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DEATH AND AMERICAN PAINTING: CHARLES WILLSON PEALE TO
ALBERT PINKHAM RYDER

City University of New York

PH.D.

1980

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DEATH AND AMERICAN PAINTING:
CHARLES WILLSON PEALE TO ALBERT PINKHAM RYDER

by
PHOEBE LLOYD

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

1980

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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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INTRODUCTION

Death and American Painting: Charles Willson Peale to Albert Pinkham Ryder is an excursion into unexplored territory in the investigation of American art: the iconography of death. Two assumptions underlie this study and determine the works chosen for discussion. The first assumption is that the iconography of death is an especially sensitive index of cultural change because, as historians of European art have long understood and demonstrated, the life of a culture is revealed in its death imagery.¹ The second assumption is that the portrayal of the death of the common man is the most susceptible to change. Unlike the death imagery of heroes--such as presidents, senators or military men--the death imagery of the common man is not bound to any received iconographic tradition.²

The reader will soon discover that the term "common man" is understood generically. Common man may be interpreted variously to mean a child, a drowned woman, an Indian, a pilgrim journeying through an allegorical landscape. But everywhere it is the common man who is isolated for discussion. Artists and the society in which they worked perceived the death of the common man in a variety of ways: from the proper mental preparation for death, to the moment of expiration, the mourning over the corpse, burial and even the spiritual return of the deceased. Indeed, it is often by isolating the shift from one aspect of death to another

that we can best chart the changing attitudes to death which in their turn reflect cultural change.

The most significant discovery of this study is that from approximately 1828 onward, Americans wished to suppress the reality of death. They succeeded to such an extent that the phenomenon has long gone unobserved. Consequently, the ways in which artists disguised the fact of mortality are introduced for the first time into the iconography of American death imagery. Artists held death at bay in three ways: by making life portraits from the corpse; by intimating doom rather than depicting actual death; and by dramatizing situations of peril. Collectively, these modes suggest that the suppression of death may be more diligent in America than in Europe and that this situation constitutes critical evidence of sociological attitudes. A study of American art, then, buttresses the observations of social historians who have labeled the suppression of death as the "American way of death." Significantly, the iconography of death imagery, which can be as illuminating as funerary practices and mourning customs, reveals that this phenomenon occurred much earlier in the national experience than was formerly believed.

In the following pages, a considerable number of paintings will appear which have as yet received little or no attention. Many have never been reproduced or analyzed in the literature.

However, the obscurity of such works does not condemn them to insignificance. Rather, because until quite recently Americans have evinced little interest in the subject of death, a great theme in the history of art has been overlooked. It is the purpose of this study to restore these works to their context.

The body of works discussed is divided chronologically into four periods: 1772 to 1828--the Revolutionary era to Andrew Jackson's election to the Presidency (Chapter I); 1828 to 1861, the Jacksonian era to the beginning of the Civil War (Chapter II); the Civil War years, 1861 to 1865 (the Peace at Appomattox) (Chapter III); 1865 to 1917--Appomattox to the death of Albert Pinkham Ryder (Chapter IV). Some works, however, have been taken out of chronological sequence. Since the art in each period is referred to the predominant cultural trends, chronological crossovers occur whenever there is a long evolution of ideas or artistic traditions informing a particular series of paintings. Thus, to take the examples of widest disparity, certain pre-Civil War paintings of the death of the Indian are reserved for discussion in connection with post-Civil War imagery of the same subject. Similarly, the death imagery deriving from the Mexican War is discussed in Chapter III because it was adapted for the Civil War. And the genre here designated as the posthumous

mourning portrait, which appears to have been produced in greatest abundance between 1828 and 1861, nevertheless continued to be produced after the Civil War. Therefore, when a late example is relevant to understanding the type, it may be discussed in Chapter II.

Four exhibition pictures focusing the public's attention on the death of everyman in the early years of the New Republic open the analysis of American death imagery. Charles Willson Peale's Mrs. Peale lamenting the death of her child (1772-76), adapted from a compositional type for the Madonna watching over the sleeping Christ Child, is the seminal work considered.

Put on view in the artist's painting room in the year the Revolutionary War began, Peale's image celebrated the death of a child anonymous to all but her parents. In 1782, when he opened the first sky-lighted gallery in America, he displayed this mortuary portrait together with his bust portraits of Revolutionary War heroes. The next exhibition picture to impress the public with a death in the family came in the guise of a Biblical subject rarely portrayed, Washington Allston's The Dead Man Revived by Touching the Bones of the Prophet Elisha (1811-14). Although the text did not require it, the artist added the dead man's wife and daughter and made this family of three a center of

compositional interest. Allston's work was purchased by the Directors of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and remained on view in Philadelphia through the nineteenth century. Soon artists, exercising their entrepreneurial skills, introduced the subject of everyman's death on a much larger scale and over a wider geographical area. Benjamin West's final version of Death on a Pale Horse (1815-17) was first known to Americans through William Dunlap's copy, which toured East coast cities from 1825 to 1827. In 1836, the original was purchased by the Directors of the Pennsylvania Academy and exhibited in New York and Boston before being put on permanent display in Philadelphia. Portraying a scene from the Book of Revelation, West took a complex iconographic construct evolved over a seven-hundred-year period, and made an innovation: he inserted a family of four among death's victims. One other work--the largest, the most universalizing in theme, the most didactic, and the most widely toured over the longest period of time--was Rembrandt Peale's Court of Death (1820). Rembrandt Peale conceived for his fellow citizens a modern ars moriendi in which an old man is prepared to accept death and the viewers are instructed to follow his example. Charles Willson and Rembrandt Peale, Washington Allston and Benjamin West, in exhibition canvases conceived for the American polity, brought the death of anonymous individuals to the fore. Each artist extracted

from the body of Enlightenment thought ideas about the significance of the common man, a significance which led to the inversion of death's role. Traditionally, depictions of death were most often reserved for eminent persons. However, in the New Republic, the portrayal of the common man in death elevated him to a position of new importance.

Even as the exhibition pictures of Allston, West and Rembrandt Peale were being seen by large numbers of people, their message was being augmented by novel representations of death. The watershed for iconographic change appears approximately with the election of Andrew Jackson to the Presidency in 1828. His election brought further democratization and ushered in a period of optimism which was complemented by a naive romanticism. For this reason, the years from 1828 to 1861 have been often described as the era of Jacksonian Democracy. During this era, death imagery proliferated in the form of three categories: mourning art, genre paintings for exhibition, and landscape. All three categories reflected the cultural shift to a naive romanticism by introducing euphemisms of diverse kinds.

Mourning art, which constituted a body of work for private viewing, is here divided into two basic iconographic types: the tombstone mourning scene and the posthumous mourning portrait. It is the latter type, here named, defined and collected together for the first time, that

is of primary interest. For, although the likeness of the deceased was taken from the corpse, the result was not a mortuary but a "life" portrait executed to console the bereaved. Through the posthumous mourning portrait, the dead were restored to the living--if only in effigy. And this wish to camouflage the full reality of death pervaded other forms of imagery as well.

In genre paintings for exhibition, the dead literally slept through the era of Romantic Democracy. Exhibition canvases, such as Frederick S. Agate's Mother lamenting over her child (1827) and George Cochran Lambdin's The Dead Wife (1859), retitled The Last Sleep, eased the passage to death by reverting to the ancient iconographic tradition of equating death with sleep.

Thomas Cole's iconographic innovations were the most original and the most thoroughly cogitated, for he translated the experience of death into artistic allegories. The artist associated America with Eden, and in a singular figure composition of the Dead Abel (1831-32), he tentatively raised a question about the future of the land, which he regarded as endangered. This line of thought was pursued in his first landscape cycle, The Course of Empire (1836), which concluded with a scene of desolation. But the public, infused with the optimistic spirit pervading the era, refused to believe that Cole could have envisioned such an

end for American empire. And Cole, in two subsequent series, The Voyage of Life (1839-40) and The Cross and the World (left unfinished in 1848), took care to adjust his message to the tenor of the times.

During the Civil War, the presence of death was felt in every quarter. The American public only slowly comprehended the magnitude of the slaughter and their artists did little to confront them with the truth. Adhering to strategies of euphemistic evasion that had obtained before the war, artists concentrated on depictions of the bereaved. When the dead in battle were portrayed, as in James Hope's Civil War panorama of 1865, the endeavor was not well received. Nor was any monumental art portraying death in battle commissioned by 1865. Twenty years after Appomattox, artists returned to the subject of the Civil War. Then an attempt was made, through the iconography of death imagery, to present a sympathetic account of Southerners rather than to celebrate Northern victories. Thus death imagery reflected the confusion of thought and feeling attendant upon America's fratricidal war.

Before and after the Civil War, the death of the Indian was made to conform to the exigencies of Manifest Destiny. The Indians, an aboriginal people doomed to near extinction in America's industrial economy, were portrayed in compositions that depicted the necessity of their

demise, rather than their actual deaths. As in the case of the Civil War dead, the decimation of the Indian was not a subject that the public wished to confront outright in art.

In the last phase of American death imagery, some artists turned completely away from the realities of life in America. They favored instead subjects of familial tragedy in exotic settings or took up literary themes. It fell to Winslow Homer and Albert Pinkham Ryder to make an indigenous contribution to the iconography of death at the end of the century. Homer essayed a number of compositions upon the theme of peril in dangerous waters. Ryder sought and achieved universal symbols for the experience of death. His The Race Track (c. 1890-98) and The Dead Bird (c. 1890-1900) thereby provide poetic closure to a century of death imagery.

Notes: Introduction

1. The most recent attempts to relate death imagery to cultural developments have been those of Robert Rosenblum in Transformations in Late Eighteenth-Century Art, Princeton, 1967, and Linda Nochlin in Realism, Middlesex, 1971. Rosenblum considered the theme of death in French painting of the period. Nochlin interpreted certain European paintings of death in the context of mid-nineteenth-century cultural developments. However, neither Nochlin nor Rosenblum has pursued the theme across a whole century. Recently, Jan Białostocki's Vom heroischen Grabmal zum Bauernbegräbnis, Wiesbaden, 1977, has treated the death motif in peasant burial scenes of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. And Edith Hoffman's forthcoming Love, Sickness & Death: A Study of Subject Matter in 19th Century Art promises to make an important contribution. However, there has as yet been no treatment of American death imagery in a cultural context. The pioneering work in this area has occurred in two works that fall outside the discipline of art history: Leslie Fiedler's Love and Death in the American Novel, New York, 1960, and David Stannard's The Puritan Way of Death, New York, 1977. Although these works take little or no account of pictorial imagery, they nevertheless inform this study.

2. The death of exceptional men comprises several distinct studies. The subject of George Washington's death has been broached in Mark Thistlethwaite's The Image of George Washington: Studies in Nineteenth Century History Painting, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1977, pp. 183-207. P. Lloyd has examined the related theme of Washington's apotheosis in "John James Barralet and the Apotheosis of George Washington," Winterthur Portfolio, 12, 1977, pp. 115-37. The death of Lincoln, which generated an extensive iconography, has yet to be undertaken. The theme of the death of the military hero should also be isolated from within the general category of American death imagery.

Chapter I: DEATH AND THE NEW REPUBLIC

Four exhibition canvases, brought together and considered in sequence for the first time, introduce the subject of attitudes to death as revealed in American painting: Charles Willson Peale's Mrs. Peale lamenting the death of her child, Washington Allston's The Dead Man Revived by Touching the Bones of the Prophet Elisha, Benjamin West's Death on a Pale Horse and Rembrandt Peale's The Court of Death. Although at first the iconographic offerings of the four artists may appear highly diverse, it will emerge that all introduce a novel way of representing a death in the family. And because in every case the exhibition record is as important as the iconographic program offered to the viewers, these two phases in the canvases' history shall be given equal attention.

When the infant Margaret Bordley Peale died of smallpox in 1772, her father portrayed the corpse (Fig. 1). With this painting Charles Willson Peale signaled the beginning of a novel and significant tendency in American art. On the eve of the American Revolution he gave expression to democratic ideas through a representation of death. Death in the early decades of the New Republic would be considered from the point of view of the common man--and painted accordingly.

Proving that Charles Willson Peale conceived the painting of his dead daughter to correspond to the newly evolving democratic ethos is a twofold task. First, the extent of Peale's genuinely democratic sympathies has to be established. Second, the manner in which these sympathies were incorporated into a painting that also served to attract viewers to his new portrait gallery must be demonstrated. Peale, we shall discover, consciously resolved the distinctions between idealism and opportunism in order to prosper as an artist in America. Idealism informed his philosophical convictions, and hence the iconographic content of his painting. Opportunism informed the way he presented the work to the public.

Democratic ideas entered early into Peale's life, fostered by his reading and reinforced by direct political involvement. In 1764 he sided with the Maryland insurgents who opposed the Stamp Act by which England hoped to tax all legal documents.¹ Joined with Peale in common cause was the barrister Charles Carroll. His large library, to which Peale surely had access, contained books basic to the development of Enlightenment thought: Voltaire's works in translation and Montesquieu's Spirit of the Laws² with d'Alembert's Analysis of it. During the summer of 1764, as fury against the Stamp Act spread through the Colonies, Peale read James Otis's inflammatory pamphlet,

The Rights of the British Colonies Asserted and Proved.³

Traveling to Massachusetts in the fall, he supplied emblematical designs for the citizens of Newburyport to use in publicizing their detestation of the law, and he watched as they burned the stamp distributor in effigy.⁴ The following year Citizen Peale sailed for London on the ship that, with the act repealed, carried the Stamp Act paper back to England.⁵

Peale was in London from 1765 to 1769, during a crucial interval when Parliament again tested--and miscalculated--colonial resistance to English rule. After the passage of the oppressive Townsend Acts, Peale refused to doff his hat when the royal carriage rolled by.⁶ Studying at this time under the aegis of Benjamin West, Peale had in his mentor the very model of an artist as political tactician. West had just come into friendship with the king; and George III, in his turn, had begun to follow West's artistic progress with great interest. As a consequence, West was at that time to attempt no subject displeasing to the king from a political point of view.

The obdurate Peale, by contrast, invited official disapproval. In 1768, while still in London, he accepted a commission offered by Edmond Jenings to paint a lifesize portrait of William Pitt for Virginia's Westmoreland County courthouse.⁷ Prudent friends advised Peale not to

ask Pitt to pose in person. Peale solved the problem of a model by borrowing John Wilton's bust of Pitt.⁸ Pitt, recognized by the colonists to be their staunch defender in Parliament after the Stamp Act affair, is depicted by the artist in what he believed to be the "Consular habit." By analogizing the Englishman to a Roman consul, Peale implied that Pitt was one with those ancient leaders supposed to represent the rights of the people. When he executed a mezzotint after the portrait (Fig. 2) Peale appended a broadside which turned the work into a topical polemic. Although Pitt had been elevated to the House of Lords, the broadside referred to him as "MR. PITT" (his name when arguing for the colonists in the House of Commons). The legend under the image claimed Pitt for the colonial cause: "Worthy of Liberty, Mr. Pitt scorns to Invade the Liberties of Other People." And the broadside went further, intimating that, like Charles I, George III could lose his head if he were not mindful of his subjects' liberties:

The View of W--H--is introduced into the Back Ground, not merely as an elegant Piece of Architecture, but as it was the Place where---suffered, for attempting to invade the Rights of the BRITISH Kingdoms....⁹

The portrait of Pitt was unusual in its time for communicating so emphatic a political message. And, by executing a print after the portrait, Peale meant to

spread his message through the Colonies. Upon his return to America, he concerned himself with the print's promotion and sale.¹⁰ It is worth noting that within a year of Peale's return, his teacher would determine upon a subject acceptable to everyone in the politically troubled times: the death of General Wolfe on the Plains of Abraham. Both the Colonies and the mother country were grateful to the hero who gave up his life in the battle that wrested the northernmost part of the American continent from French control. The Death of Wolfe, completed in 1770, was to establish West's reputation, assure him an income for years through the sale of Boydell's engraving,¹¹ and gain him royal patronage. Peale, in contrast, was not to concern himself with unproblematical heroes. Rather, he sided with those advocating rebellion to secure liberty.

Peale accepted another commission from Edmond Jenings to paint a pendant to the Pitt portrait that would make an equally strong plea, in the artist's language of political allegory, for the colonial cause. The subject of the new painting was John Beale Bordley, Jening's half-brother, Peale's dearest friend, and a conservative lawyer who made his plantation a model of American economic self-sufficiency.¹² In the Peale painting, Bordley dominates a landscape setting. He leans against a rock projection, resting his left elbow upon a book open to a page that reads: "Notamus Leges/

Angliae mutari." With his right hand, Bordley points to a statue of Liberty standing on a pedestal inscribed LEX ANGLIAE.¹³

Bordley's portrait was finished in 1770. Two years later, Rachel Peale gave birth to the couple's fourth child and named her Margaret Bordley, after John Beale Bordley's wife. Margaret lived less than a year before following three older siblings to the grave.¹⁴ According to family tradition, the distraught mother requested that her husband paint a portrait of their child in death.¹⁵ He complied, rendering Margaret as he found her upon entering the room where she lay ready for burial in white grave clothes, her chin secured by a strap sewn to a cap, her arms bound to her body with ribbons. Originally, the canvas was horizontal in format, containing only the supine body of the little girl (Fig. 1).

There are numerous instances, beginning in the Renaissance, of artists executing funerary portraits, primarily of royalty, the lesser nobility, the clergy, the famous and the wealthy.¹⁶ There also are instances in which an artist-father painted his dead child. The best known instance is recorded by Vasari. After Luca Signorelli's beautiful young son was killed at Cortona, his father drew the body "so that he might always behold in the work of his hands what nature had given him and cruel fortune taken away."¹⁷ And this practice continued into the eighteenth

century. When Peale's contemporary, the Scottish painter Allan Ramsay, lost his first born and namesake, he sat disconsolate at the bedside. Suddenly, he had a desire to make a last record of the child's face. While working, Ramsay recalled later, he felt no grief, but having finished, grief overwhelmed him. A small sketch in oil of a child's head with eyes closed, found in the studio after Ramsay's death, is no doubt the picture of his son Allan (Fig. 3). At first Peale's canvas, too, was simply a last record of the dead child that could have served as a catharsis for both parents. The father could have purged his grief in the act of painting; the bereaved mother could have found consolation in the gratification of her request.

However, at a later date, Charles Willson Peale decided to join to the original canvas additional fabric which almost doubled the field, so that he might include the lamenting mother and useless medicine bottles (Fig. 4). His diary entry for August 18, 1776, notes that he worked "on the head of Mrs. Peale in the picture with the dead child."¹⁹ With this addition, Peale turned a private memento into a composition suitable for hanging in his painting room where visitors came. There it complemented two other depictions of Peale family life: a painting of Mrs. Peale watching over a sleeping child (now lost) and the large Peale Family Group (New York Historical Society).²⁰

By placing the half figure of the doleful mother above the body of the corpse, Peale established a visual analogy to compositions in which a pensive Madonna watched over the Christ Child. Renaissance artists had evolved a new iconographic type in which Christ's infant sleep was made to resemble the death-sleep of the Passion.²¹ By the seventeenth century, the visual paradox of a prescient infant sleep had been resolved with characteristic Baroque naturalism. Guido Reni's Virgin Watching Over the Sleeping Christ Child (formerly Dresden, Gemäldegalerie) represents the end of an iconographic tradition Peale could have adapted to his secular purposes.

When Peale doubled the canvas, he aspired to more than a straightforward portrayal of what he saw. To achieve his new end, certain aids would have been invaluable to him. Engravings were one. Reni's work, for example, would have been accessible in the engraving by Cornelius Bloemaert (Fig. 5). A copy of Le Brun's Conference on the Expression of the Passions (London, 1701) would have been another.²² Peale owned a copy at the time. And it is clear that he incorporated into the Madonna and Sleeping Child formula Le Brun's standardized expression for "Sadness"²³ (Fig. 6).

The addition of the mother to the funerary portrait of her child made a great histrionic difference. John Adams's letter, written on August 21, 1776, after a visit to Peale's painting room, bears witness to Mrs. Peale's

importance in the composition: "He shewed me one moving Picture. His wife, all bathed in Tears, with a Child about six months old, laid out upon her lap. The picture struck me prodigiously." ²⁴ The presence of the weeping mother in the painting apparently impressed Adams as much as the image of the pale corpse.

By resorting to a time-honored compositional scheme made more dramatic by the incorporation of a conventionalized physiognomic type, Peale followed the example of his mentor, Benjamin West. The representation of Wolfe's death suggests in a general way not only scenes of the death of Meleager, but also of Christ at the Deposition, and in particular Van Dyck's Munich Deposition, as Charles Mitchell ²⁵ has pointed out. Mitchell also observed that the grenadier to Wolfe's right wears Le Brun's expression for "Compassion," while Wolfe in his death agony conforms to Le Brun's illustration of "Acute Pain." So exalted a scheme was, in West's mind, appropriate for an exalted subject, the death of a hero. As West later was to state: "...there was no other way of representing this death of a Hero but by an Epic representation of it.---It must exhibit the event in a way to excite awe & veneration... ²⁶ Wolfe must not die like a common Soldier under a Bush...." The essential difference between West and Peale was, of course, not in the approach to the subject but in the attitude toward what should be depicted. For West thought

an "Epic representation" appropriate to a hero whose death he meant to give a universal meaning. Paradoxically, Peale dignified as a subject of lamentation a little girl whose death would otherwise have gone unnoted beyond her family.²⁷

Peale's dignifying of the child in death was also part of a secular iconographic tradition.²⁸ This theme had received wide distribution through Bartel Beham's engraving (1530) in which a child's skull and the death's head are aligned, the caption offering the explanation: "MORS OMNIA AEQUAT" (Fig. 7). We may assume that the idea enjoyed continued recirculation because there are thirteen known restrikes. Hans Holbein was the next to take up the theme of Death snatching the child in his famous Dance of Death (1538). The series, which enjoyed enormous popularity into the seventeenth century, has for its penultimate illustration Death leading a child out of his parent's house. Stefano della Bella capitalized on Holbein's success when he etched Il Capriccio della Morte, a series of five roundels, in about 1648. His is the most poignant rendering of the child in Death's clutches (Fig. 8). For the graphic media, these three artists universalized the iconographic theme of death and the child first introduced in the Christ Child's death-sleep.

To make the sacred and profane traditions coalesce in one image, Peale removed the allegorical personification

of Death and reverted to a figural grouping recognizably Christian. He thus sanctified even as he secularized the tradition. At the same time, by externalizing a common private experience, he gave it a more universal, dramatic appeal. The thrust of Peale's message was: look on my dead child and think of your own, for death deals with us all alike. The message was well timed and well suited for a canvas Peale decided to enlarge and display in the year the American Revolution began.

A message, of course, is not transmitted if it is not received. The way in which Charles Willson Peale communicated with his viewers was in keeping with his time. Before Napoleon established his Musée Napoleon with a collection augmented by confiscated works, there were only three public collections in Europe: the Uffizi, the Museo Capitolino and the Vatican's Cortile Belvedere. Until the nineteenth century, America had neither public collections nor any art academies with space to display paintings. An American artist, therefore, had only three ways of reaching a wide public. He could have his painting engraved, he could put it on display in a shop window, or he could put it on display in his painting room where visitors came and announce the fact to prospective viewers. Disappointed because proceeds from the sale of his Pitt mezzotint did not even cover the cost of the paper it was

printed on, Peale understandably would have hesitated before having an engraving made of another painting. But he had a painting room. There he hung the canvas of his dead daughter and mourning wife, and there it remained from 1776 until 1782.

In the late fall of 1782, Charles Willson Peale completed a new gallery at Third and Lombard Streets, Philadelphia. It was the first skylighted gallery in America for the display of paintings. In this new gallery he hung together for the first time his portraits of distinguished Americans (principally the heroes of the Revolutionary War).³⁰ However, to draw in the public, he called attention to a more personal kind of portrait. On December 4, 1782, a poem of Peale's own composition appeared in The Freeman's Journal as a news item: "The following lines were found in Mr. Peale's New Room, pinn'd to the curtain which hangs before the portrait of Mrs. Peale lamenting the death of her child:

Draw not the curtain, if a tear
Just trembling in a parent's eye
Can fill your gentle soul with fear
Or arouse your tender heart to sigh.

A child lies dead before your eyes
And seems no more than moulded clay,
While the affected mother cries,
And constant mourns from day to day.

Ostensibly, Peale concealed his canvas behind a curtain because he wanted to protect viewers from a tragic sight.

But just as probably he wanted to pique their curiosity. Charles Willson Peale was perfectly willing to externalize his family's grief and share with other parents his feelings of bereavement and loss if in so doing he could attract the public.³¹ And, as Charles Coleman Sellers, Peale's biographer, observed, the artist's strategy launched a family tradition: "Here in a scene of pure tragedy, painted with deep feeling and plain truth, begins the part of the Peales in the development of exhibition techniques and the use of painting as a democratic art...."³²

Amidst the bust portraits of Revolutionary War heroes and important men in the New Republic hung the funerary portrait of a dead child. This arrangement was in keeping with Peale's democratic convictions, for it suggested that an infant who had not lived long enough to accomplish anything nevertheless had worth as a human being. In the public announcement for his new portrait gallery, Peale did not name her. And given the convention of dress for children in the eighteenth century, the corpse could have been of either sex. Through both the iconographic conception for the work and its exhibition, therefore, Peale attempted to elevate the death of a common child to the status of a universal symbol. Coincidentally, he anticipated by fifty-five years the importance of the child to the American iconographic tradition of death imagery.³³

When Charles Willson Peale was almost eighty, he repainted the canvas of his dead daughter and mourning wife for the 1818 exhibition of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, then changed his mind about entering it. Perhaps he decided, as artists often do, to enter more recent works. What he did exhibit were two portraits of ladies and one genre scene, Portrait of a Mother caressing her convalescent Child (location unknown).³⁴

Or perhaps someone in the family objected to exhibiting beyond the family precincts a work intimately connected with the family's history. As if in anticipation of such an objection, Peale wrote his son Rembrandt: "You will wonder that I should think of making it a Picture for Exhibition."³⁵ It is also possible that approaching death himself and having fathered by this time many children who lived, the artist wanted to sound an optimistic note. A painting of a mother and convalescent child, after all, turns a potentially sad ending into a happy one. Therefore, this painting could seem (at least in the artist's mind) to be a fitting antidote for the canvas he had painted, out of grief, so many years ago. And finally, the sage of American painting, an artist who often had his finger on the pulse of the exhibition-going public, may have known when to favor another subject. For just the year before, Benjamin West had presented a replica of his highly praised³⁶ Christ Healing the Sick to the Pennsylvania Hospital.

Restoration from death to life was presented in yet another form to Philadelphians who attended the annual exhibition of the Pennsylvania Academy. In 1816, the Directors had purchased Washington Allston's The Dead Man Revived by Touching the Bones of the Prophet Elisha (1811-14) and put it on display with much fanfare (Fig. 9). For its time and place, Allston's was an unusual canvas. The Dead Man Revived was a large, multi-figured history painting and therefore of a type few American artists attempted and viewers rarely had a chance to see. Yet, by focusing the dramatic interest on a father, revived and restored to his wife and daughter, Allston found the common denominator. Allston, then, was the next artist after Charles Willson Peale to create an exhibition canvas concerned with a death in the family of everyman.

Unusual, too, was Allston's choice of the Dead Man Revived as the subject for an exhibition canvas. From the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, only six artists are known to have turned to this Old Testament story.³⁷ This paucity of precedents indicates that the Dead Man Revived was never a popular theme, perhaps because it did not fit into the Christian typological scheme. Unlike, for example, Elisha Raising the Shunamite's Son, which prefigured the Raising of Lazarus, the Dead Man Revived foretold no New Testament event. And because the protagonist in the story is Elisha's miracle-working bones, the subject

is more directly related to the kind of medieval tale in which a miracle is worked upon contact with relics--hardly a popular idea among Protestants. Margaret Fuller, commenting on Allston's singular choice of subject in 1839, understood this well enough when she wrote: "But a miracle effected by means of a relique, or dry bones, has the disagreeable effect of mummery."³⁸

Yet Allston's selection may be explained, in part, by the vogue for religious paintings on the themes of resurrection and healing in England, where he conceived and executed his canvas.³⁹ Benjamin West had painted Elisha Raising the Shunamite's Son in 1760, as well as the Raising of Lazarus in versions of 1776 and 1780. In 1798, Sebastiano del Piombo's Raising of Lazarus had created a sensation when it was purchased for 7,000 guineas by John Julius Angerstein.

Then, in 1811, the purchase of West's Christ Healing the Sick for 3,000 guineas by the Directors of the British Institution caused another sensation.⁴⁰ They announced that West's painting was to form the basis of a national collection of modern and Old Master works of art. That same year, Allston also essayed a study for Christ Healing the Sick and, in addition, began work on the Dead Man Revived. Before Allston entered his own work in the 1814 exhibition of the British Institution, Henry Richter had

exhibited Christ Healing the Sick in 1811 and Richard Westall's Elijah Restoring to Life the Widow's Son, exhibited in 1813, had been purchased for 420 guineas by the Institution. However, for all the paintings that can be marshalled to testify to the popularity of resurrection and healing themes, none were as obscure as Allston's. This fact was not lost upon a critic for the New Monthly Magazine, who thought Allston had done remarkably well considering the difficulty of the subject: "With a subject not the most promising, or even intelligible without a written commentary, he has produced a picture of extraordinary merit."⁴¹

What can be stated with certainty about Allston's choice of the Dead Man Revived is that the rarity of the theme gave him considerable latitude. The historic precedents for it were few and obscure and only one contemporary, a Frenchman, Jean-Joseph Taillasson, had attempted the subject (Fig. 10). With such latitude, Allston may have felt less hindered when he came to work out a novel iconography. More important, by selecting a Biblical story on the theme of resurrection in which the holy miracle worker would not be present, Allston was able to make the reviving dead man the real protagonist of the unfolding drama.

Two probable visual sources for the reviving dead man also may provide a clue to the meaning the subject had for

Allston. The legs and supporting arm of his figure correspond closely to the Dying Gaul, a work known from the eighteenth century as the Gladiator (Il Mirmillone). This sculpture was very probably the one associated in Allston's mind with an early artistic triumph. His drawing of the Gladiator from a plaster cast won him admission into the Royal Academy and coveted praise from Benjamin West.⁴² And not only did Allston turn to an antique source: the outstretched arm and the craning neck of the reviving man are reminiscent of Michelangelo's Adam in the Sistine Creation. Allston, then, combined a dying figure with one coming to life and thereby achieved the appropriate iconographic combination as well.⁴³

The reference to the figure of Adam lends further meaning to Allston's reviving dead man. By alluding to Adam, Allston imparts to the theme of reanimation a reference to the original miracle of creation and turns his figure into generic man. Since we know that Allston greatly admired Michelangelo, it is not impossible that the young American would have made such an equation by way of a visual analogy with the master's figure. Indeed, Oliver Wendell Holmes later made the same association, albeit obliquely, when he wrote:

No common painter would have dared to make his début in the full blaze of English criticism, by attempting a subject like that of the miracle of the awakening of the Dead. It must have been a boldness which was acquired beneath the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel,--⁴⁴

Allston may also have been responding to another work he admired greatly as a young artist, Benjamin West's Death on a Pale Horse. Allston wrote in a letter of 1801 that originally he had looked on West's "understanding with indifference" and his "imagination with contempt." But, having seen Death on a Pale Horse, he changed his mind:

No fancy could have better conceived and no pencil more happily embodied the visions of sublimity than he has in his inimitable picture from Revelation. Its subject is the opening of the seven seals, and a more sublime and awful picture I never beheld. It is impossible to conceive anything more terrible than Death on the white horse, and I am sure no painter has exceeded Mr. West in the fury, horror and despair which he has represented in the surrounding figures.⁴⁵

West painted five versions of Death on a Pale Horse, in which a family figured prominently at the world's apocalyptic end. Allston reversed the emphasis to ponder new beginnings seen through the resurrection of one man and his restoration to his family.

Allston also turned his unusual subject into a vehicle for exploring new areas of interest. He inserted a wife and child where the text did not call for them in order to examine the way death affects a family. Additionally, he assigned himself the task of analyzing a whole range of psychological states experienced by those members of the burial party witnessing the miracle.⁴⁶ One would not have thought that the passage he chose, II Kings 13:20-21, would have yielded so much to depict:

And Elisha died, and they buried him.
And the bands of the Moabites invaded
the land at the coming in of the year.

And it came to pass, as they were bury-
ing a man, that, behold, they spied a
band of men; and they cast the man into
the sepulchre of Elisha: and when the
man was let down, and touched the bones
of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on
his feet.

Elizabeth Jones has argued that, in keeping with the period, Allston meant his resurrection theme to coincide with the currently popular aesthetic tradition of the sublime.⁴⁷ Jones recalls Edmund Burke's famous theory of the sublime as the effect of awe induced by an experience in which mysterious forces intrude into the rational flow of events. Yet it appears to the present author that Allston's concerns point in the opposite direction. He seems to be intent upon making rational again the irrational flow of events. Allston, who wrote the Pennsylvania Academy catalogue description himself, was at pains to elucidate the psychological states he represented.⁴⁸ Only the two men at the far left stand by the priest waiting for a religious explanation. The man at the dead man's feet responds with "astonishment and fear modified by doubt" as if requiring further confirmation of the miracle before him; the one at the head responds with immovable terror. The soldier acts contrary to expected behavior, for as Allston explains: "...the violent and terrified action of this figure was

chosen to illustrate the miracle by the contrast which it exhibits in that habitual firmness, supposed to belong to the military character...." And the child in the company "like children of his age unconsciously partakes of the general impulse." The distracted child, the disbelievers, and the hardened soldiers are joined by one other group, the reviving man's wife and daughter. Of them Allston writes:

The Wife, unable to withstand the conflicting emotions of the past and present, has fainted; and whatever joy and astonishment may have been excited in the Daughter by the sudden revival of her Father, they are wholly absorbed in distress and solicitude for her Mother.

Allston's catalogue description constitutes the most fully articulated written evidence we have that an American artist was concerned with the study of spectator responses. Although he dealt only with the response of those witnessing the miraculous event, Allston seems to anticipate the varied responses of a live audience viewing the canvas. And the audience is engaged on another level as well. The artist arranged the figures in the composition so that the viewer's attention is drawn to the reviving man who is placed toward the bottom center of the canvas in his grave. The eye passes from the grave in a semicircle to the affected witnesses. The circle is then closed by those standing outside the canvas.

Ultimately, Washington Allston attempted to make more familiar a supernatural Biblical event. To this end, he concentrated on the psychological responses of different ages and different sexes. He introduced a family where the text did not call for one and attempted, through the arrangement of figures in the composition, to draw the viewers into the witnessing circle. Thus he could almost be said to have domesticated the content in order to establish a context with which the nineteenth-century viewer might more readily empathize.

Despite the popularity of healing and resurrection themes in England, Allston's canvas enjoyed a warmer reception in America. The Dead Man Revived, shown in both London and Bristol, remained unsold until the Philadelphian, James McMurtrie, saw it in Allston's London painting room. McMurtrie, certain that the Directors of the Pennsylvania Academy would buy the painting, took it to America. The Directors not only purchased it in 1816, but were willing, a year later, to mortgage the Academy building to meet the final payment.⁴⁹ The Dead Man Revived remained on permanent display at the Pennsylvania Academy through the nineteenth century.

Twenty years after the Directors of the Pennsylvania Academy acquired Allston's Dead Man Revived, they purchased the final version of that canvas which the young Allston had so admired--Benjamin West's Death on a Pale Horse (Fig. 11).

Like Allston, West treated the subject of a death in the family as a subject within a subject. But West's iconographic program was more complicated, deriving from a millennial Christian conception of the death of mankind.

To appreciate the way West conceived a subject that, despite the unusual iconography, would appeal to the popular imagination, it is first necessary to consider the evolution of his creation. Originally, Death on a Pale Horse was to be one of forty-six canvases in a great chapel cycle projected for George III's Chapel of Revealed Religion at Windsor.⁵⁰ However, the canvas in the chapel cycle was never painted. What remain are four preliminary studies and miscellaneous drawings. The initial design for the chapel canvas, a sepia study, was conceived in 1783 and exhibited at the Royal Academy in the following year (Fig. 12). West also executed two oil studies, one a small, undated oil on paper (Fig. 13); the other a large oil sketch, signed and dated 1796 (Fig. 14). Six years later, during the brief Peace of Amiens, West as President of the Royal Academy exhibited at the Paris Salon of 1802 yet another version of Death on a Pale Horse (Fig. 15).⁵¹ This work, executed with a spontaneity remarkable for the period, was enthusiastically received by many Frenchmen. They pronounced him "the Vien of the Thames" because they considered him to be an artistic reformer.⁵²

No other canvas connected with the Windsor cycle evolved through so many preliminary studies. And yet several canvases conceived after much less preparation, like the Last Supper of Our Lord, actually were completed. There probably is no single explanation for why Death on a Pale Horse went through such a long incubation. But it is certain that in the case of this subject West had few established iconographic precedents to rely on, which may help to account for the number of preliminary studies.

The subject of Death on a Pale Horse was essayed first in manuscript illumination and then in the graphic media. Late medieval illustrations of the Apocalypse contain one page devoted to the rider on a pale horse referred to in Revelation 6: 8 "...behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed him" (Fig. 16). By the fifteenth century the subject was popularized in Dürer's famous woodcut, where he chose to represent all four of the deadly horsemen mentioned by St. John (Fig. 17). Stefano della Bella returned to the idea of death as the lone rider in his Death on Horseback (c. 1648). Then, in 1775, West's English contemporary, John Hamilton Mortimer, exhibited at the Society of Artists a drawing of Death on
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a Pale Horse. Each of these precedents could have been known to Benjamin West by the time he exhibited his 1783 sepia study at the Royal Academy. Except for prints and medieval Apocalypse illustrations, the subject was rarely

attempted. Palma Giovane (1544-1628) painted a Triumph of Death (location unknown) and Francesco Maffei (c. 1600-60) painted the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (Rimini, Pinacoteca).⁵⁴ But neither Palma Giovane nor Francesco Maffei introduced any iconographic innovations into their treatment of the subject and we have no evidence that West was aware of these canvases.

From the available sources, West could have derived only piecemeal inspiration, for his was a much grander conception: a holocaust brought on mankind by all four horsemen. He conceived an iconographic program to explain the function of four riders and the fate of those who lie in their way. However, what is important for the present study is the group placed to the right of Death: the father, mother and two children. The way in which Death affects this group's fate is novel and reflects the concerns of the late eighteenth century.

When Death emerged in Western art as an active participant in man's affairs he did so as a skeleton rider who mowed down victims irrespective of social classes: a king, a pauper, a pope, a middle class burgher (Fig. 18). Death in this guise is not Death on a Pale Horse of the medieval Apocalypse, a fleshed out figure riding alone across the page. Rather it is the figure of Death who emerges in art after the Black Death of 1348. By the mid-fifteenth century in Italian manuscript illuminations for

the Triumph of Death in Petrarch's Trionfi, a skeleton rides over his assorted victims (Fig. 19). Representations of Death taking victims from the entire social spectrum undoubtedly reflect the situation occasioned by the Black Death, when one quarter of Europe's population was destroyed. So traumatic was the experience of the plague that from this time on Death was represented in a grisly new form: the skeletal reaper.⁵⁵

Dürer, in 1498, retained the idea of Death the reaper impervious to social distinctions when he rendered the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (Fig. 17). In Revelation⁵⁶ the horsemen do not come into direct contact with mankind. Therefore, the precedent for Dürer's rendering would have been set in fifteenth-century Italian manuscript illuminations. Dürer's treatment of Death's victims became canonical for the post-Renaissance tradition. No artist who depicted the subject after Dürer and before West altered the scheme.

West's contribution to the iconography of the subject was to focus on the family as victims at a time when the family was growing in importance as a self-sustaining social unit. Progressing from version to version, he refined his ideas about the fate of the family. The refinement took place in two stages. First, West isolated the family for special attention. Next, he conceived

different ways in which death might overtake them, while making the overall composition more complicated. In an undated, but presumably early drawing of ink and charcoal, he worked with only a few figures so that the family became prominent figures in the composition (Fig. 20).⁵⁷ Death, a skeleton mounted on a charger, rides over his victims, those dead and those about to die. One man, holding his arms out protectively, and a woman with a child in her arms, attempt to outdistance death. By isolating father, mother and babe, West suggests that the ultimate victims of holocaust will be members of society's basic unit. For the sepia study of 1783, the father is the active protector of a family unit that now includes two children (the younger dead) and a mother, soon to expire (Fig. 12). Death's aspect also has been altered. Death is no longer the bone-rattling skeleton of the ink-and-charcoal drawing,⁵⁸ but a fleshed-out corpse who, as both Grose Evans and Jerry Don Meyer have pointed out, visibly conforms to Milton's poetic description in Paradise Lost: "Fierce as ten furies; terrible as hell; / And shook a deadly dart. What seem'd his head / The likeness of a kingly crown had on."⁵⁹ For the version exhibited at the Salon of 1802, West made one last change (Fig. 15). Although the mother's pose is the same, her head falls further back and her eyes are closed in death.

When West returned to the subject one final time, it had assumed the dimensions in his mind of a great moral sermon on canvas. For this reason, two descriptive catalogues were prepared in conjunction with the work's exhibition. Descriptive catalogues often accompanied major exhibition canvases in an era when the public, who came to be edified as well as entertained, were expected to follow the painting's iconographic program. The written word was intended to help the viewer correctly understand the meaning of the motifs. It still is that for the modern interpreter. When the descriptive catalogue is written with the artist's full knowledge and approval, as was the case in this instance, the possibility of misreading the iconographic program is further reduced. The one written for West in 1817 was the undertaking of West's outspoken admirer, William Carey; the other was written in 1818 and signed with the initials J.G., doubtless John Galt, West's close friend and biographer. The earlier catalogue, which reads at times as though Carey were taking dictation from West, contains the essential interpretation, somewhat elaborated by Galt the following year. Carey isolates the protagonist and his principal victims at the outset of his description. Death, he observes, is represented destroying mankind and especially the family at center right: "An image of devouring mortality is seen in the sudden death of

a young Mother and her infant Son....Her daughter, a beautiful child, in a pathetic attitude, endeavors to succour her. Everything shows this to be a family of rank...."⁶¹

Carey, who described himself as having been "suckled at the breast of Painting,"⁶² was the perfect choice to descant upon West's work. He turned out a one-hundred-and-eighteen page description that left not a foot of the surface unexplained. In the course of his narrative he returned to the dying mother, writing of her in such a way as to excite pity:

Nothing can be more awfully impressive than the dark, still expression of the grave upon her whole figure and that of her dead infant, which lies upon her lap. The hand of the Mother still clinging to that fruit of her love, which was most dear to her in life, softens the horror of this group, and by the tender sentiment, which it awakens, overcomes the repulsive effect of the first view.⁶³

To reinforce the impression of the family's piteous plight and, perhaps, to more securely engage the viewer's sympathies, Carey wrote at some length about the presence in the composition of a family of dead doves. They are used as a visual reinforcement that conveys the artist's full meaning about death:

There is a resemblance in the circumstance of the Dove lamenting over its dead mate, to that of the husband supporting the lifeless body of his wife, in the next group, which strengthens their mutual interest. The multiplication of mournful images, increases the force of their pathos.... The incident, to which I am averting

had its foundation in a reality, which happened to WEST, in his youth, before he left America. Wandering, one day, in the woods, he shot a pigeon and on reaching the wild spot, where it fell, beheld its mate drooping, in sorrow, over the bleeding body. Touched with pity and regret, he conceived a distaste to his gun, and never after partook of the same amusement. The strong impression upon his mind, caused him to introduce the Doves, nearly forty years after, in his first sketch of this subject, and, in his eightieth year, when relating the anecdote, his voice and look convinced me that he had not forgotten his early feelings.⁶⁴

As in West's painting, so in Carey's prose, the death of a family was carefully pondered and commented upon. John Galt, who would have had the advantage of perusing Carey's work before commencing his own, put the matter succinctly:

The domestic group in the foreground represents a family belonging to that class of society which are supposed to be safe beyond the reach of the ordinary casualties of life, but who are still not farther remote from the dart of Death. It is here that the Painter has attempted to excite the strong degree of pity which his subject admitted, and to contrast the surrounding horrors with images of tenderness and beauty.⁶⁵

Galt, too, was aware that the death of the family provided the focus of interest amidst a complex of actions and took care to explain to the viewer the full social significance of the event.

