessors' antiquated tendencies toward the picturesque. Castagnary defined the traits of naturalism as "nature in landscape painting, character in portraiture, humanity . . . Life everywhere . . ." He also

referred to naturalism's "double focus on country life . . . and city life . . . in it attempts to embrace all forms of the visible world" and modernity wherever it was found.⁴² Henri's paintings at the turn of the century, such as Cumulus Clouds, East River, 1901-02, also painted in a muted brown tones, fulfills such a definition with its focus on the unglamorous aspects of life on an urban waterfront. (Fig. 69)

Geneviève Lacambre recently reiterated Castagnary's description of the aim of naturalism as "not simply to render reality but, far beyond, to express Life itself."⁴³ She maintained that in order to avoid the literary, painting must represent a specific moment or instant, an attribute also shared by the impressionists. As Robert L. Herbert explained, "naturalism, a term of literary derivation, should also be used to interpret impressionism."⁴⁴ If the naturalist "paints the spectacle of life around him, its vice and ugliness, its beauty and sweetness" then Henri and the Ashcan School painters can also be linked ideologically with naturalism.⁴⁵ Avoiding the sentimental and narrative, the Ashcan School painters concentrated on a range of everyday urban images such as women on rooftops drying their hair, a derelict going through garbage, or children frolicking in the park.

However, just as Henri deviated from impressionism in terms of his darker palette and evocative tonalism, he also parted company from the naturalists in formal aspects. His

emphasis on quick execution and spontaneity precluded the detail and large scale of the French naturalist works he admired such as Bastien Lepage's Joan of Arc.

The term most frequently applied to Henri and the Ashcan School is "realist" or more specifically New York Realists.⁴⁶ Realism, like naturalism and impressionism, is committed to contemporaneity. Henri and his circle rejected all forms of picturesque historicism and embraced the rallying cry "Il faut être de son temps" of not only Daumier and Courbet but Zola, De Maupassant and other French naturalist writers. The inclusion of all types of ordinary people in the art of the Ashcan School also denotes these artists as inheritors of mid-nineteenth century French realism.

While both realism and naturalism can produce an art that imitates the reality of the external world, there is significant difference between them. The former concerns itself with the accurate recording of visual data and in so doing, acknowledges the existence of that data beyond the mind of the one who perceives it. Naturalism is more concerned with perception of optical sensation. In this sense, Henri was more aligned philosophically with naturalism than traditional realism.

What differentiated impressionists from the realists was technique, which, as Linda Nochlin points out, "was as fleeting and nonchalant as their motifs." However, in some of

Henri's early works, his "fleeting and nonchalant" brush strokes surpass the vitality of those in most impressionist paintings, with the possible exception of late Monet. His fluid technique was certainly not part of the American realist tradition. As John Sloan explained: "[Winslow] Homer and Eastman Johnson and [William Sidney] Mount had painted the life around them, but we thought their work was too tight and finished."⁴⁷ In Henri's Breton Market Scene, 1899, (Fig. 55) or Snow, Paris, 1899, (Fig. 70) forms are almost totally obscured by the vigorous strokes.

Henri's energetic painting surfaces suggest not only Bergson's dynamic flux of pure experience but his search for a higher reality. Such metaphysical concerns were foreign to the works of Manet, Daumier, and other French realists and naturalists whom Henri admired. Henri's desire to capture and express an unseen reality such as the idea of the wind or the spirit of a bird in flight also departs from the optical approach of the impressionists and naturalists who relied on their perceptions of observed phenomena. Yet the form of his paintings never gave way to the Symbolist use of arbitrary color and distorted form nor did he emphasized personal subjectivity to the point where it became dominant over nature as it did with the Symbolist painters.

It was Henri's interests in metaphysical reality that prompted Judith K. Zilcer to devote an essay to "Anti-Realism

in the Ashcan School." Henri and Sloan, in particular, she writes, were not literal realists. "The 'art spirit' that animated Robert Henri and his colleagues," Zilczer concludes, "seems to have been neither the naturalistic spirit of detached observation nor the antipositivistic spirit of the fin-de-siècle."⁴⁸ Zilczer's grappling for appropriate terminology to describe Henri's early paintings aptly reflects Henri's eclectic borrowings and his own resistance to labeling himself or the art of his colleagues. (She finally comes up with the term "subjective naturalism" to describe their personal response to urban life.)