Why West singled out Death on a Pale Horse as the subject for one of the two exhibition canvases he exhibited toward the end of his career (the other being Christ Rejected) is the question which remains to be answered. Sometime in 1802, when Rembrandt Peale was studying with West, the neophyte suggested to the master that he enlarge his "spirited composition" of Death on a Pale Horse and take it on tour in America. "It is worth recording," Rembrandt Peale recalled years later, "that he [West] expressed himself mortified with the idea of descending to such means of getting money which had not then been the practice of any distinguished Artists, and with a flushed countenance begged that I never mention the subject to him again."⁶⁶ This conversation probably would have taken place while West was preparing the fourth version of his painting for the Salon of 1802 which opened in early September. He still was painter to the King, receiving a yearly allowance. But by 1810, the King and his advisers had cancelled the Windsor Chapel project and removed West's name from the royal payroll.⁶⁷ Humbled, the aging artist resorted to the kind of huckstering that once would have "mortified" him. Yet if one must fashion success out of fading prospects, the best fabric may be a success of the past.

There is perhaps an additional reason for West's favoring the subject of Death on a Pale Horse as an

exhibition canvas. John Dillenberger has plausibly argued that the subject came in the King's mind to be associated with the American's democratic leanings and anti-monarchical sentiments.⁶⁸ Interestingly, these associations accrue to the style of the work as well as to content. It was in his new proto-Romantic mode that West painted his fourth version and won the admiration of French artists. And it was on the trip to Paris in 1802 that he made several favorable remarks about the French and their Revolution which irritated the King. Thus this painting came to signify the French approval of West and West's endorsement of the French in an era when England was almost continuously at war with France. Dillenberger further argues that the King was disturbed by West's rendering of a chaotic Last Day for mankind. The King and the Anglican bishops had a clear conception of the Book of Revelation. Therefore, according to Dillenberger:

While they agreed that there would be increasing defection and decay in church and society, the faithful, who obviously belonged to the established order, had a secure place. The Book of Revelation was to be understood rationally, not directly in terms of its wild, apocalyptic imagery.⁶⁹

These expectations for a rationally ordered Last Day would in their turn make comprehensible on theological grounds the King's stated aversion to West's "Bedlamite scene from the Revelations." Finally, Dillenberger observes that the allusions to Milton's description of death could seem to

express West's sympathy with the era not only of Milton, but as well of Cromwell and the Regicides.

Perhaps West himself suspected that his conception of the Last Day could antagonize the King. If so, this would be another reason why he never transferred the design to a large canvas while on the King's payroll. Conversely, he may have decided that a scene which might alienate the King might please the people. For ultimately, West followed Rembrandt Peale's advice and by 1815 decided to enlarge the composition which had been held in waiting for so long. With the aid of his son, Raphael, he executed and completed by 1817 a final version of behemoth proportions: fifteen feet by twenty-five feet, three inches.⁷⁰

Death on a Pale Horse was put on display in London for an admission fee on November 24, 1817.⁷¹ Then, after West's death two years later, the painting became the property of his son Raphael, who chose not to exhibit it.⁷² In 1825, William Dunlap, America's author-artist-actor-entrepreneur, decided he could realize a considerable sum by exhibiting a copy of the great painting in America. To this end, he ordered canvas measuring ten feet by twenty-five feet and made his copy, based on a line engraving of West's original, together with a catalogue description.⁷³

Several pages of Dunlap's autobiographical account in the History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States were devoted to a description

of the tribulations of taking a picture on tour in America. They constitute an important record of the way the American artist of that period was required to interact with the public to make a living. He showed the now lost Death on a Pale Horse first in New York City in 1825 and then for the next two years traveled to upper New York State's major cities, arranging to have his copy exhibited in the largest spaces available. The first profits were highly encouraging, but Dunlap admitted wryly that success with touring pictures required "management and an oily tongue."⁷⁴

The touring picture, a new phenomenon, and the panorama, a related development, were by the 1820's important forms of popular entertainment. And in the nineteenth century, as in the twentieth, what the American public will pay to see is a significant barometer by which to gauge what is vital to the culture's ongoing myths. Dunlap calculated that he had found a vital subject in Death on a Pale Horse. He still believed in the painting's appeal to the public when he observed in 1834 that a large sum might be realized if Raphael West would exhibit his father's canvas in America.⁷⁵ Two years later, Dunlap acted upon his belief: he and his fellow artist Henry Inman contracted with the Pennsylvania Academy to handle the details of a major showing of West's original work in New York City. The directors of the Academy had just bought Death on a Pale Horse from Raphael West for twelve hundred pounds and no doubt hoped revenues

from its exhibition would recoup their investment. After a winter's exhibition, Dunlap had taken in a net profit of less than two hundred dollars. In his correspondence with the directors, Dunlap attributed his failure in large part to inclement weather. But scanning the whole correspondence, it can quickly be determined that Dunlap was, at the very least, a quixotic businessman. The directors almost ended up owning him money!

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The painting's commercial failure is not as important as Dunlap's belief that it would be a success or--to express the situation in terms of the inevitable sporting metaphor--that Death on a Pale Horse would win at the track. This belief prompted him to circulate and recirculate the painting on the East coast--with the result that the consciousness of many Americans was permeated with yet another message about the way death entered into the macrocosm of the world's end and the microcosm of the family's end.

What the public ostensibly contemplated in the Dead Man Revived and Death on a Pale Horse were highly elaborated Biblical constructs. To Americans, who often if they owned one book, owned the Bible, a subject culled from Scripture would have been immediately acceptable and appealing. However, once drawn into contemplating the canvas, the viewer would discover concealed under the Biblical cloak a subject of even more universal appeal. For both West and Allston placed the real stress on the way a family was

was affected by death. Thus they prepared the way for another artist to focus on the secular element more exclusively.

Given the tendency in American exhibition canvases to generalize the experience of death, a concomitant step was to offer the public some positive instruction on dying itself. The man to take up the task was Rembrandt Peale. His conception for the Court of Death (1820) required a large format, a canvas stretching twenty-four feet across and thirteen feet high, with twenty-three life-size figures (Fig. 21). It was, as Rembrandt Peale recalled proudly twenty-five years after its creation, "the first large Picture composed by an American in America."⁷⁷ Upon the expanse of the surface the twenty-three figures were to offer to the American demos instruction in living and dying well.

Rembrandt Peale learned from his predecessors' exhibition canvases on the subject of death. From his father's painting, he would have understood how to promote such a theme. Benjamin West's decision to execute his final version of Death on a Pale Horse on a vastly enlarged scale could have impressed upon the young artist the value of a large canvas for attracting the public's attention. His father, West and Allston provided examples of how to introduce secular content into Christian

iconographical and compositional prototypes. Rembrandt Peale's contribution was to push furthest toward democratizing the theme.

To this end, Peale manipulated a complex of sources and put much effort into promoting his painting. He adapted a tradition, going back to the Middle Ages, of offering instruction on dying. He made use of a currently popular poem on death and had recourse to medical terminology. In his writing about the Court of Death, Peale let it be known that the work was a family affair for which his father, brother, sisters and children had posed. And he announced his intention to fashion a new kind of allegory for a democratic setting. Or, as he told it to Charles Lester in 1846:

the first attempt, in modern times, to produce moral impressions on the ancient Greek plan, without the aid of mythology, or conventional allegory, being as readily understandable by the ignorant as the learned....⁷⁸

Rembrandt Peale believed he had to invent a new kind of allegorical language comprehensible to an audience uneducated in the conventions of allegory. To this end, he called upon the authority of the ancients. Pliny, he reasoned, had written about a painting by Apelles in which "...thought, principle and character were conveyed without allegory and approved by the Multitude."⁷⁹ The actual model for Peale's endeavor, however, was most probably a

work filled with conventional allegorical figures: Rubens' ⁸⁰
Horrors of War. This painting, now in the Pitti Palace, was in the collection of the Musée Napoleon in 1808, at the time Rembrandt Peale was a young man studying in Paris. Such an impressive canvas and so ambitious an allegorical program must have made a deep impression on Rembrandt Peale, whose favorite artist was Rubens. But Rembrandt Peale rejected Rubens' allegorical machinery, only to devise a new machinery of his own based upon the principle that allegory was instructive. For both Rembrandt Peale and Rubens intended their works to be understood as great moral pictures.

According to Peale's own report, the immediate inspiration for his huge canvas was a poem famous in the eighteenth century, "Death," written by the chaplain to George III and Bishop of London, Beilby Porteus. ⁸¹ Peale took from the poem the setting, a cavern, and the central plot: death holding court surrounded by the spirits of war, pestilence and all other agents in his power. Although he never stated it, he also must have taken from Porteus the idea for the distribution of figures. The best known line of the poem was: "War its thousands slays, Peace its ten thousands." To illustrate this profundity, the artist placed to the right half of the canvas the easily identifiable figure of the warrior and ranged about him females representing

Want, Dread and Desolation. To the left, he planned a much more congested area containing a "fascinating female" (Peale's term for the traditional Luxuria), an inebriated youth, a suicide and six victims of sinful living imagined by the artist to be Gout, Dropsey, Apoplexy, Hypochondria, Fever and Consumption.

Consistently Peale's modus operandi in The Court of Death was to make alterations which he believed would improve upon both his visual and verbal sources. So in the case of Porteus's poem, he objected to the way the poet characterized his personae. As Peale was to recall in 1857 for readers of The Crayon, he was repulsed by Porteus's "romantic" idea that death holds court in the literal sense. Obviously he was unaware that Porteus drew upon a long established visual tradition going back to plague times, as evidenced by Giulio Clovio's Triumph of Death for the Farnese Hours (1546; Fig. 22).⁸² Peale caught the verbal half of the tradition and thought only in terms of improvement. Commonsensical Rembrandt Peale preferred to "...represent Death, as a fact, an incident, the natural and ordained termination of life."⁸³

To convey what to him was the major idea, Peale placed at the center of the composition death in two aspects. "Death as a fact," he explained, is presented in the corpse of a young man killed off in the prime of life; the corpse served as a footstool for Death as a "personification

of the power of death." An old man approaches this central group and confronts the corpse. Significantly, Peale equivocates about who the corpse may be: "perhaps his son, his neighbor, a fellow-man in the prime of life." A young woman, who lends literal support to Old Age, is the embodiment of "sympathy, hope, virtue and religion."

Certain impressions, deeply rooted, may have prepared Rembrandt Peale to look at a great Baroque painting and at a popular poem with a view to refashioning them into a creation of his own. There were dramatic encounters with death experienced as a child in a household of artists. Rembrandt, the seventh child born but only the third to live, could hardly have been left unimpressed by that singular canvas in his father's portrait gallery--the painting of his deceased older sister. And he would have been well aware of how his father made the family's grief public. Nor would twelve-year-old Rembrandt be likely to forget the sharp contrast in his father's behavior when his mother, Rachel, died in 1790. The elder Peale, beyond consolation this time, locked himself into the sick room⁸⁴ for three days, refusing to surrender the corpse. At fifteen, in 1793, Rembrandt witnessed the yellow fever⁸⁵ epidemic that swept Philadelphia. The epidemic, a scarifying event; brought the phenomenon of mass death to the North American continent and soon inspired at least

two Gothick novels, Charles Brockden Brown's Ormond (1799) and Arthur Mervyn (1799). These experiences, seemingly unrelated, could have caused a boy raised in a family of artists to give death new form and meaning through art.

In Rembrandt Peale's youth, death and the practice of art had been at times inextricably intertwined. So they remained in his mature work. The model for the old man in The Court of Death was his seventy-eight-year-old father. His daughters impersonated the female characters and his brother, Franklin, lay in for the corpse.⁸⁶ The family members thus posed for roles in a great morality play in which the focus of the action--the initiation of the old man into death--would have assumed a special meaning for them.

The placement of the figures in the composition, it would appear, was meant rather literally to reinforce the iconographic program. The stooped old man is being brought to Death, and on his way leads the viewer's eye in with him. The fact of death, personified in the corpse, is placed in the center foreground like an obstacle to be overcome--an impediment in the old man's progress toward his ultimate goal: the acceptance of death, as represented by Death enthroned. In the near middle ground, spreading out from the figure of Death enthroned, are the personifications of disease and destruction that the old man has managed to avoid or stave off all his life.

The pictorial actors who instruct the general citizenry in The Court of Death play out a script not entirely Peale's own. When the artist offered the public guidance for meeting life's end, he updated a practice originating in the Ars Moriendi. This work, one of the most popular books of the late Middle Ages and Renaissance (the earliest dating to the fifteenth century), was an illustrated manual for teaching the proper way to prepare for death.

The religious and literary tradition of learning how to die "well and gladly" culminated in Jeremy Taylor's great work of 1651, The Rule and Exercise of Holy Dying. Indeed, the rationale determining the actions of Peale's personifications across the vast canvas could, with minor alterations, have been taken from Taylor's admonishing line: "we sacrifice our youth to folly, our manhood to lust and rage, our old age to covetousness and irreligion, not beginning to live till we are to die, designing that time to Vertue which indeed is infirm to everything and profitable to nothing."⁸⁷ But, between the time that Taylor wrote and Peale painted, a new force shunted aside the old pieties, and the artist took this new force into account.

The iconography of the Court of Death reflects a major shift in man's thinking about mortality brought about by science. Beginning in the Age of Enlightenment, scientific

discoveries, better sanitary measures and increased medical facilities prompted men to imagine that they could exercise some measure of control over death.⁸⁸ The words "rational" and "fact of death", used in Rembrandt Peale's retrospective descriptions indicate that he had internalized conceptions promulgated in the new scientific age. His iconographic program taught that one should live a life of moderation, eschewing vice, to avoid death too early in life. Then, in old age, one should accept death as a fact. Specific diseases of mind and body, contracted through intemperate living, were a perpetual threat because they led to premature death. In Peale's schema, morality had become prophylactic. Or to put it the other way round: Peale was aware that science altered the way man conceived of his life before death but knew too that science still could serve as the handmaiden to traditional morality.

What Rembrandt Peale created, ultimately, was a nineteenth-century Ars Moriendi for use in the New World. To this end he not only adjusted the content but tempered the visual language for easier comprehension. Rather than give his figures standardized attributes known only to an audience educated in the humanist conventions of allegory, he generalized them. This impulse was not lost on his audience. The contemporary critic, John Neal, wrote that Peale "...disdains to follow the vulgar notions of allegory."⁸⁹

Neal understood that the artist hoped to do in his painting what Noah Webster was soon to do in his American Dictionary (1828): simplify the language--whether visual or verbal--to make it fit the uses of a democracy where all had to be brought to the same level of culture.

Simplifying the language of allegory was central to Peale's intention. From its inception, the Court of Death had been conceived as a great exhibition canvas. But to be well received its message had to be understood. The canvas, on completion, was exhibited first at the family branch museum in Baltimore and then in the major eastern cities.⁹⁰ Clergymen endorsed the work and members of the New York Common Council assembled in a body to view it. A newspaper description written in The National Federal Gazette on September 5, 1820, indicates that Peale's underlying message was successfully transmitted to the public. The anonymous author told his readers that Peale stressed constant preparation for the "inevitable end," taking into account, particularly, death brought about by indulgence of the passions.⁹¹ This critical interpretation became the version approved by the artist; exhibiting The Court of Death again in 1845, he reprinted it in the descriptive catalogue.

Just as Rembrandt Peale intended his message to be universal in its implications and comprehensible to the

multitude, so he took his work on tour to transmit his message to the largest number. The Court of Death, in 1820, was seen by nearly 32,000 people. Certainly his motives were mixed, for Mammon and the altruistic impulse to teach a lesson in dying were coincident in his mind. Receipts from the exhibition of the great canvas totaled \$8,886, with a net profit of \$4,000--a very impressive sum for an artist of the period.⁹² Furthermore, all the while the work was on tour, the artist remained alert to audience response.

Thirty-three years after The Court of Death was first exhibited, and in anticipation of taking the canvas on tour a third time, Rembrandt Peale wrote to dispel the rumor that, on its first tour, a man had died while viewing the canvas. It was a "coincidence," he remonstrated, explaining that the man had died before entering the room. Clearly, if the iconographic program were skewed toward an acceptance of death, then the worst thing that could occur would be to have a member of the audience literally die of fright. In hope of producing a positive response, the artist told of taking in hand a man eager to see the canvas but afraid of death: "An hour after, I met him coming out, when he grasped my hand, and thanked me for the good I had done him, acknowledging a dread of death which he had disavowed, but which this picture had entirely removed."⁹³ Peale went on to describe with approval the empathetic

response of a group of deaf and dumb school children who were greatly excited because the corpse reminded them of one of their members who recently had drowned.

What is of overriding significance in the four canvases discussed here is that the figures are treated almost as hieroglyphs. Specificity is avoided whenever possible, for specifics would distract from the common experience. Death on a Pale Horse and the Dead Man Revived were the products of Americans working abroad who initially revived Judeo-Christian themes for an English audience. But the iconographic innovations which West and Allston did permit themselves were in line with those of Charles Willson Peale and Rembrandt Peale. Allston injected an anonymous family into the Biblical scenario when it was not called for. West even inserted a family of birds, lest the viewer miss the point made by the human family. The elder Peale never designated a title for the painting that now is known as Rachel Weeping. Despite the fact that a particular child died of a particular malady and was lost to a particular family, he took care to present the painting in as generalized a context as possible for the viewing public. And Rembrandt Peale went so far in the direction of generalizing that he took the course of obfuscation when indicating the relationship of the corpse to the

old man. To make the understanding of a universal experience as available as possible to the largest number, just the essence was distilled and served up.

It is sometimes useful in American art to define what is by what is not. The death imagery created by 1820 is a case in point. An American audience was surprisingly disinclined toward representations of contemporary heroes, as witness the failure of John Trumbull's Death of General Warren at the Battle of Bunker Hill, 17 June 1775 and Death of General Montgomery in the Attack on Quebec, 31 December 1775 (Figs. 23, 24).⁹⁴ Because Trumbull is America's first history painter and because these works have entered the lists of our national icons along with Gilbert Stuart's Atheneum portrait of Washington and Emanuel Leutze's Washington Crossing the Delaware, it is doubly important to realize that neither work was a commercial success as an engraving.⁹⁵ Furthermore, both canvases were rejected by Congress as inappropriate for the decoration of Washington's new Rotunda. Dissecting the anatomy of Trumbull's failure becomes another way of understanding why the exhibition canvases of the two Peales, Allston and West were well received.

The Death of General Warren and the Death of General Montgomery were history paintings which satisfied contemporary

expectations for that genre. Dr. Joseph Warren had led the rebel militia of Boston which faced seasoned English troops at Bunker's Hill. In the hand-to-hand combat, Warren lost his life. Trumbull favored the moment when a British major was supposed to have parried a bayonet thrust to spare the dying Warren the Pain and indignity of sustaining further wounds. General Montgomery also died in the early months of the Revolutionary War. Having devised a brilliant campaign to wrest Canada from English control, he seized Fort Ticonderoga, St. Johns, Chambly and Montreal before the British stopped him at Quebec. Military martyrdoms, then, were what Trumbull presented to the public; and a few perceived their instructional value. Trumbull, Abigail Adams wrote after viewing the Death of General Warren in early March 1786, was the first "to immortalize by his pencil those great actions that gave birth to our nation." And, she concluded patriotically:

At the same time, he teaches mankind that
it is not rank, nor titles, but character
alone, which interests posterity.⁹⁶

However, it became clear over time that most Americans were resistant to Trumbull's conceptions. The reason is very probably to be found in the backgrounds of Trumbull and a viewer like Abigail Adams. Both were members of an aristocracy and therefore educated in the conventions

of history painting. They knew how to judge a noble action for its own sake, disregarding the hero's affiliation or whether his action led to victory. With myopic certainty, they wrongly assumed their standards to be shared by their countrymen. But Americans generally did not wish to view Warren's martyrdom because it produced no clear-cut victory for their side and, in addition, paid tribute to the gallantry of an English soldier. They were no more approving of Trumbull's other choice: Montgomery's aborted victory in Canada. These objections were voiced forthrightly enough after Trumbull took both canvases to Washington in the hopes that they would be adopted as part of his four-canvas Rotunda scheme.

At this juncture, William Dunlap's account furnishes a valuable commentary on the way Trumbull's countrymen received his heroic death scenes. Admittedly, Dunlap dipped his pen in vitriol to write Trumbull's biography, and his resentment of the artist's background comes through in the first paragraph:

This painter was emphatically well born; and we shall see that he reaped, as is generally the case, through life, the advantages resulting from the accident.⁹⁷

But precisely because he is prejudiced, Dunlap probably locates the source of the general public's dissatisfaction with Trumbull's conceptions. As we have seen, Trumbull's

aristocratic background militated against a partisan
⁹⁸
 viewpoint. Unfortunately for Trumbull, such fine
 impartiality offended Americans twice over since his
 canvases for the Rotunda were proposed in the aftermath
⁹⁹
 of America's second war with England.

Dunlap expressed the discontent with Trumbull when he
 chastised him for not following the example of his mentor,
 Benjamin West. The latter, he contended, in portraying
 the death of the victorious Wolfe, additionally alluded to
 the enemy's defeat. Whereas Trumbull painted "nothing
¹⁰⁰
 more than--dying men." And, Dunlap wondered, why had
 Trumbull not painted Colonel William Prescott and General
 Israel Putnam who survived the battle of Bunker's Hill.
 Clearly Dunlap had no comprehension of the artist's motives.
 Trumbull, the aristocrat, admired Montgomery's great
 soldiering even if it did not obtain its objective, just
 as he admired gallantry even if it occurred on the enemy's
 side. Dunlap, the pragmatic plebian, preferred success
 to martyrdom and victorious, live officers to dead ones.
 Thus he dismissed Trumbull's depicted examples of two
 outstanding Revolutionary heroes.

It was, however, Trumbull himself who furnished the
 most telling evidence of the failure of the Death of General
 Warren and the Death of General Montgomery. A proud man,
 he put himself, at age eighty-one, to the task of writing

his Autobiography--in part to correct Dunlap's disparaging
¹⁰¹ account. On the subject of these two canvases he neither
 mentioned that he took them to Washington nor that they were
 criticized, as though to deny they ever existed.¹⁰²
 Instead, he asserted that when he knew only four canvases
 could be executed, he advised against the subject of the
 "battle of Bunker's Hill."¹⁰³ Because the debates of
 Congress in the early years of the Republic are recorded
 in a highly condensed form, no verbatim record of the
 Congressmen's objections survives.¹⁰⁴ What we do have are
 Dunlap's pointed comments, his references to the disgruntle-
 ment of others and Trumbull's pained silence. Unwittingly,
 then, Trumbull reveals what he must have meant to conceal.
 And only by understanding the human impulse to pass over
 failure--especially at the end of one's life--can we begin
 to reconstruct the actual sequence of events.

Just as Americans were not receptive to the celebration
 of contemporary heroes in death, so they were no more
 receptive to the demise of antique heroes. The one painting
 of such a hero destined for exhibition in America
 floundered on reaching this shore. Samuel F. B. Morse's
Dying Hercules (Fig. 25), which won critical acclaim when
 it was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1813, was not a
 successful exhibition painting in this country.

Morse, in 1811, was an ambitious young man. Traveling
 to England in the company of Washington Allston, he soon

established himself in the American art colony of London. By 1812, when his mentor was beginning work on the Dead Man Revived, Morse believed himself ready to attempt his own history painting on a canvas of heroic proportions, one measuring eight feet by six feet, six inches. After the painting's favorable critical reception, Morse reported triumphantly to his parents:

My great picture also has not only been received at the Royal Academy, but has one of the finest places in the rooms. It has been spoken of in the papers, which you must know is considered a great compliment; for a young artist, unless extraordinary, is seldom or never mentioned till he has exhibited several times. They not only praise me, but place my picture among the most attractive in the exhibition. This I know will give you pleasure.¹⁰⁵

The letter, written in June 1813, was followed the next year by one to his parents in which he voiced his suspicion that "mere portrait painting" was the way to make a living in America.¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless, he still hoped that he could impress Americans by exhibiting the Dying Hercules and forwarded the painting to his parents. Morse's father hired a room in Boston for the purpose. Mrs. Morse, who took a positively jaundiced view of the American public's ability to appreciate her son's history painting, wrote back to England on June 25, 1815:

'Your' friend Mr. Tisdale says the picture of the Hercules ought to be in Boston as the beginning of a gallery of paintings, and that the Bostonians ought not to permit it to go from here. Whether they will or not, I know not. I place no confidence in them, but they may take a fit into their heads to patronize the fine arts....¹⁰⁷

Before young Morse had returned from England, the exhibition of his painting in Boston had failed because of poor attendance. Two months later, in February 1816, Morse exhibited the work himself in his painting room on Cornhill Square, Boston. The public remained indifferent, and they were no more enthusiastic that spring in Philadelphia.¹⁰⁸ Dead or alive, a mythical antique hero tended to leave Americans cold.

No other American artist of that period took up the subject of the demise of an antique hero for an important exhibition canvas. Furthermore, despite exposure to European painting, no artist of the early nineteenth century concerned himself with another European pre-occupation: the didactic deathbed exhibition picture. Such scenes, based upon incidents from the past, were initiated by Poussin, then taken up by the Neoclassical painter Gavin Hamilton, given new currency in the years preceding the French Revolution by artists like Jacques-Louis David. In the same period, Jean-Baptiste Greuze translated such scenes into the present. Yet even Greuze,

who domesticated and contemporized the didactic deathbed picture by portraying the common man, painted Septimus Severus Reproaching Caracalla from his deathbed when he sought critical acclaim and admission into the Royal Academy.¹⁰⁹

If we think in terms of competition for the public's attention--and we should since exhibition canvases (and especially large ones) were conceived to draw in the viewers --then we may conclude that the subject of a death in the family proved highly successful in America before the Civil War. There were important exhibition canvases addressing themselves to other subjects: Henry Sargent's Christ Entering Jerusalem (c. 1815), Thomas Sully's Capuchin Chapel after Granet (1821), William Dunlap's Christ Rejected (1821-22), Christ Bearing the Cross (1824) and Calvary (1826-28), as well as a copy of David's Napoleon Crossing the Alps (n.d.)¹¹⁰ But among these canvases there was no consistency of theme. They were as grapeshot to a single cannon ball that blasts the bulwark. Nor were they on view for extended periods.

The anonymous death in the family of everyman was America's iconographic offering to art in the Western tradition. Whether the death of a child in the work of Charles Willson Peale, the imminent death of the old man in The Court of Death, the death of the mother and child

in Death on a Pale Horse, or the revival of a father in the Dead Man Revived, the lesson taught by the American artist is that every death, whatever the circumstances, is worthy of attention. A dignified commemoration thus completes the cycle experienced by every individual, each one of whom assumed an important role in the world's new democracy.

Notes: Chapter I

*A Bibliography of frequently cited sources begins on p. 271

1. Charles Coleman Sellers, Charles Willson Peale, New York, 1969, p. 46.
2. Ibid., p. 41.
3. Ibid., p. 45.
4. Ibid., p. 46.
5. Ibid., p. 51.
6. Ibid., p. 64.
7. Ibid., p. 67.
8. See Charles Coleman Sellers, "Virginia's Great Allegory of William Pitt," The William And Mary Quarterly, IX, 1, pp. 59, 61. Sellers also believes that the portrait probably was not painted in West's studio.
9. Ibid., p. 60. Sellers, conjecturing about how much of Peale's spirited allegory was his own, writes: "His broadside Description that was used as an advertisement gives a glimpse of criticism and suggestions by which friends tried to modify the severity of the piece and which he answers with quotations from Montesquieu. It is significant, too, that in the Description William Pitt is William Pitt and not the Earl of Chatham. The Great Commoner's acceptance of a peerage two years before had not been popular with his following. It was Mr. Pitt who had defended American rights and 'rejoiced' in American resistance and here amid the panoply of Freedom he stands as 'Mr. Pitt.'"
10. Ibid., pp. 62-63. Sellers argues that Peale's subsequent inability to sell many mezzotints arose from the artist's miscalculation of American taste in art. He believes they would have preferred "honest realism" to the allegorical language of "high art."
11. See David Alexander and Richard T. Godfrey, Painters and Engraving: The Reproductive Print from Hogarth to Wilkie, New Haven, 1980, p. 32 and no. 58.
12. The painting of Bordley, lost for years, but now at the Stetson University of Law, St. Petersburg, Florida, was identified by Sellers and published for the first time in his Charles Willson Peale, 1969, ill. 22.

13. Sellers, *ibid.*, pp. 85-86 provides a more detailed iconographic analysis that supplements the argument advanced here. He ingeniously interprets Peale's use of the noxious Jimson weed to symbolize a warning comparable to the rattlesnake's banner "Don't tread on me." However, his conclusion that the sheep in the landscape symbolize America's economic emancipation cannot be substantiated.
14. Charles Coleman Sellers, Charles Willson Peale, 1969, pp. 38-39. Charles Willson Peale sired seventeen children. The first to live to maturity was Raphaele, born Feb. 17, 1774.
15. See Charles Coleman Sellers, Portraits and Miniatures of Charles Willson Peale, Philadelphia, 1952 (Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, 42, 1), p. 164. Originally the work was untitled. It now carries the title Rachel Weeping. In a letter to the present author (Oct. 16, 1976) Sellers, a direct descendent of Charles Willson Peale and a member of that branch of the family which inherited the portrait, writes: "The title is recent--thirty years or so, ago --when someone in the family began calling it by the phrase from the 2nd chapter of St. Matthew--a lady, as you can imagine, recoiling from the repetition of 'Mrs. Peale with Dead Child.'"
16. Anton Pigler, "Portraying the Dead," Acta Historiae Artium Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae, 4, 1956, pp. 1-75, offers a systematic study of mortuary portraits from the fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries in Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, France, England and Hungary. The majority of examples were of royalty, the nobility and clergy and were intended for public exhibition. The first extant funerary portrait Pigler cites is that of a cardinal by a mid-fifteenth-century Florentine painter, preserved in the Cathedral of Florence. Famous men, like Luther and Melanchthon, also were portrayed in death. From the evidence Pigler gathered, the first extant funerary portraits of children, other than royalty, occur in Holland in the seventeenth century.
17. See The Temple Vasari, trans. A.B. Hinds, London, 1900, III, pp. 208-09. For other examples, going back to the Renaissance, of the artist painting his dead child, see Linda Nochlin, Realism, 1971, pp. 60-61, 253 and ill. 26. See also Oliver Millar, The Age of Charles I. Painting in England 1620-1649, The Tate Gallery, London, 1972, p. 124, no. 227.

18. Alastair Smart, The Life and Art of Allan Ramsay, London, 1952, p. 48.
19. Charles Willson Peale, Diary, Vol. II, in the collection of the American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia.
20. See Sellers, Charles Willson Peale, 1969, pp. 104-06.
21. On the death-sleep of the Christ Child, see Millard Meiss, "Sleep in Venice: Ancient Myths and Renaissance Proclivities," Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, 110, 1966, pp. 348-82; and "Sleep in Venice," Stil und Überlieferung in der Kunst des Abendlandes: Theorien und Probleme, Berlin, 1967 (Akten des 21. Internationalen Kongresses für Kunstgeschichte in Bonn, 3), pp. 271-79. For a study of the way in which Piero della Francesca made the death-sleep theme personally relevant for Federigo da Montefeltro, see Meiss, "Ovum Struthionis: Symbol and Allusion in Piero della Francesca's Montefeltro Altapiece," in Studies in Art and Literature for Belle Da Costa Greene, ed. Dorothy Miner, Princeton, 1954, pp. 95-101.
22. See Sellers, Charles Willson Peale, 1969, pp. 78-79. Charles Willson taught his brother St. George to draw expressions by copying Le Brun's Conference on the Expression of the Passions so that he might earn his living making crayon portraits. And such a drawing lesson is taking place in The Peale Family Group. As Charles Willson, *ibid.*, recalled later: "He then was shown the application of this line in various drawings, how it may be made part of a face in profile, and the character varied, and from drawing profiles he was set to copying Le Brun's passions...." In France, Peale's contemporary, Jean-Baptiste Greuze adapted expressions from Le Brun for his highly popular moralizing genre scenes. See Edgar Munhall, Jean-Baptiste Greuze 1725-1805, Hartford, Conn., 1977, pp. 14-5 and no. 84 (The Father's Curse; The Ungrateful Son, 1777-78) and no. 88 (The Father's Curse; The Punished Son, 1777-78). Wayne Craven, in his recent article "The Grand Manner in Early Nineteenth-Century American Painting: Borrowings from Antiquity, the Renaissance, and the Baroque," The American Art Journal, 11, no. 2, 1979, p. 10, discusses the importance of Le Brun's work to both Peale and John Vanderlyn. The latter copied into his sketch-book the heads of Admiration, Attention, Hatred or Jealousy and Horror.

23. The telltale indication that Peale did not observe his wife from nature is to be found in the white of the eyes visible below the rolled-up iris. This glance, nearly impossible to hold (especially with the head held straight) was used by Le Brun for his expression of sadness and adapted by Peale. Its history is an interesting one. Leo Steinberg has informed the author that the upward turning gaze, originating in religious painting to indicate a heavenly vision or heaven-sent inspiration, was popularized by Raphael (St. Catherine of Alexandria, London, and The Ecstasy of St. Cecilia, Bologna). Rubens secularized the formula in his depiction of St. Cecilia as the muse, rather than the patron saint, of music (Bologna). Peale observed this convention again when he painted Amerigo Vespucci and George Fox; see Sellers, Portraits and Miniatures, p. 214, no. 888 and p. 79, no. 272.
24. The Book of Abigail and John. Selected Letters of the Adams Family 1762-1784, eds. L.H. Butterfield, Marc Friedlander, Mary-Jo Kline, Cambridge, Mass., 1975, p. 156.
25. Charles Mitchell, "Benjamin West's 'Death of General Wolfe' and the Popular History Piece," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, 7, 1944, p. 31.
26. Joseph Farington, The Farington Diary, ed. James Greig, London, 1924, p. 151, June 10, 1807.
27. It is worth noting that both Benjamin West and Charles Willson Peale preceded David in basing a secular work on a religious compositional prototype in order to convey a message of special pertinency to their contemporaries. As West's was derived from the Deposition and Peale's on the Madonna and Sleeping Christ Child, so David chose the type of the Cristo Morto for his famous painting of the Death of Marat (1793). See Robert Rosenblum, Transformations in Late Eighteenth Century Art, pp. 82-84. In the same year, David also conceived his Le Peletier assassinated, another composition constructed on the Cristo Morto type. See Milton W. Brown, The Painting of the French Revolution, New York, 1938, pp. 84-85 and David Lloyd Dowd, "Pageant Master of the Republic: Jacques-Louis David and the French Revolution," University of Nebraska Studies, n.s. no. 3, 1948, pp. 98-102. Naturally, there is no question that, as Milton Brown argues so convincingly, the paintings of David were the most effective weapons produced in a revolutionary era.

28. The pioneering iconographical study of the child and death is Horst W. Janson's "The Putto with the Death's Head," The Art Bulletin, 19, 1937, pp. 423-49.
29. See Sellers, "Virginia's Great Allegory of William Pitt," p. 62.
30. See Sellers, Charles Willson Peale, 1969, pp. 191-92, for a discussion of the new portrait gallery. In his autobiography (n.d.), written in the third person, Peale recalled: "having completed his building, and pursuing his usual practice of painting portraits in oil, he occasionally painted portraits of distinguished characters in the revolutionary-war, by which means, he conceived, that in the end [he] would make such a collection of Portraits to fill his gallery as might be valuable in a future day. The formation of this Gallery of Portraits gave him the opportunity of a more extended acquaintance with the military characters of those times, as well as a knowledge of ingenious men in different branches of Science." (Quoted in Sellers, *ibid.*, pp. 191-192.) A painting of the new gallery by Rubens Peale is reproduced by Sellers, *ibid.*, ill. 45.
31. A first draft of Peale's poem appeared on the last page of a letterbook Peale kept between 1782 and 1795. See Sellers, Charles Willson Peale, 1969, p. 106 and Letterbook II in the collection of the American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia. When the poem appeared in The Freeman's Journal, Peale changed "awful" to "gentle" and "Breast" to "heart." Peale was not the only artist to take the death of his own child as a subject for an exhibition canvas. In a highly acclaimed work, La Vierge Consolatrice, the French artist Adolphe William Bouguereau depicted his recently deceased wife and son. The painting was exhibited in the Paris Salon of 1877, from which it was purchased for the Gallery of the Luxembourg. See Clara H. Stranahan, A History of French Painting from Its Earliest to Its Latest Practice, New York, 1899, p. 404; and Edward Strahan, The Chefs-d'Oeuvre d'Art of the International Exhibition, 1878, Philadelphia, 1878, p. 114.
32. Sellers, Portraits and Miniatures, p. 164.
33. See Chapter II, below.
34. See Cumulative Record of Exhibition Catalogues: The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts 1807-1870, ed. Anna Wells Rutledge, Philadelphia, 1955, p. 163. When explicit titles are published in the Academy catalogue,

- they provide dates for the events depicted, which show that Peale was in the habit of exhibiting a new work within a year or two of its execution. This was the case, for example, when he painted portraits of gentlemen joining the Long expedition to explore the Missouri. See *ibid.*, and Sellers, Charles Willson Peale, 1969, pp. 386-87. Portrait of a Mother caressing her convalescent Child is now lost. Sellers does not discuss it in any of his publications. The only record of its existence occurs in the Pennsylvania Academy catalogue for 1818.
35. Charles Willson Peale, Letterbook XV, April 13, 1818, p. 39.
 36. A brief account of the display of West's painting can be found in William Dunlap's A History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States, 1834; reprint, New York, 1969, II, pp. 85-86. Dunlap notes that West had donated the painting to the Hospital in hopes that it would promote painting in his native land and objects to the fact that artists and students were charged admission to see it. Over the winter of 1821, Peale occupied himself painting his own version of Our Savior Healing the Sick at the Pool of Bethesda. This painting, now lost, is described by Sellers in Charles Willson Peale With Patron and Populace (Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, 59, 3), pp. 46-47.
 37. See Anton Figler, Barockthemen, 2nd rev. ed., Budapest, 1974, I, p. 182. According to Figler, Dirck Barentsz. (1534-92), Salomon de Bray (1597-1664), Nicolas Chapron (1612-56) and Raymond Lafage (1656-84) represented the theme, but only in drawings. Antonio Tempesta (1555-1630) included it as one of 220 small engravings to illustrate the Old Testament. Jean-Joseph Taillasson (1747-1809) made it the subject of a large canvas.
 38. Margaret Fuller, "A Record of the Impressions produced by the exhibition of Mr. Allston's pictures in the summer of 1839," in Papers on Literature and Art, New York, 1846, pp. 111-12. That Allston's choice of Biblical subject disturbed his contemporaries is also attested by a letter in the archives of the Pennsylvania Academy written by James Taylor on March 7, 1831. Arguing that the "dead" man had not in fact died, Taylor reasons: "Scripture affords no example of any miracle having been wrought by relics of the dead. The miracles accorded in the Old & New Testaments were performed by living agents, & for important purposes: they proved the divine mission of those by whom they were wrought."
 39. This suggestion has recently been made by Elizabeth Jones in her "Washington Allston's Dead Man Revived," The Art Bulletin, 61, 1979, pp. 82-85.

40. See Joseph Farington, Diary, VI, March 15, 1811, p. 248.
41. New Monthly Magazine, April 1, 1814, p. 279.
42. Letter to Charles Fraser quoted in full by Jared B. Flagg, The Life and Letters of Washington Allston, New York, 1892, reprinted in London, 1893, pp. 42-48. Allston reported to Fraser: "Next week I shall apply for admission into the Academy. The very first figure that I draw from plaster, Mr. West said, would admit me. It was from the 'Gladiator.' He was astonished when I told him it was my first, and paid a compliment (too pretty to repeat) to the correctness of my eye. He also observed that I not only preserved the form, but, what few artists think of, the expression of my subject." The Dying Gaul, or Mirmillone (the "big Gladiator") was discovered in Rome in about 1722. Clement XII (1730-40) acquired it for the Capitoline Museum where, placed in the center of the Room of the Gladiators, it was the main attraction. In 1799, it was removed to Paris. A plaster cast of this work must have been included among the antiques that young Americans drew from while studying in London. Trumbull's fallen Spanish officer in the Sortie of the British Garrison at Gibraltar of 1789 is based on the Dying Gaul; and Allston, in the letter cited above, mentions that he had seen this work by Trumbull. A confusion has arisen because the Borghese Warrior was also known as the "Gladiator." Thus Wayne Craven, in his "The Grand Manner in Early Nineteenth-Century American Painting," p. 33, also observes that Allston's figure of the dead man is based on the Dying Gaul; but assumes, p. 23, that the drawing for admission to the Academy was based on the cast of the Borghese Warrior. Craven notes, however, that Allston's drawing has never been located and the present author would add that perhaps the reason lies in the fact that Allston's drawing was not taken from the Borghese Warrior. Other Americans besides Allston drew from one or the other of the Gladiators. Dunlap's drawing from the "Fighting Gladiator" gained him permission to enter the Academy at Somerset House. Morse also made a drawing of "the Gladiator," but was not pleased with it.
43. Jones, "Washington Allston's Dead Man Revived," pp. 84-87, has suggested that Allston was inspired by two of the Parthenon marbles, the Ilyssus and the Dionysus. Leaving aside for the moment the question whether these marbles are convincing as visual sources, it should be noted that Jones cannot prove that Allston actually saw them by 1811. Jones, pp. 84-85, does document the fact that Benjamin West, Benjamin Haydon and Samuel F.B. Morse drew from the

- marbles and she assumes, therefore, that Allston must have. She also passes over the possible difficulties that arise from the fact that the marbles came to England in separate shipments, some arriving in 1804, others not until 1811, that some of the marbles were displayed in 1807, but that they were not all on view until 1817. See also The Art Bulletin, 61, 1979, pp. 662-63, for an exchange of correspondence between Elizabeth Jones and Alison West concerning Louis Francois Roubiliac's tomb monument to General William Hargrave in Westminster Abbey (1757) as a possible contemporary source for Allston's figure.
44. Oliver Wendell Holmes, "Exhibition of Pictures painted by Washington Allston at Harding's Gallery, School Street, Boston: 1839," North American Review, 107, p. 369.
 45. See Flagg, The Life and Letters of Washington Allston, pp. 43-44.
 46. The scenario as Allston conceived it stands in sharp contrast to the version of his contemporary, Jean-Joseph Taillasson. The latter gave to the viewer only the dead man's extremities, which in reanimation had horrified four spectators. Furthermore, fear of the supernatural appears to be Taillasson's true subject, the Old Testament event only a secondary concern. Jones, "Washington Allston's Dead Man Revived," p. 83, has suggested that the artist might have known, through a line engraving, Taillasson's work.
 47. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
 48. For Allston's description, see Exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, October, 1816. The entry begins: "The following description is taken from the pen of Mr. Allston." All of the passages cited below are quoted from this catalogue entry. Allston rejected the offer of another to write a description of the Dead Man Revived. The incident, recounted by Flagg, *ibid.*, pp. 100-1, is as follows: "Encouraged by the success West had met in exhibiting large pictures of sacred history, Allston contemplated an exhibition of this picture, and when near to complete he hired a room for that purpose, in Pall Mall. Morse and I were one day with him when he was putting the finishing touches on to his work in that room. Allston was called out for a few

minutes by a stranger (for he would admit no one but intimate friends), and when he returned he told us that a little, goggle-eyed man, in a shabby black dress, had offered his services to write a paragraph in praise of his picture for the newspapers, having seen its approaching exhibition advertised in them, and had brought the commencement of one, which he read to Allston as a specimen. It ran as follows: 'The venerable President of the Royal Academy has set an excellent example to our artists by selecting the subject for his pencil from the inspired writers, which example we are happy to see followed by his countryman, Mr. Allston. 'The Dead Man Revived by Touching the Bones of the Prophet Elisha's, what a subject for descriptive painting.' 'But,' said Allston, 'this, sir, would look like a puff.' 'No, sir,' replied the author, 'as it is not written by yourself it cannot be called Puff Direct, though I own it may be considered somewhat in the light of the Puff Oblique'."

49. See Jones, "Washington Allston's Dead Man Revived," p. 96. Allston was greatly cheered by the painting's purchase. He wrote to Samuel F. B. Morse in April (n.d.), 1816: "When you recollect that I considered the 'Dead Man' (from the untoward fate he had hitherto experienced) almost literally as a caput mortuum, you may easily believe that I was most agreeably surprised to hear of the sale. But pleased as I was on account of the very seasonably pecuniary supply it would soon afford me, I must say that I was still more gratified at the encouragement it seemed to hold out for my return to America." Samuel F.B. Morse: His Letters and Journals, I, ed. E.L. Morse, New York, 1914, p. 199.
50. See Jerry D. Meyer, "Benjamin West's Chapel of Revealed Religion: A Study in Eighteenth-Century Protestant Religious Art," The Art Bulletin, 57, 1975, pp. 247-65, esp. pp. 264-65. The article is adapted from Meyer's dissertation, The Religious Paintings of Benjamin West: A Study in Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Century Moral Sentiment, New York University, Institute of Fine Arts, 1973.
51. The order and dating of this series follows Meyer, The Religious Paintings of Benjamin West, pp. 182-84. Meyer revises the sequence proposed by Fiske Kimball, "Benjamin West au Salon de 1802. La Mort sur Le Cheval Pale," Gazette des Beaux-Arts, 7, 1932, pp. 403-10.
52. Quoted in Robert Rosenblum, "British Art and the Continent, 1760-1860," in Romantic Art in Britain, eds. Frederick Cummings and Allen Staley, Detroit and Philadelphia, 1968, p. 111.

53. See Norman D. Ziff, "Mortimer's 'Death on a Pale Horse,'" Burlington Magazine, 112, 1970, pp. 531-35.
54. See Pigler, Barockthemen, I, p. 396.
55. See Kathi Meyer-Baer, Music of the Spheres and the Dance of Death. Studies in Musical Iconology, Princeton, 1970, pp. 291 and 296.
56. For an extended iconographic analysis of Dürer's woodcut, see Erwin Panofsky, The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer, 4th ed., Princeton, 1955, pp. 53-60.
57. Ruth Kraemer, in her Morgan Library catalogue, Drawings by Benjamin West and his son Raphael Lamar West, New York, 1975, no. 39, writes of this drawing that it "most likely represents a first idea" for Death on a Pale Horse, and that it precedes the drawing at the Royal Academy. Because West studies, in regard to both drawings and paintings, still are so incomplete, the present author must rely on the judgment of Miss Kramer.
58. It is worth noting that death personified as a skeleton appears only rarely in American painting. One such instance is John Trumbull's Joshua at the Battle of Ai (1839-40, Yale University Art Gallery). For another instance, see the present author's discussion of James Beard's The Night Before the Battle of 1865, p. 185, below.
59. Grose Evans, Benjamin West and the Taste of His Times, Carbondale, Ill., 1959, p. 62 and Meyer, The Religious Paintings of Benjamin West, p. 188.
60. William Carey, Critical Description and Analytical Review of 'Death on the Pale Horse' Painted by Benjamin West, London, 1817, p. 1.
61. Ibid.
62. Ibid., p. 118.
63. Ibid., pp. 62-63.
64. Ibid., pp. 114-15. West, of course, was not the only artist to employ birds as actors in a human drama. Dutch Baroque genre painters, such as Gerard Dou, used birds in a cage or birdhouse to indicate that a young woman had caught her man, and a bird outside the cage to indicate that she had lost her virginity. Jean-Baptiste Greuze, who admired Dutch genre painting, transferred its erotic bird symbolism to his works. Thus his Girl Weeping Over Her Dead Bird (Edinburgh, National Gallery of Scotland) is meant to symbolize the loss of virginity, a fact not

lost on his contemporaries. "Cet enfant pleure autre chose, vous dis-je," Diderot wrote in his Salon review of 1765. And in the Marriage Contract (Louvre), Greuze used a hen and chicks in a genre scene with erotic connotation to symbolize the future of the young bride-to-be. For Greuze, then, birds symbolized the erotic connotations in a situation either anterior (Girl Weeping Over Her Dead Bird) or posterior (Marriage Contract) to the moment he depicts in a human drama. West, by contrast, removed the erotic symbolism traditionally associated with birds. Instead, they serve to echo the fate his human actors were simultaneously experiencing.

65. J.G. (John Galt), A Description of Mr. West's Picture of Death on the Pale Horse; or the Opening of the First Five Seals, exhibiting at No. 125 Pall-Mall, London, 1818, p. 6.
66. Charles Edwards Lester, The Artists of America. A Series of Biographical Sketches of American Artists, New York, 1846, pp. 206-7.
67. Meyer, "Benjamin West's Chapel of Revealed Religion," p. 248 and n. 8, discusses the cancellation of the Windsor Castle Chapel project.
68. Justice to Dillenberger's argument can only be rendered by reading it in full. See John Dillenberger, Benjamin West: The Context of His Life's Work with Particular Attention to Paintings with Religious Subject Matter, San Antonio, Texas, 1977, pp. 83-94.
69. Ibid., p. 88.
70. The work is signed and dated October 10, 1817.
71. Farington, Diary, entries for July 18, November 8 and 24, 1817.
72. William Dunlap, A History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States, II, p. 148.
73. Dunlap, I, p. 296, writes that he painted the whole canvas over the summer of 1825. In the fall of the same year he exhibited his version of Death on a Pale Horse at the American Academy of the Fine Arts in New York and by January 1826, was taking it on tour to Norfolk,

Virginia. A copy of the line engraving from which Dunlap worked is in the collection of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Dunlap worked remarkably fast, executing four large canvases between 1821 and 1828 and one suspects that quality was sacrificed to expediency as Dunlap hurried to get his great pictures on the road.

74. *Ibid.*, I, pp. 296-99.
75. *Ibid.*, II, p. 148.
76. All of the correspondence between Dunlap and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts is preserved in the archives of the Academy. In a letter dated July 12, 1836, Dunlap submitted a ledger of his final accounts that showed a profit of only \$36.56 for the Academy. West's painting was exhibited at Independence Hall, Philadelphia, from Aug. 5 to Oct. 31, 1835. David Wright, a professional picture show promoter, exhibited the work in Boston at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. See Charles Coleman Sellers, "The Pale Horse on the Road," Antiques, May 1954, pp. 384-87.
77. Peale made this remark in a letter, preserved in the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, addressed to the Rev. W.J. Pierpont of Boston, sent from Philadelphia, April 13, 1845.
78. Lester, The Artists of America, p. 209.
79. *Ibid.*, p. 224.
80. Norman Geske, Rembrandt Peale: A Case Study in American Romanticism, M.A. Thesis, New York University, Institute of Fine Arts, 1953, pp. 75-76, first made the observation that Rubens' picture was an important source for Peale's Court of Death. See also p. 19: "Of all the artists he mentions by name it is of Rubens that he writes with greatest enthusiasm."
81. For the importance of the poem to Peale's conception of the painting, see Rembrandt Peale, "The Court of Death," The Crayon, 4, September 1857, pp. 278-79, and Lester, The Artists of America, p. 223.
82. See also René as le-roi-mort, f. 53r in the London Hours of René of Anjou, reproduced in John Harthan, The Book of Hours with a Historical Survey and Commentary, New York, 1977, p. 92, fig. 90.
83. Rembrandt Peale, "The Court of Death," pp. 278-79.
84. Sellers, Charles Willson Peale, 1969, p. 239.

85. For an account of the plague in Philadelphia, see J.H. Powell, Bring Out Your Dead: The Great Plague of Yellow Fever in Philadelphia in 1793, Philadelphia, 1949. The artist Joseph Wright, who moved from New York to Philadelphia, lost his life in that city's yellow fever epidemic. See William Dunlap, A History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States, I, p. 314.
86. For a full account of all the family members used, see Lester, The Artists of America, pp. 223-24.
87. This passage from Taylor's work is quoted in Nancy Lee Beaty, The Craft of Dying. The Literary Tradition of the ARS MORIENDI in England, New Haven, 1970, p. 254.
88. The rapid progress made in curbing diseases of all kinds can be gauged by reading the medical broadsides of the period. The largest collection of these broadsides is preserved in the Library Company of Philadelphia. See also, Robert B. Austin, Early American Medical Imprints; A Guide to Works Printed in the United States 1668-1820, Washington, 1961.
89. Quoted from "Observations on American Art: Selections from the Writings of John Neal (1793-1876), edited by Harold Edward Dickson," The Pennsylvania State College Bulletin, 38, no. 6, 1943, p. 21.
90. There also exists a squared-off sketch, apparently intended for another version of the painting for the parent museum in Philadelphia. Of this sketch, Charles Coleman Sellers, in the letter cited above, n. 15, writes: "As to the Court of Death sketch, I have repeated the traditional identification as Rembrandt's original study, but have since become very sure that it must be the sketch which CWP made in Baltimore when the painting was new. He planned to enlarge it, but not to full size, and hence the squaring. His son objected, and he did not carry through. It looks to me much more like a CWP sketch than a RP study, which would have been more finished. I suggested this theory the last time it went out on loan, but the exhibitor chose to stay with the old view."
91. Quoted from "Peale's Court of Death," The National Federal Gazette, Sept. 5, 1820, p. 11.

92. The painting's profit-making potential was discussed by Rembrandt Peale in his letter to the Rev. Pierpont, cited above, n. 77. The letter begins: "A few days ago I received a letter from Mr. W.T. Andrews, Chairman of the Committee of Fine Arts of the Boston Atheneum, requesting some contribution from me for the ensuing Exhibition, and expressing a particular desire that I would send my Painting the Court of Death....I informed him that mind has long been made up never to unroll that picture but for the purpose of its final disposition, if possible, in some public Gallery. I had been thinking of a plan for the Citizens of Baltimore, where the Picture originated, but I confess my pride as an Artist would be more gratified to know or see it placed in the Gallery of the Atheneum of Boston."
93. Quoted from "The Court of Death," The Daily Herald (Newburyport, Mass.), Oct. 25, 1853, p. 223.
94. The most extensive history to date of these two paintings is to be found in Irma B. Jaffe's John Trumbull: Patriot-Artist of the American Revolution, New York, 1977; see especially pp. 22-23, 81, 84-85, 88-93 and 151.
95. The English were not enthusiastic about Trumbull's conceptions, a fact brought home to Trumbull when no English engraver would transform his design for the Death of General Warren. After a three-year search, Trumbull was able to employ Johann Gotthard von Müller of Stuttgart. But the process was so extended that the engraving was not issued until twenty-three years after the battle. For a discussion of this engraving, see Alexander and Godfrey, Painters and Engraving, p. 52 and no. 109. See also Jaffe, John Trumbull, pp. 143-44 and 187. The commission for the engraving of the Death of General Montgomery was divided between Luigi Schiavonetti, Wilson Lowry and Johan Frederik Clemens; *ibid.*, p. 187 and n. 48.
96. Abigail Adams, Letters of Mrs. Adams, the Wife of John Adams, with an introductory memoir by her grandson, Charles Francis Adams, Boston, I, pp. 126-27.
97. Dunlap, A History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States, I, p. 340.

98. Irma Jaffe, John Trumbull, p. 180, records another instance of Trumbull's innate sense of fairness and balanced point of view. In the evaluation of his fellow artist, Jacques-Louis David, Trumbull perceived a man who could be a "ferocious monster" in public life but who, as a private individual, had a "primitive character of kindness."
99. For a fine account of the emerging nativist sentiment in the years after the founding of the Republic, see Marshall Smelser, "The Federalist Period as an Age of Passion," American Quarterly, 10, 1958, pp. 391-419.
100. Dunlap, A History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States, p. 358.
101. See Theodore Sizer's astute preface to The Autobiography of Colonel Trumbull, Patriot-Artist, 1756-1843, New Haven, 1953, pp. xi-xx. Even Trumbull's contemporaries felt Dunlap had done him a grave injustice. See Lester's introduction to Trumbull's life in The Artists of America, p. 137, where he writes: "Since too the Painter has left a very voluminous autobiography, we shall leave Mr. Dunlap's account of him entirely out of the question, and thus be saved the trouble of showing directly how far he allowed his private passion to 'transport him beyond the limits of honest truth.'"
102. See Trumbull, Autobiography, pp. 256-58.
103. Trumbull's remarks were addressed to President James Madison since it was resolved in Congress that the President was to make the final selection of subjects. For the references to the resolutions regarding Trumbull's canvases, see The Debates and Proceedings in the Congress of the United States, Fourteenth Congress, Second Session, Dec. 2, 1816 to March 3, 1817, cols. 64, 67-68, 79, 704, 746, 761-63, 1041 and 1348.
104. The record of the objections which does survive is nevertheless a valuable document because it reveals more generally how the arts were regarded in America at the time. See The Debates and Proceedings in the Congress of the United States, cols. 761-63.
105. Morse, Letters and Journals, I, p. 107.
106. *Ibid.*, I, p. 132.
107. *Ibid.*, pp. 185-86.

108. See Carleton Mabee, The American Leonardo: A Life of Samuel F.B. Morse, New York, 1943, pp. 51-53.
109. Two didactic deathbed scenes, those of George Washington and Henry Clay, fall outside the range of this chapter because they were not painted until the 1850s. They are iconographically isolated in their period, and they do not establish a new tradition of their own. The reason may be that they involve the death of famous Americans. The images are: Junius Brutus Stearns' Washington on his Deathbed (1851) in the Dayton Art Institute, reproduced in The Dayton Art Institute Bulletin, 35, Sept. 1976, p. 21; and Robert W. Weir's The Last Communion of Henry Clay (after 1852) in the collection of Henry C. Robertson, Jr., reproduced in Robert Weir: Artist and Teacher of West Point, West Point, 1976, no. 42.
110. Rubens Peale arranged to exhibit these canvases in the Baltimore Museum between 1823 and 1828. See Wibur Harvey Hunter, Jr., Rendezvous for Taste. Peale's Baltimore Museum 1814-1830, Baltimore, 1956, p. 9. The history of the touring exhibition picture has yet to be written. Dunlap's autobiography in A History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States gives the best contemporary account that we have. See also Harold E. Dickson, "Artists as Showmen," The American Art Journal, 5, 1973, pp. 4-17.

Chapter II: THE ERA OF JACKSONIAN DEMOCRACY:
O LOVELY APPEARANCE OF DEATH

From 1776, when Charles Willson Peale enlarged the funerary portrait of his daughter for exhibition in his painting room, to 1836 when Death on a Pale Horse entered the collection of the Pennsylvania Academy, the four major canvases discussed in Chapter I conveyed ideas about the significance of the death of everyman. Such depictions accorded with beliefs in the dignity of man and his right to self-governance. But even as these Enlightenment theories were promulgated, they provided the basis for the next intellectual movement: Romanticism. Predictably, death imagery responded to Romanticism and took new forms.

The period from Andrew Jackson's election in 1828 to the beginning of the Civil War, has sometimes been designated the era of Jacksonian Democracy. There was, during this era, an essential belief in the goodness and worth of individuals who, collectively, would advance the nation's destiny in the direction of progress. And this native optimism brought about a threefold development in death imagery whereby the fact of death came to be distanced. In the private realm, a demand began to grow for posthumous "life" portraits commissioned by the bereaved. For exhibition pictures artists, reverting to an ancient subterfuge, deliberately conflated death with sleep. And death was held at bay in another genre which increasingly

captivated the American imagination: landscape. Especially in Thomas Cole's major landscape cycles, the reality of death was subsumed in nature.

That the impulse to hold death in abeyance begins in the era of Jacksonian Democracy is a revisionist view. Social historians studying the "American way of death" have previously dated the onset of this suppression to the post-Civil War period. When, in the Jacksonian era, this tendency began to emerge, it was soon reflected in the iconographic innovations of two pictorial genres. These genres are designated here for the first time as the tombstone mourning scene and the posthumous mourning portrait.¹ Since the former enjoyed considerable vogue in the age of Enlightenment, it best illustrates the way death imagery for private individuals began to change by the Jacksonian era. Furthermore, because the tombstone mourning scene evolved in England before being transported to America, the history of its changing iconography properly begins there.

The conceit of a figure at a tomb, set within a landscape, achieved considerable vogue in England after the Duke of Devonshire acquired Nicholas Poussin's Et in Arcadia ego (c. 1630, The Chatsworth Settlement, Derbyshire) sometime around 1761.² Poussin's work, engraved in 1763,

soon generated other paintings on the theme. Probably the landscape compositions of Arcadian shepherds at a tomb by Richard Wilson, Giovanni Battista Cipriani and Francesco Zuccarelli, although all undated, were inspired by Poussin's example.³ But it required the inventiveness of Sir Joshua Reynolds to personalize the motif. In a painting exhibited at the Royal Academy in the year of its founding, 1769, Reynolds introduced two English women, Mrs. Edward Bouverie and Mrs. Crewe, at the tomb (Fig. 26). Although the inscription reads "Et in arcadio [sic] ego," the catalogue entry informs the viewer that the ladies are moralizing at the tomb of a certain Lady Coventry. By substituting real people for the Arcadian shepherds, and by indicating that the tomb covered the remains of an actual person, Reynolds transformed the original Arcadian theme into a motif appropriate for a personal commemoration. At approximately the same time, Angelica Kauffmann conceived a similar composition with a cenotaph dedicated to Shakespeare which is decorated by an allegorical figure of Fame (Fig. 27). Francesco Bartolozzi translated Kauffmann's design into a stippled etching. The print was subsequently issued in four states and copied in a smaller version as late as 1821, thus giving the motif of the tombstone mourning scene wide currency.⁴

The conceit of a figure at a tomb in a landscape enjoyed great popularity because it simultaneously

sentimentalized, democratized and secularized death. This mourning scene paralleled the vision of the eighteenth-century poets forging the verse of an incipient Romanticism --poets such as Thomas Parnell, Thomas Gray, Robert Blair and Edward Young, who sought out the graveyard as the proper location for expressing the old idea of death as the leveler. Furthermore, in its wholly secular treatment of death, the conceit proved compatible with the anti-clerical attitudes of the Enlightenment. No wonder this mourning motif appealed to the middle classes both of Europe and America.

By the late eighteenth century, the tombstone mourning scene had received wide dissemination in the various mediums of miniatures and mourning rings, embroideries, prints, amateur watercolors and Josiah Wedgwood's pottery designs. The scene also received wide geographic dissemination. This mourning motif can be found pressed into service to commemorate a German merchant's wife ⁵ just as well as an American backwoods hero who died in the 1794 Battle of Fallen Timber (Fig. 28). The type quickly became standardized, always including one or more iconographic funerary staples: a cenotaph, an urn, a weeping willow ⁶ and a mourner. In a mourning scene, the selected elements are balanced one against the other, so that none predominates in the composition. The majority of American examples were produced

between 1780 and 1830.⁷ In America this motif amounted to almost a preoccupation in some circles. Young ladies in seminaries sometimes plied their needle to the design because it was fashionable, not because they were bereaved.⁸

Since the tombstone mourning scene soon evolved into a standardized type, a deviation from that type becomes a significant indicator of change. So it is that the Three Daughters of Addin Lewis at their Mother's Grave, executed by an anonymous artist around 1832, is pivotal in this study (Fig. 29). Four features distinguish this work from the usual mourning scene: the oil medium, the execution of the motif on a large scale (fifty-six by forty-four inches), the prominent place given to the mourners and the late date. But most important, the artist, in keeping with the optimistic ethos of the new era, holds death at bay. Or, to be more precise in terms of the composition itself--he pushed death to the side.

The arrangement of elements in the Three Daughters of Addin Lewis at their Mother's Grave is such that the bereaved,⁹ in their concern for the departed, assume pride of place. The little girls, wide eyed and stoic, wear the appropriate mourning clothes for the period and somber expressions to match. They very nearly take over the canvas and surely are meant to capture the viewer's attention. Indeed, to

accomodate the girls, the artist had to push their mother's marker far to the left.¹⁰ Therefore, only half the information usually provided in the scant biographical tomb description is given. That Mrs. Lewis lived is attested to by her death date and by the children who now live after her. Missing is the information about her birth date and her Christian name of Fanny. What is important is that the daughters must deal with the fact of their mother's death.

The center of interest in the composition, both visually and psychologically, is the soulful faces of the Lewis girls. Joined in sisterhood by their family resemblance, they look bewildered--they had suffered a loss beyond their understanding. The emphasis on the emotions of the bereaved is in keeping with the climate of Romanticism. It is as though only tears could provide the requisite humidity. The painting of the Lewis girls gives visual expression to the sentimental aspect of Romanticism at a time when mourning was beginning to take a tenacious hold on the American imagination.¹¹

The Three Daughters of Addin Lewis at their Mother's Grave is a poignant example of an iconographic type that by the 1840s was to become standardized and mass-produced. Nathaniel Currier universalized the type when he published a color lithograph in which a female mourner stands by a tomb with an inscription reading: "In memory of-----."¹²

Yet even as Currier was making it possible for a mourning scene to hang in all but the poorest homes, this standard motif was being superceded by a radically different kind of mourning image: a "life" portrait of the deceased.

To group posthumous portraits together for investigation, a new category has been created and named the posthumous mourning portrait. Since the bereaved wished their dead to be restored to them as living presences, it is necessary to describe these "life" portraits as posthumous. And because families commissioned the portraits during the mourning period, the mourning function is also included in the designation of the category.¹³

The first clue to the wide diffusion of posthumous mourning portraits comes from written evidence. These documents are so extensive that the making of such portraits can be described as practically a flourishing industry. Taking portraits from the corpse was a way for an artist to survive in nineteenth-century America. Raphaelle Peale, a failed painter in the eyes of his family because he could not support himself through his art, advertized in self-deprecation that being proficient in still life, he could execute another form of "still life"--portraits from the corpse.¹⁴ The nearly forgotten Joseph Whiting Stock noted in his journal that he would accept commissions for portraits and portraits "from corpse."¹⁵ During the winter of 1847,

William Stoodley Gookin placed this advertisement in a small Connecticut paper: "his method of taking portraits of Deceased persons, and his success in getting good likenesses, is well known to the public."¹⁶ Even the young Thomas Cole, already aspiring to become a landscape painter, was once forced to accept such work.¹⁷ To the end of the century, there was a demand for posthumous mourning portraits. In the 1890s, Edwin Romanzo Elmer, farmer, carpenter, and painter to the population around Shelburne Falls, Massachusetts, got up a horse and buggy and traveled to those who wanted portraits of their "lost dear ones." From such a beginning, he made enough money to try his hand at genre, landscape and trompe l'oeil still-life painting.¹⁸

A successful portraitist like William Sidney Mount, who was frequently called to the task of making posthumous mourning portraits, could be of several minds about the undertaking. The work was not to his liking: "I hope to paint no more portraits after death, or from Daguerreotypes. I don't believe in Vaults," he wrote emphatically in his journal for 1852.¹⁹ But, in 1856, when commissions were slack, he wrote to a friend: "At times, it did appear as if my only patron was death. Therefore, consider death not as an enemy but as a friend."²⁰ And Mount was shrewd enough to devise a separate price scale for posthumous commissions: "Portraits taken from after death double the

price--even at that price, I am not paid for the anxiety of mind I have to undergo, to make my efforts satisfactory to the bereaved friends and relatives." ²¹ Indeed, so necessary might posthumous mourning portrait commissions be to an artist's livelihood, that it was the fortunate artist who could disdain such work. When asked if he believed in taking likenesses from photographs, William Morris Hunt's reply took an unexpected turn:

No, indeed! and don't make portraits of people who have died either. A sensitive person gives out altogether too much life in trying to put some life into them. If you get into that sort of thing you'll be overwhelmed and fenced in with dead people.²²

For obvious reasons, the products of the posthumous mourning portrait industry have not been recognized for what they are. Where, then, are they? If one begins by looking for portraits of corpses, the search yields few examples. Any proof that certain portraits are posthumous must rest on documentation--on artist's letters and journals, family genealogies, or letters attached to the backs of canvases. Because of the personal, private nature of their commissions, ²³ many such portraits have remained in the family. They do not enter the public domain unless their artistic merit ²⁴ or commercial value prevails over their memorial function. Yet, undoubtedly, once this category of portraiture is established, many more examples will be flushed out.

The posthumous mourning portrait functioned as an icon for the bereaved; contemplating it was part of the mourning ritual. And because the artist presented the deceased to the mourners as though alive, a delicate pictorial balance had to be maintained between life and death. It was achieved in two ways. On the one hand, the figure of the deceased, generally life-size, was placed in his habitual former environment. On the other hand, a disguised omen or valedictory symbol was usually included.

An early example of the posthumous mourning portrait is Ralph E. W. Earl's rendering of Sarah Louisa Spence (Fig. 30). The daughter of a prominent Nashville family, she had succumbed overnight to cholera. The disconsolate parents promptly ordered her portrait. Every effort was made by the artist to achieve an exact likeness. He took measurements from the corpse and worked with a lock of her hair for color. Sarah's parents supplied Earl with a double portrait of her and her mother, painted when the child was five. Her half-sister was called in to pose because she had the same hazel eyes. And the large size of the canvas commissioned--forty-eight by sixty-six inches,²⁵ assured that nine-year-old Sarah would appear life-size.

Costumed in the clothes she wore in life, Sarah Louisa Spence greets the viewer as though she were about to step down from her proscenium stage space into the viewer's own.

Only the rose she holds betokens her altered condition. For as viewers of the period would have known, roses held downward, or drooping from a broken stem, symbolized an innocent life cut short.²⁶ In Earl's posthumous mourning portrait, Sarah Louisa Spence continues to exist in a twilight state between the quick and the dead.

Children's portraits, like the one of Sarah Louisa Spence, constitute a distinct category in the genre of posthumous mourning portraits.²⁷ They are of greater interest for two reasons: there appear to be more of them than there are adult portraits, and they reveal some of the most striking iconographic inventions. The coming of death to children was often sudden and unforeseen, and parents realized too late that they had no visual record. They thus placed certain demands on the artist. He was often called upon to create a life portrait that expressed, through some valedictory symbol, the family's regret over the loss of the child.²⁸

The iconography of William Sidney Mount's posthumous mourning portraits reveals a full range of omens and valedictory symbols. Plants and water were among the elements that he used. When, for instance, William Wickham Mills Smith died in 1848, at the age of one and a half, the artist symbolized his short sojourn with a flower.²⁹ Smith was descended from a prominent Long Island family, the

Smiths for whom Smithtown is named. At his death, the family, who must have high hopes for him, their eldest son, sought consolation in a posthumous mourning portrait. Mount's journal for 1849 describes the drawing he made from the corpse before executing an especially fine life-size portrait.³⁰ In the finished composition, scaled to the child, William is placed in the corner of a room flooded with sunlight. Interrupted while pulling a toy cart across the floor, he pauses to gaze at the viewer. The only outward sign that this portrait was not taken from life is the cart's unusual cargo--fresh-plucked blue morning-glories.

Morning-glories are native to the Western hemisphere. Consequently, they have no history in the flower symbolism of European painting.³¹ But their growth cycle readily suggests a particularly dramatic birth-to-death progression. First this green vine sends out heart-shaped leaves and long, clinging tendrils. Slowly, the petals of the bud grow, all the while remaining tightly wrapped as thread round a spindle. Then, overnight, the translucent petals open to the morning sun, wilt as the sun's rays become more intense, and drop from the vine. Because their stems are short, and because they bloom for a single half-day, the blossoms generally are not picked. This fact alone assures us that the morning-glories in William's little cart are not a common genre motif. Most important, the suddenness

and brevity of the morning-glory's flowering becomes eloquent of William, cut off in his infancy.

The idea of designating specific flowers as appropriate death symbols seems to have circulated between William Sidney Mount and his brother, Shepard Alonzo Mount. In two of the latter's paintings, both roses of sharon and apple blossoms were placed in vases carrying the legend: "Remember me." "Saw a bold flower piece, rose mallow (swamp holly-hock) genre Althea, painted by S.A. Mount," William wrote in his journal for 1866, presumably referring to Shepard's flower piece of 1863 (Fig. 31).³² But Shepard Alonzo was not as ambitious as his brother. William Sidney, by integrating the flower as a genre element in a larger format, emulated those European artists who had long worked flower symbolism into their figure compositions.

Water was another natural element that William Sidney Mount appropriated to a symbolic end. It forms the background in at least two posthumous mourning portraits of the 1850s. In his rendering of Matilda Evelina Wells (1852), the water is calm, in that of Sarah Cordelia Smith (1857),³³ the water is turbulent. Water is an unusual background for female portraits. Most commonly it was favored for life portraits of men who had trafficked on the sea. However, pressed into service as a visual metaphor to indicate that the passage to death had been either easy or difficult, water could become another death symbol.

Lilly Martin Spencer's Nicholas Marcus Ward, datable between 1858 and 1860, provides another instance of an artist converting natural objects into symbols appropriate to particular situations. Spencer executed two portraits of the Ward children, the four living siblings in one composition (Fig. 32) and the deceased Nicholas, standing alone, in the other (Fig. 33).³⁴ Nicholas looks wistfully out of the picture, demonstratively offering an orange to the viewer.

The artist used two symbols, one commonplace, one arcane, to convey a dual meaning about Nicholas Marcus Ward's state. The broken-stemmed rose in the silver vase to the right of the boy's extended hand signifies his posthumous condition. Therefore, although we know Nicholas to be dead, he appears alive. He holds an orange with the outer skin cut away, a feature more difficult to interpret. As a valedictory symbol, an orange peeled halfway in seven sections seems to be unique to this painting. Nicholas may have been fond of oranges, but the demonstrativeness of his gesture suggests that some symbolic meaning was intended, one that would explain why Nicholas' orange is peeled in precisely seven equal sections.

Seven would have been the number of the Ward family had Nicholas not died in the year a group portrait was commissioned from Spencer. What the artist executed was,

in effect, companion portraits. The two together reconstituted the number of children in the Ward family, the two parents being implied. It is not coincidental that seven pieces of fruit lie on the table in the group portrait. For the same reason, the seven sections of the orange peel could symbolize the aggregate family, the unbroken inner fruit their reunion after death.³⁵ Yet however the viewer is meant to divine this esoteric symbol, he is still presented with a visual paradox. For Nicholas comes back with his message not as a spirit, but as he had been in life.

The subtlety of Mount's and Spencer's symbolic inventions is better appreciated if their efforts are compared to those of the folk artist Susan Waters. She, too, depicts the dead in living form. But in her posthumous mourning portrait of Nicholas Catlin (Fig. 34), the symbols are culled from the common store. The boy takes hold of a rose to pull it from the growing plant, which indicates that he is being cut off from the family's growth. On the far horizon, a boat sails. Thomas Cole had made the boat on water a familiar symbol to Americans in his second landscape cycle, The Voyage of Life (1840), where it represented the passage through life to death.³⁶ The dissemination of the boat and the rose symbols was wide enough by this time for both to be used in another primitive

work entitled Departure of the Spirit (Fig. 35). For the portrait of Nicholas Catlin, Waters adopted both symbols, but lest the viewer be in any doubt about the boy's demise, she inserted two more: Nicholas' tomb and the funereal willow. In her wish to be explicit, Waters produced a composition containing an obvious anomaly--the deceased standing next to his own tomb.

So strong was the desire for the restoration of the dead through art that sometimes families rejected any death symbol. Late in his career, William Sidney Mount was commissioned to paint Susan Marsh after her death. He tentatively sketched her as a figure standing near water where a toy boat floated (Fig. 36). The Marsh family may well have rejected this symbolism because they were reluctant to be reminded that their little girl had departed for the farther shore. In the completed oil portrait, therefore, Susan stands life-size amidst her toys as though temporarily interrupted in the corner of a room where she was playing with her doll (Fig. 37). So pleased were the Marshes with this version that they congratulated Mount on the "perfect" likeness.³⁷

Among those who accepted symbols in death portraiture, Shepard Alonzo Mount sought to give the tradition a homely immediacy. He described his portrait of his niece, Camille, in a letter to his son (Fig. 38). The letter documents how the artist intended his symbols to be read and, in addition,

records the way such a portrait functioned in the mourning ritual. ³⁸ Mount referred to his mourning portrait as an "idol"--an apt designation. With head and shoulders emerging from the clouds, bounded by the heavenly symbol of the morning star and the earthly symbol of her grandfather's pocket watch, Camille becomes once more tangible to her family. They were in possession of this painting only seven days after Camille's death and, according to Mount's letter, would sit in "raptures" before it for an hour at a time. In his choice of descriptive nouns for the painting, Mount alternated between heaven-and earth-bound references. As he calls his little niece to mind again, she seems part earthling and part angel:

Alas! how everything fades from us...She was laid out in a beautiful casket and she looked like an angel---Her eyes were bright and heavenly 'till the last. I painted her with Mr. Searings watch lying open in the foreground, the hand pointing to the hour of her birth while she is seen moving up on a bright cloud---the image of the lost Camille---She was in the habit of holding her grandfather's watch to her ear, and all others who came around her did the same....

In two respects Camille lives on and is with her family still. She stares out of the canvas to make eye contact with them. Mount could have represented her as truly heavenbound, as Rubens did when he painted a dead infant borne up by angels (Fig. 39); but the American chose not to. The fact that he included Camille's favorite plaything--a watch--is even more significant. From the

seventeenth century, particularly in Dutch still-life painting, watches had been used as vanitas symbols.³⁹

And in America, watches set to the hour of death, were sometimes placed in funeral wreaths (Fig. 40).⁴⁰ But in Mount's painting, time has a different connotation. It is as though even the watch, set at the hour of birth, was to be a reminder that Camille had lived.

Vacillating as he does between allusions to heaven and earth, Mount can deftly avoid confronting the finality of his niece's death. He writes that he considered himself fortunate to have sketched Camille in good health a few days before her death. But he neglects to mention that he also sketched her in death, with eyes closed, that he measured her face with calipers and put down color notations in the margin of the sketch (Fig. 41).⁴¹ He preferred to concentrate on a Camille in a cloudbound reincarnation designed to "comfort" the family.

There is yet another way the posthumous mourning portrait impinged on the consciousness of the living: it helped perpetuate the cycle of the generations. In America, a few generations constituted the country's whole history. It is probably for this reason that Alexis de Tocqueville saw no sense of generational continuity in America:

...new families are constantly springing up, others are constantly falling away, and all that remain change their condition; the woof of time is every instant broken and the trace of generations effaced. Those who went before are soon forgotten; of those who will come after, no one has any idea: the interest of man is confined to those in close propinquity to himself.⁴²

But, if the evidence from art is taken into account, it becomes clear that Americans did not wish to break "the woof of time." By commissioning posthumous mourning portraits, they obtained a permanent record of the effaced member of a generation.⁴³ This practice is well illustrated in Frederick R. Spencer's painting of the Clark children, which doubles as a family portrait (Fig. 42).⁴⁴ Anna Mary, dead three years, appears in effigy among her siblings. Her small bust portrait was painted after death from a description, and then included in the large family portrait.⁴⁵

By dint of art, then, Americans strove to recover what had been lost. The degree to which this was imperative can be measured by the lengths to which an artist would go to bring about restoration. William Sidney Mount's posthumous mourning portrait of Jedediah Williamson provides a striking instance of the kind of cosmeticizing sometimes required of the American artist. When young Jedediah was run over by a loaded wagon in 1837, his father called in Mount, a neighbor, to make a quick sketch.⁴⁶ But the surviving drawing of the boy is a profile study which does not record the manner of his death (Fig. 43). And certainly Mr. Williamson did not intend the final version to be anything but a conventional bust-length posthumous portrait, sans horse, sans cart, sans mutilation (Fig. 44). Furthermore, the family was pleased enough with the result

to have the painting duplicated in a daguerreotype two 47
years later, when the photographic process was invented.
Through the magic of art, the dead could be restored to the
survivors and eternally preserved, the flat, painted
equivalents of the embalmer's art.

Just as Americans showed a decided preference for
portraits in which the dead reappear in a familiar form
to or among the living, so they created an actual environ-
ment for the dead where they could be called upon as in
life. For this reason, it became usual in America for
each corpse to be allotted a separate space in the cemetery
--a hitherto uncommon practice--so that the deceased could
be visited "at home." R. Fibich's painting of the modest
rural cemetery of York Springs at York, Pennsylvania,
typifies the American propensity to domesticate the environ-
ment of the dead (Fig. 45). The primitive artist faithfully
records the organization of the cemetery: the land, cleared
of native trees and pasturing animals, was measured off in
plots and ornamented with that traditional cemetery tree,
the weeping willow. The living came to this pleasant place
not to inter the deceased, for there are no burials going
on in the painting. They came in horse-drawn carriages
as if making a social call.
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York Springs cemetery was one of many rural or garden
cemeteries springing up in the American countryside over

the nineteenth century. The first was Mt. Auburn, founded in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1831. Rural or garden cemeteries were not indigenous, but existed in Europe as well and there formed another tributary of Romanticism. In America, however, the type proliferated because there was more land in which to house the dead. And Americans were so proprietary about their dead that they fenced them in. At York Springs this proclivity had advanced to the point where plots, yet to be filled, already were staked out by fences. The custom of enclosure caused European visitors to wonder. Francis and Theresa Pulsky, visiting Mt. Auburn in the 1850s, remonstrated: "The elegant iron rails, which divide the different small lots, are neither ornamental, nor...reverential for the place. Exclusiveness little befits a cemetery; the idea of private property carried over into the realm of the dead, where no one can own more than he covers has something unnaturally strange ⁵⁰ sic."

To a remarkable extent, Americans were bent on the preservation of what had been tangible. This, in turn, produced a surprising development. Certain attitudes toward the dead began to approximate those of the ancient Egyptians. The evidence is to be found in an area where Americans excelled: the creation of new products. After the invention of chemical embalming fluids and air-tight

coffins in 1847, the living could expect to preserve their dead in the body for a considerable period of time.⁵¹ And, preserved in these forms, their presence could almost be said to inhabit the family plots where they were interred. In this context it is hardly accidental that nineteenth-century Americans favored Egyptian burial architecture and motifs in their cemeteries.⁵²

The cultural imperatives underlying the memorialization of the dead in imagery and custom evolved out of the American experience and may be related to that phenomenon labeled "American materialism." America was, after all, a civilization in which the only given was the land, where culture was imported and no indigenous cultural developments were as yet sanctified by time. Americans put a high value on the material objects they produced and upon the remains of a few generations. The reality of death had to be repressed because it robbed them of too much. That the paintings discussed here as iconographically significant are of children is a related phenomenon. In a land still underpopulated, every person's presence counted. Children were particularly appreciated, for they represented the promise of the next generation. Once a child survived infancy and early childhood illness, his loss became increasingly difficult to accept.⁵³ Death, therefore, so far as it stood in the way of material progress and

natural succession, no doubt seemed to Americans especially unwelcome.

The systematic denial of any of death's horror is all the more ironic because, as Leslie Fiedler has convincingly demonstrated, the foundation for the nineteenth-century American novel was the Gothick, a mode that explored death in many gruesome aspects.⁵⁴ Charles Brockden Brown, who launched the American novel, did so within a Gothick structure which accommodated the exaggerated and the grotesque. Edgar Allan Poe, Brown's spiritual heir, gained international recognition with his tales spun from a core of Gothick horror. Indeed, death came to saturate the consciousness of the American author. Thus Poe's contemporary, Nathaniel Hawthorne, made death the turning point in the plot of an American romance. In The House of Seven Gables (1851), the daguerreotypist gains time with Phoebe Pyncheon by showing her the photograph of her cousin, Judge Pyncheon, taken as he lay dead in the next room. During the interval it takes to contemplate the daguerreotype and explain the situation to Phoebe, Love, Death's opposite, wins out. Phoebe agrees to marry Holgrave, the daguerreotypist.

But in American art, the depiction of death with the dimensions of Gothick horror remained an aberration. At first glance, Jarvis Hanks' so-called Death Scene (Fig. 46)

seems a subject ripe for a morbid and macabre treatment. But, in keeping with the imperatives imposed by American materialism, Hanks provides an extreme example of the impulse to emphasize preservation and continuity even as he depicts collective death in the Augustus Israel Stone family. This mysterious painting begs for a narrative interpretation. Yet, it is nothing more or less than a bizarre variant of the posthumous mourning portrait. (The misleading title, Death Scene, was appended later.) The persons have been identified: the mother, Elizabeth Spencer Stone, died in 1840; the infant twins, Augustus and Elizabeth, died in the same year, one at five months, the other at six months. Also included in the painting are a surviving son, born in 1838, Elizabeth Stone's mother and husband.⁵⁵ The work may be dated by the age of the surviving son (probably two or three years of age here) to about 1841 or 1842. It remained in the Stone family, longtime residents of the Ohio-West Virginia region,⁵⁶ for over a hundred years.

Hanks' painting is manifestly not a rendering of an actual event, but a reconstruction after the fact of three separate deaths. The mother, propped up with head thrown back and cushioned, has her eyes open and legs spread wide apart. She assumes a posture like that of an obstetrical delivery on the kind of makeshift birthing stool⁵⁷ common in the region. The twins, staring up from their

mother's lap, have been restored to the place nearest the womb. Obviously, the three did not die in their respective positions. Rather, they have been reassembled.

It is reasonable to assume that Jarvis Hanks meant to suggest the birthgiving potential of the mother, cut off in her prime. Although Hanks, an itinerant sign and portrait painter, would probably not have known the iconographic precedents, he reinvents a way of representing what Leo Steinberg has called "manifest filiation." This visual formula for filiation most nearly approximates what the English word "issue" connotes. As Steinberg showed, it evolved out of two Trecento schemas concerned with the procession of generations: the Trinity of the Gnadenstuhl type indicating the Son's relationship to the Father, and the family group of the Virgin and Child with St. Anne. It was taken over by Michelangelo for representations of the Virgin and Child where, as Steinberg explains:

The thighs, knees, and feet of the mother are, or become, outward tokens of the maternal womb; the child's place with respect to these members indicates filiation.⁵⁸

What is unexpected is that such an iconographic invention should be reformulated for use in America within a secular context. But it was, and not only by Hanks. In a watercolor attributed to John Vanderlyn, a mother

is portrayed with her young son lodged deep within her thighs--hardly the usual arrangement for a family group in painting of the period (Fig. 47). Clearly, if the need to assert the idea of progeny is strong enough, the same formulation could recur with indigenous variations.

In the Augustus Israel Stone family, the sense of generational continuity was strong. The family descended from a certain Dea. [Deacon] Gregory Stone, who had come to Cambridge, Massachusetts, from England in 1635. They had settled in the Ohio-West Virginia region in the late eighteenth century when it was still wilderness. The prolific Stone clan took upon themselves the Biblical injunction to be fruitful and multiply, retaining in every generation the name "Dea."⁵⁹ Jarvis Hanks, who painted seven Stone family portraits, ranged the survivors of Augustus Israel Stone's family as a constellation of figures around the dead mother and her babes. An uninformed viewer might think he was contemplating the evil deed of a backwoods Medea. But such is not the case. Hanks paints a family portrait as a lament for the untimely deaths of three members. And so extreme is the compulsion to reconstitute the family--to reject the separation forced by death--that Hanks, unlike the more sophisticated Lilly Martin Spencer, joined the dead and the living.

Production of posthumous mourning portraits seems to have flourished between 1830 and 1860. But it is in a late example, much smaller than those of the preceding generations, that the attempted communion between the living and the dead becomes most apparent. A painting executed for the Bulkeley-Pomeroy families in the late 1860s shows five grim-faced adults gathered for the unveiling of a portrait (Fig. 48). The subjects of the portrait are probably two Bulkeley sisters: Julia, who died young, and Mary Josephine, who married the Honorable Benjamin Pomeroy. The living sister places a floral crown on her dead sibling, who stares out at the viewers. Those assembled now include a middle-aged Mary Josephine, mother and father Bulkeley, Benjamin Pomeroy and his mother.⁶⁰ In the Pomeroy home, the life-size posthumous mourning portrait was installed behind a heavy curtain. The families may have gathered on the day of Julia's death to view her effigy. Through the commission of the second painting, the family also commemorated their ritual gathering.

A final proof of the dissemination of posthumous mourning portraits is provided by the portraitist and animal satirist James Beard. One winter day in 1833, when the fuel had run out, the impoverished young Beard

responded to a knock at the door. A man, all in black, requested him to take a likeness from his brother's corpse. Prompted by necessity, Beard repaired to the man's family vault, and executed the portrait with a "trembling hand."⁶¹ Many years later, now an established artist, Beard ridiculed the excess of mourning that created the demand for posthumous mourning portraits. In his parodic work, The Mourners (Fig. 49), three dogs gaze at their master's portrait, which is draped in a mourning veil. Dolefully, the master stares back at his Fidos. A pup huddles close to his master's abandoned schoolbooks,⁶² slate and top.