Baudelaire wrote of the ideal artist, the flaneur, seeking a beauty extracted from both the external and the transitory, the concrete and the ephemeral sides of modern life. If such divergent ideologies derived from the empiricism of a realist/naturalist aesthetic and the poetic transcendence of symbolism co-mingled in the writings of Baudelaire as well as Zola and Walt Whitman - why, then, could they not coexist in painting? Through the use of a dynamic painting style, Henri sought in his early landscapes and urban scenes to achieve this very alliance.

Zola's writings have been described as "multi-faceted, where naturalism, romanticism, idealism, even symbolism each has a part, a work gorged with life that started like a chronicle and ended like a poem."⁴⁹ Although no artist in

actuality charts such an ordered and linear journey, Henri adopted aesthetic and theoretical aspects from realism, naturalism, impressionism, vitalism, and symbolism. In the hands of a group of newspaper artists with a proclivity for depicting modern urban life such a synthesis, ignited by Henri's enthusiasm, became the catalyst for the development of the Ashcan School.

Notes

1. Robert Macleod, Style and Society: Architectural Ideology in Britain, 1835-1914 (London: Royal Institute of British Architecture, 1971), 7, cited in Conn, The Divided Mind, 320.

2. Zilczer, 44.

3. In June of 1898 Henri married Linda Craige, a former student of his at the Women's School of Design in Philadelphia. They honeymooned in Paris where they remained until August of 1900. Frail in health, Linda suffered periodic illnesses. She died in November of 1905 at the age of thirty.

4. Henri letter to parents, 24 January 1899, BRBL.

5. Cited in Helen Farr Sloan, "Robert Henri: An Appreciation," Robert Henri, Painter, exh. cat. (Wilmington, Delaware: Delaware Art Museum, 1984), xii.

6. No further one artist shows of Henri's work were held until the Memorial Exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1931, two years following his death.

7. When Sloan described Henri as a better painter when he "had less facility with the brush" he was undoubtedly referring to Henri's adherence after 1909 to the structure and order of Hardesty Maratta's color system and, to a lesser degree, Jay Hambidge's theory of dynamic symmetry. See Helen Farr Sloan, "Robert Henri: An Appreciation," xii.

8. " 'Special Exhibition' Tone and Color, The Works of Robert Henri at the Academy of Fine Arts," Philadelphia Press (28 October 1897), newspaper clipping, Henri scrapbook, Reel 887, AAA, SI.

9. "A New Painter," Philadelphia Ledger (25 October 1897), newspaper clipping, Henri scrapbook, Reel 887, AAA, SI.

10. "Interesting Pictures, Robert Henri's Remarkable Exhibition at the Academy. Views of Parisian Streets," Philadelphia Record (25 October 1897), newspaper clipping,

Henri scrapbook, Reel 887, AAA, SI. Interestingly, Everett Shinn was also compared to Raffaelli. See Virginia M. Mecklenburg, "Manufacturing Rebellion," in Metropolitan Lives, 195.

11. "Robert Henri Private View at His Exhibition," Philadelphia Item (23 October 1897), newspaper clipping, Henri scrapbook, Reel 887, AAA, SI.

12. "Art Notes," Philadelphia Inquirer (24 October 1897), newspaper clipping, Henri scrapbook, Reel 887, AAA, SI.

13. Philadelphia Press (13 October 1897), newspaper clipping, Henri scrapbook, Reel 887, AAA, SI.

14. The full quotation reads: "Ce sont de ces variations qui n'arriveront jamais à nombre des peintres déjà en pleine possession de leur art, appréciés du public pour leur conscience au moins autant que pour leur talent, et parmi lesquels j'ai plaisir à citer, au hasard de ma promenade, M. Robert Henri, qui a quatre toiles remplies d'esprit, dont l'une, Un P'tit, est ravissante." Emmanuel Arène, "Le Tour Du Salon," Le Matin (21 Mai 1899), newspaper clipping, Henri scrapbook, Reel 887, AAA, SI.