A parody, to be enjoyed, requires that its subject be generally understood. Beard's wake, transposed into the canine world, would have had special pertinence to his contemporaries. And it reached a wide audience, for an engraving after the painting appeared in the New York Art Journal of 1875. Now understood as referring to a hitherto forgotten genre, Beard's work is meaningful again. The Mourners supplies final, if ironic, proof of the popularity of posthumous mourning portraits.

Posthumous mourning portraits in the era of Jacksonian Democracy were privately commissioned. At the present time, no comparisons can be made with European art because,

if European portraits of this type exist, they have not been identified. However, the underlying tendency to negate death, which is found in American posthumous mourning portraits, is also found in publically exhibited works. And here, cross-cultural comparisons should be made, for then the homogeneity of American iconographic preoccupations will stand in even sharper relief.

The American artist did not concern himself with those macabre themes which agitated the European Romantic imagination: death and sex, death and insanity, or death and criminality. There were to be no American equivalents for Géricault's studies of decapitated heads, rotting limbs or the faces of demented criminals; for Delacroix's Death of Sardanapalus and Gros' Pesthouse at Jaffa. Nor were the suicides of Chatterton, Atala and Phelia as attractive to Americans as to their European confrères.

Absent, too, is any sympathy for the long-time European absorption with decay, with decomposition and the worm's work that produces the clean-boned skeleton. And this despite the fact that Americans witnessed the horror of plagues--not only in the outbreaks of yellow fever that inspired Charles Brockden Brown's first Gothick novels, but also in the cholera epidemics of 1832, 1849, and 1866. ⁶³ In European art, however, just as the great plague of 1348 had repercussions for art, so the cholera epidemic of the

1830s did not go unrecorded. But Alfred Rethel's very popular woodcuts, Death as an Enemy (The first outbreak of Cholera at a Masked Ball in Paris, 1831) and its pendant, Death of a Friend (1851), had no American analogues. And the agile skeleton who danced a merry round in Thomas Rowlandson's The English Dance of Death (1814-16) and Rethel's A Dance of Death from 1848, did not inspire⁶⁴ comparable variations in America.

A major component of European Romanticism--fascination with the horror of death--is deliberately ignored in American public art, no less than in private commissions. American artists were never drawn to the macabre. They left it to literature to explore this aspect of death. Not unexpectedly, then, it was with a sensibility informed by literary standards that an anonymous critic responded to George Cooke's copy of Géricault's Raft of the Medusa when it was exhibited in New York in 1831 (Fig. 50). Writing for the New York Mirror, the critic bypassed Géricault's artistic achievements. He dwelled instead on the recent disaster of the sinking of the Medusa, informing the reader that originally one hundred and forty-seven persons had been on the raft (as against Géricault's handful). Nor did he review the scandalous government negligence that was responsible for the ship's sinking. Rather, he elaborated on the macabre aspects, the "famine,"

"bloodshed," "madness," and "despair" he knew to have surrounded the event. "The large painting," he informed the reader with lugubrious glee, "forcibly illustrates one of those exquisitely awful scenes which are continually occurring, but the full horror of which is seldom
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conceived."

This American critical response to a prime specimen of European Romanticism leads us to ask what kind of death imagery was produced by native artists for public exhibition, and by what critical standards it was judged. In the period under discussion, a miscellany of paintings was executed, ranging from Henry Peters Gray's King Death (1852) to Abraham Woodside's The Drowned Child (1844). In proportion to all the canvases produced for exhibition, relatively few treated the subject of death, and most of them are now lost. However, two surviving works are of particular interest: Frederick S. Agate's Mother lamenting over her child, and George Cochran Lambdin's The Dead Wife. Both works, which span the period from Jackson's Presidency to the time of the Civil War, share a single approach: just as posthumous mourning portraits concealed death in lifelike depictions of the deceased, in these publically exhibited works Agate and Lambdin resorted to another kind of masking--death was disguised as sleep.

Death in the guise of sleep is hardly an American invention. To the ancient Greeks, death and sleep were

personified as the twin brothers Thanatos and Hypnos who carried Sarpedon to his homeland. Neoclassical artists revived the Greek mythic tradition as in, for example, Asmus Jacob Carsten's Night with her Children Sleep and Death. (1795, Weimar, Schlossmuseum). However, the two nineteenth-century American works under discussion substitute sleep for death toward a new end. Here, death disguised as sleep becomes the placebo offered to the bereaved (and the viewer) in order to soften the announcement of death and to postpone its full realization.

In 1828, the first year of Jackson's administration, Frederick Agate exhibited Mother lamenting over her child at the National Academy of Design (Fig. 51). So successful was Agate with his composition that he resubmitted it in 1830 under the title The Dead Child. There is some confusion, arising from contemporary accounts, as to whether Agate painted two similar compositions⁶⁶ or resubmitted the same composition under a new title. But whichever the case, what is important for the present study is the evolution of Agate's conception, the exhibition history of the painting or paintings from 1828 to 1839, and the accompanying poems. All demonstrate the way in which an artist of the period

might adjust the content of an iconographic theme to the changing times.

Rembrandt Peale could have suggested the subject of a mother lamenting her dead child to Agate. They must have known each other, for in 1826 both artists were founding members of the National Academy. Eight years before, Rembrandt and his father had been in correspondence about the possibility of exhibiting Mrs. Peale lamenting the death of her child (Fig. 4) at the Pennsylvania Academy.⁶⁸ Although they decided not to exhibit this painting beyond the family precincts, the idea of putting such a subject into an annual exhibition had been entertained in the Peale family, and Rembrandt may have passed it along to young Agate. Childless, and just entering manhood, Agate was not personally involved with the subject as the Peales had been. Nevertheless, by the end of the year he proceeded with his canvas as though he had been handed down a Peale family formula for an affective exhibition piece. This formula called for one part composition derived from a revered religious prototype with the word "lamenting" in the title; one part grieving mother wearing Le Brun's expression for "Sadness"; and one part heart-

rending poem--all of which, combined together, would body forth a common experience of the period. Both Charles Willson Peale and Agate addressed the same theme in their respective works: the bereavement felt in a family over the loss of a young child. The painting of the older man, therefore, provides a gauge for measuring the differences in Agate's approach.

Like Charles Willson Peale, Agate modified Le Brun's expression of "Sadness" for the face of the mother. His compositional format seems to have been freely adapted from Annibale Carracci's three-figure devotional image, the Madonna and Child with St. John the Baptist, described by a seventeenth-century chronicler as a "Madonna picciola, ch'accenna col deto alla bocca a S. Giovanni, che non tocchi il Signore che dorme," and engraved by Francesco Bartolozzi in 1768 (Fig. 52).⁶⁹ Carracci's image would have been even more appropriate from an iconographic point of view because it deals with the theme of death-sleep. The Virgin is cautioning St. John not to touch the sleeping Christ Child, lest he wake him to the Passion before his time. In the secularized American version, the artist introduces an older sibling who touches the flesh of the infant to test whether he is sleeping or dead.

The idea of an infant asleep anticipating a death-sleep, as incorporated in the Christological myth, was

not so far removed from the American ken as one might suppose. The year Agate first exhibited his work, Francesco Albani's Sleep of the Infant Jesus was reproduced in The Talisman (a gift book) (Fig. 53). But Agate reversed the Christian order, presenting death as sleep rather than sleep as a metaphor for death.

Whereas the compositional type for Agate's work is to be found in Baroque painting, the scenario is provided by a contemporary poem, Henry Pickering's "I Thought It Slept."⁷⁰ Agate had Pickering's poem reprinted in full for his entry in the 1828 exhibition catalogue of the National Academy. Crucial both to Agate's rendering of the subject and to the death-sleep equation are these lines from Pickering:

I saw the infant cherub--soft it lay
 As it was wont within the cradle, now
 Profusely decked with fragrant flowers and herbs.
 Marvelling at such strange fantasy, I gaz'd
 Upon the babe the more. I thought it slept!
 But yet its bosom did not move....
 'My dearest boy! thy brother does not sleep:
 'Alas! he's dead: he never will awake!'. . . .
 Its little cords were broke--forever broke!
 And gushing tears the fatal wound disclos'd.

Agate, following Pickering's rendition, depicted a tranquil flower-strewn corpse. Presumably encouraged by the work's positive reception, he recycled his conception, exhibiting it under the new title of The Dead Child at the Pennsylvania Academy in 1831. This time Agate appended to his National Academy catalogue entry a

four-line excerpt from the Pickering poem which more succinctly described the ongoing drama:

All pale beside
My weeping mother sat, and gazed and look'd
Unutterable things. Will he not wake?
I eager ask'd: She answer'd but with tears.

It was Agate's intention to work toward the kind of generalized image that would lend itself to more than one setting. In 1839, the now retitled Dead Infant was exhibited at the newly founded Apollo Association (precursor to the American Art Union). Concurrently, it was engraved for inclusion in The Christian Keepsake and Missionary Annual. The engraving appeared with a poem, "The Dead Boy," written by William Tappan. Agate's conception, based on a religious prototype conceived eleven years earlier and unchanged in essentials, now served to illustrate Tappan's conceit about death as sleep:

William! wake!--it is not sleep,
Surely slumber's not so deep.
Pretty baby! look at sis---
Look at me, and wake! or I
Shall my little plaything miss,
Wake! or darling sis will cry.
I cannot tell what makes him so;--
You told me, mother, he must go.
Yet he's here, and yet he's not,
Somehow. Has he us forgot?⁷¹

A critical evaluation of Agate, written by Francis Edmonds on the occasion of the artist's untimely death in 1844, contains this account of the picture:

The subject presents the corpse of a beautiful child snatched away in the moment of health, with its mother hanging over it with the most intense expression of grief, while by her side stands a little daughter [sic] too young to understand the loss she has sustained, but old enough to be touched with her mother's suffering; presenting at a glance one of those scenes of affliction which reaches and softens the heart of all who behold it.⁷²

Edmonds perceived that Agate struck the common chord when he deliberately externalized an experience that was, in an era of high infant and child mortality, an everyday occurrence. The artist attempted to universalize his subject by depicting a dead child who had no name and whose gender was ambiguous. Furthermore, the specificity Agate avoided in art reflected a common attitude to the infant as opposed to the child. Not infrequently in the pre-Civil War era, children were given no first or middle name until they were, perhaps, as old as five. If the child failed to live past the first year, the parents might register him in the family Bible as "not named," "unnamed," or simply "anonymous."⁷³

Edmonds also praised Agate for representing his somber subject in a form pleasing to his audience: "It was not until this picture was exhibited that he displayed that fine imagination which placed him so much above the mere imitators of nature."⁷⁴ Which is to say: Agate knew when to cloak death as sleep.

However anomalous it may seem now, exhibition pictures such as Agate's were not only intended to reach a mass audience, but were offered for sale. The subjects were considered ingratiating. Artists thought in terms of creating a sort of rhetorical genre in which sleep provided a sweet overlay for death. To educate the viewer in this convention, a poem interlaced with the requisite amount of romantic sentiment was appended. Lilly Martin Spencer's carefully worked drawing of her daughter Angelica, the first child she lost, may have been intended as a study for such an exhibition canvas (Fig. 54).⁷⁵

A preliminary sketch of the same subject appears in one of her sketchbooks. In the more finished version, the infant lies with her limbs still flexed and her gown in disarray. Were it not for her fixed stare, Angelica could be mistaken for a living infant. In keeping with the conventions of the death-sleep scheme, a poem penned in the corner of the sketch rhymes out the child's brief life history and too early death:

She took the cup of life to sip
 But bitter twas to drain
 She meekly put it from her lip
 and went to sleep again

The work was never executed. But the degree to which the drawing was finished, the fact that a preliminary sketch also exists, that the composition is enclosed within a lightly sketched oval (Agate had favored an oval format

for his composition), and that there was an attendant poem, all this evidence indicates that the artist had ambitious plans for the picture.⁷⁶

The preference for death in the guise of sleep may explain why the subject of another exhibition canvas, William Sidney Mount's Girl Asleep (Fig. 55), looks suspiciously moribund. If we allow the title to be our guide, we see a young girl who has drifted into sleep, apparently fatigued by the exertion required to peruse the religious book she still holds in her hand.⁷⁷ However, the handling of the subject resembles daguerreotypes of the dead, fully dressed but recumbent, with eyes closed (Fig. 56). Because the subjects, usually children, are in their Sunday best, sometimes hold a book (often religious) and have healthy faces, they appear to be sleeping. So closely, in fact, does Mount's painting follow the daguerreotype models that viewers of the period⁷⁸ surely drew the analogy.

Finally, the sleep-for-death substitution took a conspicuous public form in George Cochran Lambdin's The Dead Wife, a work celebrated in its own time, although forgotten in ours (Fig. 57). This painting is important for three reasons: for the way the artist conceived the subject, for the way the press initially responded, and for its continuing exhibition history. The most interesting phase of its career falls after the Civil War. But The

Dead Wife was painted in 1859 and partakes of the sentiment and concerns implanted in the era of Jacksonian Democracy.

Lambdin's is a two-figure composition in which all the drama is played out between one who is living and one who is dead. The wife lies with both hands placed just below the breast, her right hand atop her left. She could be sleeping. But the histrionic gestures of the husband, collapsed in grief at her side, provide the clue the viewer needs to understand that his wife has passed beyond the threshold of sleep into death. And, of course, the title bluntly reinforces the point.

When The Dead Wife was exhibited at the National Academy of Design in 1859 an anonymous critic for The Crayon, the most prestigious art publication of the day, singled it out for guarded praise. His ultimate concern was to establish how to depict a "beautiful death," which according to his criterion was one subordinated to "some moral or spiritual end." To measure how closely Lambdin came to the mark he also examined a work that missed it completely, Edwin May's The Dying Brigand (Fig. 58). May's painting was entirely unacceptable because the brigand and his helpmate were "scarcely above animals in expression!" Lambdin's was of a "more refined treatment." But not refined enough for the critic: "There is but little in the treatment of the subject to make us feel

that death has been sanctified to us, except so far as our thoughts may turn in that direction, from the sight of natural dissolution, and the sundering of natural ties."⁷⁹

Lambdin attended to the critic's objections, although he did not repaint the canvas. After all, he may have reasoned, he already had arrived at a pose that did not allow any of death's ugliness to obtrude. "Sanctifying" the subject, therefore, would have to be done in another way. The modification of one element could bring about, if not a transformation, then at least a shift of mood. Sometime between the initial showing of The Dead Wife in 1859 and its selection for exhibition in the Paris Exposition of 1867, Lambdin rechristened his work The Last Sleep.

Today the Paris Universal Exposition is remembered above all in the history of American art as the forum where Winslow Homer received his first international recognition --for Prisoners from the Front. But in 1867, Lambdin's work also received a positive critical reception. The French critic, Paul Mantz, wrote at length about The Last Sleep. Taking his cue from the new title, he speculated about whether the bereaved was a husband or a lover, then concluded:

La prostration de la douleur, l'affraissement
 d'une âme en qui succombent à la fois tous
 les espoirs et toutes les forces sont rendus
 avec une éloquence naïve et saisissante.
 M. Lambdin est-il un bon peintre? Je ne sais;
 mais c'est un sensitif d'un ordre exquis.⁸⁰

Ultimately, the interchangeability of sleep for death is the most interesting aspect of Lambdin's The Dead Wife/ The Last Sleep. By substituting one for the other, the artist met the contemporary critical requirement for a beautiful expiration.⁸¹

American artists, in presenting death to the public under the cover of sleep, introduced an integer of time as a new dimension in the experience of death. The Dead Wife, retitled The Last Sleep, suggests that the lover may tarry awhile with his beloved. "You told me, mother, he must go./Yet he's here, and yet he's not,/Somehow," muses the child in William Tappan's poem. The "sleeping" infant in Agate's painting looks just as he always did in his cradle, the reader of Pickering's poem is told--except that now he is bedecked with flowers.

What Americans did not wish to confront in their death imagery for public exhibition was, in the words of The Crayon critic, any sign of "natural dissolution." Obliginglly, American artists made a determined detour around this central aspect of death. How insular and retardataire were their results is made evident by contrasting the

efforts of these American artists with a work by the French artist who pioneered the treatment of death as genre. The artist is Gustave Courbet, who infuriated critics and public alike by taking for the subject of a large exhibition canvas, A Burial at Ornans (1849), an aspect of death as it is actually experienced in life. Far more daring, however, was his Toilet of a Dead Woman (Fig. 59). Recently, Hélène Toussaint has demonstrated that this painting, which has been mistitled Toilet of a Bride since 1919, is a genre scene of women ⁸² preparing a corpse for the wake. Two wash the corpse, which before overpainting was nude; two stretch out the winding sheet; another reads a prayer for the dead and two more set a long table in preparation for the funeral feast. This starkly realistic treatment of death's everyday aspect was intended for public exhibition. The critic Castagnary referred to it as The Wake when he listed works Courbet might have submitted to the Salon of 1866, had he not already exceeded his permitted quota under the new limiting regulations.

One could argue that Courbet is atypical, that even the French could not produce another such as he for taking on death's full range in everyday life. But it is nevertheless true that American painting, as opposed to ⁸³ American literature, produced no such exception. Death,

in American genre painting for public exhibition, advanced only a little beyond the ancient Greek mythic conception.

If Courbet had exhibited Toilet of a Dead Woman at the Salon of 1866 he would, of course, have been again in advance of most French critics and the public. But how ironic to consider that, but for the new Salon regulations, Courbet's nude corpse being prepared for the wake and Lambdin's decorously composed dead wife, would have been visible within a year of each other in the French capital. Then the French painter's direct confrontation with death would have made the American euphemism of death as sleep all the more apparent.

There was one artist, Thomas Cole, who systematically pondered questions of death on a level we have not yet encountered. He was concerned not with death as a natural phenomenon, but with its moral dimensions. On the one hand, he explored the ways to achieve a good Christian death; on the other, the moral consequences of violent death. Early in his career, these preoccupations led him to the pictorial subject of murder in the first human family.

At twenty-six, Cole wrote a notation in a sketchbook:
⁸⁴
 "Adam and Eve discovering the body of Abel."
⁸⁵ He never did execute the work, but while in Florence during the

winter of 1831-32, he completed a related study, The Dead Abel (Fig. 60). This work--an oil sketch on paper mounted on a wood panel--was a study only. But Cole thought well enough of it to exhibit The Dead Abel at the National Academy of Design in 1834 and to offer it for sale. Between the time he made the sketchbook notation and the time he began the oil study, Cole altered the narrative moment. Instead of concentrating on the time when the despairing parents find the body of Abel, he flashed back to the immediate moment after the murder itself. Cole calls the viewer to witness by splaying the body of Abel across the entire foreground. The body must be confronted before the eye moves in to find the diminutive figure of Cain fleeing in the middle distance. The viewer is, therefore, forced to consider the fact of a death that of necessity must have the profoundest consequences in the Judeo-Christian myth.

Perhaps Cole first was prompted to meditate on the death of Abel when he was a young student copying from the plaster casts and paintings at the Pennsylvania Academy. There he would have had an opportunity to study firsthand one of the Academy's prized paintings: The Death of Abel⁸⁶ (then attributed to Johann Karl Loth; Fig. 61). This old master painting was large and, for a figure study, dramatically conceived by American standards. To an aspiring artist, who early recognized his deficiency as

a figure painter, the composition would have provided an important model. Indeed, Cole appears to have taken certain solutions from it. He too casts the figure of Abel across the pictorial threshold and conceives the space primarily in terms of foreground and middleground.

Cole could have drawn inspiration in another form, Salomon Gessner's poem "The Death of Abel in Five Books." Translated from the original German, Gessner's poem was popular enough in England and America to go through at least ten editions between 1770 and 1818. Gessner, who reconstructed a family life for Adam and Eve full of anecdotal detail, made the murder of Abel the central event in the complicated plot of the poem.⁸⁷

A work detailing the family life of Adam and Eve could hardly fail to find a receptive audience in America, the new Eden. Proof of Gessner's influence on the arts in America can be found in the poem's dissemination through different mediums. The sculptor Horatio Greenough, working in Florence with Cole, was completing his own version of Abel. Contemporaneously, an American primitive, Mrs. H. Weed, applied her needle and brush to a design that closely followed Gessner's narrative (Fig. 62).⁸⁸ For her composition, Mrs. Weed chose the moment Cole had rejected: Adam and Eve discovering the body of Abel. Following Gessner, she included the wives of Cain and Abel and Cain's two children.

One element in Cole's composition, the inclusion of Cain, calls for further discussion. As the painting in the Pennsylvania Academy had demonstrated, the scene of the first murder required only two pictorial elements: the body of Abel and the burnt offering. Cole wrote to William Dunlap that his Dead Abel was a preliminary study.⁸⁹ He may have been influenced to add Cain in the background by a specific literary genre: from the 1770s in Germany, and somewhat later in England, there grew up a continuing interest in outcasts and wanderers, beginning with Cain,⁹⁰ who wandered, burdened by blood-guilt.

Cole knew that his strength lay in landscape painting. But when he turned to the representation of nature, his artistic imagination continued to dwell on the Edenic experience. In light of these later paintings, we understand that Cole regarded the murder of Abel as an omen for the future of America, the new Eden. His landscape cycles show how he worked out his concerns in an iconography appropriate to the genre.

Cole's equation of America with Eden is documented in his Essay on American Scenery (1836): "We are still in Eden; the wall that shuts us out of the garden is our own⁹¹ ignorance and folly." And it may have been that a fundamental pessimism, derived from considering the consequences of man's first evil deed, buttressed Cole as he took a stand against the native optimism of his era.

For his contemporaries were in accord with Bishop George Berkeley who, early in the eighteenth century, had written that America was the seat of innocence where "nature guides" and Europe's decay is not bred. To Berkeley's mind, there could be no more fitting candidate to represent the culmination of civilization's progress than America. These ideas, contained in Berkeley's widely admired poem "Verses on the Prospect of Planting Arts and Learning in America," set the tone for the era of Jacksonian Democracy. The last stanza, especially, had resonance for Cole and his contemporaries:

Westward the course of empire takes its way;
The four first Acts already past,
The fifth shall close the Drama with the day;
Time's noblest offspring is the last.

Cole's landscape cycle, The Course of Empire, completed in 1836, contains three references to the last stanza of Berkeley's poem. The title may be understood to allude to the opening line. The decision to make a five-canvas series and to plot the sun's course westward in stages through four of the canvases may also be choices made in response to this stanza. But most important, it was Cole's achievement to envision, in a canvas corresponding in number to Berkeley's fifth Act, how the drama might close for "Time's noblest offspring."

The Course of Empire tells of the life cycle of a great power. Conceiving these canvases after a trip to

Rome, Cole kept in mind the paradigmatic instance of an empire going through successive phases. His third and fourth scenes--an empire in ascendance and then in decline and fall--correspond to Rome's history. Cole's firsthand observations were reinforced by reading Comte de Volney's Les Ruines; ou, Meditation sur les revolutions des empires (1791). But he was original in conceiving for his final scene a state of total desolation where no man dwells. As he explained in a letter to his patron, Luman Reed: "This picture must be as the funeral knell of departed greatness....⁹² Thus Cole anticipated by over a century what has become a commonplace since the invention of the atom bomb--the total elimination of human life.

The landscape setting for each of the five scenes is the same, but altered according to the extent of man's incursion upon the land. In this way, Cole suggests a tension between nature and culture that must be resolved anew in each phase of a civilization until nature triumphs at last, growing over the ruins that man has left in his destructive course. Equally ominous was Cole's decision to plot the rise and fall of a great empire in correspondence with the sun's path. Cole planned the canvases so that the dawn of civilization was illumined by the morning sun in the first scene, the consummation of empire by the sun at midday in the third canvas. Originally, desolation was to coincide with sunset, but Cole changed

his mind, substituting for the sun's tired beams a vista shot thorough with romantic moonlight. (Fig. 63).

And this conception is ominous because the course of empire is ineluctably equated with the westering sun, an idea reinforced by Cole's title for the series. Desolation, which is pictured beyond day's end, must of necessity be associated with the west. In a virgin land where the territory for expansion was all to the west, Cole's prophecy had an especial pertinence and could have served as a somber warning.

However, Cole's was too radical a vision for the time. If his canvases were intended as a jeremiad, they were not understood that way. The critics were able to perceive an allusion to Europe's past, but not a prophecy for America's future. And this despite the fact that Cole's series referred back to Berkeley's well-known poem. Thus the reviewer for the New-York Mirror wrote:

He has accomplished his object: which was to show what had been the history of empires and of man. Will it always be so? Philosophy and religion forbid! Although such as the painter has delineated it, the fate of individuals has been, still the progress of the species is continued, and will be continued, in the road to greater and greater perfection.⁹⁴

Refusing to recognize any possible analogy with Berkeley's poem, one critic even lauded Cole's series for making more money than West's Death on a Pale Horse,

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which was on exhibition in New York at the same time. Americans would not permit a vision of total desolation to obtrude on their collective consciousness. ⁹⁶ Nor did Cole dare so broad a hint again. For his next large cycle, The Voyage of Life, completed in 1840, the artist programmed an unequivocally redemptive ending. No longer concerned with making a metaphorical statement about the death of empires, Cole narrowed the focus of the drama to the life cycle of everyman--again interpolated into a landscape setting.

In The Voyage of Life, there was only one actor, man, accompanied by a guardian angel through four stages of life represented in canvases depicting childhood, youth, manhood and old age. The effects of nature are orchestrated to dramatize life's passage. Cole alternates seasons to correspond to life's stages and selects a corresponding time of day. Morning is matched to childhood and spring; noonday to youth and summer; an afternoon storm to manhood, and the oncoming of night to old age. No longer is the tension between nature and culture the issue, for the setting remains primal, almost Edenic. As the focus of the drama narrowed in setting and number of actors, so the content of the drama became universalized. Nature provides the requisite conduit to God. For all four canvases Cole used a boat on water to symbolize the passage through life; and the progress of a Christian soul skirting

life's vicissitudes to arrive at a final beatific vision before death was the painter's ultimate concern.

Cole's conception was tripartite. He partook of a pan-Romantic sensibility and drew upon Christian topoi, but in the end produced an iconographic scheme adjusted to the liking of an American audience of the period. Imagining a progression through life as the course of an individual on a boat was hardly unique to Cole.⁹⁷ Other painters of the Romantic era placed men on storm-tossed boats as a way of emphasizing man's essential isolation and voyage to death (Fig. 64). Nor was Cole original in assigning an angelic guide to a mortal. Angels served this custodial function from the Baroque period on, particularly in scenes with Tobias. Accompanied by his guardian angel, Cole's voyager was vouchsafed a final vision and in this conceit Cole calls to mind an analogous--and famous--precedent. For the voyager's vision parallels Dante's revelation in the company of Beatrice, but in a truncated form (Divine Comedy, Paradise, XXIX - XXX). Cole wrote simply:

The angelic Being, of whose presence until now the voyager has been unconscious, is revealed to him, and with a countenance beaming with joy, shows to his wondering gaze scenes such as MORTAL MAN HAS NEVER YET SEEN.⁹⁸

And there is an important change of venue. Cole's voyager received his vision on this side of the grave (Fig. 65). He had yet to explore the nether shore.

For The Voyage of Life Cole held to the common tendency to deny death's full play by locating actual death beyond

the range of his final canvas. His restraint is all the more striking since death, after all, provides the terminus to life's voyage. Yet Cole leaves the sobering reality of life's conclusion to the viewer's imagination. Not unexpectedly, Cole's conception was just what Americans in the era of Romantic Democracy were prepared to receive. They applauded a series in which a voyager, like a navigating everyman, goes through four stages in life, all set on water, only to be vouchsafed at the end a beatific vision as preparation for death. When engraved, The Voyage of Life ⁹⁹ became the most popular set of religious prints in America.

In his last series, The Cross and the World (1848), Cole was again concerned with the death of everyman, again in a landscape--but a landscape filled with the temptations of empire. ¹⁰⁰ Here he worked out the fate of a hero, the Pilgrim of the Cross, and his alter ego, the Pilgrim of the World. He retained the metaphor of life's journey, but a journey on land where the lures of civilized life were snares to the pilgrims and where nature offered solace.

Cole's two pilgrims, in his five-canvas drama, first travel by separate roads to an empire in its glory, filled with temptations as well as death and destruction. Cole returned to his earlier theme of the dangers inherent in empire when he declared that one empire lives through the destruction of another: "Between the beholder and this grand spectacle of empire are armies in conflict, and a city in flames, indicating that the path to glory lies

through ruin and the battle-field." To his pilgrims, Cole allowed no compromise. In the two canvases that concluded the series, the Pilgrim of the Cross, who could resist what was evil in the world and return to nature, all the while keeping the Cross in view, attained salvation and a vision of celestial bliss. The Pilgrim of the World, unable to resist temptation, lost sight of the Cross and dropped his staff in horror as demon forms gathered round.

Cole, the landscape painter, willed upon his culture the most moral solution he could conceive. At the point of death, the pilgrim who led the virtuous life is rewarded. That pilgrim, called to witness the death and destruction which comes with conquest and empire building, was ever able to keep on the path that leads away from glory and to a death in nature where man communes best with God. Further, in The Cross and the World, Cole achieved a self-imposed goal, which he explained to the journalist George Washington Greene. During Cole's second sojourn in Rome, the two men traversed the city, coming to Monte Cavo at twilight. The setting prompted Cole to think of his conception for The Course of Empire and the two subsequent series. He told Greene:

...how he had hoped to make landscape speak to the heart by the pencil, as it was speaking to us, there, of the great questions of life. He talked, too, of the works he had planned, in which nature was to tell a story of vaster import than the rise and fall of human power-- the triumph of religion.¹⁰¹

It was Cole's achievement to have made landscape the stage for modern morality plays. At his most profound, Cole thought in terms no more complex than those of parable. All developments, to him, could be interpreted as either good or evil. Nevertheless, by symbolizing forces at work in the land as good or evil, he addressed his generation on moral issues in a way no other American artist did.

Thomas Cole died in 1848. Within a year Jonathan Sturges commissioned from Asher B. Durand a commemorative picture, entitled Kindred Spirits (Fig. 66). This painting was intended to celebrate a fertile friendship between an artist and a poet. But in this straightforward fact lodges a host of complications. The poet was William Cullen Bryant, precocious author of America's famous poem on death, "Thanatopsis" (1811-21). In Durand's painting, America's living Muse on death stands in conversation with the deceased landscape painter. Who instructs whom and about
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what?

Lines from "Thanatopsis" may provide one clue. The poem was one of Cole's favorites, one he read over often. And Durand was so impressed with it that, in the year following the completion of Kindred Spirits, he painted another composition which he entitled Thanatopsis (1850, The Metropolitan Museum of Art).
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Bryant's poem was fashioned to his time, for he touches on a common theme of death as the leveler when he observes that all mankind--the wise, the good, the fair, the powerful, the infant--eventually lies

in one mighty sepulchre. His point of departure is the conception of death in nature as the balm of Gilead. To die in nature's sepulchre is to lie down to "pleasant dreams," he writes. "Thanatopsis" is pantheistic rather than deistic: "Earth, that nourished you, shall claim/Thy growth, to be resolved to earth again." Nature, not Scripture, provides spiritual nourishment in the face of death:

Go forth under the open sky and list
To Nature's teachings, while from all around---
Earth and her waters and the depth of air---
Comes a still voice:¹⁰⁴

The natural setting that commemorates Cole's friendship with Bryant is a Catskill landscape they both loved: Table Rock.¹⁰⁵ And because of the habit in posthumous mourning portraits of restoring the dead to the living, we may see Cole returning to instruct the poet who pondered the question of death on the near side of the grave. The content of the colloquy can never be ascertained, but some of Durand's ideas about the subject can be determined by the way he arranged landscape elements and the human figures in the composition.

Durand painted Kindred Spirits in an era when, as Ruskin astutely observed in Modern Painters (1843), the principle of the pathetic fallacy was applied to the interpretation of literature. Non-human subjects and especially landscape elements were assigned human attributes.¹⁰⁶

Cole could have served Ruskin as the example of an artist

who, both in his paintings and his writings, indulged the pathetic fallacy. Anticipating the famous English critic by almost a decade, Cole wrote in his Essay on American Scenery: "Trees are like men...in exposed situations, wild and uncultivated, battling with the elements and with one another for the possession of a morsel of soil, or a favoring rock to which they may cling--they exhibit striking peculiarities, and sometimes grand originality." Cole gave evidence that he painted as he thought in The Catskill Mountains (1833, The Cleveland Museum of Art). Here a dead and a living tree, juxtaposed on either side of the composition, represent the life cycle even as they function as frames for an autumnal scene. It is not too much to suppose, therefore, that his close friend and fellow artist Durand would have followed Cole's example in allowing landscape elements to symbolize the human condition.

As befits the solemn mood, Durand bends the branches of a great old tree to evoke a verdant cathedral arch. Water flows from its source through the center of the composition. The eye, following the cascading water, meanders to a far horizon line, so that the painting depicts what in "Thanatopsis" is described as a "depth of air." The symmetry of life and death is suggested in a broken tree, the tree falling through the lower center of the composition, sheltered by the arching limb overhead. Cole, placed further out on a rocky promontory and therefore closer to the vanishing horizon, gesticulates. Bryant listens.

Two creative talents are embosomed in nature's manufactory. Water trickling from its source to become a fall is the symbol for the source of life. ¹⁰⁷ Trees reach maturity and die and are so arranged in the composition that the viewer follows this cycle in a circle of verdure framing the composition. Reasoning by visual analogy, it is possible to conclude that Bryant and Cole, like the living and the fallen tree, are one with the whole life cycle. The painting conforms to Bryant's pantheistic vision in which man's ultimate destiny is to be "resolved to earth again."

Americans in the nineteenth century found the kind of solace in nature that had formerly been sought in religion. Cole, in his landscape cycles, demonstrated nature's sanitive influence on man. Bryant's poem "Thanatopsis" expressed the idea that nature's beneficence could accommodate the specter of death. But it was Durand who, for his singular commemorative portrait in a landscape, incorporated the summary statement about a death in nature. ¹¹⁰

An ebullient optimism, a belief in material progress maintained as an article of faith, and the certainty that America was the New Eden--all were components of the ethos pervading American culture from the election of Andrew Jackson to the onset of the Civil War. For a brief period, death was nearly overcome by an entrenched optimism and by a stubborn refusal to let go of what once had been tangible. Given such a national outlook, death entered art in a new

disguise. To forestall and suppress the full reality of death, the living clung to lifelike mourning portraits of the deceased--especially of their deceased children. In public exhibition pictures, they preferred death to be presented under the label of sleep. Moreover, they were disturbed by intimations of death in the landscape unless nature was allowed to palliate the loss.

With the onset of the Civil War, there was a shift in the approach to death imagery. The production of tombstone mourning scenes and posthumous mourning portraits dwindled. The dead child largely disappeared as a subject. The American landscape, desecrated by war, could no longer function as a vehicle to give death its full moral meaning. After 1861, artists had to seek new iconographic solutions because death became an experience of too great a magnitude to be expressed in the extant iconographic types. It permeated the culture, leaving too many bereaved at once. By contrast, death in the era of Jacksonian Democracy had, for Americans, not yet lost its innocence.

Notes: Chapter II

1. The terminology has been coined by the present author in order to distinguish clearly between two forms of death imagery created for the bereaved. As will be demonstrated, the iconography of the two types is quite different. However, they have in common that both were created as mourning images.
2. See Anthony Blunt, The Paintings of Nicholas Poussin: A Critical Catalogue, London, 1966, p. 80. Blunt observes that Poussin's composition enjoyed great popularity in the late eighteenth century. See also Erwin Panofsky, "Et in Arcadia Ego: Poussin and the Elegiac Tradition," Meaning in the Visual Arts, New York, 1955, pp 295-320.
3. Richard Wilson's version of Et in Arcadia Ego is in the collection at Wrotham Park, Kent, England; Cipriani's, in Viscount Cobham's collection, Hagley Hall, Stourbridge, England; Zuccarelli's, in the collection of J. Ferguson, Kilkerran, Ireland.
4. See Alessandro de Vesme, Francesco Bartolozzi, Milan, 1928, p. 459. Anita Schorsch discusses Angelica Kauffmann's contribution to the tombstone mourning scene in her article, "Mourning Art: A Neoclassical Reflection in America," The American Art Journal, 8, no. 1, May 1976, pp. 8-11 and figs. 11, 13-16. However, the present author believes that Schorsch, in her enthusiasm to credit a woman, slights the contributions of Poussin, Wilson, Cipriani, Zuccarelli and especially Reynolds. Certainly Kauffmann should be credited with popularizing the motif, but not necessarily with inventing it. Because her original painting is undated, we do not know if it antedated Reynold's conception. What is known is that it was never exhibited at the Royal Academy and that it entered the collection of the Marquis of Exeter. See Frances A. Gerard, Angelica Kauffmann; A Biography, London, 1892, p. 344.
5. See the drawing for the epitaph of Chrischona Staeheln reproduced in Zeichnungen des 18. Jahrhunderts aus dem Basler Kupferstichkabinett, Basel, 1978, fig. 56 and p. 66.
6. The iconography of the weeping willow is discussed by John W. Draper, The Funeral Elegy and the Rise of English Romanticism, New York, 1929, pp. 335-37.
7. Anita Schorsch has discussed mourning imagery in the minor arts in two recent publications: Mourning Becomes America. Mourning Art in the New Nation, exhibition catalogue, William Penn Memorial Museum, Harrisburg,

- 1976; and "A Key to the Kingdom: The Iconography of a Mourning Picture," Winterthur Portfolio, 14, no. 1, Spring 1979, pp. 41-71. The production of hand-drawn and embroidered memorial pictures ceased in the 1840s, soon after the first memorial lithographs were published. See p. 89 and Beatrix T. Rumford, "Memorial Watercolors," Antiques, 104, 1977, pp. 88-95.
8. The present author wishes to thank Lois Burch who, in an unpublished paper ("Thy Death versus My Death: Mourning in American Needlework, 1800-1835"), points out that the needlework memorial picture can sometimes be understood to be more fashionable than sad. Burch cites letters such as that written in 1796 by Margaretta Akerly, a student at the Moravian School in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania: "It will not be trouble for me to work you a screen...I shall do it with the utmost pleasure; I think it will look best on white sattin [sic] ...But I wish you to chuse [sic] a Motto to go in the Urn. If you wish a name let me know and I will do it." Letter of Margaretta Akerly, March 23, 1796, The New York Historical Society, Letters c. 1796-1801. See also Susan Burrows Swan, Plain & Fancy: American Women and their Needlework, New York, 1977, pp. 181-84.
 9. See The Painting Collection of The New Haven Colony Historical Society, New Haven, 1971, no. 95.
 10. The present author has examined this canvas in its frame and concluded that it was not cut down--therefore the tomb inscription must intentionally have been placed off-center. Biographical information about the Lewis family was conveyed to me in a letter from Elizabeth W. Nowak of the New Haven Colony Historical Society, July 20, 1977: "Addin Lewis was born in Southington, Connecticut in 1780 to Captain Nathaniel and Sarah (Gridley) Lewis. He graduated from Yale in 1803 and in 1804 moved to Athens, Georgia where he became an instructor at the University of Georgia. He remained there for many years, serving as the first Collector of the District of Mobile, Postmaster, Mayor, and President of a local bank. In 1823 he married Fanny Lewis, daughter of his cousin Seth of Southington. For some years they spent the summers in Connecticut and finally in 1827 settled permanently in New Haven. The Lewises had three daughters who apparently died relatively young (and, I assume, unmarried). Mrs. Lewis died in 1832 at the age of 43 and Addin Lewis died in 1842. In Franklin Dexter's Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College, mention is made of Lewis being consumptive and a family letter from our files states that the entire family died of tuberculosis."

11. To understand how and why the mourners take precedence it is useful to refer to a distinction made by Philippe Ariès in his historical analysis, Western Attitudes Toward Death: From the Middle Ages to the Present, trans. Patricia M. Ranum, Baltimore and London, 1974, pp. 55-82. Ariès points out that by the nineteenth century the concern was not so much with "la morte de soi," one's own death, as with "la morte de toi," the death of the loved one whose loss was lamented and memory preserved in new forms. This development, in turn, produced two more. The deceased was given a second life in the memory of the living. And, quite logically, the role of the mourner was expanded. Ariès observed that display of grief was encouraged and given structure in mourning customs devised to accommodate the new contingencies.
12. Two examples of the tombstone mourning scene in lithographs can be found in Martha V. Pike and Janice Gray Armstrong, A Time to Mourn: Expressions of Grief in Nineteenth Century America, The Museums at Stony Brook, 1980, nos. 40 and 41. Although undated, the lithograph by Nathaniel Currier would have to have been published between the time he moved the firm to 2 Spruce Street in 1838 and the time he went into partnership with James Merritt Ives in 1857.
13. Calling these works posthumous mourning portraits has one further advantage. Thus designated, they form a complement to an established category of posthumous portraits: posthumous commemorative portraits. A treatment of this subject appears in a slightly altered form in P. Lloyd, "Posthumous Mourning Portraiture," A Time to Mourn: Expressions of Grief in Nineteenth Century America, pp. 71-89. In a forthcoming article for The Minneapolis Institute of Arts Bulletin, the present author will expand still further this newly emerging category of portraiture. Here the analysis moves on to include certain undetected symbols such as stormy skies, dead trees, flowers which will not live long once picked, faithful dogs, and certain toys and gift books. The diffusion of certain plant and animal symbols occurred when many of these same motifs were used in the tomb sculpture, iron railings and plantings of the newly constructed garden cemeteries. Through an analysis of flora and fauna motifs, the present author hopes to demonstrate that a larger number of children's portraits than heretofore suspected are posthumous.

14. See Poulson's American Daily Advertiser, May 26, 1821.
15. See The Paintings and the Journal of Joseph Whiting Stock, ed. Juliette Tomlinson, Middletown, Conn., 1976, which contains seventeen entries by Stock of portraits from the corpse.
16. Gookin ran this advertisement in The Dover Gazette and Strafford Advertiser from the end of January through the middle of March, 1847.
17. See George Washington Greene, Biographical Studies, New York, 1860, pp. 89-90. Cole recalled that this incident occurred when he was a young artist struggling through his first winter in Philadelphia. Greene writes of this period: "His works were small landscapes and bar-room scenes; recollections, perhaps, many of them, of painful parts of his own experience, but which readily found a place in barbers' shops and oyster-cellars. After a while, too, he got regular employment as an ornamental painter, and decorated bellows and brushes, and Japan ware, with figures and birds and flowers; sighing now and then as he bent over his task, but trusting still that the better days would yet come. Once he was called to paint a portrait from a corpse, and after toiling several days, was compelled to go to law for his pay."
18. See Maud Valona Elmer, "Edwin Romanzo Elmer as I knew him," The Massachusetts Review, 6, 1964-65, pp. 121-43.
19. Diary of William Sidney Mount, August, 1852, The Museums at Stony Brook, New York.
20. Letter from William Sidney Mount to John M. Falconer, December 13, 1856, The New-York Historical Society.
21. Letter from William Sidney Mount to Nathaniel Smith, January 26, 1857, The Museums at Stony Brook, New York.
22. William Morris Hunt, Talks on Art, Boston, 1883, II, p. 42.
23. Anton Pigler, in his pioneering study "Portraying the Dead," makes the same point about European funerary portraits from the Renaissance through the nineteenth century.

24. Rembrandt's acquisition of a death portrait by Abraham Vinck is the earliest known instance of such a painting entering a collection as a work of art. The painting is now lost; see Pigler, "Portraying the Dead," pp. 40-41.
25. The portrait of Sarah Louisa Spence, auctioned in June, 1979 at Sotheby Parke Bernet, is an instance of a posthumous mourning portrait just entering the public domain from a private family collection. A long letter, describing the circumstances under which Earl painted the portrait, was attached to its back. Grete Meilman kindly called this work to my attention. See Sotheby Parke Bernet Inc., Fine Americans, June 20-23, 1979, no. 188B.
26. For a discussion of the rose as a vanitas symbol, see Charles Joret, La rose dans l'antiquité et au moyen âge, histoire, légendes et symbolisme, Paris, 1892, pp. 59ff. In American art, a rose cast down, separated from a bunch, or broken at the stem are all variants used in both painting and tomb sculpture. From Roman times, of course, genii with inverted torches were common on sarcophagi.
27. Additionally, it should be noted that this form of portraiture was produced primarily for the well-to-do, as the examples to follow will indicate. Those less well off turned to the daguerreotype. See Floyd and Marian Rinhart, "Rediscovery: An American Way of Death," Art in America, 55, no. 5, September-October, 1967, pp. 78-81.
28. The dead child living on in the memory of the bereaved found expression in the poetry of the period as well. An unsigned poem, printed in Our Little Ones in Heaven, Boston, 1862, pp. 194-96, is typical.
29. For a reproduction, see the Frick Art Reference Library, negative number 123-1/d.
30. See Frederick Kinsman Smith, The Family of Richard Smith of Smithtown, Long Island, Smithtown, Long Island, 1967, p. 260. William Wickham Mills (listed incorrectly by Smith as Wickham Mills) was born Jan. 28, 1848 and died June 17, 1849. He was the first child of three born to Edmund Thomas Smith and Amanda Moscrop Mills Smith. The entry for the painting in Mount's journal is as follows: "Year 1849...Last summer 1849 I painted a whole length of an infant boy (drawing made after death), the son of Edmund Thomas Smith of Smithtown, L.I." See Alfred Frankenstein, William Sidney Mount, New York, 1975, p. 472.

31. Morning-glories, originally from South America, were not grown widely in North America before the nineteenth century. It is probably for this reason that the morning-glory is not included in the books on flower symbolism so popular in the period, such as Sarah Carter Mayo's The Flower Vase, Containing the Language of the Flowers and their Poetic Sentiment, Boston, 1844. The present author wishes to thank John Williamson, botanist at The Cloisters, for his help in researching this problem.
32. Diary of William Sidney Mount, September 24, 1866, The Museums at Stony Brook, New York.
33. Both works remain in the respective family collections. For Mount's references to the portrait of Matilda Evelin Wells, as taken from the corpse, see Frankenstein, William Sidney Mount, p. 472; for similar references to the portrait of Sarah Cordelia Smith, see *ibid.*, pp. 317, 335, 348 and 474.
34. See Robin Bolton-Smith and William H. Truettner, Lilly Martin Spencer 1822-1902. The Joys of Sentiment, exhibition catalogue, The National Collection of Fine Arts, Washington, D.C., 1973, pp. 209-11. In an agreement between the artist and Marcus L. Ward, she was allowed to rent, with a purchase option, a house in Newark owned by Ward. In lieu of cash, Ward agreed to accept "one large full length picture of four figures--likenesses of his said Ward's children, one portrait of Mrs. Ward, and one handsome fancy piece." The agreement was made in 1857, the year Nicholas died. Perhaps the Wards changed their mind about the fancy piece and decided in favor of a posthumous mourning portrait instead.
35. If this reading is correct, Lilly Martin Spencer has given a connotation of death to a practice found in life portraiture--the use of a still-life fruit to signify the number of a sitter's children. Thus William H. Gerdtz and Russell Burke, American Still-Life Painting, New York, 1971, p. 22: "The use of fruit as a symbol of fecundity can be demonstrated with some certainty in Copley's depiction of Mrs. Ezekiel Goldthwait. Mrs. Goldthwait is shown contemplating thirteen pieces of fruit, a fitting attribute for a woman who bore thirteen children!" The idea that a family remained intact even after the death of one or more of its members was not unique to Lilly Martin Spencer. It had appeared as early as 1798, in Wordsworth's poem, "We are Seven." Here a little girl insists that her family still numbers seven, despite the deaths of

- her brother and sister. To keep in contact with them, she even took her supper at the grave and there sang them a song. I would like to thank Professor Arthur Danto of Columbia University for calling Wordsworth's poem to my attention.
36. See Robert Rosenblum, Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition, Frederich to Rothko, New York, 1975, pp. 33-35, for a discussion of how Caspar David Friedrich and Joseph Mallord William Turner used a boat to signify the passage into the unexplored waters of death.
 37. Letter from William Sidney Mount to Robert Nelson Mount, March 6, 1860, The Museums at Stony Brook, New York.
 38. Letter from Shepard Alonzo Mount in New York, to his son William Shepard Mount in Galveston, Texas, May 15, 1868, The Museums at Stony Brook, New York. The quotations that follow in the text are taken from this letter.
 39. See Ingar Bergström, Dutch Still-Life Painting in the Seventeenth Century, trans. Christina Hedström and Gerald Taylor, New York, 1956, Chap. IV, "The Masters of the Vanitas-Still-Life." Bergström places watches in the second group of three vanitas categories: "The second main group consists of the many different symbols representing the transience of human life; it includes skulls and, in exceptional cases, whole skeletons, instruments for measuring time, such as watches, clocks, and hour-glasses; candlesticks and oil-lamps--the latter sometimes with smoking wicks; soap-bubbles...and flowers, especially roses and anemones." It should be noted that in the examples assembled by Bergström, the exact time is never of significance, as it is in Mount's painting. Bergström also observes, pp. 189-90, that the pocket watch may be used as a symbol for temperance, as well as for death.
 40. See Nina Fletcher Little, The Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Collection, Boston, 1957, p. 190.
 41. Both Shepard Alonzo and William Sidney Mount were in the habit of taking careful measurements of the deceased's face, as well as making color notations, while the body was laid out on the deathbed. Their drawings are preserved in the collection of the Museums at Stony Brook. See, for example, Shepard Alonzo Mount's Outline of Dear Tutie's Face After Death; and William Sidney Mount's Major General John R. Satterly Aged 75 Years, and Portrait After Death of an Unknown Man.

42. Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, original French edition, 1835, rev. & ed. by Phillipps Bradley, New York, 1948, II, pp. 99.
43. A related phenomenon is the taking of the likeness of a pregnant mother. Charles Willson Peale, who painted two portraits after death from descriptions, also accepted this kind of commission. See Sellers, Portraits and Miniatures, pp. 5-7, where, as he explains: "It was customary for a woman expecting a child, her first, particularly, to have her portrait painted, to hold secure her place in the family life should she fail, as so many did, to survive that dangerous passage. Peale painted many such pictures....Peale, the sentimentalist, treated these subjects with great tenderness and sometimes reveals the occasion to us with a delicate symbolism of his own, a rosebud beside a full-blown rose among the flowers at his sitter's bosom."
44. See Hirschl & Adler Galleries, American Paintings from Public and Private Collections, New York, Dec. 4, 1967-Jan. 13, 1968, unpaginated. An instance of a tombstone mourning scene being included within a family portrait is The Rev. John Atwood and His Family, discussed in American Paintings in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Greenwich, Conn., 1969, I, p. 89, no. 321. Ariès, ibid. p. 80, has remarked of mourning pictures that they were "a sort of portable tomb adapted to American mobility."
45. The practice of including a portrait of the deceased family member in a group portrait goes back to Dutch painting of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. See, for instance, Frans Floris' Group Portrait of the van Berchem Family (1561, Lierre, Stedelijk Museum Wuyts-van Campen en Caroly). Here the posthumous portrait hangs on the wall behind a table where the family eats and makes music. This practice occasionally recurred in Colonial America, as for instance when John Smibert included the deceased Daniel Oliver in his portrait of the Three Oliver Brothers. Daniel's likeness was taken from a miniature, but enlarged to the size of the living brothers. See Henry Wilder Foote, John Smibert Painter, Cambridge, 1950, pp. 176-77. In an instance that wrought havoc on his career, John Singleton Copley, at the request of Sir Edward Knatchbull, painted into a family portrait Knatchbull's two deceased wives, then painted them out again when Knatchbull's third wife protested; see Jules Prown, John Singleton Copley in England 1774-1815, Cambridge, Mass., 1966,

- pp. 360-71, and Dunlap, A History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States, I, p. 121. However, it is important to note that Frederick Spencer's conception differs from all these alternative ways of accommodating the deceased. Here the effigy is literally held onto at the same time that it is brought within the family circle.
46. Frankenstein, William Sidney Mount, p. 469.
 47. The daguerreotype is in the collection of the Museums at Stony Brook.
 48. David E. Stannard, The Puritan Way of Death: A Study in Religion, Culture, and Social Change, New York, 1977, in his chapter "Toward an American Way of Death," remarks on the way in which rural or garden cemeteries came to be regarded as "calm dwellings." He relates, p. 100, how the Reverend Theodore Cuyler, author of The Empty Crib: The Memorial of Little Georgie would, when visiting his son Georgie's grave, turn "toward the sacred spot where my precious... was lying" and bid the boy, "as of old, 'Goodnight!'" The American propensity for domesticating the environment of the dead continued to the end of the nineteenth century. See, for example, Andrew Melrose's Peaceful Homes, 1891, in the collection of Michael Reed, New York.
 49. See Stanley French, "The Cemetery as Cultural Institution: The Establishment of Mount Auburn and the 'Rural Cemetery' Movement," in Death in America, ed. David E. Stannard, Philadelphia, 1975, p. 83.
 50. Francis and Theresa Pulsky, White, Red, Black: Sketches of Society in America (1853), reprinted New York, 1968, III, pp. 98-99.
 51. Floyd and Marian Rinhart, "Rediscovery: An American Way of Death," pp. 78-79.
 52. See French, "The Cemetery as Cultural Institution," pp. 82-83.
 53. For an analysis of the growing importance of the child in the culture of nineteenth-century America, see Bernard Wishy, The Child and the Republic: The Dawn of Modern American Child Nurture, Philadelphia, 1968. Recently, Lois Fink has examined the place of the child in painting in her "Children as Innocence from Cole to Cassatt," Nineteenth Century, 3, no. 4, 1977, p. 71-75.

54. Leslie A. Fiedler, Love and Death in the American Novel, rev. ed., Briarcliff Manor, N.Y., 1966 and 1975, Chapter VI, "Charles Brockden Brown and the Invention of the American Gothic."
55. See J. Gardner Bartlett, Gregory Stone Genealogy. Ancestry and Descendants of Dea. Gregory Stone of Cambridge, Mass. 1320-1917, pp. 422-23. For precedents of the bereaved included in the portrait of the deceased, see Pigler, "Portraying the Dead," figs. 63-64.
56. Juanita Etter, administrative assistant, the Campus Martius Museum, Marietta, Ohio, forwarded to the present author in a letter of May 11, 1978, the Stone family correspondence concerning their family posthumous mourning portrait.
57. Richard and Dorothy C. Wertz discuss childbirth on a birthing stool in Lying-In: A History of Childbirth in America, New York, 1979, chap. 1, "Midwives and Social Childbirth in Colonial America." The authors illustrate, p. 12, the kind of birthing stool, made of two chairs, used in Ohio.
58. Leo Steinberg, "The Metaphors of Love and Birth in Michelangelo's Pietà," Studies in Erotic Art, ed. Theodore Bowie, New York, 1970, p. 260.
59. Bartlett, Gregory Stone Genealogy, needed 905 pages to give the early history of the family and to list the descendants of Dea. Gregory Stone.
60. The present author wishes to thank Mary-Ellen Perry, Curator of Fine Arts, The Margaret Woodbury Strong Museum, Rochester, New York, for forwarding letters of February 22 and March 13, 1979, from Josephine B. Pierce concerning this work. According to Mrs. Pierce, a descendant, the Pomeroy's had lived in Southport, Connecticut, from the seventeenth century. The house where the picture was painted is still standing. She surmises, correctly I believe, that some of the adult figures were added from other paintings or daguerreotypes and she identified them as: Sarah Dimon, who married Andrew Bulkeley, their child Mary Josephine, who married the Honorable Benjamin Pomeroy, his mother Jerusha Williams, and a Pomeroy child, Benjamin. Mrs. Pierce also believes the girls in the picture within the picture to be two daughters of Mary Josephine and Benjamin Pomeroy. However, their dress is that of

- approximately the 1830s. It is more reasonable to assume, therefore, that the girls are Mary Josephine and her sister, Julia. Furthermore, the posthumous mourning portrait is life-size, which is characteristic of the genre up to the time of the Civil War. See also Rev. F.W. Chapman, The Bulkeley Family, Hartford, 1875, p. 219.
61. See the full account, as given by Beard to Leon Mead, in "The Apprenticeship of an Academician," American Magazine, 9, no. 2, December 1898, pp. 198-99.
 62. Beard also treated widowhood in animal satire. His The Widow (1872, location unknown), depicts a still nursing dam and pup before an empty pillow on which rests a now unused dog blanket and collar.
 63. See Charles E. Rosenberg, The Cholera Years, Chicago, 1962, for a thoroughgoing investigation of the cholera epidemics and their repercussions for cultural institutions.
 64. See Robert Reinick, Ein Totentanz aus dem Jahre 1848. Erfunden und Gezeichnet von Alfred Rethel, Leipzig, 1849, and Robert R. Wark, Rowlandson's Drawings for the English Dance of Death, San Marino, California, 1966. In Europe, the absorption with the Dance of Death continued through the nineteenth century. Francis Douce's long introduction to the 1832 facsimile edition of Holbein's Dance of Death represented the first attempt to give the subject a scholarly treatment.
 65. Editor, "The Fine Arts," New-York Mirror, 9, no. 20, Nov. 19, 1831, p. 155. Ellwood Parry discusses Cooke's copy of Géricault's great work in The Image of the Indian and the Black Man in American Art, 1590-1900, New York, 1974, pp. 73-75.
 66. See Francis W. Edmonds, "Frederick S. Agate," The Knickerbocker or New-York Monthly Magazine, 24 August 1844, p. 159, where he writes: "In 1830 he exhibited eight pictures, two of which were full lengths of children, and in 1831, fourteen among which was the 'dead child,' a picture similar in character to his 'mother lamenting over her child.'"
 67. See Dunlap, A History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States, II, p. 435: "For a time his efforts appeared timid, but within two or three years, he has felt a just confidence in himself, and 'The Dead Child,' 'Forest in the character of Metamora,' and still later his historical picture

- of 'Ugolino' from Dante, stamp his character as an artist of genius and power." It is possible that Agate was permitted to retitle his original work so that he could conform to exhibition rules set down in 1829, the year after he exhibited Mother lamenting over her child. Rule no. 2 reads: "Works of Living Artists only, and such as have never before been exhibited by the Academy, will be received." In any case, the work illustrated in A Century and a Half of American Art, National Academy of Design, New York, 1975, p. 20, under the title The Dead Child, is actually the first version, A mother lamenting over her child, dated 1827. Recently, Lois Fink published this painting under the incorrect title The Dead Child, and identified the sibling as a sister rather than a brother; see "Children as Innocence from Cole to Cassatt," p. 74.
68. See p. 25. Reference to the first meeting of the National Academy of Design is made in George Norse Morris' contribution to A Century and a Half of American Art, pp. 10-11.
 69. See Donald Posner, Annibale Carracci, London, 1971, II, pp. 53-54. Carracci's work was widely known. Posner lists five copies, as well as prints by Sebastien Picart and Bartolozzi. In addition, Reindel executed a large folio engraving after a drawing by Duchemin.
 70. Henry Pickering, descended from the Pickerings of Salem, moved in the circle of artists and writers based in New York, among them Agate and William Cullen Bryant. He also was a friend of Washington Allston. The poem used by Agate first appeared under the title "I thought It Slept," published in Pickering's The Ruins of Paestum and Other Compositions in Verse, Salem, Mass., 1822, pp. 63-64. The volume in the New York Public Library was given by the author to William Cullen Bryant. See Hamsen Ellery and Charles Pickering Bowditch, The Pickering Genealogy, I, pp. 263-64 and Evert A. Duyckinck and George L. Duyckinck, Cyclopaedia of American Literature, Philadelphia, 1875, pp. 713-16.
 71. The Christian Keepsake was a gift book of a type common in the period. The subject of death in poems, short stories and illustrations was a staple for such books. See Ralph Thompson, American Literary Annuals and Gift Books, New York, 1936.

72. Edmonds, "Frederick S. Agate," pp. 158-59. Edmonds here confuses the sex of the living sibling, presumably because he remembered Agate's painting rather than the text of Pickering's poem. Because boys were often dressed as girls until about the age of five, Edmonds' mistake is natural enough.
73. See Lewis O. Saum, "Death in the Popular Mind of Pre-Civil War America," in Death in America, ed. David E. Stannard, Philadelphia, 1975, p. 38.
74. Edmonds, "Frederick S. Agate," p. 158.
75. See Bolton-Smith and Truettner, Lilly Martin Spencer, p. 108.
76. Spencer attempted other genre subjects treating death: The Dying Child (1840-45, location unknown) and Young Woman Mourning Her Dead Mother (1842-48). See *ibid.*, pp. 98, 118 and fig. 68.
77. For references to this work in Mount's correspondence, see Frankenstein, William Sidney Mount, pp. 29, 470, and 483. Girl Asleep was exhibited and offered for sale in 1844 at the National Academy of Design exhibition.
78. The image of a beautiful death-sleep may have been one that bereaved parents wished to retain for private viewing as well. There is in the Marcus L. Ward, Jr. bequest of family portraits to The Newark Museum, a painting of one of Joseph Morris Ward's children, ostensibly asleep. A child of about one, she is portrayed life-size and takes up the whole canvas. Because one of Joseph Ward's children (Emma Dean Ward, 1871-72) died in infancy and because the painting has no exhibition history as a "fancy piece" on the theme of sleep, it is reasonable to assume that this child of the Joseph Ward family was depicted in death rather than sleep. Furthermore, it should be noted that there is already a precedent for the posthumous portraits of children in the family: that of Nicholas Longworth Ward (Fig. 33); and possibly another: that of Catherine A. Ward (d. 1860) in a composition with her brother Marcus L. Ward, Jr. See Persis Motter, "The Marcus L. Ward Bequest," The Museum, 1, no. 3, p. 9 and pl. VII. (In her forthcoming article for The Minneapolis Institute of Arts Bulletin, the present author will discuss the disguised death symbolism of this portrait.)
79. See the review, the "National Academy of Design. Second Notice," The Crayon, 6, 1859, p. 192.

80. Paul Mantz, "Les Beaux-Arts à L'Exposition universelle," Gazette des Beaux-Arts, 1867, p. 229. Death in the guise of sleeping is a traditional way of representing the beloved wife. The bestknown example is Van Dyck's portrait of Venetia, Lady Digby, on her deathbed (Dulwich). Van Dyck was called in by his friend Sir Kenelm Digby to paint his beautiful wife Venetia as she lay in bed two days after death. Her husband wrote later that the artist "...hath expressed with admirable art every little circumstance about her...and hath altered or added nothing about it, excepting only a rose...whose leaves being pulled from the stalk in the full beauty of it...is a fitt Embleme to express the state her bodie then was in." As Van Dyck portrayed her, Venetia's is a death-sleep on propped elbow. As her adoring husband described Venetia, she had become no more putrefied in death than a plucked rose. For Digby's comments, see Oliver Millar, The Age of Charles I. Painting in England 1620-1649, London, The Tate Gallery, 1972, p. 113. There is also in this genre a miniature by Jean François de la Vallée depicting Harriet Mackie (1788-1804) as the dead bride (Yale University Art Gallery).
81. As late as 1887, Lambdin was still turning to the deathbed as a source of inspiration for small genre paintings. See Woman on Her Deathbed (c. 1887), published in The American Heritage, Sotheby Parke Bernet Inc., Nov. 17-19, 1977, fig. 494. The most moving portrayal of a woman on her deathbed in American art is John Trumbull's Mrs. Trumbull on her Deathbed (1824; collection Joseph Lanman Richards, New London, Conn.). For an account of the Trumbulls' life together, see Theodore Sizer, "Who was the Colonel's Lady? The Strange Case of Mrs. John Trumbull," The New-York Historical Society Quarterly, XXXVI, 1952, pp. 417-29.
82. Hélène Toussaint, Gustave Courbet, Arts Council of Great Britain, Royal Academy of Arts, 1978, no. 24, Toilet of a Dead Woman (generally known as Toilet of a Bride.) Central to Toussaint's reinterpretation of the bride's iconography is the following passage, pp. 98-99: "Let us now consider the central figure of a woman seated in a chair. An X-ray examination performed in 1960 in the Research Laboratory of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts shows that prior to being dressed in a bodice and petticoat she was naked; her head rested on her left shoulder, and her left arm hung down as limply as the right. This arm and the woman's face are so feebly painted, in the version we now see, that it may well

- be doubted whether they are Courbet's work. Moreover, unless the 'bride' is extremely short-sighted she is holding her mirror in a highly unnatural fashion."
83. William Sidney Mount planned, but never executed, a five part genre sequence going from the bereaved keeping the death watch through to the funeral feast. The drawing for the projected sequence is in the collection of The Museums at Stony Brook.
 84. For the role of figure painting in Cole's early career, see Ellwood C. Parry III, "Thomas Cole and the Problem of Figure Painting," The American Art Journal, 4, no.1, Spring 1972, p. 79.
 85. The sketchbook, inscribed by him, "Thomas Cole, N. York, 1927." is among the Thomas Cole papers at the New York State Library at Albany. See also Studies on Thomas Cole, An American Romanticist. The Baltimore Museum of Art Annual, II, 1967, appendix, p. 82.
 86. The Death of Abel was among the canvases attributed to Old Masters purchased from Robert Fulton in 1813 for the Pennsylvania Academy.
 87. The Death of Abel in Five Books, attempted from the German of Mr. Gessner, London and Philadelphia, 1770, p. 70.
 88. See Jane Dillinberger and Joshua Taylor, The Hand and the Spirit: Religious Art in America 1700-1900, University Art Museum, Berkeley, 1972, p. 94. Dillinberger makes the connection to Gessner's poem and pinpoints the place in his narrative that corresponds to Weed's scene.
 89. Dunlap, A History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States, II, p. 363.
 90. Seminal to this new interest were the Gessner poem and Christian Schubart's long poem "Der ewige Jude" ("The Wandering Jew"; 1783). Coleridge read Schubart's long poem in an English translation. This, along with Gessner's inclusion of the Cain Legend in "The Death of Abel," provided a dual inspiration for Coleridge. In the same year, 1798, Coleridge produced not only a fragmentary poem, "The Wanderings of Cain," but the much longer "Rime of the Ancient Mariner," the Englishman's original contribution to the theme of legendary wanderers. Byron's play, "Cain: A Mystery," written in 1821 and praised by Goethe, further heightened the interest in the subject. In fact, so widespread had the sympathy for outcasts become, that when Cole's biographer, Louis

Legrand Noble, came to treat the artist's peregrinations during his first European sojourn, he introduced the subject with lines from Coleridge's "The Wanderings of Cain."

For an extended study of the legend of the Wandering Jew, see George K. Anderson, The Legend of the Wandering Jew, Providence, 1965. In his introduction to "The Wanderings of Cain," Coleridge mentions Gessner's poem as the seminal source of inspiration. Originally, Coleridge and Wordsworth were to have written "The Wanderings of Cain" together. Anderson, p. 173, has established the connection between Schubart's "Der ewige Jude" and Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner."

91. Thomas Cole, "Essay on American Scenery," The American Monthly Magazine, January, 1836, p. 12.
92. Cole's letter to Reed is transcribed in Louis L. Noble, The Course of Empire, Voyage of Life and Other Pictures of Thomas Cole, New York, 1853, p. 178.
93. See John Hollander, "Landscape's. Empire," Prose II, 1971, pp. 79-94, where he discusses the importance of Cole's concept of "westerling"--that is, the way in which the progress of civilization follows the course of the sun across the sky.
94. Quoted in full in Ellwood C. Parry III's dissertation, Thomas Cole's The Course of Empire: A Study in Serial Imagery, Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1970, pp. 135-38 and pp. 196-98.
95. Ibid., p. 136.
96. The success of Cole's series is detailed by Parry who appears to believe that Cole was not overly pessimistic. See especially pp. 136-37.
97. Lorentz Eitner's "The Open Window and the Storm-Tossed Boat; An Essay in the Iconography of Romanticism," Art Bulletin, 37, 1955, pp. 281-90, remains the classic study of the Romantic ship motif. As we have seen in the case of the posthumous mourning portrait, the boat on water as a symbol for the passage from life to death was widely dispersed in the period under discussion. A late use of this symbolism occurs in Alfred Fitch Bellows' trilogy on the theme of the life cycle: Morning, Evening and Midday (1861, Philadelphia, the Edwin Forrest Home for Retired Actors). Here, in

Morning, a young family comes to a boat tied to the shore. At Midday a wedding party steps from the boat. The passage to death also occurs on water in Evening, where pallbearers carry a casket over frozen water. Initially, Bellows may appear to confront death more frankly than Cole. It should be noted, however, that Midday, the center canvas in the trilogy, is approximately twice as large as the other two. Thus Bellows also places the emphasis on the life force rather than death. The use of the ship as a literary symbol for the passage of life goes back much farther than the Romantic era. Cf. Petrarch's Sonnet 189, "Passa la nave mia," or Michelangelo's sonnet of 1554, "Giunto è già 'l corso della vita mia / Con tempestoso mar per fragil barca..." ("Now hath my life across a stormy sea / Like a frail bark..."). Tennyson uses the symbolism in his poem, "Crossing the Bar."

98. Thomas Cole, Cole's Voyage of Life: A Series of Allegorical Pictures, New York, 1860, p. 6.
99. See Milton W. Brown, American Art to 1900, New York, 1977, p. 326. The series was engraved by James Smillie of New York in 1856. For similar reasons, Daniel Huntington's allegorical painting of Mercy's Dream (1841, The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts) from The Pilgrim's Progress enjoyed enormous popularity. See William H. Gerdts, "Daniel Huntington's Mercy's Dream: A Pilgrimage through Bunyanesque Imagery," Winterthur Portfolio, 14, no. 2, 1979, pp. 171-94. John Bunyan's work itself was widely read because, as Gerdts (p. 173) points out: "In the nineteenth century, Americans saw an analogy between Christian's journey to the Celestial City and the American Adam's discovery of his new Eden. The trials and tribulations involved in attaining those goals were comparable--though for the settler and inhabitant of the New World, attainment of paradise was not achieved at the expense of life." More especially, the journey of Mercy and the revelation she receives in a dream were well received because, as George Cheever, the popular promoter of Bunyan, explained to nineteenth-century readers, her story was "more consoling and uninterruptedly cheerful"; *ibid.*, p. 175.
100. Cole's uncompleted series was exhibited after his death in 1848, accompanied by a catalogue description. See Exhibition of the Paintings of the Late Thomas Cole at the Gallery of American Art Union, New York, 1848, nos. 30 and 32.

101. George Washington Greene, Biographical Studies, p. 109.
102. For a long discussion and interpretation of the painting, see David B. Lawall, Asher B. Durand: His Art and Theory in Relation to His Times, Ph. D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1966, pp. 516-20. Cf. also Lawall's A.B. Durand 1796-1886, exhibition catalogue, Montclair Art Museum, Montclair, N.J., 1971, p. 59, and the same author's Asher B. Durand; A Documentary Catalogue of the Narrative and Landscape Paintings, New York, 1978, pp. 77-78. Kindred Spirits was commissioned from Durand by Sturges for presentation to William Cullen Bryant. Sturges, moved by Bryant's funeral oration for Cole, wished to give him the painting as a token of gratitude. Since Sturges had lent Durand money for his European tour of 1840-41, he allowed the artist to work off part of his debt by painting Kindred Spirits.
103. Lawall, Asher B. Durand, 1966, pp. 520-21, and idem, A.B. Durand, 1971, p. 59, interprets certain aspects of Durand's imagery in the light of Keats' "Sonnet to Solitude," which concludes with the lines: "But though I'll gladly trace those scenes with thee [Solitude], / Yet the sweet converse of an innocent mind, / Whose words are images of thoughts refin'd, / Is my soul's pleasure; and it sure must be / Almost the highest bliss of human-kind, / When to thy haunts two kindred spirits flee." Lawall (1966, pp. 517-18) notes that Sturges, when he commissioned Durand to paint Kindred Spirits, wrote: "Soon after you [i.e. Bryant] delivered your oration on the life and death of our lamented friend Cole, I requested Mr. Durand to paint a picture in which he should associate our departed friend and yourself as kindred spirits. I think the design, as well as the execution, will meet your approbation, and I hope that you will accept the picture from me as a token of gratitude for the labor of love performed on that occasion." Because the phrase "kindred spirits" appears in Sturges' letter, Lawall assumes that either he or Durand or both had Keats' sonnet in mind. However, the phrase had by this time become a commonplace. Thus Shakespeare, Richard III, ii, 2, 63, speaks of "kindred tears," Cooper, Task, ii, 19, writes "kindred drops," and D.E. Jones, "Blest be the Tie that Binds," refers to the fellowship of "kindred minds." In The Century Dictionary of the English Language, New York, 1889, s.v. "kindred," where these early examples are listed, Keats is not even mentioned. To

- interpret Durand's painting, there is little reason to introduce an English poet when one of the painting's two subjects is America's foremost poet and the author of the best known poem on death at the time. As regards Cole's reading of "Thanatopsis," see Greene, Biographical Studies, p. 110.
104. So influential was Bryant's poem on death in nature that it was pressed into service to promote the newly created concept of garden cemeteries. In 1846, Nehemiah Cleaveland quoted lines from "Thanatopsis" in the introduction to his Green-wood Illustrated, a volume with many illustrations of tombsites nearly lost to view, so deeply were they nestled in greenery. See N. Cleaveland, Green-wood Illustrated, engraved by James Smillie, New York, 1846.
 105. See Charles H. Brown, William Cullen Bryant: A Biography, New York, 1971, p. 263.
 106. See Ruskin, Modern Painters, III, Chapter XII, The Works of John Ruskin, V, eds. E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, London, 1904, pp. 201-20.
 107. Cole, "Essay on American Scenery," pp. 9-10. Robert Rosenblum has recently pointed out that the pathetic fallacy was also operative in the attitude of Northern Romantic artists to nature and in particular to trees; see Rosenblum, Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition, p. 36.
 108. See Jules Prown, American Painting from its Beginning to the Armory Show, Cleveland, N.D. pp. 66-67. The author, himself professing the pathetic fallacy, writes of Schroon Mountain: "One of the two prominent trees in the left foreground is alive while the other is dead and blasted, a skeletal thing; the tree on the right has both living and dead limbs. These tree forms, their limbs extended like arms, stand in the natural landscape as human surrogates. Their fate is man's fate." Prown also points out the affinity between Cole and Bryant in their view of death in nature as expressed in "Thanatopsis." He further states that this is what Durand implies "a little stiffly, by the juxtaposition of Cole and Bryant in Kindred Spirits."
 109. The symbolism of water was very important to the planners of Greenwood Cemetery, Brooklyn who insisted on preserving a wide view of New York harbor. See the engraved View from Battle Hill in Cleaveland, Green-wood Illustrated.

110. Sometime after 1865, Thomas Le Clear also integrated a posthumous mourning portrait into nature when he painted Parnell and James Henry Sidway in an artist's studio posed before a large landscape. See Chase Viele, "Four Artists of Mid-Nineteenth Century Buffalo," New York History. The Quarterly Journal of the New York State Historical Association, 43, 1, pp. 71-72.

Chapter III: DEATH AND THE CIVIL WAR

With the coming of the Civil War, death became omnipresent. News coverage was so extensive that no citizen could remain unaffected. Casualties were so high that few families were unscathed. As hand looms were fed women's mourning crepe and the Union blue or Confederate grey of dead soldiers' uniforms, the carpeted floors in American homes grew more somber each year. ¹ Yet it is a remarkable fact that American painters rarely took up the subject of the ongoing slaughter. And their refusal to address themselves to the current conflict is the more ironic since it was an American, Benjamin West, who startled the English art world by rendering a death in battle as contemporary history.

To his contemporaries, West's Death of Wolfe marked a break with a tradition of battle scenes that stretched back to Roman battle sarcophagi and the battle scenes on the columns of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius. Fed by the antique tradition, artists of great repute, beginning with Titian, provided examples of the genre. The normative "high art" tradition began in the sixteenth century with Giulio Romano's battle frescoes for the Vatican's Sala di Costantino and continued in the work of Poussin, Rubens and Le Brun. By the sixteenth century it had also become standard to glorify the victories of

a ruling house, a city or state; and many of these scenes were engraved. The important victories of Charles V-- the Battles of Pavia, Mühlberg and Tunis--were rendered in many media, and henceforth important military campaigns came to be represented as a matter of course. Indeed, so popular did the genre of battle painting become that Nicholas Manuel Deutsch included samples in his pattern book, Figürliches und ornamentales Musterbüchlein. By the seventeenth century, there were artists like Aniello Falcone, Jacques Bourguignon, Antonio Tempesta and his pupil Callot who specialized in depicting military maneuvers and campaigns. And through the eighteenth century, the genre flourished. In addition, there was a continuous history of generals' portraits which included a battle scene in the background. Thus a European artist like Antoine-Jean Gros, when he depicted the contemporary campaigns of Napoleon, was an inheritor of a long tradition. This tradition carried over even to the civil insurrections and internecine wars of the nineteenth century, as witness the record kept in the graphic media by Francisco Goya in Spain, Ernest Meissonier and Honoré Daumier in France and Adolph Menzel in Germany.

American artists, too, had participated in this great tradition--up to a point. John Trumbull and later Emanuel Leutze commemorated Revolutionary War battles.

Heroes of the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812 were sometimes shown in portraits with a battle scene in the background. But by and large the representation of death in contemporary battles had been long discontinued by the time of the Civil War. Perhaps this avoidance is not so surprising if we recall that in the previous thirty years Americans had, for cultural reasons, assiduously eschewed the depiction of death. Whether in private portraiture or public exhibition pictures, the public had demanded of artists that they invent strategies of evasion and emphasize the sentimental. Furthermore, the representation of death in battle fell into disuse because no major war had given occasion and Leutze's commemorative painting was concerned with glorification, empire building and individual heroism, not with expiring heroes.² Neither public taste nor artistic tradition was ready for a sharp turnabout, even when killing in a full-scale war made death commonplace. And as it was the general expectation that the war would be quickly won, the issues resolved and the conflict forgotten, there seemed at first no compelling reason to give permanence, by means of art, to the war's passing horrors.

A record of the grim reality of death in the Civil War was kept, not in painting, but in a new secondary medium thought to be instantaneous and documentary: the

photograph. To photography the nineteenth century assigned a unique place. Because it was believed that the photograph was not contrived in any way, this medium lacked one of art's primary qualities--invention. However, its deficiency was also its attribute. For only the photographer could hold a mirror to the event. This³ belief, firmly established before the Civil War, conditioned the response to the first photographs of carnage. Thus the editorial in The New York Times calling the public's attention to Mathew Brady's photographs of the slaughter at Antietam began: "MR. BRADY has done something to bring home to us the terrible reality and earnestness of war. If he has not brought bodies and laid them in our doorways and along the streets, he has done something very like it."⁴ And Oliver Wendell Holmes said of these same photographs: "Let him who wishes to know what war is look at this series of illustrations."⁵

Mathew Brady's photographs of the wounded and dead caused a sensation, first in New York and then across the nation. He assembled them for display in a New York gallery, announcing on a placard outside: "The Dead of Antietam." Long lines quickly formed at the door. The photographs riveted the viewers. "Of all subjects of horror," the critic for The New York Times continued, "one would think the battle-field should stand preeminent,

that it should bear away the palm of repulsiveness. But on the contrary, there is a terrible fascination about it that draws one near these pictures and makes him loth⁶ to leave them."

Brady's success provided the incentive to a fellow photographer, Alexander Gardner. Hastening to Gettysburg after the battle, he sought out the unburied dead. His absorption was with bloated and mutilated corpses, open graves and dead artillery horses.

Photographs satisfied the "terrible fascination" with death precisely because the public believed that in looking at photographs they were re-experiencing the event. Little did the public suspect that a photographer might manipulate his compositons, that the lens was indeed used as a creative tool. But one hundred years later, recognizing the nature of photography as an art form, we cannot remain as naive as did the nineteenth-century public who were confronting the medium in the third decade after its invention. This public could not have known that Gardner was less concerned with documentary reportage than he was with making a propaganda statement. For instance, he sought out not the battlefield sites but the nearby fields to which the Confederate dead had been removed. Since Northern troops buried their own first, he had free rein to do with Southern bodies what he wished. As William Frassanito

has convincingly demonstrated, Gardner posed and reposed these bodies as though they were manikins.⁷ He made as many as six photographs of a single corpse, the limbs being carefully rearranged for each take. And because he had many more scenes of Southern dead, he created a more equal balance by labeling some views of Southern bodies as Northern. Furthermore, for purposes of war propaganda, Gardner selected certain angles from which to photograph the bodies. He understood, as many artists before him, that extremely foreshortened figures had an expressive charge--that foreshortening equals diminishment.⁸ He therefore reserved these views for the defeated enemy. Frassanito's careful reconstruction of the Gettysburg photographs indicates that bodies labeled Southern were most often photographed from undignified foreshortened angles that obscured the head (Figs. 67, 68). (This is true for the five out of seven views of Southern dead in Frassanito's study.) By contrast, Northern bodies tended to be photographed parallel to the picture plane or, if foreshortened, so that heads came more nearly into view (Fig. 69).

Given the primitive technology of the camera at the time, photographs could not capture bodies in motion. One might suppose, however, that wood-engravings would do so, since artist-correspondents for nationally circulated

magazines were dispatched to the front to make sketches for transfer to the block. But with certain exceptions, these artists chose not to depict violent battle action. Indeed, they tended to avoid depicting death at all. Perhaps the artist's reluctance can be ascribed to the special horror of the Civil War: that it was an internecine war, one that divided many families; and there was no clear enemy. It is also true that the Civil War was one of the first modern wars in the sense that technology facilitated extermination on a scale never before experienced. And, after all, the new medium of photography could "record" the carnage. But there was yet another reason why artists did not make their own record.

A little discussed aspect of Civil War imagery is the way the government early in the war put artists on the defensive. After Harper's Weekly published topographical views of the terrain around Yorktown on April 19, 1862, the local military command became alarmed that these views might aid Confederate forces and mislead Union troops. Military authorities therefore confiscated the issue.⁹ Artists working for Harper's, including Winslow Homer,¹⁰ exercised self-censorship for the duration of the war. They responded by gradually abandoning battle subject matter, concentrating instead on subjects of the home scene and on camp life behind the lines.¹¹ A composite illustration Homer executed for Harper's after his return from the

Potomac campaign is both a justification for the artist's war-front activities and a display of "safe" subjects (Fig. 70).¹² In one vignette soldiers pose for Homer's fellow artist Alfred R. Waud; in another they read an issue of Harper's; in a third a woman encounters maimed soldiers. Then, executed in the darkest hatching, we come upon the scene that predominates over the others: a lone woman receives news of a loved one wounded in battle. This last vignette is symptomatic of a shift in subject matter that characterized many wood-engravings and, as we shall see, many paintings too: a shift from the theater of war to the way women experienced it.

Winslow Homer went on to become an especially effective propagandist for the North. Of his thirty-seven wood-engravings of the Civil War, only two include actual killing, and one other portrays the wounded after a battle.¹³ Another, The Army of the Potomac--A Sharp Shooter on Picket Duty, suggests the strength and valor of the men who enlisted on the Northern side (Fig. 71).

Homer's other thirty-two wood-engravings deal either with troops being mustered in, with life behind the lines, with troops on the move, or with domestic activities related to the war. His oeuvre, therefore, includes a large body of "war" images that avoid the depiction of death. Nor did Homer adjust the balance when he redid his Civil War drawings in 1887 for Century Magazine.¹⁴ Other

artist-correspondents followed the same course, although
 to varying degrees.¹⁵ That theirs was a conscious choice
 is all the more evident if we recall that, beginning a
 year after the war with the publication of John W. De
 Forest's Miss Ravenel's Conversion from Secession to
 Loyalty, literary men including Ambrose Bierce, Stephen
 Crane, Harold Frederic and Francis Grierson began system-
 atically exposing the war's horrors in stories filled with
 vivid details.¹⁶

Only occasionally, then, did wood-engravings approach
 the kind of reporting of death found in short stories,
 novels and photographs. The subjects they did treat met
 two important criteria. First, scenes of life behind the
 lines were certain to be safe from government censure.
 Second, scenes of the bereaved--most especially women--
 best expressed sentimental attitudes toward death that
 carried over from the preceding period. For women, it was
 widely held in the nineteenth century, were more sensitive
 and emotional. Suffering, therefore, came to be equated
 with the feminine character. It was this association that
 made women into the symbolic embodiment of suffering in
 the Civil War. And, of course, women were not at war.
 The shock of the war had to be hidden somewhere, and the
 woman's view at least softened that shock. But the lack

of accurate pictorial reportage also allowed Americans to detour around the reality that death had suddenly and drastically reduced the ranks of able-bodied men.

The subject matter of the majority of paintings was the same as that in wood-engravings: portrayals of life behind the lines, on the homefront, and of the way women experienced the war. Furthermore, suffering inflicted by the war was conveyed not through actual battle scenes but through the depiction of the bereaved.¹⁷

At the outset of the Civil War, painters had received advice about appropriate new subject matter from an artist writing for The Crayon. Reasoning that people were too distracted and distraught to give heed to art, he offered suggestions for subjects that might be of interest: "It is impossible to walk the streets or to cross the rivers in our ferry boats without witnessing scenes which would make most effective groups for pencil. The parting of friends, the enlisting rendezvous, the return of the slain of Baltimore to their homes, the faces of eager recruits and earnest debaters."¹⁸ The subjects suggested, though various, have in common that they deal with events removed from action at the front. And it was in this area that artists were to begin their search for new subject matter.

The Peale family had at the ready a veritable icon for the bereaved. In the memorial exhibition for Rembrandt Peale, held at the Pennsylvania Academy in 1862, they included his The Pearl of Grief, an exhibition picture Rembrandt had conceived at the time of the Mexican War¹⁹ (Fig. 72). The Pearl of Grief was intended to console mothers, wives and sisters of the war dead, all the while that it ennobled their bereavement. To this end, the artist did not strain after a new invention, but based his picture on the compositional type of the Mater Dolorosa. Derived from a religious prototype, it lent a timeless quality to a secular situation.

The idea of focusing on the bereaved seems to have originated in American painting at the time of the Mexican War. This war was essentially a series of skirmishes and minor battles at a great remove from the majority of the population--including artist-correspondents who did not make the long journey. What artists could observe was the way those at home received either good news, as in Richard Caton Woodville's War News from Mexico (1848, National Academy of Design), or news of casualties as in John L. Magee's Reading an Official Dispatch (Mexican War News) (Fig. 73). This latter work, exhibited at the American Art Union in 1849, carried the catalogue explanation: "A family receiving news of the death of one of its members

in battle; a friend is reading the newspaper to the wife, whom the rest are endeavoring to console."²⁰ For this painting, Magee orchestrated the full range of emotional responses in a family comprising three generations. He also included what was doubtless intended as a portrait of the deceased. A high-ranking officer in parade dress, his life-size image looms over the bereaved. Although dead, he remains present in effigy, the missing male member of the second generation.

The representation of Mexican War dead in absentia was consistent with the interest in portrayals of the bereaved that characterized the period before the Civil War. Furthermore, it was an ingenious way to depict the death that artists would have had difficulty witnessing firsthand. But when artists of the 1860's took over this Mexican War format for Civil War imagery, their decision can be characterized as a euphemistic evasion. Clearly, the majority of artists did not wish to go to Civil War battle sites, for they could have done so easily: it was as possible to visit, let us say Antietam, as it had been impractical to travel to the Alamo.²¹ Moreover, their behavior was consistent with the earlier attempts of artists to work out evasive iconographic programs for portraying death.

A prime specimen of a Civil War exhibition canvas that draws on the Mexican War pictorial approach is Titian²² Peale's News from the Front (1866) (Fig. 74). The painting is specifically fashioned to recapitulate an experience that had become common during the Civil War: the receipt of news about the death of a loved one. A young woman, in a kind of half faint like that sometimes assumed by the Virgin, is held by another and ministered to by a third wearing a widow's cap. The cause of her condition is revealed by a sheet falling over the table edge which reads: "List of Officer's...and Wound[ed]." One other element, a "still life" of a guitar and music sheets, may allude to the harmonious accord between the couple before the bereavement.