15. The other two works accepted were A Little One (a portrait of Henri's cleaning woman's son) and Woman in Cloak, a seated model wearing a loose black wrap. In the 1930s the Luxembourg closed and its collection transferred to the Louvre. Many works went into storage and were eventually dispersed to various state agencies. La Neige currently hangs at the Musée de la Coopération Franco-Américaine, housed in the Château de Blérancourt, Blérancourt, France. Files at the National Archives in Paris list the purchase date as Aug. 1, 1899. The purchase price of 600 francs is crossed out and replaced with 800 francs.

16. Philadelphia Press (March 1901), newspaper clipping, Henri scrapbook, Reel 887, AAA, SI.

17. Riter Fitzgerald, "Academy Exhibition, Large Display of Very Eccentric Art. Too Many Odd Effects. The Folly of Sending American Students to Paris to Study," Philadelphia Press (16 January 1901), newspaper clipping, Henri scrapbook, Reel 887, AAA, SI.

18. Byron Stephenson, "Palette and Brush," New York Town Topics (3 April 1902), newspaper clipping, Henri scrapbook, Reel 887, AAA, SI.

19. New York Mail and Express (8 April 1902), newspaper clipping, Henri scrapbook, Reel 887, AAA, SI.

20. New York Evening Post (9 April 1902), newspaper clipping, Henri scrapbook, Reel 887, AAA, SI.

21. Brooklyn Eagle (4 April 1902), newspaper clipping, Henri scrapbook, Reel 887, AAA, SI.

22. Herald Tribune (15 March 1902), newspaper clipping, Henri scrapbook, Reel 887, AAA, SI.

23. Charles FitzGerald, "Mr. Robert Henri and Some Translators," New York Evening Sun (8 April 1902): 4; Henri, The Art Spirit, 31.

24. Charles H. Caffin, "Pennsylvania Academy Exhibition," New York Sun (2 February 1902), newspaper clipping, Henri scrapbook, Reel 887, AAA, SI.

25. Ibid.

26. "The Work of Robert Henri," Philadelphia Ledger (16 November 1902); and "Art and Artists," clipping dated November 1902, reel 887, Henri scrapbook, AAA, SI.

27. The exhibition included such now well known figure paintings as Portrait of George Luks, The Man Who Posed as Richelieu, and Woman in the Mantau.

28. Riter FitzGerald, "Robert Henri's Works, The Eccentric Artist Improving," Philadelphia Item (1 December, 1902), newspaper clipping, Henri scrapbook, Reel 887, AAA, SI.

29. "Robert Henri's Pictures at Pratt Institute," Brooklyn Eagle 19 December 1902, newspaper clipping, Henri scrapbook, Reel 887, AAA, SI.

30. In 1883 an exhibition containing French impressionist art was held in Boston. Two years later the Parisian art dealer Durand-Ruel was invited to have an exhibition in New York. The show held in 1886 contained mostly impressionist art. However, scholar William H. Gerdts asserts that impressionism did not reach full acceptance in America until the Pan-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco of 1915. Not only was that exhibition full of impressionist art, critical reaction was extremely positive and enthusiastic. See William H. Gerdts, American Impressionism (New York: Abbeville Press, 1984), 50-53, 301-302.

31. Gerdtts writes: "The Eight should be seen as an extension of the figurative Impressionists-not so radical as the modernists but ready to reinvestigate the tougher, more ugly, sometimes more pessimistic themes of the figurative French Impressionists that had been so emphatically rejected in New York in 1886." See William H. Gerdtts, Impressionist New York (New York: Abbeville Press Publishers, 1994), 34.

32. "An Exhibition in Brooklyn," New York Evening Sun (27 December 1902): 6.

33. "Pictures by Robert Henri," New York Morning Sun (31 December 1902), newspaper clipping, Henri scrapbook, Reel 887, AAA, SI.