For the newly evolving Civil War imagery, artists adapted yet another established iconographic type for representing the bereaved: the tombstone mourning scene (see pp.85ff). Charles Soule's Civil War Widow and Winslow Homer's small panel representing a soldier, off duty, meditating before a comrade's grave, are of this type (Figs. 75, 76).²³ But Soule and Homer alter the traditional type when they locate the survivor prominently in the center of the composition, thereby shifting the focus to the living. Only the standardized knee-high crosses, frequently used to mark the gravesites of slain Civil War

soldiers, indicate the presence of the dead. Both artists are also innovative in creating new stock mourning types: a widow and a soldier who stand as symbols for vast numbers of the bereaved.

Of course, received iconographic traditions could not always be adapted to the depiction of experiences new to the Civil War, such as the identification of the war dead through photographs. This is the subject of William John Hennessy's small canvas painted in 1866 and probably exhibited at the National Academy of Design under the title In Memoriam (Fig. 77).²⁴ Another of the artist-correspondents during the Civil War, Hennessy occupied quarters next to Homer's in the New York University studio building and had a similar interest in depicting military genre rather than actual combat.²⁵ Indeed, his is a scene which must have occurred commonly in the aftermath of battle. Hennessy set his quiet drama in a town square. The sloping canvas of a large hospital tent is visible in the background. The statue of a military officer looms over boys playing soldier in the middleground. Situated along the front plane is a woman with a daguerreotype case in her hand. Presumably she has already toured the hospital tent and now waits as a soldier with his back to the viewer peruses another daguerreotype she has given him. Downcast, she is perhaps waiting to see whether the soldier can identify

the face in the picture. Because it is the woman who faces the viewer, her concerns become ours. Her search for a lost one through a photograph calls to mind lines from The New York Times editorial about Brady's photographs of the Antietam dead:

We would scarce choose to be in the gallery when one of the women bending over them should recognize a husband, son or a brother in the still, lifeless lines of bodies, that lie ready for the gaping trenches. For these trenches have a terror for a woman's heart, that goes far to outweigh all the others that hover over the battlefield.²⁶

In the foregoing five canvases that concentrate on the homefront, the emphasis is on the emotions of women. Soule's widow gazes out at the viewer with soulful eyes, while the despondent woman in Hennessy's painting engages the viewer's sympathy. Rembrandt Peale dramatizes the woman's distress by making her shed tears that swell on her cheek like the kind of pearl called the teardrop pearl (hence the title, The Pearl of Grief). Rembrandt's brother, Titian, organized his composition so that the half-figures of the three women are brought close to the foreground plane. Thus, no part of their pantomimed melodrama is lost. And, of course, the extreme sentimentality in these works lends visual reinforcement to the contemporary notion that women were the more emotive sex. For sentimentality--that ready-to-hand emotion which can be made to serve as a response to many emotions while

plumbing the depths of none--here becomes the exclusive preserve of women. In stark contrast to the female display of emotion, the feelings of men are not communicated. Homer's soldier, detached and meditative, gazes down at the grave, not out at the viewer, while Hennessy's soldier presents only his back.

The emphasis on women's emotions may be explained by a corollary development in literature, as well as by a transatlantic event. From the 1830s, there had proliferated an extensive literature written by women and by the clergy for women. One objective of this genre was to instruct women in their role as consolers. The result--as the title of Ann Douglas's recent book, The Feminization of American Culture, suggests--was that a ritual basic to any culture came to be dominated by women.²⁷ The flood-tide of consolation literature, epitomized by Elizabeth Stuart Phelps's The Gates Ajar (1868), coincided with the aftermath of the Civil War. Literature as well as art, then, conspired to provide comfort when great numbers of women had recently lost their menfolk. And one result was that even some male artists came to show the war from a woman's point of view--the experience of war was, to use Ann Douglas's formulation, feminized.

It is also germane to recall that in 1861 Queen Victoria became the widow non pareil. Widely circulated photographs of Victoria in mourning for Albert, or adoring his bust

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suddenly gave "royal" status to widowhood. And, of course, the history of art supplies us with other examples of noble widows: Agrippina, Artemesia, Andromache, Calpernia and Sophinisba, for example. These precedents may have lent authority to American artists who favored the subject of women bereaved. But the critical difference in the case of bereaved women in Civil War imagery is that Americans often chose to represent this aspect of death in the war in preference to any other. Emotion generated by a war that bloodied the land was channeled through representations of women.

That an alternate course was available is evidenced by the contrasting examples of the French painter, Ernest Meissonier and the German Adolph Menzel. While on duty as a captain in a National Guard artillery unit, Meissonier participated in an attack on the barricade in what is now the rue de l'Hôtel-de-Ville. As he recalled later:

I saw it in all its horror, the defenders slain, shot down, thrown from the windows, covering the ground with their corpses, the earth having not yet drunk up all their blood.²⁹

Rather than suppress this terrible spectacle, Meissonier chose to give it form in art:

When I executed it [a preliminary water color], I was still in the grip of the terrible spectacle I had just seen, and believe me... these things penetrate into your very soul. When one reproduces them, it isn't just to make a work. It's because one has been stirred to the depths of one's being and because this memory must endure.³⁰

Missonnier's work, originally titled Juin because the incident occurred on June 25, 1848, was submitted to the Salon of 1849. However, he withdrew it that year, probably because, as Constance Hungerford has argued, "the work was too strong to be shown so soon after the traumatic events that had occurred."³¹ But the following year he resubmitted the picture under the more generalized title, Souvenir de guerre civile (Fig. 78). It is a superb example of a work that "originates in the rude impact of reality itself upon the artist."³² By painting a scene in this manner, Missonnier externalized his feelings about a profoundly shocking event he had witnessed. And before Missonnier, Goya, in his Disasters of War, had been similarly motivated to produce great art. By contrast, American artists averted their eyes from a grim-visaged war, seeing suffering in the symbolic guise of bereaved women.

The example of Missonnier is revealing not only because he too chronicled a moment in a civil war, but because at the time he was primarily an illustrator. His position, therefore, is comparable to that of, let us say, Thomas Nast, an artist-correspondent for Harper's. But Nast, unlike Missonnier, having executed an oil sketch of the fighting he witnessed at Gettysburg, chose not to submit the work for exhibition (Fig. 79). And Winslow Homer, who designed two wood-engravings of the combat, The War for the Union, 1862--A Cavalry Charge and The War for the Union, 1862--A Bayonet Charge, left no memorable record on

canvas (Figs. 80 and 81). Furthermore, Homer's portrayal of combat in the wood-engravings is generalized, as Julian Grossman makes clear in his book on Homer's Civil War imagery:

To take exception to the factual accuracy of Homer's mass battle illustrations might seem picayune in the face of the dramatic imagery presented, but a sober analysis of the facts calls for just this. Homer was clearly interested in creating romantic battle scenes, rather than straightforward factual reports of specific historical events.³³

Grossman goes on to remark that Harper's Weekly acknowledged Homer's images were generalizations by titling them A Cavalry Charge and A Bayonet Charge because they wanted "scenes to give a positive impression of the progress of the war" rather than specific battles.³⁴ Certainly, Homer should never be praised, as Meissonier was, for creating a "devastating work" and for achieving the "pitiless fidelity of the Daguerreotype."³⁵

But because the American approach to war imagery is better pointed up through contrasting examples, let us also turn to the European artist-illustrator, Adolph Menzel. In 1839, Menzel was commissioned to provide wood-engravings for Franz Kugler's life of Frederick the Great, Geschichte Friedrichs des Grossen.³⁶ Imbued with bourgeois idealism, Menzel believed Frederick to have been the champion of the people and his wars to have been fought to establish a state for the people. However, when he depicted Frederick's

wars, both for illustrations of Kugler's biography and for Frederick's Oeuvres, Menzel acknowledged the death and horror in war to such an extent that these scenes outnumber those of victories and conventional battles.³⁷ He also made moving records of death he witnessed firsthand, such as the pencil and watercolor study of the Dead At Königshof (1866), based on an incident in the Austro-Prussian War (Fig. 82). Indeed, his "inclination for ugliness" made his work unacceptable to some German critics, even though Kugler understood his work to achieve a "daguerreotypical reality."³⁸

Menzel's Dead at Königshof has in common with contemporary Civil War imagery only the coincidence of date. His American parallel is to be found not in art, but in the photographs taken during the war, and in the novels and short stories that later took up the theme of war's brutality. Writers like John W. De Forest, Ambrose Bierce and Stephen Crane were to devise a new realistic mode that achieved the equivalent of Menzel's (or Meissonier's) "daguerreotypical reality." But it should be clearly understood that there was no visual analogue between the art of the Civil War and, for instance, a particularly descriptive sentence from Crane's The Red Badge of Courage: "Under foot there were a few ghastly forms motionless. They lay twisted in fantastic contortions. Arms were bent and heads were turned in incredible ways."

Taking into consideration contemporary European works (themselves coming at the end of the battle scene genre) and

American Civil War literature, the conclusion is difficult to avoid that among American artists experiencing the trauma of civil war, there was a failure of nerve when it came to depicting what they saw. Although it is true that the artists fell back on a pattern of avoidance obtaining in American death imagery from about 1828, the question remains: why did they not seek to change that pattern? At least a partial answer lies in the public's reaction to a protracted internecine war. Two canvases on display in 1865, James Hope's The Bloody Lane, Battle of Antietam, and James Beard's The Night Before the Battle, may serve as a guide to public feeling.

James Hope was an artist who had served at the front. After his discharge, he began a series of small canvases, measuring nineteen by twenty-six inches, which dealt with well-known battles: the First and Second Battles of Bull Run, the Army of the Potomac in the Peninsular Campaign and at Cumberland, and the Battles of Fredericksburg, Gettysburg, and Antietam.³⁹ These canvases were executed in preparation for a panorama comprising separate canvases, each measuring four and a half feet by ten and a half feet. For his panorama, Hope selected one view of the carnage he had witnessed firsthand, The Bloody Lane, Battle of Antietam (Fig. 83). Here, as he recalled for his catalogue description, "the Confederate dead lay in the sunken road on an average of three deep for half a mile, and there was only one man who breathed in all

that distance." Early in 1865, Hope put the panorama on exhibition in a New York gallery, charging admission. But he could not draw in enough viewers to cover his rent.

James Beard's The Night Before the Battle, completed in the year Hope's panorama opened to the public, appears better adjusted to the tenor of the last war year (Fig. 84). It was conceived for exhibition at the National Academy of Design in 1865. The Night Before the Battle is unique in distilling into a single image a moral statement about the Civil War by alluding to an event in the Passion sequence. Behind a breastwork and a canon kneels skeleton Death. Round him are ranged sleeping soldiers. The work is like several other Civil War scenes representing men protected behind a bulwark. But the arrangement of figures harks back to a religious prototype, for Beard's painting is a modern variation on the familiar Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane.⁴⁰ His choice is appropriate because the Agony in the Garden is, after all, the night before an ordeal. Thus Beard enriched the interpretation of an ongoing event by invoking a pictorial religious model: the battle to come; as the Civil War itself, was seen as tragic. But he transmitted his message by allegorizing death rather than by depicting slaughter.

Another factor affecting artists who created Civil War imagery was patronage. Scenes of carnage were clearly not appropriate for the parlor. Neither, for reasons

already discussed, were they favored for exhibition canvases. The history of Civil War imagery would have been different, of course, had the government commissioned art to commemorate historic battles and Northern victories. But no commissions were forthcoming from that source either. This fact did not go unnoticed by contemporaries. A correspondent for The Crayon, writing from Washington in June of 1861, noted that the Seventh Regiment was quartered in the Hall of Representatives where empty panels had been designated to hold paintings of patriotic subjects. Ruefully he observed: "It would have been so easy to have packed colors and brushes in their knapsacks, and have forced some good art on the government at the point of a bayonet. Capt. Meigs, who has so skillfully engineered for artists at Washington, might have profited by the occasion."⁴¹ It is important to note that, early in the war, a small contingent writing for The Crayon did believe Northern artists should create "patriotic" battle scenes. However, not in 1861 nor at any time thereafter were monumental canvases of Civil War battles or related scenes deemed a necessary part of the official Washington decorative scheme. Nor is this decision particularly difficult to fathom. During the early part of the war the safety of Washington was not assured, and therefore new works were not commissioned. After Appomattox, the government

could hardly afford to humiliate those they took back into the Union by portraying them in defeat (see pp. 192-93, below). And they could not offend Northerners by portraying Confederate heroism.⁴²

Additionally, there was by war's end widespread public aversion to confronting the recent experience. The aversion is evidenced in all three mediums: wood-engraving, photography and painting. When, in 1866, Harper and Brothers extracted articles and wood-engravings from their weekly issues for inclusion in a summary tome, Harper's Pictorial History of the Civil War, scenes of combat and death were even more minimal than they had been in the individual issues. Alexander Gardner, who made a selection of his photographs for the 1866 publication of Gardner's Photographic Sketch Book of the War, attracted few buyers.⁴³ And this despite the fact that he had included only a few images of dead bodies and took the precaution of giving them sentimental euphemistic titles like A Sharpshooter's Last Sleep (Fig. 85). Finally, the failure to confront death may inform even the smallest detail of a Civil War painting. In Titian Peale's News from the Front of 1866, the sheet is cut so that, if transcribed, it reads: "List of Officers... and Wounded." An ellipsis is offered for "Dead" or "Killed."

Furthermore, the tendency to suppress death in the visual media has its parallel in the contemporary literary genres of poetry and soldiers' memoirs. Unlike Civil War novels, in poetry the end rarely came to a soldier in a paroxysm attended by blood and pain. More often, the news of death came home--to the field where the father worked, to the lane where the wife strolled, to the front porch where the mother sat waiting. Sometimes it would seem as though the paintings were intended to illustrate the poems, so coincident are their respective preoccupations.⁴⁴ Similarly, a parallel development occurred in the outpouring of memoirs that began to be written after Appomattox. Thomas Leonard, analyzing this literature in his recent study, Above the Battle, has concluded:

The most important thing...is what the veterans did not say. After the Civil War, Americans, more than any industrial nation, could see what war was to be. Mass armies had been recruited by patriotic appeals, then supplied and killed off by the industrial system. Where the invading armies met civilians, cities were burned and crops destroyed. No war of the eighteenth century had been like this; no war of the nineteenth century pointed more clearly to the future. Americans, however, failed to grasp this lesson, and their failure began in the personal narrative.⁴⁵

It should be further observed that the tendency not to comment on the horror began even earlier in the paintings.

Two exhibition canvases conceived after the war follow this pattern of evasion and therefore become

representative, summary statements: Eastman Johnson's Wounded Drummer Boy and Winslow Homer's Prisoners from the Front (Figs. 86 and 87). During the Civil War these two artists had working habits in common. Both, at times, witnessed the war firsthand, then returned to the same New York University studio building to execute their paintings.⁴⁶ Johnson chose as his subject an incident he had seen at Antietam: a drummer boy who, though wounded, continued to rally the troops from his perch on the shoulder of a soldier.⁴⁷ Characteristically, Johnson's depiction of the slaughter, which was so overwhelmingly a part of the battle of Antietam, is reduced to a vignette. At the rear of the composition the artist inserts a man, traumatized, who sits bolt upright, his mouth open in a howl. Beside him lies a dead comrade.

Homer chose a different kind of scene. He also alludes to a specific event: the brilliantly maneuvered victory at Spotsylvania Courthouse, Virginia, in 1864, which allowed General Francis Channing Barlow to capture prominent Confederate officers and troops.⁴⁸ The young Union officer to the right in Homer's canvas is recognizably a portrait of Barlow. However, the deforested land in the background does not correspond to the terrain of Spotsylvania Courthouse, but to sketches

Homer made of the devastation at Petersburg. He thus fused a particular incident and a specific location to achieve an image which represented a more universal situation. And the artist succeeded so well that his contemporaries praised his painting for recording a common occurrence at war's end. But only the deforestation behind the captives bespeaks the war's actual destruction.⁴⁹

Yet if these two paintings confirm a pattern of evasion, the concomitant truth is that art historians, in the main, have avoided facing the fact. For Winslow Homer, especially, the case is made that his was a straightforward confrontation with the reality of the war. This contention, which was introduced into the literature during World War II, has grown so widespread as to become a topos of Homer criticism. It appeared originally in the writing of Forbes Watson when he asserted:

We might note that the tradition of reality which makes Homer's records of the Civil War among our most prized possessions is being followed by the painters who today are beginning to make the pictorial record of this war with its infinitely more destructive weapons. Homer never dreamed of a raid of a thousand planes but the hearts of courage that now fly through the sky were equalled in the breasts of the men who fought at Gettysburg. Homer recognized then, as he would now if he were painting today, that the heart was the essential.⁵⁰

Watson's passage is, of course, patent wartime propaganda. And, fortunately, the record was set straight by Milton Brown when he wrote of Homer:

He had little to report of the fighting itself, his concern was with the life of the soldier in leisure and boredom, peripheral but revealing, jovial rather than serious.⁵²

This last word, "serious," is crucial.

An artist seriously addressing himself to the depiction of war must acknowledge that death in battle is more often seamy than heroic. The seamy side of war has long been a sub-theme in the battle scene genre even before Goya--witness the work of the seventeenth century artist Karel Du Jardin (Fig. 88). However, a similar representation of a Civil War scene has the character of an aberration. When, for instance, Francis H. Schell portrayed local residents who flocked to Antietam after the battle, he produced a powerful image. Here shocked tourists behold bodies frozen into grotesque poses by rigor mortis (Fig. 89). But Schell's wood-engraving is rarely reproduced. The standard Civil War fare served to modern viewers is Homer's often "jovial," usually "peripheral" renditions of military genre.

More difficult to ignore is Peter Rothermel's painting of The Battle of Gettysburg: Picket's Charge (1870, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, The William Penn Memorial Museum). This huge canvas proves the rule that it was acceptable to follow a pattern of evasion. Rothermel's

work, which did not spare the viewers a gory spectacle, has suffered almost total neglect. In 1866 Pennsylvanians, proud that the decisive battle of the Civil War had taken place in their state, decided to commemorate the event. Accordingly, the legislature appropriated the funds and a Philadelphian, Peter Rothermel, was selected to execute one large canvas.⁵³ The artist made three major decisions in regard to his subject. He selected for depiction the military maneuver that turned the tide of battle, Picket's Charge. He chose to execute the whole on a very large canvas, thirty-two by sixteen and three quarter feet. And, lastly, he filled the entire foreground plane with a multitude of dead and dying Confederate soldiers.

At first Rothermel's canvas met with success. He exhibited it in the Northern cities of Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago and Pittsburgh. He was praised for placing at the center of the composition a "stalwart Union soldier" who, with one foot propped against a dead Rebel, beat back the enemy with the butt of his musket. However, Rothermel's decision to emphasize the Northern victory by multiplying the dead on the Confederate side proved a miscalculation. William Dean Howells, summing up his impressions of the Centennial Exposition of 1876, hints that many had complained of this "huge slaughter of

rebels."⁵⁴ A growing discomfort with Rothermel's conception may explain why the Pennsylvania legislature did not raise adequate funds to house the canvas until 1894. Nor is it, to this day, displayed satisfactorily. But a last proof of the work's neglect is that one cannot even obtain a standard black-and-white photograph of Rothermel's "huge slaughter of rebels."

The failure to confront the Civil War in pictorial terms can thus be explained in various ways. It is true that artists were able at first to fall back on strategies of evasion in death imagery obtaining before the war. Their tactic, then, was to introduce iconographic innovations appropriate to the new situation while observing the general wish for euphemism. It is also true that there was a new medium to record the carnage, that artists were called upon to exercise self-censorship and that patronage presented special problems. Yet ultimately it must be conceded that no artists emerged who, by talent and force of personality, rose above these circumstances to impose a true record of the war years on a reluctant American public.

The evasiveness about death that prevailed during the war in both images and memoirs continued well into the 1880s. It was then realized that the survivors of the

Civil War were dying off; a concerted effort was therefore made to gather their memoirs. Beginning in 1879, the Philadelphia Weekly Times published The Annals of the War. Between 1884 and 1887, Century magazine ran memoirs and illustrations in every issue. So popular was the series that the magazine's circulation doubled to a quarter million, and it was decided to collect the war papers, rearrange them, add illustrations and bring out four volumes in book form as Battles and Leaders of the Civil War (1887-88).⁵⁵ All of these works shared a tendency to cosmeticize the war record. Grant's best-selling Memoirs, published in 1885, is a case in point. Edmund Wilson has pointed out that the book filled Northerners with moral pride only because Grant made it possible for them to forget a good deal about the war.⁵⁶ Thus, the retired General described Sherman's strategy for the scorched earth campaign and the burning of Atlanta in two sentences: "Atlanta was destroyed so far as to render it worthless for military purposes before starting, Sherman himself remaining over a day to superintend the work, and see that it was well done. Sherman's orders for the campaign were perfect."⁵⁷

The production of magazine articles and books in the 1880s initiated a second campaign of easel paintings on Civil War subjects. As was true twenty years earlier,

the number of genre scenes portraying life behind the lines far outnumbered depictions of death. However, there was one new development. Some artists began to dignify the Confederate position.⁵⁸ Thus Julian Scott, who served as an officer in the Union Army during the Civil War and studied with Emanuel Leutze thereafter, chose as the occasion for his Death of General Kearny (1884) a gesture of magnanimity on the part of General Lee (Fig. 90). Kearny, whom Lee knew from the Mexican War, was a man of dash and daring--the epitome of the "perfect soldier." He was shot when he entered enemy territory at Chantilly. In keeping with the Southern chivalric tradition, Lee forwarded the body under a flag of truce to General Pope. At the request of Kearny's widow, Lee returned his sword, horse and saddle.⁵⁹ Scott chose to depict the moment when Kearny's body, laid on a stretcher, was being respectfully covered with a blanket by a Confederate officer. Another Confederate stands waving a flag of truce on his sword.

Perhaps the most ambitious and unambiguous attempt to dignify the former enemy was made by Carl Guthertz in a work entitled Missing (Fig. 91).⁶⁰ This expatriate artist, who had married a Southern lady, painted a Confederate rifleman lying in a spring wood, his body partially obscured by underbrush. In the tradition of Alexander Gardner's battlefield photographs, Guthertz selected a

foreshortened view, but one that reversed the usual position for photographing Southern bodies during the war. The angle favored was the one which elided the horror and allowed the artist to focus on the soldier's young face. The work, exhibited at the 1886 Paris Salon, vouchsafed the foreigner and the American visitor alike a bitter-sweet view of America's fratricidal war.

The silent testimony of death imagery from the Civil War, both in the 1860s and again in the 1880s, suggests that in the more vivid sphere of the visual Americans did not want the ugliness of the Civil War recapitulated. Oliver Wendell Holmes gave expression to the wish to repress the Civil War experience when he wrote of Brady's photographs of Antietam that many seeing them would want to lock them away in some secret drawer or put them in the recesses of a cabinet. For, as he went on to observe: "the sight of these pictures is a commentary on civilization such as a savage might well triumph to show its missionaries."⁶¹ Photographs of the mutilated remains were reminder enough to the generations who either witnessed or heard firsthand about the war. They did not wish the scenes repeated on canvas and artists generally respected that wish. The confusion of thought and feeling arising from the war experience carried over to the 1880s: "In the lapse of years the war recurs to us as a picnic on

a large scale, somewhat long drawn out and arduous at times; but, after all, we recall more of joy than of sorrow, more of play than work," an old general reminisced at a reunion.⁶² Ultimately, it fell to writers of independent spirit, like Stephen Crane, to record the Civil War for future generations. Those who wrote unrelentingly of the killing had no equivalents among the artists. Consequently, the horror attendant upon any war rarely was portrayed in the paintings of America's Civil War.

Notes: Chapter III

1. This detail appears in Harold Frederic's short stories of the Civil War written during 1892-93. See Harold Frederic's Stories of York State, ed. Thomas F. O'Connell, Syracuse, 1966, p. 276.
2. Emanuel Leutze's commemorative paintings of the Revolutionary War include: the three versions of Washington Crossing the Delaware (1850, formerly Bremen Kunsthalle, destroyed 1943; 1851, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art; with Eastman Johnson, c. 1851, private collection), Washington at Dorchester Heights (c. 1852, Boston, The Public Library of the City of Boston), First News from Lexington (1852, Lexington, Massachusetts, Lexington Historical Society) and Washington Rallying the Troops at Monmouth (1854, Berkeley, University Art Museum).
3. Beaumont Newhall documents this attitude in The History of Photography, 2nd rev. ed., New York, 1964, p. 71.
4. See "Brady's Photographs: Pictures of the Dead at Antietam," The New York Times, Oct. 20, 1862, p. 5.
5. See Oliver Wendell Holmes, "Doings of the Sunbeam," Atlantic Monthly, 12, July 1863, pp. 11-12.
6. "Brady's Photographs," p. 5.
7. Frassanito, who has examined all the photographs taken at Gettysburg, discusses Gardner's efforts to seek out certain sites, rearrange bodies and mislabel views in his photographs; see Frassanito, Gettysburg. A Journey in Time, New York, 1975, esp. pp. 27, 174, 187, 191, and 202-33.
8. For the visual effect of foreshortening, see Leo Steinberg, Michelangelo's Last Paintings, New York, 1975, p. 37. As Steinberg explains: "Traditionally --roughly since the mid-fifteenth century--scorti had been reserved for dead figures; and by the sixteenth century, for the dead and defeated. Since, normally, a foreshortened diminishing body is tapered into the contradictions of perspectival space, it has less room to manoeuver, hence is felt to be incapacitated, unmanned. Spacial constraint and reduction of stature become legible tokens of deprivation, creating a perfect foil for the heroic figure in commanding possession of space."

9. See David Tatham, "Winslow Homer at the Front in 1862," The American Art Journal, 11, no. 3, 1979, pp. 86-86. See also W. Fletcher Thompson, Jr., The Image of War: The Pictorial Reporting of the American Civil War, New York, 1959, p. 80.
10. To the end of the war, there were generals who regarded artist-correspondents as potential spies. "You fellows make the best spies that can be bought," William T. Sherman told one artist-correspondent; see Thompson, The Image of War, p. 79. For a discussion of this aspect of the Civil War and the difficulties it caused artists, see *ibid.*, pp. 78-80 and William P. Campbell, "The 'Special Artist' Reports The Civil War," The Civil War: A Centennial Exhibition of Eyewitness Drawings, Washington, D.C., 1961, pp. 59-63.
11. This was most true of the artist-correspondents working for Harper's, less so for the two other illustrated weeklies, Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper and New York Illustrated News. For Harper's crucial role in propagandizing the Union war effort (particularly in regard to Thomas Nast's work), see William Fletcher, Jr.'s excellent article, "Pictorial Propaganda and the Civil War," Wisconsin Magazine of History, 46, 1962, pp. 21-31.
12. Tatham, "Winslow Homer at the Front in 1867," p. 87. Tatham observes: "Within the context of the controversy over suppression, it [Homer's wood-engraving] can be seen as a comment by the Harper firm that pictorial weeklies, Harper's above all, were good for military morale and harmless to the war effort."
13. All of Winslow Homer's Civil War scenes are reproduced in Barbara Gelman, The Wood Engravings of Winslow Homer, New York, 1969. Homer's sketches, wood-engravings and paintings of the Civil War are to be found in Julian Grossman, Echo of a Distant Drum: Winslow Homer and the Civil War, New York, 1974.
14. For a discussion of Winslow Homer's Civil War drawings, redone in 1887, see Gordon Hendricks, The Life and Work of Winslow Homer, New York, 1979, pp. 191-92 and Lloyd Goodrich, Winslow Homer, New York, 1944, p. 13.

15. See especially William Fletcher Thompson, Jr., "Illustrating the Civil War," Wisconsin Magazine of History, 45, 1961, pp. 10-20. Thompson, pp. 17-18, remarks: "Winslow Homer, best remembered as a painter of seascapes, was frankly not interested in doing combat sketching...Other artists followed Homer's example. Those who remained with the army during the long months between campaigns and when the troops were in winter quarters sent their publishers hundreds of sketches of the soldiers in their noncombat hours."
16. See especially Edmund Wilson, Patriotic Gore: Studies in the Literature of the American Civil War, New York, 1962, and Thomas C. Leonard, Above the Battle: War Making in America from Appomattox to Versailles, New York, 1978, chs. 1 and 2.
17. For reasons that will be discussed subsequently, paintings of the Civil War are not generally reproduced in great numbers. Many remain unsold in gallery warehouses. The most comprehensive publication of these paintings occurred at the time of the Civil War centennial. See, for example, Hermann Warner Williams, Jr.'s amply illustrated catalogue The Civil War: The Artist's Record, Meriden, Conn., 1961. See also Civil War Centennial Exhibition, Washington County Museum of Fine Arts, Hagerstown, Maryland, 1962 and "Artists of the Civil War," The Kennedy Quarterly, 2, no. 2, 1961. Even one hundred years after the war the suppression continues. Thus in Williams' catalogue of 251 pages, the chapter titled "Wounds, Disease and Death" is only ten pages long.
18. See "Postscript--Artists Going to the Seat of War," The Crayon, 8, no. 5, May 1861, p. 120.
19. See Charles H. Elam, The Peale Family: Three Generations of American Artists, exhibition catalogue, The Detroit Institute of Arts, 1967, no. 224. Mary Jane Peale made a copy of this painting in 1855. See also John A. Mahey, "The Studio of Rembrandt Peale," The American Art Journal, 1, no. 2, Fall 1969, no. 65.
20. Cited in Hirschl & Adler Galleries, The American Scene. A Survey of the Life and Landscape of the 19th Century, Oct. 29-Nov. 22, no. 63.

21. If one were to judge from the paucity of battlefield scenes, one might conclude that artists almost never went to the front. In fact, however, we know that artists other than artist-correspondents did go to witness battles. Eastman Johnson, for instance, traveled to the battle sites of Bull Run, Antietam and Gettysburg; see John I. H. Baur, Eastman Johnson: An American Genre Painter, Brookly, 1940, p. 19.
- Returning from England in 1863, the landscape painter Jasper Cropsey went directly to Gettysburg. (His large painting of the battle, exhibited at the National Academy of Design in 1866, was destroyed in the New York Union League Club fire of 1875.) William Thompson, Jr., "Illustrating the War," p. 16, observes that some battles, like those of Antietam, Fredericksburg and Gettysburg, were more difficult to witness than others like Shiloh, Chancellorsville and the battles of the Peninsula. The battle most frequently rendered appears to have been Gettysburg, no doubt because it turned the tide of the war in favor of the North. It should also be noted that sometimes incidents were fabricated; see Campbell, The Civil War: A Centennial Exhibition of Eyewitness Drawings, pp. 65-88. Furthermore, the atrocities supposedly committed by Confederates, then depicted by Northern artist-correspondents in an effort to enlist the sympathies of civilians in the war effort, were a complete fiction; see Thompson, "Pictorial Propaganda and the Civil War," pp. 26-28.
22. See Sotheby Parke Bernet Inc., American 18th, 19th, & 20th Century Paintings, Drawings, Watercolors & Sculpture, April 29, 1976, no. 18.
23. There is a drawing for Homer's Trooper Meditating beside a Grave in the Robert Hull Fleming Museum, the University of Vermont, signed W.H. [1865]. See Hendricks, Winslow Homer, CL-623
24. Hirschl & Adler Galleries, Faces and Places. Changing Images of 19th-Century America, Dec. 5, 1972-Jan. 6, 1973, no. 39. The description of Magee's painting is found in the American Art Union Bulletin, no. 236, Oct. 1849; p. 42.
25. For a discussion of the respective studios of Homer and Hennessy during the war years, see T.B. Aldrich, "Among the Studios," Our Young Folks, September 1866, pp. 573-76.

26. "Brady's Photographs," The New York Times, Oct. 20, 1862, p. 5. Some of these photographs were translated into wood-engravings and published in the Oct. 18, 1862 issue of Harper's Weekly.
27. See Ann Douglas, The Feminization of American Culture, New York, 1977, ch. 6, for an analysis of consolation literature. Douglas further points out that women took the clergy as their allies. Emulating women's success in writing this literature, the American clergy in their turn took up this genre and so became feminized.
28. See John Morley, Death, Heaven and the Victorians, London, 1971, figs. 32 and 106.
29. Meissonier's letter, dated October 22, 1890 and addressed to the Belgian painter Alfred Stevens, is quoted in Constance Cain Hungerford, "Meissonier's Souvenir de guerre civile," The Art Bulletin, 61, 1979, p. 282.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Grossman, Echo of a Distant Drum, p. 80. Grossman also observes, p. 78: "Excellent propaganda, these two illustrations of all-out warfare celebrate the Union cause--only brave Union soldiers fill the picture frame. The Rebels offer no more than slight resistance to what Homer, back in his New York studio, has portrayed as invincible Northern forces."
34. Ibid.
35. Hungerford, "Meissonier's Souvenir de guerre civile," p. 283.
36. For a discussion of these wood-engravings, see Francoise Forster-Hahn, "Adolph Menzel's 'Daguerreotypical' Image of Frederick the Great: A Liberal Bourgeois Interpretation of German History," The Art Bulletin, 59, 1977, pp. 242-61.
37. Ibid., p. 246 and fig. 7.
38. Ibid., p. 261.

39. See Larry Freeman, The Hope Paintings, Watkins Glen, New York, 1961.
40. Bruce Chambers, formerly Director of the Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester, has, in conversation, pointed out the visual analogy James Beard meant to draw between his composition and a traditional Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane.
41. See "Domestic Art Gossip," The Crayon, 8, no. 6, June 1861, p. 133. For Captain Montgomery Meigs' role as supervisor of art work for the Capitol Extension, see Lillian B. Miller, Patrons and Patriotism, Chicago, 1966.
42. In the same June, 1861 issue of The Crayon that included "Domestic Art Gossip," we also learn that Emanuel Leutze visited the troops camped outside Washington. Then America's most proficient figure painter, Leutze could easily have turned his talents to Civil War battle scenes of Northern heroism. But he contented himself with making written notations for military subjects. He also designed a certificate of service for the army of the United States and finished a picture of Icabod Crane and the Headless Horseman. While the Civil War raged, he executed a mural for the Capitol on the theme of manifest destiny, Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way (1862). At the time of his death in 1868, the projected military subjects from the Civil War had not been broached.
43. See E. F. Bleiler's introduction to Gardner's Photographic Sketch Book of the Civil War, New York, 1959. The tendency to suppress death imagery in photographs continued into the twentieth century; see Francis Trevelyan, The Photographic History of the Civil War in Ten Volumes, New York, 1911.
44. The present author wishes to thank Amy Jones who, in an unpublished paper on the subject of Civil War poetry, pointed out the analogies between the content of many of these poems and the paintings under discussion.
45. Thomas C. Leonard, Above the Battle: War Making in America From Appomattox to Versailles, New York, 1978, p. 9. An analogous argument has been advanced by Daniel Aaron, The Unwritten War: American Writers and the Civil War, New York, 1973.

46. John Wilmerding, Winslow Homer, New York, 1972, pp. 46-47.
47. Catalogue of the Forty-Seventh Annual Exhibition of the National Academy of Design, New York, 1872, p. 18.
48. See Nicholai Cikovsky, Jr., "Winslow Homer's Prisoners from the Front," Metropolitan Museum Journal, 12, 1977, pp. 162-64.
49. Cikovsky, *ibid.*, pp. 165, 171-72, writes about the iconographic meaning of the tree-stumped background in "Winslow Homer's Prisoners from the Front." See also Cikovsky, "'The Ravages of the Axe': The Meaning of the Tree Stump in Nineteenth-Century American Art," The Art Bulletin, 61, 1979, pp. 611-26.
50. Forbes Watson, Winslow Homer, New York, 1942, p. 12.
51. Need there be further proof, the back jacket cover of Watson's book carried the additional prompting: "It will cost money to defeat Germany, Japan and Italy. Buy war savings bonds or stamps today. Buy them as often as you can. Buy them regularly. Buy for victory!"
52. Milton Brown, American Art to 1900, p. 496.
53. Detailed information about the commission, execution and exhibition of the Rothermel painting is to be found in Edwin B. Coddington's "Rothermel's Painting of the Battle of Gettysburg," Pennsylvania History, 27, no. 1, 1960, pp. 1-27. In addition to the one large canvas, Rothermel subsequently was reimbursed for five smaller ones: Battle of the First Day and Death of Reynolds; Charge of Louisiana Tigers and Repulse [on East Cemetery Hill in the evening of July 2]; The Charge of the Pennsylvania Reserves in Plum Run, July 2; Repulse of General Johnson's Division by General Geary's White Star Division, July 3; and an alternate version of the Plum Run scene which shows the charge of the Pennsylvania Reserves as seen from the Confederate side. In addition to Rothermel's painting of the Battle of Gettysburg, there were two other large canvases of the subject produced in the nineteenth century: Paul Philip-poteaux's Cyclorama (1883, Baltimore Street, Gettysburg) and James Walker's Repulse of Longstreet's Assault (1870, location unknown). See Coddington, "Rothermel's Paintings of the Battle of Gettysburg," pp. 17-19.

54. William Dean Howells, "A Sennight of the Centennial," The Atlantic Monthly, 38, July 1876, p. 94.
55. This work has been reprinted as The American Heritage Century Collection of Civil War Art, ed. Stephen W. Sears, forward Bruce Catton, New York, 1974.
56. Wilson, Patriotic Gore, p. 152.
57. Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant, II, New York, 1886, p. 361.
58. The series of paintings and illustrations generated after John Brown's hanging will not be discussed here because their interest to contemporaries centered around Brown's kissing of a Negro baby ("the labial process of the picture," as one contemporary described it), rather than his execution. Consequently, these works are better understood in the context of abolitionist controversies of the time than as examples of Civil War death imagery. The works include Louis Ransom's John Brown on his Way to Execution (1860, Oberlin College); John Brown, Currier & Ives lithograph after Ransom (1863); Brown of Ossawatimie, unsigned woodcut in Whittier's National Lyrics (n.d.); Thomas S. Noble, John Brown's Blessing (1867, whereabouts unknown); John Brown--The Martyr, Currier & Ives lithograph after Ransom (1870); and Thomas Hovenden, The Last Moments of John Brown (1884, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; smaller version, c. 1884, John D. Rockefeller collection). See James C. Malin, "The John Brown Legend in Pictures: Kissing the Negro Baby," The Kansas Historical Quarterly, 9, no. 4, 1940, pp. 341-46.
59. See Dictionary of American Biography, X, New York, 1933, pp. 271-72.
60. Gutherz studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and became a pupil of Jules Lefebvre and Boulanger. Another one of his popular paintings was Sunset after Appomattox, in which Lee is shown driving into the sunset, seated on a wagon. See Lilian Whiting, "The Art of Carl Gutherz," The International Studio, 24, 1904-05, pp. LXXXI-VII.
61. Holmes, "Doings of the Sunbeam," p. 11-12.
62. Quoted in Leonard, Above the Battle, p. 13.

Chapter IV: AMERICAN DEATH IMAGERY: THE LAST PHASES

In the last phases of nineteenth-century American death imagery, the tendency to avoid the depiction of actual death continued. The paradigm is to be found in the representation of the death of the Indian. Here the hypothesis that Americans, by and large, wanted death suppressed is confirmed. For while it is a matter of historical fact that over the nineteenth century this aboriginal people were nearly eliminate, American art only hints at their fate.

Where other subjects are concerned, artists like Winslow Homer and Albert Pinkham Ryder, who either invent circumlocutions for death or find the most distillate symbols for it, conform to native expectations. By contrast, artists who took death forthrightly as their subject were working from their experience of and exposure to European traditions, so that their images must be considered apart from those which are touchstones for the indigenous experience.

The American artist, in regard to the near elimination of the Indian, had an unparalleled opportunity to bear witness, to probe the dark underside of the American experience. As Roy Harvey Pearce has demonstrated in his excellent study, The Savages of America, Americans from the eighteenth century realized that the ways of the Indian and of the white settler were antithetical. As early as

1795 an historian could blithely advocate the Indian's elimination so that "five hundred rational animals" might "enjoy life in plenty" where now only "one savage drags out a hungry existence."² By 1830, such reasoning found expression at the highest levels of government. Andrew Jackson, addressing Congress, expatiated upon the Indian's fate in language whose elegance cloaked a barbarous, albeit "melancholy," fact:

Humanity has often wept over the fate of the aborigines of this country, and Philanthropy has been long busily employed in devising means to avert it, but its progress has never for a moment been arrested, and one by one have many powerful tribes disappeared from the earth. To follow to the tomb the last of his race and to tread on the graves of extinct nations excite melancholy reflections. But true philanthropy reconciles the mind to these vicissitudes as it does to the extinction³ of one generation to make room for another...

And how did the artist respond? Occasionally, he executed straightforward scenes of Indian burials. In certain instances, he conceived compositions on the theme of the "Last of His Race." But usually, he conformed to mainstream thinking by devising an iconography for justifying the elimination of the Indian. This iconography evolved through four phases in the course of the nineteenth century. In the first phase, an aborigine menaced a white woman or child or both; in the second, a hostile Indian contended with a trapper; in the third, the Indian's demise was alluded to in

the buffalo hunt; and finally, in an ironic twist and at the time when only a remnant of the race survived, the Indian was shown to triumph in a contest where the white man had no chance. Thus, all the images about to be discussed are symbolic, although some purport to be genre or renderings of actual events. Furthermore, their symbolism was conceived to express fear and hatred of the Indian by delineating him as the ignoble savage; or conversely, to express guilt by celebrating him as the noble savage.⁴

Although it is true that beginning in the colonial period Indians were murdered, died in battles and massacres, died en masse of the white man's diseases and by the thousands on forced marches from their hunting grounds to government reservations, up to about 1860, artists showed Indians as threats to white life. Among paintings illustrating this attitude toward the Indian, the seminal work is John Vanderlyn's 1804 The Murder of Jane McCrea (Fig. 92).⁵ Here the Indian is portrayed as a menacing figure, as was the case in the actual event. The Tory Jane McCrea, traveling though hostile territory to join her fiancé, had been assigned an Indian escort by the British. Her murder by that same escort became a cause célèbre. The incident, which took place at the outset of the Revolutionary War on July 27, 1777, turned many against the British. Although a Tory, Jane McCrea came to symbolize American womanhood imperiled; and the British were castigated for

taking brutal savages into their service. In 1804, Vanderlyn depicted the incident at the behest of Joel Barlow, who included the murder in his epic poem, The Columbiad. Originally, Barlow intended eight illustrations for his poem. However, Vanderlyn, the second artist of three whom Barlow approached, completed only this canvas. In Vanderlyn's painting, which was exhibited at the Paris Salon of 1804, Jane McCrea is represented as a hapless frontier Niobid at the mercy of two fierce and virile specimens of the Indian race. Her pale beauty and state of dishabille stand in sharp contrast to the brawny strength of the dark Indian mercenaries.

At the time John Vanderlyn painted The Murder of Jane McCrea, Indians were regarded as a hostile people threatening peace-loving white settlers. And in sparsely populated areas, Indians continued to terrorize settlers for some time. Several artists suggested the Indians' strength by showing them as aggressors who would hold captive white women and sometimes children. In 1827 and 1828, Thomas Cole painted two versions of the scene from The Last of the Mohicans where Cora Munro is threatened by the Huron Magua, alias Renard Le Subtil (Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford; and Van Pelt Library, University of Pennsylvania). Asher B. Durand, in 1846, painted Indian Rescue (private collection), a work in which two woodsmen come upon a woman and child taken by Indians. In John Mix Stanley's The Osage War Dance of 1845 (National Collection of Fine Arts, Smithsonian Institution),

a woman and child are surrounded by dancing Indians. A woman and child are captives in Bingham's Captured by the Indians of 1848 (private collection). Although such situations did occur, these compositions were more than factual pictorial records. They presented Indians as implacable foes so that the white man could better justify his often brutal reprisals. By depicting Indians as the victimizers of white women and children, these artists recreated "situations" that were in accord with the white man's need to retaliate. Toward mid-century, however, a change in the cast of characters signaled a shift in the balance of power. For now the Indian was shown in a losing contest with the white man.

In the period just before the Mexican War, when American expansionists were tauting theories of Anglo-Saxon supremacy and racial destiny, the Indian began to appear as the imperiled party.⁶ The offensive stance against the white man was exchanged for a defensive one. Two paintings of trappers and Indians by Charles Deas serve as signposts marking the change in the Indian's situation.