34. Quoted in New York Advertiser (19 December 1902), newspaper clipping, Henri scrapbook, Reel 887, AAA, SI.

35. An entire book, has in fact, been devoted to a study of crowds in Zola's novels. See Naomi Schor, Zola's Crowds (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

36. Bruce Chambers assessed that "Henri in fact stood out from his Philadelphia friends and allies as the group's theoretician, preoccupied with the idea of the city as the locus of particular perceptual modes and states of being which expressed the modern urban condition more truthfully than the paintings either of the Impressionists or of those working in more traditional representational styles." See Chambers, "Robert Henri's Street Scene with Snow (57th Street, N.Y.C.): An Idea of City "In Snow Effect," 32.

37. Zola, The Masterpiece, 250.

38. Charles DeKay, "Six Impressionists, Startling Works by Red-Hot American Painters," New York Times (20 January 1904), 9.

39. H. Barbara Weinberg, Doreen Bolger, and David Park Curry, American Impressionism and Realism, exh. cat. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1994), 4. The major thesis of this publication is, in fact, that the dichotomy between the works by the New York Realists (Henri and the Eight) and the American Impressionists as promulgated by previous scholarship does not truly exist. Rather, the authors posit, their works should be seen as compatible and analogous with one another particularly in terms of subject matter.

40. William H. Gerds, Impressionist New York (New York: Abbeville Press Publishers, 1994), 33.

41. Robert L. Herbert, Impressionism, Art, Leisure, and Parisian Society (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 46, xiv.

42. Jules-Antoine Castagnary, Salons (1857-1870) (Paris, 1892), 11; cited in Geneviève Lacambre, "Naturalism in French Nineteenth-Century Painting," in Weisberg, 231, 232. The progressive artists to whom he was referring were Jean François Millet, Théodore Rousseau, Charles François Daubigny, Camille Corot, and Constant Troyon.

43. Geneviève Lacambre, "Naturalism in French Nineteenth Century Painting," chapter in Weisberg, The European Realist Tradition, 234. Lacambre acknowledges Joseph Sloane as the originator of the phrase "objective naturalism" in his book French Painting Between the Past and Present.

44. Robert L. Herbert, 33.

45. John Canaday, Mainstreams of Modern Art (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1959), 166.

46. The Whitney Museum held a major exhibition in 1937 entitled "New York Realists" in which the work of Henri, Sloan, Glackens, Luks, and Shinn were showcased. Their usage of the title helped propagate the appearance of the term in many texts on American art.

47. "John Sloan Discussing Robert Henri," in John Sloan/Robert Henri: Their Philadelphia Years, 1886-1904, exh. cat. (Philadelphia: Moore College of Art Gallery, 1976), 27.

48. Zilczer, 48.

49. Equard Herriot, "Hommage à Zola," Equisses (Paris: Hachette, 1928): 52, cited in Berg, 210.

CONCLUSION:

HENRI, COSMOPOLITANISM, AND THE IDEOLOGICAL BEGINNINGS
OF THE ASHCAN SCHOOL

In The Art Spirit Henri counseled his students to avoid drawing a face feature by feature without considering the head in its entirety. "When I first realized this it seemed that I had to stretch my brain in order to get it around a whole head," he wrote. "No use trying to draw a thing until you have got all around it. It is only then that you comprehend a unity of which the parts can be treated as parts."¹

The purpose of this dissertation has been to try to philosophically get around Henri's head, so to speak, in order to arrive at a more complete understanding of the complex influences that coalesced during his early years of residency in France. The project is thus one of social and political history and involves an examination of the cultural milieu of France as it pertains to Henri's interests. This investigation also includes factors from his own personal history that have been overlooked, minimized, or unsatisfactorily assessed because of prevailing cultural nationalist biases. As such, this study participates in the reevaluation of postmodernism's rejection of the importance of biography and intentionality as an interpretive strategy.

In order to accomplish the breadth of this task, it was necessary to consider certain aspects of Henri's experience abroad as individual issues, in other words, to study them "feature by feature." However, as Henri would agree, such an exercise is of the most value if each feature can be ultimately brought together into one cohesive whole. This accounts for my persistent attempts throughout the dissertation to interrelate the many sources of influences that affected Henri in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century - the American writers Emerson and Whitman, French naturalists Emile Zola and Alphonse Daudet, the British artist/critics Phillip Gilbert Hamerton and George Moore, the Russians Marie Bashkirtseff, Leo Tolstoy, and Mikhail Bakunin, the French and American anarchist movements and their protagonists, the vitalist philosophy of Henri Bergson, the Canadian artist James Wilson Morrice, the expatriate James McNeill Whistler, and French art from Courbet to the Symbolists.

Of primary concern to Henri and the writers and artists to whom he was attracted was the issue of contemporaneity, particularly the modern urban existence. The French naturalist literature that Henri was so fond of reading often focused on the depiction of the city and the effects of urbanization on the lives of its inhabitants. These concerns were complimented by elements in Henri's choices of nonfiction such

as Marie Bashkirtseff's exclamations in her journals about the urban vignettes she found so compelling as an artist and George Moore's exhilaration expressed in his autobiography over the mere thought of painting urban modern life. This emphasis on the "here and now" was further reinforced for Henri in his reading of the poetry of Walt Whitman whose verse often reveled in the sensations of the moment.

A commitment to painting contemporary city life was, of course, a distinguishing characteristic of much of the painting of the Ashcan School. Just as Zola avoided the use of a narrative voice in order to involve the reader more intimately in his stories, the painters of the Ashcan School sought to diminish the psychological space between viewer and painter. This was achieved through a close cropping of images and loose brush strokes which contributed a sense of immediacy, both aspects of which can be also linked to impressionist painting as well as their own backgrounds as newspaper artists.

There was a recurring interest in the lower classes among the writers and artists to whom Henri was attracted. Their lives, unfettered by convention, were deemed to be sources of authentic experience. Again, many images from the Ashcan School include lower class urban dwellers. There was also an intense humanitarianism and interest in social conditions common to those whom Henri admired. When Henri praised John

Sloan's painting Pigeons he made no reference to its aesthetic qualities. Evoking Baudelaire's ideal artist as "man of the world" who appreciates everything that happens of the "surface of the globe," Henri saw in the painting "a human document of the lives of people living in those houses . . . That canvas will carry into the future time the feel and the way of life as it happened and as it was seen and understood by the artist."² Sloan echoed Henri's emphasis on the depiction of human experience when he wrote "I think there is . . . not enough centering of the mind on an important idea about Life - rather than Art."³

Individualism was a driving force behind Henri's teaching methods which resisted academic training and structure. This commitment to individualism was fed by Emerson, Hamerton, and Whitman as well as Bakunin and the anarchist movement which was in full force in fin-de-siecle France. Furthermore, Henri Bergson's doctrine of vitalism, apparent in the spontaneity and vigor of Henri's early painting, was well suited to individualism in its emphasis on knowledge intuited from personal experience and direct interaction with life. Both these aspects gave a group of newspaper artists the impetus to take themselves seriously as artists.

Members of the Ashcan School were also engaged by the modern dialectic between individual and society, evidenced by their imagery in which private lives are often played out in

the very public arena of the city. This topic was addressed by numerous writers and thinkers in Henri's intellectual pantheon, particularly the French naturalist authors. Henri's belief in the critical almost prophetic role of the artist to help heal a failing bourgeois society also participated in modern ideological thought shared by Tolstoy and numerous prominent anarchists of the day.

The notion of organicism, the melding of form to idea, was a common thread throughout much of Henri's reading. Organicism was apparent in the writings of Emerson and Whitman, and even had a part in anarchism's ideal self regulating community in which free human beings grow and develop in social harmony. Tolstoy sought an art generated from the inner self. George Moore rejected academicism in favor of a natural development of aesthetic form. Bergson believed in an organic consciousness which encouraged the natural flow of meaning between an artist's mind and the corresponding form of his art.