In his curious The Death Struggle of 1845, Deas concocted a veritable cliff hanger--the visual equivalent of the tall tales of the period (Fig. 93). Judging from the visual evidence, the trapper and one of his Indian attackers will go over the cliff together.⁷ The Art Union awarded this work as a lottery prize in 1845, and in the following year it appeared as an engraving to illustrate a story of

the same title written by Henry William Herbert for the Illustrated Magazine. In Herbert's narrative, a certain mountain man named Mike Carson believed Indians were emptying his traps: "Jest as I thought," muttered Carson-- "arter my traps agin, by G--! The lazy thieving hounds, but I'll fix 'em." ⁸ He was wrong, the reader discovers. A white vagabond had emptied Mike's traps. But Mike, blinded to the real evidence by his bigotry, pursues the Indians right to the edge of a cliff. Whether Deas' painting preceded the story or was derived from it we do not know. But in any case, The Death Struggle ostensibly serves as an illustration while transmitting a subliminal set of messages in no way related to the tale. The choice of a white horse for the white man anticipates latter-day cowboy movies in which the heroes wear white hats, the villains black. And in exaggerating the ugliness of the Indians, Deas falls back on the time-honored tradition whereby those designated malevolent are caricatured.

Conveying the impression of Indian savagery and dignifying the trapper's activities was the whole thrust of a lost work by Deas for which we have a description published in The Reveitte (February 7, 1847). ⁹ The picture, entitled Trapper and created two years after The Death Struggle, represents a mounted trapper poised on a mountain platform and framed against a stormy sky. The reader is told that this Rocky Mountain man is ready to meet any "hostile surprise." The Indian's presence is

implied rather than given, as the suggestively written review indicates: "directly in the solitary wayfarer's path lies a skull, bearing in its cloven front the mark of savage murder." Here the Indian, although an aggressor, is moved off-stage. The gloomy, dramatic setting and the thrill of a threatening situation are the means by which Deas stages the trapper's glorification. "The whole picture conveys at a glance the lonely, perilous and daring character of the western trapper," the reviewer concludes.

The irony is that, as Henry Nash Smith has demonstrated, the western trapper was himself a fairly savage creature.¹⁰ But in the nineteenth century it was the Indian whose barbarous activities were so labeled in order to justify his elimination. Thus an advocate of Manifest Destiny could write on the eve of the Mexican War: "The Mexican race now see in the fate of the aborigines of the north, their own destiny. They must amalgamate or be lost in the superior vigor of the Anglo-Saxon race, or they must utterly perish."¹¹ The "inevitable" demise of the Indian is represented outright in Mark Robert Harrison's Trapper's Encounter of 1867 (Fig. 94), where the trapper, looking down at the dead Indian, has clearly triumphed.

An alternate iconographic solution for alluding to the death of the Indian, as Rena Coen has amply demonstrated, was to depict the buffalo hunt. In such scenes, painted as early as 1825, artists like Peter Rindisbacher, George Catlin, Charles Wimar, F.O.C. Darley and John Mix Stanley

may have begun to equate the fate of the vanishing buffalo
with that of the Indian: ¹² both were, in the words of
Catlin, "wasting away at the approach of civilized man." ¹³
After the Civil War, we shall see the symbolic buffalo
hunt rendered with heightened theatricality or combined
with yet other iconographic programs.

The peace at Appomattox marked the last phase in the
Indian's decimation. The industrial energy that had flowed
into the war effort was diverted into the rail lines and
engines that pushed across hunting grounds. And this last
drive to close the frontier was soon completed. On May 10,
1869, the tracks of the Central Pacific and the Union
Pacific were joined at Promontory Point, Utah. Thus
William Gilpin's 1846 advocacy of western expansion ("the
untransacted destiny of the American people is to subdue
the continent--to rush over this vast field to the Pacific
Ocean") was no longer a prophet's dream.

The construction of a network of railroads, and the
deployment of Union troops to protect them, closed the
Indians' open range. This development, in turn, generated
novel formulas for indicating the Indians' fate. The
traditional symbolism of Indian and buffalo was expanded
to include the iron horse. The train came to stand for the
white man's progress in territorial conquest; the buffalo
became the Indian's surrogate; the Indian acted out his
own doom. Only one painting that employs the three symbols

together has come to the author's attention. In the more common pattern, the symbols appeared in two basic combinations: that of the Indian and the train, or of the Indian and the buffalo.

Even before the transcontinental rails were joined, Theodor Kaufman depicted the Indian and the train in an image designed to justify the white man's hostility. His composition of 1867, Railway Train Attacked by Indians,¹⁴ pitted the Indian against the white man's engine (Fig. 95). In a most resourceful use of one-point perspective, Kaufman made the train's light the center from which the tracks projected as orthogonal lines. Where the orthogonals should have achieved their fullest width, there lurked Indians removing track. Though not equipped to invent and manufacture trains, Indians were equal to the task of derailing them. They thus constitute an obvious danger in a new, technological context.

By 1875, when the Italian-born Domenico Tojetti painted The Progress of America, the "untransacted destiny"¹⁵ of western expansion had been accomplished (Fig. 96). His canvas registered this victorious fact by demoting the Indian and promoting the train. In his composition, America (an allegorical beauty gripping the reins of her chariot) rides diagonally across a landscape. She is attended by female personifications of art and architecture, music, medicine, agriculture and learning. From the background behind these figures a train emerges. The train, an end

product of the white man's learning, makes further technological advances possible and is a symbol for real rather than allegorical progress. Tojetti enhances the train's symbolic importance by locating it in sunlight on the righthand side of the canvas. By contrast, the Indians are placed in the dimly lit area to America's left; and they occupy this side with the buffalo, who shares their destiny.

To combine the Indian in a composition with the white man's iron horse was to demonstrate conquest by a technological power. To put him in the company of the buffalo, who from the period of the Civil War had faced extinction, was also a way of representing the Indian's inevitable demise. Large numbers of buffalo were killed, first to feed Union troops, later to feed the gangs building the railroads, and finally for the value of their hides. By the 1870s, therefore, the archaic Indian-buffalo hunt had become symbolic rather than actual.

Thus Henry N. Cross' Tables Turned of 1879, an ostensible scene of the buffalo hunt, in fact shows how untenable the Indian's situation had become (Fig. 97). Cross, who studied with Rosa Bonheur, knew better than most Americans the conventions of realistic animal genre. But here he chose to heighten the drama beyond natural probability. An Indian is being forced over a cliff by the quarry he usually pursues and which normally sustains him. ¹⁶ Whereas thirty years earlier, in Charles Deas' The Death Struggle,

the Indian was driving the white man to the cliff's edge-- and thus giving cause for the necessity of his elimination-- now the Indian has allowed himself to be maneuvered into a hopeless position on his own hunting ground. And since Indians, before they had guns, sometimes hunted the buffalo by driving them over a cliff, Cross' title becomes even more pertinent.

In the same spirit, but more grandly and subtly conceived, is Albert Bierstadt's The Last of the Buffalo (Fig. 98). Like Cross, Bierstadt chose to depict the Indian hunting the buffalo as of old, with his archaic weapons.¹⁷ He was ambitious for this composition, which exists in two large versions and in small oil studies.¹⁸

For one oil sketch, the artist conceived a scene that corresponds to the title of the finished version. A mounted Indian sinks his long spear between the shoulder blades of a buffalo (Fig. 99). But, as can be determined from more finished oil sketches, Bierstadt was working toward an ambiguous situation in which the Indian was menaced by the beast he pursued. For one oil sketch that varied the central action, he showed the Indian spearing the buffalo, and the animal retaliating by driving his horns into the Indian's mount.¹⁹ This motif was retained in all the later versions, the differences now being in the addition of more Indians and buffalo. In another finished sketch, the artist included a second Indian riding to the assistance of the first.²⁰ For the large version now in the Whitney Gallery of

Western Art (Cody, Wyoming), two Indians ride in to help their endangered brother (Fig. 100). Then, for the final and largest version (Fig. 98), Bierstadt flanked the Indian with still more comrades. But now they come from a greater distance, and are equidistant from a second enraged buffalo preparing to charge from the opposite side. Lest the viewer be in any doubt that this is a combat to the death for all participants, Bierstadt places in the foreground not only buffalo skulls and dead buffalo, but a fallen Indian. This ostensible genre scene is, then, an epitaph in panoramic form which might be more appropriately titled The Last of the Indian and the Buffalo.

Albert Bierstadt submitted The Last of the Buffalo for exhibition at the Paris Exposition of 1889. But, to his astonishment, it was rejected by the Americans on the selection committee. Embittered, the artist told a reporter: "Why my picture was rejected I, of course, do not know. I have endeavored to show the buffalo in all his aspects and depict the cruel slaughter of a noble animal now almost extinct." ²¹ This is a strange statement coming from an artist who had attempted, in version after version, to depict the buffalo hunt as an even contest between man and beast. He surely knew that the "cruel slaughter" he mentions (but does not depict) did not take place in the Indian's buffalo hunt where the animals were slain only as they were needed for subsistence. Perhaps the artist's

statement was intended to camouflage the more complex meaning of his canvas: both the buffalo and the Indian were being destroyed.²²

The American attitude toward the Indian was, to be sure, not entirely one-sided, so that the Indian was not always portrayed as the aggressor. In an endeavor to record the vanishing folkways of the Indian, the government commissioned artists to portray all aspects of his life, including his burial customs. In this spirit Seth Eastman executed an Indian Burial (1848, location unknown); and John Mix Stanley, in his Chinook Burial Grounds, rendered with anthropological exactitude an Indian tree burial (Fig. 101). Similarly, the more perceptive knew that to represent the Indian as a brute savage was unfair. An editorial written for The Crayon in 1856 protested the tendency to represent the Indian "hung about with skulls, scalps, and the half-devoured fragments of the white man's carcass." Then it went on to praise the Indian: "brave, honest, eminently truthful, and always thoroughly in earnest, he stands grandly apart from all the other known savage life."²³

The favorable attitude expressed in The Crayon reflects a counter-tendency that Roy Harvey Pearce has observed in literature and public statements as well. But it was a counter-tendency born out of guilt over the fate Americans had imposed on the Indians. This guilt found expression in the celebration of the Indian as a noble savage.²⁴

Laments for the fate of the noble savage also can be sorted into iconographic groups. A work without iconographic sequel is William Beard's Lo the Poor Indian (Fig. 102). Beard comments on the Indian's destiny in the title; and the glowering sky the Indian contemplates intimates his end. More common are paintings celebrating the "Last of...", as in Thomkin H. Matteson's The Last of his Race (1847, New-York Historical Society), Jesse Talbot's Indian's Last Gaze (1860, private collection) and John Mix Stanley's Last of Their Race (c. 1860, private collection). In all three paintings, cliffs are used to indicate that there was a terminus to the Indian's stay in the white man's world.²⁵ Additionally, there is the type of the burial scene where a faithful squaw mourns her brave, as in Henry Farny's Mourning Her Brave (1881, private collection). Not to be outdone, George de Forest Brush, in Mourning Her Brave (1883, Tulsa, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art), locates his squaw near the body which is suspended over a snow-covered cliff! Although it might be argued that these portrayals are sympathetic to the Indian's suffering, it should be noted that guilt about the noble savage is but the reverse of the coin: hatred for the ignoble savage. Furthermore, in all the imagery discussed to this point, death visits the male of the species. For, of course, it was the male Indian who threatened the white man's progress.

But perhaps the most telling proof that the white man carried a double burden of guilt and hatred is to be found

in two paintings, Cassilly Adams' Custer's Last Fight and Henry Farny's The Captive, created in the final stage of the Indian's containment (Figs. 103 and 104). Here the Indian returns for an encore as the ignoble savage. In the case of Adams' work it might be argued that history conspired to provide an event which dramatized the Indian's barbarism.²⁶ But one suspects that it was because this battle was exceptional for the wholesale slaughter and mutilation of white troops that no fewer than twenty artists were attracted to the subject. From among these, Adams is exceptional for making the most of the contrast between white heroism and Indian brutality. On the panels of a triptych measuring twelve by thirty-two feet, he staged Custer's ignominious defeat in a way that excited sympathy for Custer and his small number of encircled troops. And lest the viewer miss the point, Adams splayed across the foreground plane dead white soldiers--some stripped, some scalped, some with their skulls smashed in. Completed in about 1885, Adams took his painting on tour, then sold it to a St. Louis saloon keeper, John G. Furber. As an assist to proper viewing, Furber supplied his customers with a four page pamphlet which described in detail the different forms of mutilation practiced by participating Indian tribes.²⁷ Thereafter, Custer's Last Fight was acquired by the brewing firm of Anheuser-Busch who, for publicity purposes, commissioned Otto Becker to execute a chromolithograph of the Adams' painting. Beginning in

1896, the chromolithograph, carrying the name of Annheuser-Busch, was distributed by the firm to saloons throughout the country. By 1942, Annheuser-Busch calculated that as many as 150,000 copies of the large print (32.X 41 13/16 inches) had been dispersed to the purveyors who served America's thirsty.

Another work to dwell upon Indian brutality was Henry Farny's The Captive. Farny, together with Eugene Smalley, had been sent by Century magazine into the Montana territory to illustrate a story on Indian life.²⁸ The scenes Farny supplied were standard genre. Then, for the American Art Association exhibition of watercolors in 1885, he submitted a large gouache, The Captive. Presumably this scene was also the product of the 1884 trip. A Plains Indian sits watch over a white prisoner staked to the ground. What Farny emphasizes is the Indian's calculated cruelty. For the Indian, with his white man's gun, watches his victim suffer from exposure. As Denny Carter has rightly observed, it is highly unlikely that at a time when the Plains Indians were almost totally subjugated, Farny could have witnessed such a scene.²⁹ He certainly could not have done so in safety. He appears to have concocted for Eastern viewers a propagandistic image purporting to be reportage. Subsequently, The Captive appeared as an illustration to the article "Staked Out," in the February 13, 1886 issue of Harper's Weekly. The article, which inveighed against the Plains Indians' cruelty toward white prisoners, ended:

Unless the barbarians elect to murder him in some way, or have need of the lariat pins when they break up that camp, the next of his race to reach that spot will find his buzzard bones yet 'staked out.'

Yet even without this gloss, Farny's image would enlist the reader's sympathies--all the more so since the victim recalls the position of Christ on the Cross.

But in point of historical fact it was, of course, the Indian who was the victim, incapable of surviving in a white man's world. And his decimation was vindicated in paintings through an iconography which expressed the death of the Indian as a necessity.

The death of the Indian, then, was inevitable. But ever since the Jacksonian era, American painting had obeyed a pervasive impulse to suppress death's actuality by avoiding too overt a representation of it. In the case of Indian death imagery, we have seen an interesting pattern of evolution. Only occasionally was the Indian's death portrayed sympathetically. And eschewed altogether were scenes depicting the true nature of the Indian's plight. Since, for instance, the Indian could not be integrated peacefully into the work force, he would steal away, rebel, or as a last resort, commit suicide. Yet no where is this record kept in American art. One comes to suspect, therefore, that as in the case of Civil War death imagery, the Indians' mass death was too overwhelming for either the artists or the public to confront outright in art.

* * *

That death imagery is a sensitive index of cultural attitudes has been demonstrated. Yet there remains one other area of proof. In certain paintings and prints of Winslow Homer, death (or imminent death) occurs in a context that by implication reserves racial and sexual supremacy for the white male. The unraveling of Homer's meaning begins when one asks who dies, in what environment and under what circumstances. As we shall see, Homer's strategy was to present situations of peril in or near water as though they were scenes taken from his immediate experience.

Significantly, there is little death imagery at the beginning of Homer's career and under conditions that produced a great, bloody spectacle. William Fletcher Thompson, Jr., who has made the most thorough study of Civil War imagery to date, set the record straight when he observed that Homer was "frankly not interested in doing combat scenes."³¹ His early reports from the Civil War were essentially skillful propaganda images. In both A Bayonet Charge and A Cavalry Charge, a few dying bodies lie scattered off-center without claiming attention, while Northern troops press across the compositional field from left to right (Figs. 81 and 90). Minimizing the fact of death even as he depicts military action, Homer presents the death of men in the Civil War as neither poignant nor notable. And nowhere does he more than hint at the horror of the war he must have glimpsed as an artist-correspondent for Harper's Weekly.

Just as Winslow Homer was capable of conceiving war imagery where little death occurred in order to further a propagandistic end, so, for reasons to be discussed below, he also conceived symbolic scenes in which death comes to women in a watery setting. Two component elements in the compositions about to be discussed signal that Homer was not concerned to portray straightforward genre. Invariably men dominate, playing the active role in scenes where women succumb because they lack the requisite physical strength.

A year before the Civil War ended, Homer accepted an assignment to illustrate a short tale of Gothic horror, M.E. Braddon's "The Cold Embrace."³² The primary characters are an artist and his betrothed, whom he jilts. Subsequently, her father decides she should marry another. But she drowns herself on the eve of her wedding. By coincidence, the artist is in the neighborhood at the time. Informed of a drowning, he announces that he would like to see the body, because "suicides are always handsome." He arrives on the scene and withdraws the cover to reveal the bare-armed, bare-breasted body of his betrothed. And ever after, the artist is haunted by her ghostly visits. These culminate, during a festive ball, in a "cold embrace," to which he succumbs first in madness, then in death. The story offers several possible scenes to the illustrator. Yet Homer made a characteristic choice. Bypassing the actual suicide, the ghostly visitations, and the dramatic climax of the chilling

embrace, he depicted the moment when the artist looks down on the drowned woman. His illustration takes up Braddon's dramatic line, "He sees...the rigid features--the marble arms--the hands crossed on the cold bosom (Fig. 105)." In retrospect, Homer's choice of scenes seems prophetic: it anticipates his subsequent images of drowned women.

The next time Homer portrayed a drowned woman was also as a consequence of an illustrating assignment. In April, 1873, the steamship Atlantic went aground off Halifax, Nova Scotia. An article in the April 19th issue of Harper's Weekly reported the wreck. After a lengthy rescue operation in which almost 3,000 passengers were removed, there remained only the chief officer, a boy, and a woman lashed to the rigging. A wave washed the boy off the ship, but he swam to shore. The chief officer was rescued and later recalled his last sight of the woman: "... [her body] was left in the rigging. It presented a ghastly and sickening sight--half naked, with eyes staring from their sockets, her mouth foaming, and with her hands sparkling with jewels." A second article, appearing a week later, exposed the mismanagement of the steamship company and the cowardice of the captain who left the ship before all the crew and passengers had been rescued. Homer's single illustration of the event was for this second article--a wood-engraving entitled The Wreck of the "Atlantic"--Cast Up by the Sea (Fig. 106).

In a preliminary drawing for his composition, Homer sketched a drowned woman who has been washed ashore.

Presumably, she is meant to allude to the woman on the Atlantic, for she still clutches a broken rope (Fig. 107). She is not, however, the woman left behind in the rigging, but rather a beautiful woman, unravaged in death. By thus rejecting the described horror of the event and the contorted features of the victim, Homer rejected the specific data of a news story in favor of a generalized image. What he retained for the wood-engraving was a universalized image of womanhood imperiled. And in complete disregard of the historical circumstance, he shows the beautiful corpse washed ashore with one lone fisherman looking down at her much as the artist had looked down at his betrothed in The Cold Embrace.

Given the general character of Homer's work, one hardly expects eroticism to sound an obtrusive note. It is the more revealing, therefore, that a certain suppressed eroticism betrays itself in those scenes that deal with women in situations of helplessness. The theme first emerges in the two wood-engravings. Thus, for example, the degree of décolletage in Homer's illustration of The Cold Embrace is not called for in the story. Yet in an extra-narrative flourish, he attires the drowned woman in a peculiar outfit of corset and sleeves that reveals firm breasts down to the nipples. Three witnesses, exemplifying the three ages of man, stand upright over her recumbent body. Similarly, the woman in The Wreck of the Atlantic is

so displayed that a bit of leg, rounded hips and erect nipples are revealed to the fisherman. Again, the meditative man, who might have assumed other positions--seated or kneeling at the side of the corpse to express compassionate solicitude and engagement--stands over the body of the drowned woman. In both instances, then, Homer sets up a dichotomy between the female body, lying supine, unconscious and physically exposed, and the male whose commanding station is symbolized by verticality.

In the 1870s, Homer also treated the theme of women and water as straightforward genre for magazine illustrations. He showed them going to the beach, getting their ankles wet, floating on their backs, wringing their hair dry, even flirting with danger in the water (Fig. 108). Indeed, he was unusual in his time for so persistently favoring the subject of women bathing.

It was after the 1870s, however, that water increasingly became the focus of danger in Homer's major canvases. To men, it was an antagonist in a contest of strength and endurance. To women, it was a menacing environment with which they were ill-equipped to cope. This point is made dramatically enough in a painting of a rescue by breeches buoy which Homer was supposed to have witnessed in 1883 while visiting Atlantic City.³³ The new invention made it possible to remove passengers from a wreck on a buoy moved by pulleys connecting ship and shore. In Homer's painting,

The Life Line, an unconscious woman rides to safety in the arms of a man (Fig. 109). (A second etched version was actually titled Saved.)³⁴ The design was not arrived at immediately. In a preliminary drawing, the man's face was uncovered as if to divide the viewer's attention equally between the heroic sailor and the unconscious woman (Fig. 110). But for the finished canvas, Homer completely masked the man's already averted face. In this way he concentrated interest upon the woman being saved, a decision not lost on the critic Mariana Van Rensselaer. She was quick to perceive the contrast the artist wished to create between the woman's "blanched face," the "vigor of the sinews" of her rescuer, and the "tremendous rage" of the sea. And she went on to praise the artist for making the woman the main attraction.³⁵ But in correct Victorian fashion, Mrs. Van Rensselaer did not assist the viewer to see what the artist wished repressed. Once again, an unconscious woman is on display because her water-drenched garments cleave to her body. Now, however, the viewer becomes the voyeur.

Concurrently, Homer undertook a series of studies, both in the graphic media and in a canvas, which included the full cycle of women bathing, women drowning, and women saved--all of which made some reference to an endangered condition. For the canvas Undertow, the artist decided on four figures: two unconscious women saved by two stalwart men (Fig. 111).³⁶ However, Homer also conceived these same women as drowned. There was an etching, now unlocated,

which according to a contemporary description showed the two women together over the caption Till Death Do Us Part (Fig. 112).³⁷ The young women, dressed in bathing costumes for wading, have gotten into dangerous waters. They cling to each other as terrified drowning victims do before dragging their would-be rescuer down. In a preliminary drawing, which may have served for the etching as well as for the painting, Homer also attempted to combine the motif of the two drowning women with the figure of a male lifesaver (Fig. 113). He next proceeded to relate the drowning figures more convincingly to their rescuer (Figs. 114, 115). And he rejected two alternate compositions in which either the male was too dominant or one of the women was eliminated (Figs. 116, 117).³⁸ For the canvas, Homer chose the anecdotal title Undertow to explain how the unwary bathers got into such a predicament. But there is something unresolved and problematic about the painted version. Although rescued, the women still cling to each other as the drowning do, as though they had only each other. Understandably, then, when the painting was engraved for reproduction in the English periodical Tatler (August 3, 1910), the line underneath read: "And in their death they were not divided."

A final time, too, Homer introduced an erotic element into the theme of the woman imperiled. Significantly, he rejected for Undertow that drawing in which a woman is held

upright between two male rescuers (Fig. 117). Instead, he settled upon an arrangement of figures in which one of the stalward males can look down on the two comely, unconscious women. And although the situation and the dramatis personae have changed, two elements have remained from Homer's seminal conception for The Cold Embrace: men in upright positions dominate a situation of women supine and prone.

Winslow Homer, then, conceived two very different roles for women depending upon whether they were on shore or in water. At water's edge, strong women may stand stoically waiting for their men to return. And surely any viewer contemplating Homer's images of fisherwives understands that the artist shows ample admiration for these women, their strength and valor. Indeed, Homer admires valor in general and imputes it to the whole human race. But in his art it is men who take the greater risks. Thus, the complements to scenes where women stand waiting on shore are those where men are shown in dangerous situations on boats at sea. But where Homer depicts a boat that has capsized, the men swim to shore. In the year he visited Atlantic City and witnessed the rescue operation that inspired The Life Line, he executed two studies in which men swim to shore, using a ship's boat as a buoy (Figs. 118, 119). In the second role Homer conceived for women, they bathe or frolic in water, but they do not extricate themselves from dangerous situations as capable swimmers.

And because women generally were not taught to swim, the possibility of drowning is implicit whenever he shows them immersed.

In water, then, women become the weaker vessel, and one could argue that this way of indicating a woman's lesser strength conforms to reality. But it should be recalled that in the nineteenth century women swimming, drowning or being saved are exceptional subjects in art. Therefore, Homer must have sought out this environment in certain instances to emphasize woman's vulnerability.

Homer, in his creation of an ostensible genre motif, varied a popular nineteenth-century literary theme: the woman whose end is staged on water or at water's edge. Ophelia, the Christian Martyr, Virginia, Elaine and the Lady of Shalott were favorites. Though almost forgotten today, one of the most popular American works of the late nineteenth century was Toby Rosenthal's Elaine (Fig. 120). Viewers stood on line for hours in Boston and San Francisco to glimpse the corpse of the beautiful Elaine on the bark that carried her to Camelot.³⁹ John LaFarge painted the Lady of Shalott floating downstream to Camelot (Fig. 121). And Carl Marr included a drowned woman as one of two figures in his The Mystery of Life or Ahasuerus, the Wandering Jew⁴⁰ (Fig. 122). Here Ahasuerus turns voyeur and enjoys a moment of quiet contemplation. What distinguishes Homer's compositions from those of Rosenthal, LaFarge and Marr is the interjection of a strong masculine presence.

For Homer intentionally structured situations to contrast the frailty of women to the greater strength of men.

Interestingly, the imminent peril and poignant death of a man does not become an important theme in Homer's art until the 1890s, and then the man was black. After the 1880s, the black man sometimes appears in Homer's art in perilous situations where, unlike the white man, he is on the losing side of the struggle. The death of a black man occurs in a watercolor titled After the Hurricane, Bahamas (Fig. 123), executed in the year Homer completed The Gulf Stream, his last major composition on the theme of the perils at sea. (Fig. 124).⁴¹ In The Gulf Stream, the black is shown adrift in a boat surrounded by four sharks.

Altering the canvas after its initial exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 1900, Homer added a schooner on the horizon, changed the direction of the waterspout and made the boat more dilapidated (Fig. 125).⁴² Perhaps these alterations were prompted by criticisms communicated to the artist the following year by M. Knoedler, his dealer. The imperiled situation of the black had agitated gallery-goers. Their objections drew from Homer two replies, one of which apparently was never sent:

The criticisms of The Gulf Stream by old women and others are noted. You may inform these people that the Negro did not starve to death. He was not eaten by the sharks. The waterspout did not hit him. And he was rescued by a passing ship which is not shown in the picture.⁴³

The letter he did send is well known. Regretting that the painting required any description, he nevertheless provided one:

The boat & shark are outside matters of very little consequence. They have been blown out to sea by a hurricane. You can tell these ladies that the unfortunate negro who now is so dazed & parboiled, will be rescued & returned to his friends and home, & ever after live happily.⁴⁴

Clearly, the artist had painted his kind of picture, then furnished the ladies an explanation to satisfy them-- but with impatience and irony. And despite these "explanations," Homer has left the fate of the black in The Gulf Stream deliberately ambiguous. But that fate is settled in the watercolor of 1899 which, by virtue of its date and similar subject matter, can be understood as a related composition. However, his contemporaries did not need the watercolor to understand Homer's meaning. On the occasion of the purchase of The Gulf Stream by the Metropolitan Museum, the critic for The New York Times (December 20, 1906) anticipated the black man's death in an elemental struggle:

As one approaches the figure of a powerful negro is seen on the waveswept deck, and on a nearer view a school of sharks is seen lazily playing about the hull waiting for their living prey to be swept overboard... This is a powerful and superb painting, showing the cruelty of the elements and the elemental creatures of the sea....

The critic's choice of the words "living prey" to

describe the black man is uncannily compatible with Homer's meaning. For one of the artist's preoccupations was the failure of the weak to survive in elemental situations. This preoccupation is confirmed in certain hunting scenes which are transformed from narrative genre to a kind of ritual game where, generally speaking, the cards are stacked against the animal. And as in the scenes of human survival, water provides the symbolic milieu in which the struggle occurs.

In a canvas of 1892, Hound and Hunter, Homer depicted a sport harshly criticized for its cruelty at the time: the killing of deer after hounding them to water (Fig. 126)⁴⁵. Because deer are fleet of foot, hunting them on land requires great skill. But if driven by dogs into water, their heads can be forced underwater by grabbing at the antlers. That is what takes place in Homer's canvas. And, as in the case of The Gulf Stream seven years later, Homer framed an explanation to disarm those critics whose Victorian sensibilities would be offended by his brutal realism:

The critics may think that Deer is alive but he is not--otherwise the boat & man would be knocked high & dry. I can shut the deer's eyes, & put pennies on them if that will make it better understood.

They will say that the head is the first to sink--that is so. This head has been under water & from the tail up has been carefully recovered in order to tie the head to the end of the boat. It is a simple thing to make a man out an Ass & Fool by starting from a mistaken idea. So anyone thinks this deer alive is wrong.⁴⁶

It is demonstrable, however, that Homer is protesting too much. Gordon Hendricks, bringing together for the first time both the visual material and the documents for this series, has pointed out that the artist was not telling the truth about what he painted. For the hunter's hand is guiding the deer's head more forcefully than is necessary to keep it from sinking.⁴⁷

Two watercolor studies of the same year add another dimension to the deer hunting theme. One features the death of a deer, the other a doe (Figs. 127, 128). Each is a lone figure in its respective composition and in both instances their confrontation with death is brought close to the foreground plane, thus excluding any other element from the viewer's focus. However, there is an important difference in the moment portrayed: in the composition with the doe, she has already fallen; in that of the male, he is terrified by the pursuit, but not yet shot down.

Homer appears to have been of two minds in his attitudes toward hunting as a sport. According to Philip Beam, the artist was an ardent fisherman but rarely hunted.⁴⁸ He loved animals and was a shrewd and patient observer of them. But, concomitantly, he may have conceived of hunting as a translation of natural law into a game of death which he accepted as an eternal verity.

The artist also conceived two compositions in which animals act as predators. One, the Mink Pond, may have been

inspired by the writings of Charles Darwin, for the real subject is the food chain (Fig. 129). All the drama in this small watercolor evolves around the order in which butterfly, frog and sun perch will be consumed by the mink who feed at the pond.⁴⁹ The other, Homer's Fox Hunt, in which crows close in on a fox, is a representation of the natural order disturbed by extreme conditions (Fig. 130). Carrion crows do not normally harry a fox, unless they are starving and the fox is forced out of his lair to forage at the end of an especially long, harsh winter. Significantly,⁵⁰ it is this unusual situation which is portrayed by Homer.

Water appears, one last time, as the symbolic milieu for the occurrence of death in Homer's penultimate painting, Right and Left (Fig. 131). In order to observe the positions and movements of wild ducks being shot, the artist went out for days on a boat with a man who carried a double-barreled⁵¹ shotgun. The resultant composition of ducks falling into the water, causes two different responses in viewers. By bringing the ducks close to the foreground and by relegating the hunters, the boat, and the blazing gun to the background plane, the artist inevitably invites some to identify with the victims.⁵² They may be reminded that Homer's care to depict both sexes--the drabber plumage for the female, the more vivid plumage and marking near the beak for the drake--corresponds to the approach of the great⁵³ artist-naturalist, John James Audubon. But the irony is

that Audubon's intent was to capture birds in life, Homer's to record the moment of death.

Hunters respond to Right and Left very differently. They know at a glance what a contemporary knew when he came into Knoedler Galleries, saw the painting and announced: "Right and Left," so naming the painting.⁵⁴ For the most popular gun to hunt birds at the time was the side-by-side, right-and-left pattern, always referred to as the double-barreled shotgun. It had two barrels and two triggers. In shooting, the trigger finger pulls the forward trigger first, firing the right barrel. The hunter can then re-aim, or stop, or in one continuous motion fire both barrels almost simultaneously. Hence comes the expression "let him have it with both barrels"--meaning with overwhelming force. In Homer's composition, as in the watercolor studies of the deer and doe, the female is the more endangered of the species. The hardier drake, though apparently hit, is still in flight. The female is tumbling out of control. And because the artist brings the ducks up to the foreground plane, so that the viewer has no choice but to confront them in the act of dying, he departs from the rules of conventional hunting scenes.

Although the evidence regarding Homer's death imagery is not complete, a hypothesis is worth entertaining; to wit, there are levels of meaning in Homer's work, expressed through manipulation of subject, that go far beyond genre

realism. For he allows only certain types of death to occur. Conspicuously absent from Homer's death scenes is the white male. Women and blacks do die: two young women and a young black drown in works related to major canvases (Undertow and The Gulf Stream), although in the canvases themselves Homer indicates the fates of these three more ambiguously. However, the symbolic value of these images is not affected by whether the victims will survive their present predicaments. What matters, rather, is their exposure to death. Where animals die, there appears to be a progressive change of attitude which can be charted chronologically. In the Mink Pond of 1891, the Hound and Hunter of 1892, and the Fox Hunt of 1893, Homer stands back to observe the struggle in nature. However, the watercolor studies of a deer and doe meeting their deaths at water's edge seem to take a new direction of gender differentiation, a direction given full scope in Homer's penultimate painting, Right and Left. Here the very title refers to the hunter's right barrel aimed at the male, the left at his mate. But both male and female share the same doom at the hands of armed men.

In the human realm, Homer's scenes tended to accentuate the distinction of gender and race by distinctness of fate. He appears at times to have perceived life as a fierce struggle which he symbolized by casting the ocean as the antagonist. Those equipped to survive the contest are

sailors, fishermen, hunters in canoes and hale, masculine swimmers. Young women and blacks are unequal to it. Homer, then, is significantly selective in the representation of those who go down to defeat in the struggle for life. Women are more often conceived in perilous circumstances in water. And when he pictures the possibility of a man being eaten in shark-infested waters, it is the meat of a black that the sharks may have an opportunity to dine on. Furthermore, such a conclusion does not hinge upon an interpretation, but on the observed fact.

While death does not feature large in Homer's oeuvre, those works which touch upon the theme reveal a marked choice in the selection of the victim. In certain images, Homer seems to reflect a susceptibility (perhaps unconscious) to racism and what is now commonly designated as sexism.⁵⁵ This attitude is not always betrayed in Homer's images of women and blacks--quite the contrary. In life situations where women and blacks are not directly involved in a manly contest with the sea, they may act the parts of steadfast watchers. However, one mark of a significant artist is his complexity. And as the subject of this study is death, so a different set of attitudes toward victims may be revealed when one poses the question: "Who actually dies or is most imperiled in Winslow Homer's death imagery?"

Two iconographic themes entered American death imagery from Europe after the Civil War. Neither is indigenously

American, nor central to the native artistic tradition. One is centuries old--the Crucifixion; the other is a characteristic nineteenth-century preoccupation--the peasant death scene. As pictorial themes, neither of these is reflective of American attitudes.

Thomas Eakins is exceptional among American artists for attempting a Crucifixion (Fig. 132). The Mosaic proscription of religious imagery was honored in Protestant America to such an extent that, relative to the European tradition, little religious imagery was produced.⁵⁶

Perhaps Eakins would not have undertaken such a subject, were it not for his friendship with Archbishop James Frederic Wood who presided over the seminary of St. Charles Borromeo in Overbrook, Pennsylvania, an important seminary for the training of young clerics in North America. The friendship began in 1876, the year Eakins started on the Archbishop's portrait (1876-77, Overbrook, Pennsylvania, St. Charles Borromeo Seminary). Another source of influence may have been the example set by his former teacher, Léon Bonnat, who in 1876 also had produced a Crucifixion (1876, Paris, Hôtel de Ville). Bonnat, responding to the spirit of nineteenth-century scientism and its dictum, "truth to fact," had nailed a cadaver to a cross in order to execute a particularly realistic Crucifixion.⁵⁷ Four years later, Eakins strapped his student J. Laurie Wallace to a cross and painted his model in direct sunlight.

How great was Bonnat's example as an influence on Eakins is moot.⁵⁸ Of import is that both works conform to the dictates of modern scientism and that, additionally, Eakins' conception conforms to the Northern European tradition that began in the late Middle Ages for representing the Crucified bowed and humbled in death.⁵⁹

The theological doctrine underlying such representations --the suffering of Christ as a prerequisite for the redemption of mankind that was promulgated after the Millenium by mystic saints--would have been well understood by a theologian like Archbishop Wood. Not surprisingly, therefore, the seminarians accepted the loan of the Crucifixion from Eakins and kept it at Overbrook for many years. Nor were his most astute secular critics uncomprehending. "What he has done primarily has been to conceive the Crucifixion as an actual event," wrote the critic for the Telegraph on November 1, 1882. And he continued: "Certainly, if that event meant all that Christendom believes and has for centuries believed it to mean, it would seem that, if it is to be represented at all, the most realistic treatment ought to be the most impressive." However, the public was not moved on this account to commission other works in this vein from Eakins; and no artist in Eakins' Philadelphia circle was inspired to follow his example.

No more reflective of American attitudes to death are a small group of peasant death scenes produced by Americans

working abroad. We are indebted to Jan Bialostocki's recent study, Vom heroischen Grabmal zum Bauernbegräbnis for demonstrating that this genre is a pan-European phenomenon with political and social ramifications.⁶⁰ Early examples appear in Germany in the 1820s and include Caspar David Friedrich's views of humble graveyards. As a representative sampling readily indicates, the genre soon proliferated to include the hours before death, as in Mathew Lawless' The Sick Call (Fig. 133); death coming to the peasant at his work, as in Jean François Millet's Death and the Peasant (1851, Copenhagen, Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek);⁶¹ sitting watch over the corpse, as in Charles Cottet's The People of Ouessant Watching Over a Dead Child (1899, Paris, Musee du Petit Palais); and the funeral, as in Gustave Courbet's well-known Burial at Ornans (1849, Paris, Louvre).

Interestingly, there were on view in America two works by European artists which celebrated the plight of the downtrodden peasant. The one, Henry Wallis' Stone-breaker (1857, Birmingham, City Museum Gallery) was included in a major showing of European painting at the National Academy of Design in 1859.⁶² Yielding to the land he has been wresting from the rock, Wallis' stone-breaker lies dead on the job. For the exhibition, the painting was elucidated by Carlyle's Sartor Resartus, which includes the lines:

...thou wert our conscript on whom the
 lot fell; and fighting our battles, wert
 so marred. For in thee, too, lay a God
 created form, but it was not to be
 unfolded; encrusted must it stand with
 the thick adhesions and defacements of
 labor; and thy body, like thy soul, was
 not to know freedom--

The other, Carl Hubner's Death of the Poacher, was intended as a satire on the injustice of forest rights or manorial privileges (Fig. 134). Here a cottar, who has dared shoot a boar, is shot in turn by the lord's forest ranger, yet summons the strength to struggle back to his cottage door. The Death of the Poacher, one of the paintings in the Düsseldorf Gallery collection, was published in Gems from the Düsseldorf Gallery (1863) and accompanied by a poem of John Savage that concluded:

'Tis royal sport for king and court to hunt
 the grizzly boar:
 But woe unto the poor man who
 dares hunt him from the door. 63

The paintings by Wallis and Hubner are indicative of the resonance that the death of the peasant had as a subject for some Europeans. Both works point up the harshness and injustice in the life of those at the bottom of the social order. When, after the Civil War, American artists working abroad took up the subject of the death of the peasant, they did not address themselves to the peasant's exploitation. They favored scenes where death occurred in the bosom of the family. Their familial tragedies in

exotic settings are roughly equivalent to certain Indian genre scenes, like the squaw mourning her brave. And these artists may have acted under a similar "anthropological" impulse to record the folkways of the European peasant for American viewers before the peasants passed out of existence. Whatever their motivations, the resultant images, iconographically affiliated with the European tradition, cannot be construed as reflections of cultural attitudes toward death evolved in America and generated by the exigencies of life there.

Henry Mosler's The Return was painted in Europe for exhibition in the Salon of 1879 (Fig. 135).⁶⁴ Here, the son of a Breton peasant returns too late to receive the blessings of his dying mother. The priest, having shriven the mother, stands by to console the penitent. The Return recapitulates the scenario of the prodigal. But nothing arising out of the scenario necessitates its being transposed to a Breton setting. Conversely, nothing in Breton peasant life invites this theme; we are not meant to conclude that there are more prodigal sons in Brittany than elsewhere. Mosler was simply giving local color, through a punctilious reconstruction of a Breton interior, to an established iconographic theme. Furthermore, he depicts the peasant interior with the same penchant for exactitude found in the historical settings of contemporary artists like Georges Vibert and Ernest Meissonier. Moreover, in substituting the mother for the more usual father, Mosler is

not innovative, for Charles Gleyre had already made this substitution in his Le Retour de l'Enfant Prodigue of 1871-73 (Fig. 136).⁶⁵

Mosler's The Last Moments, a work of 1889, is also a pastiche (Fig. 177). Ostensibly, the artist depicts a dying Breton peasant surrounded by his family while the doctors consult among themselves. However, the formal structure of Mosler's scene borrows from a European precedent. It is adapted from one of Gustave Doré's illustrations for La Fontaine's Fables (1868, Fig. 138), a source from which Mosler had drawn before.⁶⁶ Mosler merely translated Doré's Les Medecins into a Breton setting, and in addition capitalized on the popularity of "Last Moment" scenes, an iconography then popular in Europe. Mosler's is the peasant variation on Ingres' painting of the death of Leonardo in the arms of Francis I, Lord Leighton's Death of Brunelleschi (1852, Kensington, Leighton House), Henry O'Neill's Last Moments of Raphael (1866, Bristol, City Art Gallery), or Henry Peach Robinson's famous 1858 photograph Fading Away.

Another peasant death scene, Robert Reid's Death of the First Born, is sufficiently generalized to represent many a peasant interior, not only the Norman one he supposedly portrayed (Fig. 139).⁶⁷ Consequently, the value of Reid's painting lies not in its observed data. Like Mosler, he participates in the European vogue for peasant death scenes, and specifically, the peasant child. For Reid's canvas is

reminiscent, in a general way, of Frank Holl's Hushed, where a mother with her back to the viewer, bends over a cradle holding a dead baby (Fig. 140).

The paintings of Reid and Holl point up another dimension to the genre of peasant death. Special attention was given to the death of the peasant child, with examples spanning a wide geographical area.⁶⁸ By century's end, the popularity of this genre within a genre might even tempt an artist to distort the truth of an observed situation. When, for example, the American artist Charles Fries painted Too Late, he offered to viewers certain stock elements: a shabby interior, a distraught mother, a dead child (Fig. 141). Even the doctor (arriving "too late" in Fries' conception) is reminiscent of European precedents, such as Hans Heyerdahl's The Dying Child (1882, location unknown) where the doctor bends over the cradle to listen to the child's faint breathing.⁶⁹ Because Too Late conforms so closely to European prototypes, those familiar with peasant death scenes might be tempted to place the interior of Too Late in Europe and to hypothesize for Fries a European sojourn. In reality, he was trained at the Cincinnati Art Academy and learned the European tradition at second hand through the teaching of Frank Duveneck, Robert Blum and Kenyon Cox. Moving with his family to Capistrano in 1896, he occupied an abandoned mission where his little daughter almost died of typhoid fever, save for the competent

ministrations of a trained nurse and doctor. ⁷⁰ Subsequently, Fries was inspired by the experience to produce a set-piece as nearly interchangeable with European models as possible. Given his choice of models, the artist rightly calculated that an unhappy ending was a prerequisite to the painting's success. To locals who knew the Fries family personally, the painting seemed a bit queer, perhaps. "I wouldn't have that picture in my home for fifty dollars a day," a certain Judge Bacon remarked to the artist-father. ⁷¹ But Fries, undaunted, presented the painting to the San Diego Museum.

There is evidence that Americans not educated in the sophisticated conventions of the European peasant genre still expected a death in the family to be rendered otherwise. Consider, for instance, the work of another artist-father, Edwin Romanzo Elmer. His posthumous mourning portrait of his daughter Effie, painted in 1889, is an end product of this indigenous genre (Fig. 14). The Elmers lived in a house Edwin had built before their marriage with their one adored child, Effie. After Effie's sudden death, her mother's grief was so extreme she could no longer bear ⁷² to see children and would not remain in the empty house. Before they moved away, however, Edwin Elmer took up brush and canvas to commemorate their life together. He painted Effie, her pets and toys, his wife and himself in mourning dress--all in front of their house. Like so

many other American artists in this study, Elmer attempted to mitigate death's finality, thereby exemplifying a characteristically American attitude.