Henri's vigorous early paintings done during and soon after his years abroad with their concentration on urban subject matter most successfully reveal his absorption of the content and style of the arts and philosophies to which he was exposed in Paris. While his interest in humanity did persist in his search for "my people," manifest in his portraiture, it seems the longer he was away from the rich environment of

France, his work increasingly lost the vitality which he had so earnestly sought.⁴ By 1902, after failing to realize any financial success with his cityscapes, he concentrated on portraiture and teaching. Yet the issues he encountered in his readings and daily experiences in France remained a vital part of what he thought and felt and he continued to expound upon aesthetics, philosophy, politics, and literature to the coterie of artists who had first gathered about him in Philadelphia and later in New York City.

These men who, along with Henri, came to form the nucleus of the Ashcan School - John Sloan, William Glackens, Everett Shinn, and George Luks - were primed, as newspaper artists, to receive his dictum to paint contemporary life with speed and gusto. They were descendants of Baudelaire in more ways than one. Not only were they artists in the tradition of Baudelaire's "painter of modern life" but they were the descendants of the focus of that essay, Constantin Guys, who also came from a background as a journalist illustrator.

Baudelaire had been an avid collector of graphic art. Likewise, Henri's personal library included books on the graphic arts of Honoré Daumier, Paul Gavarni, Charles Keene, John Leech, and Constantin Guys. He owned bound copies of French caricatures dating back to 1858 that dealt with issues of contemporary life and even poked fun at the French Salon and the debate over the new naturalism in French art.⁵

By encouraging Sloan, Glackens, Luks, and Shinn, and later George Bellows to turn their talents as illustrators to the fine arts, Henri gave impetus to a tradition in American art that had precedence in France. The alliance of journalistic illustration and art had a history in France as early as the 1860s when graphic art was a well-established mode of interpreting urban life. Aspects of mass media illustration such as visual shorthand even found their way into high art, including works by artists of whom Henri was particularly fond. As Beatrice Farwell asserted: "We now know that Courbet looked at popular imagery . . . and we are beginning to learn that Manet and Degas did as well."⁶

In the catalogue for the recent exhibition Metropolitan Lives, The Ashcan Artists and Their New York, cultural historian Robert W. Snyder wrote that the "inescapable crosscurrents of culture, politics, and social change in New York City helped turn illustrators into artists."⁷ There is considerable merit to recognizing both the influence of the readily available wealth of visual material in New York on members of the Ashcan School as well as their journalistic backgrounds. However, this study has focused on John Sloan's assertion that:

some art authorities claim that the reason we painted the American scene was because we were newspaper men, but it was really Henri's direction that made us paint at all, and paint the life around us. There were many other artists drawing for newspapers in Chicago, San Francisco,

all the big cities; but they did not turn to painting. I feel certain that the reason our group in Philadelphia became painters is due to Henri.⁹

The artists who have been termed the Ashcan School along with those who exhibited together as the Eight claimed to be linked only by their agreement to oppose the National Academy's stringent system of jurying. The fact remains that they were linked far more significantly by their association with Robert Henri. As naturalist, realist, anarchist, artist/seer, and vitalist, Henri was an important early conduit in America of complex cosmopolitan Western ideologies. Like other twentieth century vanguards, he was able to tie various and disparate philosophical positions together into a dynamic constellation - and it was within this cluster of modern thought that the art of the Ashcan School was able to shine.

Notes

1. Henri, The Art Spirit, 107.
2. Ibid., 218, 219.
3. John Sloan diary entry for June 16, 1906 in St. John, 42.
4. Henri defined "my people" as those "through whom dignity of life is manifest, that is, who are in some way expressing themselves naturally along the lines nature intended for them." "My People": By Robert Henri," The Craftsman XXVII, no. 5 (February 1915): 459.
5. One cartoon, for example, depicted a Salon jury of 1869 fast asleep in front of a painting of a night scene. The caption read, "Le jury de peinture completamente illusionne par un effet du nuit." The two volume set is entitled Paris Au Crayon Par Cham (Paris: Arnauld De Vresse). Robert Henri Library, The National Arts Club, New York City.
6. Beatrice Farwell, The Cult of Images, Baudelaire and His 19th-Century Media Explosion, exh. cat. (Santa Barbara: University of California Museum of Art, 1977), 7.
7. Robert Synder, "City in Transition," chapter in Metropolitan Lives, The Ashcan Artists and Their New York, 29.
8. "John Sloan Discussing Robert Henri," in John Sloan/Robert Henri: Their Philadelphia Years, 1886-1904, exh. cat. (Philadelphia: Moore College of Art Gallery, 1976), 27.

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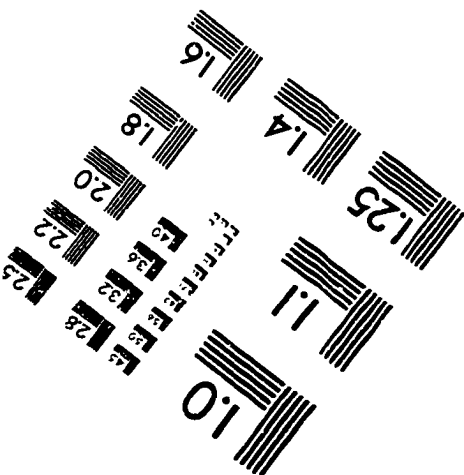
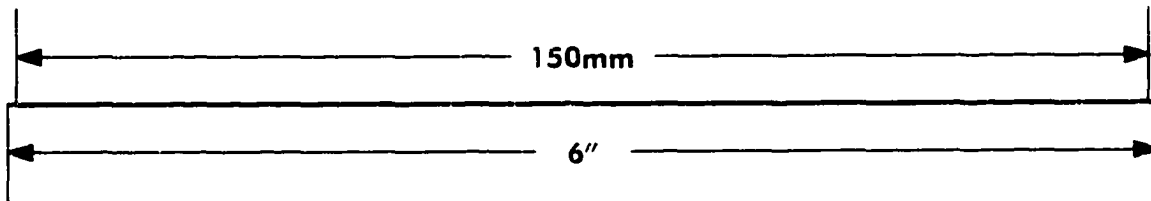
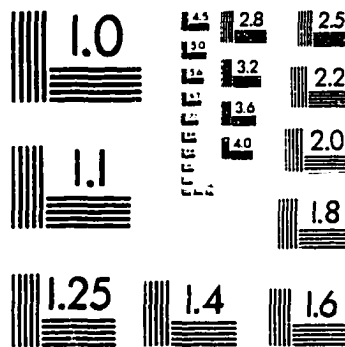
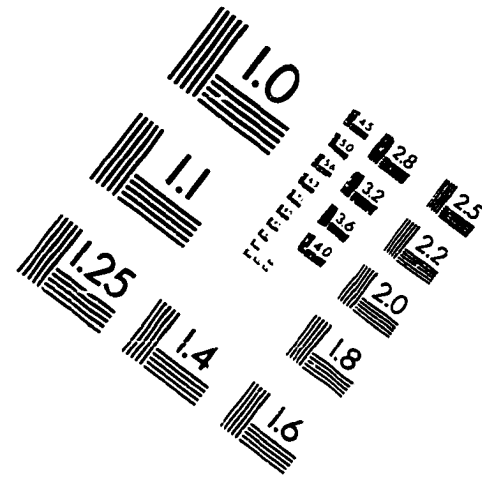
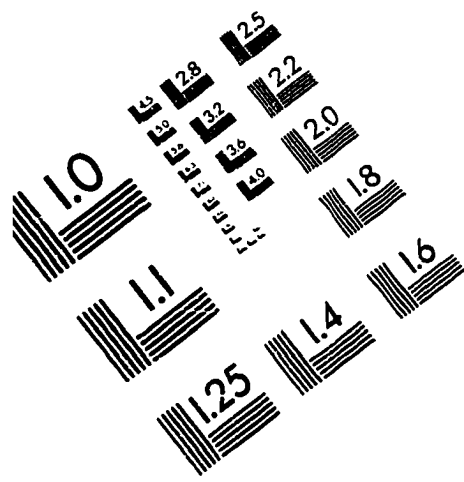
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