Only one American artist, Albert Pinkham Ryder, successfully pushed the iconography of death beyond the limits of a particular genre in a search for symbols that had more universal significance. Therefore, it is Ryder who, both in The Race Track (Death on a Pale Horse) and The Dead Bird, provides an effective coda to the treatment of death in nineteenth-century American painting (Figs. 143 and 144). These two paintings become almost metaphorical equivalents for the experience of death.⁷³

A particular incident sparked Ryder's conception for The Race Track. In a letter of 1898 to Miss Marian Y. Bloodgood, the artist told of its genesis: "As to how I came to paint 'The Race Track'--it was rather an inspirational matter." Then followed an account of how Ryder became friendly with a waiter at his brother's hotel. During their acquaintance, the waiter lost his life savings betting on a horse and, in despair, committed suicide. "The fact formed a cloud over my mind that I could not throw off, and 'The Race Track' is the result," Ryder⁷⁴ concluded.

The losing horse, the horse's owner, the race, the amount lost, the weapon used for the suicide--all were

specified in the letter. What emerged on Ryder's canvas, however, was a spectral figure of Death riding clockwise (rather than the usual counter-clockwise) round the track. Death, in The Race Track, takes the place of the jockey and rides on a course that passes beyond the horizon line to suggest a track of infinite extension. Outside the track, where the rail is down, a serpent wends its way from a wedge of dark green water, the primordial element.

An abstract personification of Death on a horse is Ryder's signal that he intends to forge a link with a time-honored Western tradition. Beginning about 1000 A.D., and especially after the Black Death of 1348, the iconography of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse and Death on a Pale Horse evolved as solutions for giving visible form to the widespread expectation either of the world's end or of the elimination of large segments of the population in plague time.⁷⁵ Ryder reverses the sequence, starting from the death of one man, then gives to that death a universal significance.

A further key to Ryder's meaning is to be found in the serpent. "The huge reptile, writhing along conspicuously evident in the foreground, in no way adds to the tragic interest of the picture and measurably interferes with the immediate realization of its significance," objected Frederic Fairchild Sherman in 1820.⁷⁶ But Ryder must have made the serpent a prominent element for a reason. The

serpent's course around the outside of the track parallels Death's course on the track. Man's first equation of the serpent with pain and death occurs in Eden. Because at the serpent's urging Adam and Eve ate of the fruit, God cursed them: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return unto the graound; for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." At the very beginning of the Judeo-Christian myth the serpent was in league with death. Ryder, then, by restating this union, provides for his painting a symbolic connection of mythic import. Significantly, the rail is down where the serpent lurks, as though to indicate that here Death entered the world.

Roger Fry, writing in 1905 about The Race Track, perhaps came closest to intuiting Ryder's ultimate meaning when he observed that: "Death, the racer...has ridden down all riders and now is condemned to ride round for ever, deprived of the dear companionship of his enemy and victim,⁷⁷ man." Although Fry could not have known it, Ryder sometimes referred to his painting as The Race with Death.⁷⁸ If the artist thought of life as a race of no contest, then all there is, his painting tells us, is death.⁷⁹

Ryder's other canvas, a painting of a dead canary, is more simply consturcted than The Race Track. Here one element, occupying the whole canvas, conveys the experience of death. Yet, condensed as The Dead Bird is,⁸⁰ it too has a long iconographical lineage.

Beginning in Northern Baroque painting, dead birds were included in still life groupings where they were depicted as trophies of the hunt or as raw material for the cook. Concurrently, beginning in the works of artists like Gerard Dou, the death of a bird was analogized to the human condition. In the eighteenth century, both Jean-Baptiste Greuze and Benjamin West were heirs to this tradition.⁸¹ But it was the English artist Joseph Wright of Derby who introduced a feature that provides the connecting link to Ryder's conception. Rather than analogize the bird's death to the human condition, he conceived a situation where humans identify with the bird's predicament in death. Thus in his A Philosopher Showing an Experiment on the Air Pump of 1758, two little girls stand by in horror as a pet dove, removed from its cage and put into the air pump, is about to be deprived of oxygen. The following year, Wright's painting was published as a mezzotint by Boydell.

In America, the dead bird came to be used as once the skull had been. It transmitted the message: sum quod eris.⁸² Such was the expatriate George Boughton's conception for his Winter: The Ended Song in which a woman, wrapped in a mourning veil, stops to look down at a dead bird in her path (Fig. 145).⁸³ In addition, the dead bird was used as a motif to engender sympathy about death and dying. The sentimental result of this conception, which began with

Joseph Wright, was the funeral of a bird. An anonymous artist popularized the motif in a Currier and Ives lithograph, The Burial of the Bird, published between 1872 and 1874 (Fig. 146).⁸⁴ In an excess of zeal for anecdotal detail, he put in not only the mourners but a considerable amount of furniture: empty cage, toy wagon converted to bier, and a coffin already in place. Indeed, this effusive outpouring of emotions over the death of a bird became a target for Mark Twain's parody of Emmeline Grangerford's mourning art in Huckleberry Finn:

Another one was a young lady with her hair all combed up straight to the top of her head, and knotted there in front of a comb like a chair back, and she was crying into a handkerchief and had a dead bird laying on its back in her hand with its heels up, and underneath the picture it said 'I Shall Never Hear Thy Sweet Chirrup More Alas.'⁸⁵

In Ryder's small circle, his great friend and fellow artist Julian Alden Weir exhibited at the National Academy of Design in 1879 a painting entitled Children Burying a Bird (Fig. 147). Two young girls sadly watch a boy digging a grave for the bird which rests on a rock nearby. One is tempted to imagine that, for his composition, Ryder lifted the bird from Weir's painting to make it a separate composition--"a dead canary lovingly laid in a tomb of rock," as Duncan Phillips once described Ryder's painting.

There is a further connection to Weir. Sometime between 1892 and about 1907, Ryder sent Weir's sister Cora

a poem in which he imagines a canary wishing to be freed from its cage ("a bit of gold in woven wire," he writes) to return in flight to its nest before death. The last lines, meant perhaps to imitate the thrill of bird song, read:

O give me ere I die
 Liberty--Liberty--
 Sweet Sweet Sweet
 Lib Lib Lib Liberty⁸⁶

Although Ryder does not mention his own painting of a dead canary in his letter to Cora, it is possible that he composed the poem with it in mind.⁸⁷ What is certain is that for his canvas, Ryder departs from the more narrative renderings of other artists, to make his composition almost iconic. To this end, he conceives of the bird as a single element and gives few clues as to its temporal space. Just what the bird rests on is moot. The painting also is so self-contained that it lacks the usual reference to top and bottom.

A bird is a particularly eloquent symbol for death because its proper domain is the air and it never lies on the ground except in death. Like the skull, the bird speaks for the state of being dead. Ryder's dead canary, an authentic memento mori, can thus become a repository for Everyman's thoughts and feelings about life's end.

Notes: Chapter IV

1. See Roy Harvey Pearce, The Savages of America: A Study of the Indian and the Idea of Civilization, Baltimore, 1965, especially pp. 53-75.
2. James Sullivan, History of the District of Maine, Boston, 1795, p. 139.
3. J.D. Richardson, ed., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897, II, Washington, 1896-99, p. 520-21.
4. This dichotomy is elaborated by Pearce, The Savages of America.
5. For a detailed account of the conception of this painting, see Samuel Y. Edgerton Jr., "The Murder of Jane McCrea: The Tragedy of an American Tableau d'Histoire," The Art Bulletin, 47, 1965, pp. 481-92.
6. The need to justify retaliation had a long history. See Merle Curti, The Growth of American Thought, New York, 1943, p. 20: "When the conflict became particularly bloody, when the white men, hysterically fearful for their lives and for those of their women and children, indulged in brutal recriminations and even massacres, they found it necessary to justify their actions on moral and rational grounds. In their efforts to enslave the Indians the whites had already elaborated a rationale of white superiority. This rationale was now extended: the Indian was condemned as a savage incapable of becoming civilized and Christianized. He was, in the words of Cotton Mather, a rabid animal, a perfidious, bloody, cruel, a veritable devil in the flesh, an agent employed by Satan himself to overcome God's chosen people."
7. See Henry William Herbert, "The Death Struggle," New York Illustrated Magazine of Literature and Art, New York, 1846, pp. 289-94. The fullest account of Deas's activities is found in John Francis McDermott, "Charles Deas. Painter of the Frontier," The Art Quarterly, 13, 1950, pp. 293-311.
8. Herbert, "The Death Struggle," p. 292.
9. See McDermott, "Charles Deas," pp. 307-08. The quotations from The Reveitte that follow are to be found in McDermott's article.

10. See Henry Nash Smith, Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth, Cambridge, Mass., 1950, ch. VIII.
11. Quoted by Julius W. Pratt in "The Ideology of American Expansion," Essays in Honor of William E. Dodd, Chicago, 1935, p. 344. See also Richard Hofstadter, Social Darwinism in American Thought, Philadelphia, 1944, ch. 9, "Racism and Imperialism." Hofstadter points out that Americans, long involved with the Indian warfare and pro-slavery arguments, were thus thoroughly familiar with notions of racial superiority even before the introduction of a Social Darwinist rationale.
12. Scenes of the buffalo hunt by these artists are illustrated in Rena N. Coen's "The Last of the Buffalo," The American Art Journal, 5, no. 2, Nov. 1973, pp. 83-94.
13. See North American Indians. Being Letters and Notes on Their Manners, Customs and Conditions, written during eight years travel amongst the wildest tribes of Indians in North America, 1832-39, by George Catlin, Edinburgh, 1926, p. 278.
14. Patricia Hills, The American Frontier: Images and Myths, exhibition catalogue, The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1973, p. 10, discusses Theodor Kaufmann's painting in connection with the "winning of the West."
15. For a short biography of Tojetti, see the anonymous article, "Signor Dominico Tojetti," California Art Records, 3, 1936, pp. 24-41. Marjorie Arkelian of the Oakland Museum, Oakland, California, has kindly informed the present author (letter of February 28, 1979) that the best provenance the Museum can discover for Tojetti's painting Progress of America is: "The artist; private ownership San Francisco; Joseph Toschi, ca. 1950; William Pearson, San Francisco; The Oakland Museum, The Kahn Collection, 1965."
16. As we shall see, cliffs and ledges have an important place in the iconography of the Indian. Commenting on Thomkin H. Matteson's The Last of his Race (1847, New-York Historical Society) and Jesse Talbot's Indian's Last Gaze (1860, private collection), William H. Gerdt's has observed that with increasing frequency the Indian was placed at the end of a one-way ledge. Asher B. Durand, in his Progress of 1853 (private collection), placed Indians at the edge of a cliff to contemplate the industrialization of a valley. Finally, in Tables Turned, the Indian is about to be pushed over the edge. Ellwood Parry, The Image of the Indian and the Black Man in American Art, pp. 143-46, also discusses this phenomenon.

17. Rena Coen's "The Last of the Buffalo," is the pioneering interpretative study of the interconnections between the death of the Indian and the death of the buffalo. Noting that the Indian hunting the buffalo was a theme popular in the nineteenth century and that scholars have generally regarded the subject as nothing more than a direct, historically accurate description of the event, she asks: "Was it simply a straightforward description of a common activity of Indian life, or was it rather an allegory of the west--a veiled allusion to the disappearance not only of the buffalo, but of the savage hunter as well?" Coen cites instances of the artist's awareness that the Indian and the buffalo were, in the words of George Catlin, "both wasting away at the approach of civilized man," as well as the Indian's own fatalistic assumption that this was so. And she selects out as the "arch-typical representation of the Indian buffalo hunt" Albert Bierstadt's The Last of the Buffalo. The interpretation of the present author differs from that of Coen in making a distinction between the early scenes of the buffalo hunt, in which the Indian prevails, and those after 1869, in which the Indian is suddenly put on the defensive.
18. To date, the most comprehensive discussion of The Last of the Buffalo is found in Gordon Hendricks, Albert Bierstadt, Painter of the American West, New York, 1974, pp. 284-91, and figs. CL-253, CL-254, CL-148. See also A Catalogue of the Collection of American Paintings in The Corcoran Gallery of Art, I, p. 127; E.P. Richardson, American Art: An Exhibition from the Collection of Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, San Francisco, 1976, p. 114.
19. This study is illustrated in Hendricks, Albert Bierstadt, CL-253.
20. This small study for The Last of the Buffalo is in the John D. Rockefeller Collection.
21. See Hendricks, Albert Bierstadt, p. 291.
22. Hendricks, *ibid.*, observes: "The Last of the Buffalo had an additional significance. It was apparently the immediate stimulus for the first official census of America's remaining buffalo. It is estimated that at the time of the discovery of America, there were 60 million buffalo and in 1859, forty years before Bierstadt's painting, 20 million. But at the time of The Last of the Buffalo the total number of cows, bulls, and calves in America was estimated to be only 551."
23. "The Indian in American Art," The Crayon, 3, 1856, p. 28.

24. The distinction between the noble and ignoble savage is a turning point in Pearce's The Savage of America. William H. Gerdtz, "The Marble Savage," Art in America, 62, no. 4, 1974, pp. 64-70, demonstrates that the distinction obtains in sculpture as well. He further observes that when a sculptor wished to present an Indian as belonging to the noble type, he idealized the anatomy.

25. At the Goodson Symposium on American Art, April 21, 1980, Kenneth Maddox presented a paper, "Durand's Progress: The Advance of Civilization," in which he explored the iconography devised to designate the Indian's vanishing place in the white man's world. See also n. 16.

26. The following account of the creation and history of Cassilly Adam's Custer's Last Fight is taken from Robert Taft, "The Pictorial Record of the Old West, IV. Custer's Last Stand--John Mulvany, Cassilly Adams and Otto Becker," Kansas Historical Quarterly, 14, no. 4, 1946, pp. 377-90. According to Taft, p. 377, John Mulvany's version of 1881 (Pittsburgh, private collection) inspired subsequent paintings of the subject. Adams's canvas was destroyed by fire in 1946; see Don Russell, "Sixty Years in Bar Rooms, or 'Custer's Last Fight,'" The Westerners' Brand Book, 3, no. 9, 1946, pp. 61-68. The present author wishes to thank Elizabeth Milroy for calling Cassilly Adams's painting to her attention. Custer's Last Fight belongs to a small group of large exhibition canvases on the theme of death which have now dropped almost completely from the public view. Others include Henry Mosler's The Return and Toby Rosenthal's Elaine; see p.232. Also included in this category is Frederick Bridgman's Funeral of a Mummy on the Nile (location unknown) which won a third-class medal in the Salon of 1877. Bridgman's work is reproduced in "American Painters--Winslow Homer and F.A. Bridgman," The Art Journal, New York, 1878, p. 229.

27. See John G. Furber, Custer's Last Fight, St. Louis, 1886.

28. The article and its illustrations are discussed by Robert Taft, "Artists of Indian Life: Henry F. Farny," The Kansas Historical Review, 18, 1950, pp. 14-17.

29. See Denny Carter, Henry Farny, New York, 1978, p. 26.

30. The necessity to eliminate the Indian was expressed quite overtly by military authorities. Thus an aide to General Sherman could write: "There is not doubt the Indians have, at times been shamefully treated... However, it is useless to moralize about the Indians. Their fate is fixed, and we are so near their end, it is easy to see what that fate is to be. That the Indian might be collected, and put out of misery by being shot deliberately (as it would be done to a disabled animal), would seem shocking, but something could be said for such a procedure." See John M. Scholfield, Forty-Six Years in the Army, New York, 1907, p. 428; Col. Tourtellotte to Gen. Sherman, Feb. 1, 1891, Sherman Papers, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Box 82. Something in keeping with Tourtellotte's suggestion had already occurred at Wounded Knee in 1890, where Sioux who had assembled for Wovoka's "Ghost Dance" were shot down like animals. Their trench burial is recorded in a photograph; see Parry, The Image of the Indian and the Black Man in American Art, fig. 111. The last moments of their leader, Sitting Bull, were hastily taken down by an artist named Varian(?); see The Kennedy Quarterly, 10, 1970, pp. 57, 63.
31. William Fletcher Thompson, Jr., "Illustrating the Civil War," p. 17.
32. M.E. Braddon, "The Cold Embrace," Frank Leslie's Chimney Corner, I, June 24, 1865, pp. 49-50. This work has not been previously cited in the Winslow Homer literature. The present author wishes to thank Rosemary Cullen of the Rockefeller Library, Brown University, for her assistance in obtaining this now rare periodical.
33. See William Howe Downes, The Life and Works of Winslow Homer, Boston, 1911, p. 120.
34. See Lloyd Goodrich, The Graphic Art of Winslow Homer, New York, 1968, p. 17.
35. See Mrs. Schuyler Van Rensselaer, Six Portraits, Boston, 1894, pp. 260-61.
36. According to Downes, Winslow Homer, p. 142, the incident depicted was observed by Homer when he was in Atlantic City obtaining data for The Life Line.
37. This information is given in Philip C. Beam, Winslow Homer at Prout's Neck, Boston, 1966, p. 80. Beam, who had access to unpublished material supplied by the Homer family, unfortunately does not indicate his source for the title. See also Goodrich, The Graphic Art of

- Winslow Homer, p. 33. Goodrich, who notes that only two prints of the etching are known, gives no title for it.
38. The sequence of these studies has never before been reconstructed. The order of execution suggested here does not correspond to the numbering at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute. The key drawing, the present author believes, is the one pasted together (Fig).
39. William M. Kramer and Norton B. Stern treat the creation and exhibition history of Rosenthal's Elaine in considerable detail in San Francisco's Artist: Toby E. Rosenthal, Northridge, California, 1978, pp. 21-50. Two other artists who took up the subject of Elaine were Thomas Hovenden and Domenico Tojetti. The latter's work is hanging in the Hoffman Cafe and Grill, San Francisco. Hovenden's Elaine is reproduced in The Kennedy Quarterly, 7, 1967, no. 279. Interestingly, no literary theme concerning a drowned male seemed to have suggested itself for a major exhibition canvas to an American artist, but rather the reverse. Thus John White Alexander's Isabella and the Pot of Basil (1897, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts), derived from an incident in the Decameron (The Fourth Day, Novel V) where Isabella mourns over her lover's head hidden in a pot sprouting basil, has the deceased literally pot bound. An artist who did take up the subject of a drowned white male (although not for an exhibition canvas) was Winslow Homer. In Christmastide (1877) he supplied an illustration for Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's "Lifeless But Beautiful he Lay."
40. Carl Marr's The Mystery of Life or Ahasuerus, The Wandering Jew, was formerly in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, but has been deaccessioned. For a description of the painting, see Lorinda Munson Bryant, American Pictures and their Painters, New York, 1920, pp. 110-11. Marr's title, The Mystery of Life, would suggest that the painting belongs to an older, allegorizing tradition. Yet the alternate title alerts us to the fact that the artist was following in Gustave Doré's wake, for Doré's illustrations of the legend of the Wandering Jew (1864) were well known. Marr, then, proceeded to combine a sequence from the story of the Wandering Jew with a highly popular motif of the period: a beautiful drowned woman washed ashore. For a discussion of the Wandering Jew in literature, see Anderson, The Legend of the Wandering Jew.

41. In addition to After the Hurricane, Bahamas, there are three other watercolor studies related to the finished canvas of The Gulf Stream: The Gulf Stream (1898-99, Cooper-Hewitt Museum); Derelict and Sharks (1885, Mrs. Ian MacDonald Collection); and The Gulf Stream (1889, The Art Institute of Chicago).
42. The present author wishes to thank Natalie Spassky for pointing out the changes Homer made in his composition after its exhibition. Spassky's observations will be published in volume II of the forthcoming catalogue, American Paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.
43. See Beam, Winslow Homer at Prout's Neck, p. 172.
44. Letter of February 17, 1902, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
45. See, for example, the Collector, January 1, 1892, where the anonymous critic writes: "The type of the huntsman...is low and brutal in the extreme. He is just the sort of scoundrel, this fellow, who hounds deer to death up in the Adirondacks for the couple of dollars the hide and horns bring in, and leaves the carcass to feed the carrion birds..." See also Beam, Winslow Homer at Prout's Neck, p. 108 and Gordon Hendricks, The Life and Work of Winslow Homer, New York, 1979, pp. 206-11.
46. Letter of December 11, 1892, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
47. See Gordon Hendricks, The Life and Work of Winslow Homer, p. 211.
48. See Beam, Winslow Homer at Prout's Neck, p. 133.
49. The Mink Pond is located in the Adirondack mountain range near Minerva, New York. See Hendricks The Life and Works of Winslow Homer, pp. 86-87.
50. See Downes, Winslow Homer, pp. 168-69, for a discussion of the conditions prevailing during the winter that Homer painted the Fox Hunt.
51. See Downes, Winslow Homer, p. 245.

52. Thus Jules Prown, American Painting, p. 91, writes: "Before our eyes two ducks, one hit by each barrel, are splattered against the plane of their death, frozen momentarily in an ungainly sprawl. They resemble a naturalist's study, but Audubon would have shown the ducks in life, not death." Beam perceives that the artist "...makes us feel the target end of the event, as if we ourselves are the hunted and feel the impact of the hit. It is a complete reversal of the approach of...most other painters of sporting scenes"; see Homer at Prout's Neck, p. 249. Roger B. Stein, "Structure as Meaning: Towards a Cultural Interpretation of American Painting," American Art Review, 3, no. 2, 1976, p. 75, takes a somewhat different tack: "'Right and left' is the vernacular expression for two direct hits with the consecutively fired barrels of a shotgun. Our perception of the beauty of the formal arrangement of the canvas dissolves before this fact. The point of view is that of the birds. We must identify with the victims." And John Wilmerding, Winslow Homer, New York, 1972, p. 178, observed: "Putting the viewer with the birds has the effect of vaguely disturbing our own sense of humanity. By painting the ducks caught in the very moment between life and death, he holds in suspension forever the meaning of mortality."
53. In three instances, Audubon's rendering of ducks resembles Homer's. See John James Audubon, The Birds of America (1827-38), reprinted New York 1953, no. 260, Leach's Petrel; no. 270, Wilson's Petrel; and no. 342, American Golden Eye.
54. See Downes, Winslow Homer, p. 245.
55. The similar disadvantages that women and blacks might labor under were perceived by some of Homer's contemporaries. See, for example, Orra Langhorne, Southern Sketches from Virginia, ed. Charles E. Wynes, Charlottesville, Virginia, 1964, p. 107: "All classes show a great and growing interest in the subject, but 'women and Negroes,' who are often classed together, are those most benefited by the greater privileges granted to all who wish to learn in these latter days. In the ante-bellum times the male Virginian had far more advantages in the way of education that were allowed his female compatriotes. Until the public schools were opened, not a dollar had ever been given by the state for the education of women..." For the treatment of blacks, generally in Homer's art, see Michael Quick, "Homer in Virginia," Los Angeles County Museum of Art Bulletin, 24, 1978 pp. 61-81 and Mary Ann Calo, "Winslow Homer's Visits to Virginia During Reconstruction," American Art Journal, 7, no. 1, 1980, pp. 4-27.

56. The most comprehensive survey of religious imagery in America is still Dillenberger and Taylor, The Hand and the Spirit: Religious Art in America 1700-1900.
57. See Gerald M. Ackerman, "Thomas Eakins and his Parisian Masters Gerôme and Bonnat," Gazette des Beaux-Arts, 6, 1969, p. 248 and n. 47, and Dorothy Weir Young, The Life and Letters of J. Alden Weir, New Haven, 1960, pp. 30-31 and 37-38.
58. Ackerman, "Thomas Eakins" and Lois Dinnerstein, "Thomas Eakins' 'Crucifixion' as Perceived by Mariana Van Rensselaer," Arts Magazine, 53, no. 9, 1979, pp. 141-42, have suggested that Eakins was directly influenced by Bonnat's example. To this argument four cautions must be added. One, the works belong to a type of the Crucifixion, see n. 59, but are not so physically similar that Bonnat's work can be said to bear directly on Eakins's. Two, Eakins, unlike Bonnat, followed a common studio procedure for maintaining a difficult pose when he strapped his student to a cross. Three, Eakins did not proceed with his work until eleven years after firsthand contact with his old teacher. Most important, Eakins was befriended at the Overbrook Seminary in the years following the first of several imbroglios: the reception of The Gross Clinic (1875, Philadelphia, Jefferson Medical College of Philadelphia). Unlike the general public who were repelled by The Gross Clinic, the seminarians were sufficiently sympathetic to Eakins rendering of the Crucifixion to accept Eakins loan of it for many years. See Evan H. Turner, "Thomas Eakins at Overbrook," Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia, 81, no. 4, 1970, pp. 195-98. But however the motivating factors on Eakins are weighed, it is important to recognize that there were special and unusual circumstances surrounding the creation of Eakins's Crucifixion. Consequently, Eakins produced an atypical work in the American canon. For a recent discussion of the painting, together with X-ray photographs, see Evan H. Turner, The Thomas Eakins Collection, Philadelphia, 1978, pp. 89-90 and 174.
59. Albrecht Dürer, Hans Holbein, Hans Baldung, Hendrick Terbrugghen and Rembrandt among the northerners and Rosso Fiorentino and Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione among the Italians all represented Christ crucified by showing the head bowed and obscure. Thus Eakins' Crucifixion follows an ancient type for expressing the theological concept of Christ as very man which is the expression of traditional religious devotions. It does not represent, as Lois Dinnerstein has claimed, the death of everyman just because the setting is non-specific; see her "Thomas Eakins' 'Crucifixion'".

as Perceived by Mariana Van Rensselaer," p. 145.

60. Jan Białostocki, Vom heroischen Grabmal zum Bauernbegräbnis: Todesmotive in der Kunst des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts, Wiesbaden, 1977.
61. For a discussion of the drawing that relates to Millet's Death and the Peasant, see V. Berezina, "A Drawing by J.F. Millet," Reports of the National Hermitage, 24, Leningrad, 1963, pp. 30-33.
62. See the special exhibition catalogue of the National Academy of Design for 1859: Second Exhibition in New York of Paintings: The Contributions of Artists of the French and English Schools, no. 223.
63. See Gems from the Düsseldorf Gallery; photographed from the original pictures by A.A. Turner, New York, 1863, unpaginated.
64. See "A Collection of Choice Paintings by Henry Mosler at the Avery Gallery Feb. 24-March 7, 1896," p. 6. The Return was purchased for the gallery of the Musée de Luxembourg and engraved by Goupil and Co.
65. The present author wishes to thank Adrian Hoch for calling this work to her attention.
66. Ibid., p. 5. In 1879, the year in which he sent The Return to the Salon, he also painted The Women and the Secret after Doré's illustration of a La Fontaine fable.
67. See H. Barbara Weinberg, "Robert Reid: Academic 'Impressionist,'" Journal of the Archives of American Art, 15, no. 1, 1975, p. 9. The title of Reid's work is curiously reminiscent of Charles Sprague Pearce's Death of the First Born (1877, location unknown), where despairing Egyptian parents mourn beside a mummy case holding their young child--a victim of the tenth plague mentioned in Exodus 11:30. This work was conceived for the Salon of 1877. Clara Erskine Clement grouped the Death of the First Born with other religious paintings in her article "Later Religious Painting in America," The New England Magazine, 12 (April 1895), p. 149. Sometime during the 1860s, Erastus Salisbury Field had executed a subject on the same theme: Burial of the First Born (Museum of Fine Arts, Springfield, Massachusetts). But Field's scene is of a massive funeral procession. See American Folk Painters of Three Centuries, eds. Jean Lipman and Tom Armstrong, New York, 1980, pp. 78 and 80.

68. Three examples are: Christen Dalsgaard's The Child's Coffin (n.d., Copenhagen, Glydendalske Borhandel); Sir Frederick William Burton's The Aran Fisherman's Drowned Child (n.d., Dublin, The National Gallery of Ireland) and Aleksander Gierymski, Der Bauersarg (1894-95, Nardowe Museum).
69. See Carl Laurin, Emil Hannover and Jens This, Scandinavian Art, New York, 1922, pp. 494-95. Heyerdahl's fortune was assured when his painting was exhibited at the Salon of 1882 and purchased by the French government. It is reproduced in L'Art, 30, 1882, p. 173.
70. Fries' first person account is found in Charles Arthur Fries, A Memorial Exhibition of his Painting, San Diego, 1941, unpaginated.
71. Ibid. Another instance of an artist-father shocking the public when he selected the subject of his dead child for an exhibition canvas is described in Emile Zola's L'Oeuvre of 1885; see Emile Zola, L'Oeuvre, Paris, 1974, pp. 327 ff., and especially pp. 351-53, and Robert J. Niess, Zola, Cézanne, and Manet, Ann Arbor, 1968, pp. 181-82. The present author wishes to thank Ellen Goldhaar for calling Zola's work to her attention.
72. See Elmer, "Edwin Romanzo Elmer as I Knew Him," pp. 136-37.
73. Two other works by Ryder, Death Rides the Wind and Elegy in a Country Churchyard will not be discussed because both have been in private collections for years and no scholar has been able to examine them.
74. Ryder's letter to Miss Bloodgood is published in Frederic Fairchild Sherman, Albert Pinkham Ryder, New York, 1920, pp. 46-48. Miss Bloodgood owned a landscape by Ryder (now in the Metropolitan Museum) and he may have been trying to interest her in buying another painting, hence the reason for the lengthy description. Wallace S. Baldinger, "The Art of Eakins, Homer and Ryder: A Social Revolution," The Art Quarterly, 9, 1946, p. 226 and note 30, attempts to establish the exact date for the fatal race. Unfortunately, the painting has been given two titles: The Race Track and Death on a Pale Horse. Lloyd Goodrich in conversation, March 22, 1979, stated that the title The Race Track is Ryder's own and that Death on a Pale Horse would have been unlikely for him.
75. See ch. I, p. 36-37.
76. Sherman, Ryder, p. 46.

77. See Roger Fry, "Art in America," The Burlington Magazine, 13, 1908, p. 64.
78. J. Robinson, "Personal Reminiscences of Albert Pinkham Ryder," Art in America, 13, no. 4, 1925, p. 187.
79. Ryder's iconographic solution for achieving a universal symbol can be contrasted to that of another American, Elihu Vedder. He, too, recalled a particular death in The Dead Alchemist of 1868 (Brooklyn Museum). When he was a young boy, Vedder came upon a boarder in the house, dead in his attic room. The experience made a lasting impression, all the more so because the boy was fond of the man. Grown to adulthood, Vedder retained the memory, but in his painting of the incident he transformed the boarder into an alchemist. Yet for all the veracity of detail, for all the vials, flasks, the flaggon, the pincers, mortar and pestle with which the alchemist was to concoct the medieval philosopher's stone and the elixir of life, Vedder's scene has about it the aura of the nineteenth century. The medieval alchemist, hair brushed back behind his ears in the current nineteenth-century fashion, "sleeps" through death--as was so often the American way. See Elihu Vedder, The Digressions of V, Boston and New York, 1905, p. 8. Ryder, by contrast, rendered no particulars of the waiter's suicide, but summed it up by personifying death. If Lawrence Gowing is correct in his assumption that Turner painted his version of Death on a Pale Horse after the death of his father, then Ryder's universalizing approach to a particular death most nearly parallels that of the Englishman. See Lawrence Gowing, Turner: Imagination and Reality, New York, 1966, p. 27.
80. See ch. I, pp.40-41 and n. 64.
81. Still lifes with skulls were sometimes produced in America; for example William Harnett's Mortality and Immortality (1876, Wichita Art Museum, Wichita, Kansas) and Louis Maurer's Still Life--"Trilby" (c. 1895, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington). But the traditional handling of this motif by Harnett and Maurer only serves to point up Ryder's inventiveness. Similarly, Frederick Stuart Church conceived a composition titled Silence (1888, The National Academy of Design, New York), which contained a veiled mummy's head and a single rose; see From All Walks of Life: Paintings of the Figure from the National Academy of Design, New York, 1979, p. 34. However, Church's work did not have the poignant appeal to contemporaries that Ryder's Dead Bird had, nor did its fame last beyond its generation.

82. Boughton's painting, which is not dated, is discussed in Edward Strahan, Art Treasures, II, Philadelphia, 1879, p. 141.
83. The lithograph is undated, but the address of 125 Nassau Street, New York, was Currier and Ives' business location from 1872 to 1874.
84. Twain, Huckleberry Finn, p. 105.
85. The present author wishes to thank Doreen Bolger Burke for generously allowing her to quote from this unpublished poem. It will also be referred to in Burke's forthcoming dissertation on Julian Alden Weir. The letter from Ryder to Miss Cora Weir is undated and is now in the possession of Mrs. M. B. Burlingham.
86. The Dead Bird is usually dated 1890-1900. Lloyd Goodrich, (conversation, April 11, 1979) pointed out that there is no internal evidence by which to date the work, nor is there any exhibition history before 1918, when the painting was included in the Ryder Memorial Exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Lloyd Goodrich, verbally, to the Frick Art Reference Library, Dec. 6, 1935, has cautioned that we cannot be certain which way Ryder intended the canvas to be hung. Shortly after Ryder's death, a Fifth Avenue dealer exhibited the painting so that the bird lay on its back; see Elliot Daingerfield, "Albert Pinkham Ryder, Artist and Dreamer," Scribner's Magazine, 63, March 1918, p. 380, where he described the painting as he saw it: "Here is the greatest mystery of all--death! The very feathers are those of a dead thing, pale, wan and pitiful; the tense little claws, clinched and stiff, thrust into the air, powerless to ward off the dread visitor. A dead bird!" For renderings of a bird solidly located on the ground, with claws pulled in, see John William Hill's Dead Blue Jay (c. 1860-65), reproduced in Theodore E. Stebbins, Jr., American Master Drawings and Watercolors, New York, 1976, fig. 121, and Andrew Wyeth's Winter Fields (1942), reproduced in The Natural Paradise: Painting in America 1800-1950, ed. Kynaston McShine, New York, 1976, p. 32.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing study has been conceived as a threefold task: to interpret the meaning of American death imagery, to understand the way in which that meaning may serve as a barometer of socio-cultural attitudes and, through the process, to contribute to the understanding of what constitutes the American experience of death--an experience never before studied through the eyes of artists. That iconographic developments are always shown here to be concomitant with important political and social philosophies or major events demonstrates the viability of death imagery as a proper indicator of cultural change. In retrospect, therefore, it is hardly surprising to discover that in the New Republic recently appropriated democratic ideals determined that the death of the common man was not only acknowledged but celebrated. Then artists created exhibition canvases with novel iconographic themes in order to focus on his death.

A major shift in American attitudes toward death and the resultant death imagery takes place in the era of Jacksonian Democracy. Social historians have identified the suppression of death's reality as the "American way of death;" but they have dated this phenomenon to the post-Civil War period. What this study of death imagery reveals is that the evasiveness first develops during the Jacksonian era, when there was beginning to emerge a truly national sense of identity. This identity took the form of an abiding faith in, and an unchecked optimism about the

progress of the nation, both industrial and spiritual. And the more Americans came to regard their land as the New Eden, the more unacceptable seemed death. At this juncture, a pattern of euphemistic evasion set in and persisted to the end of the century.

Even the punishing experience of fratricidal slaughter or the near extermination of an aboriginal race could not break the tenacious spirit of optimism that kept death from art's door. Whereas the Civil War had cruelly cut down the male population, and spread wide disillusionment, the artists who lived through it evaded the reality of a national dream betrayed, of merciless carnage--and death. Similarly, because exponents of Manifest Destiny advocated the elimination of the Indian, the artist accommodatingly created representations that called for his extinction as a necessity. Finally Winslow Homer conceived images of peril where the weak, whether women or blacks, find themselves in inextricable situations from which, by implication, a superior white male is exempt. The cumulative evidence indicates that death in the American experience came to be equated with weakness, inferior status and failure. It becomes the historian's task to confront the reality.

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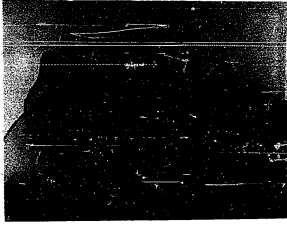


Fig. 1



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Fig. 3



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Fig. 5

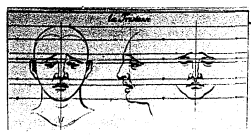


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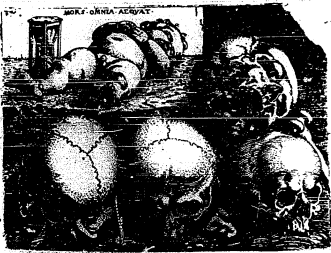


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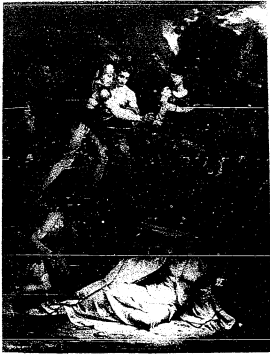


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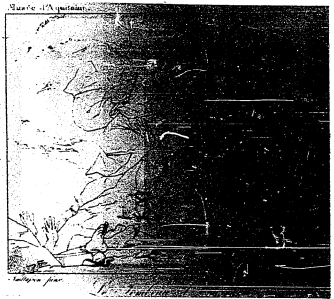


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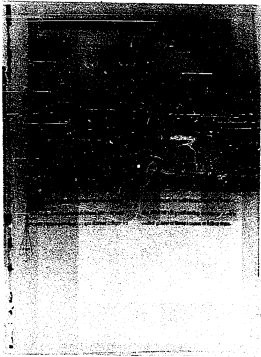


Fig. 16



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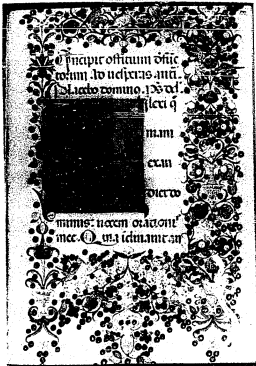


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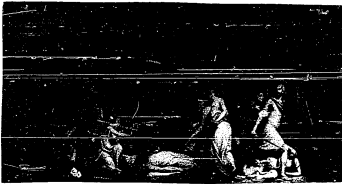


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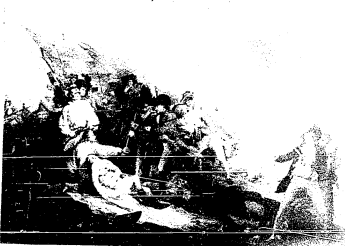


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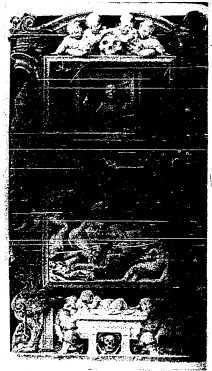


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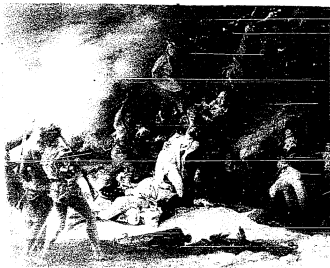


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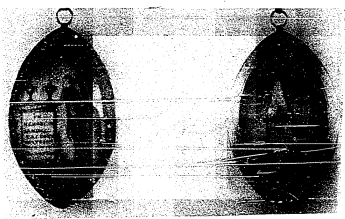


Fig. 28



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Fig. 29



Fig. 31



Fig. 32



Fig. 33



Fig. 34



Fig. 35

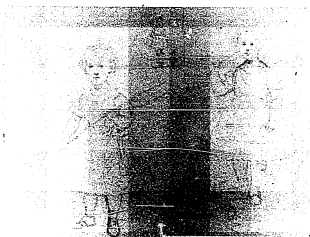


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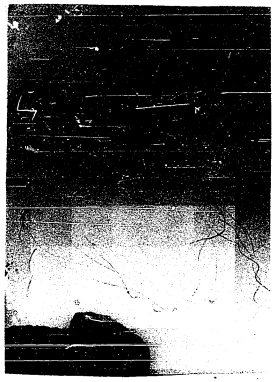


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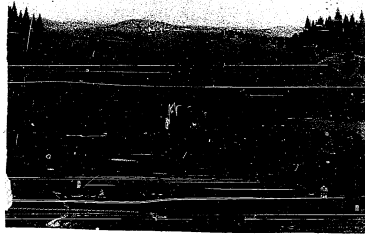


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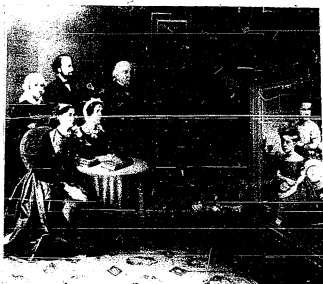


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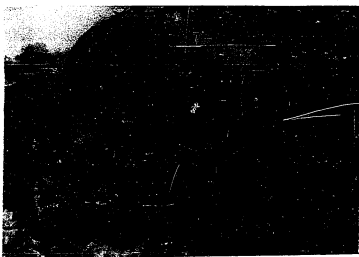


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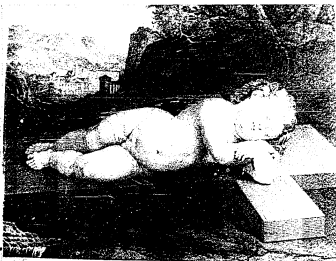


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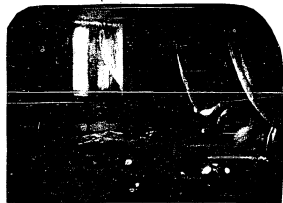


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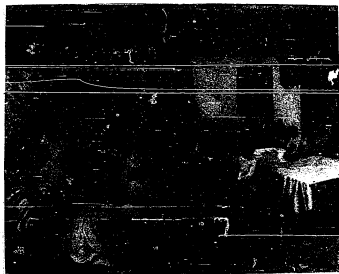


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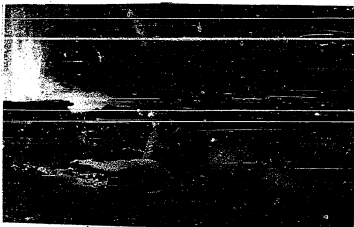


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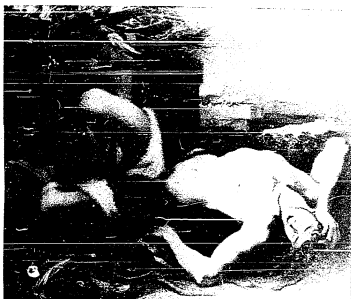


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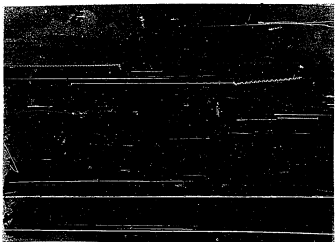


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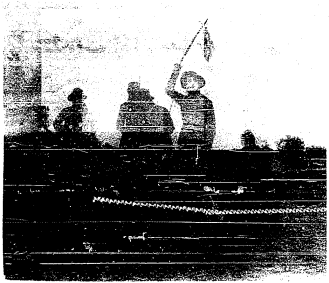


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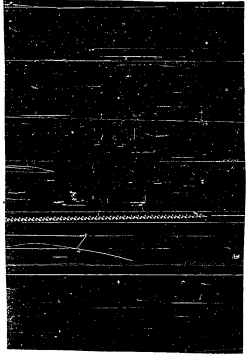


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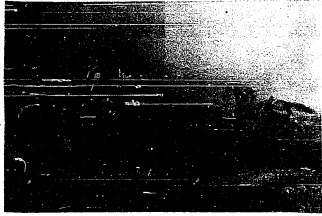


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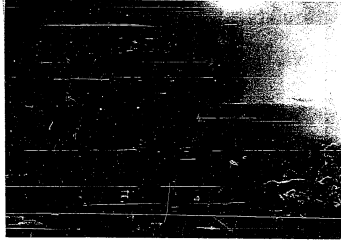


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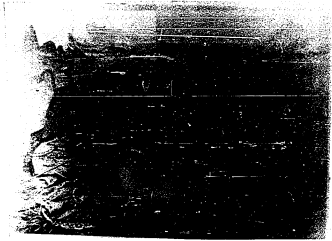


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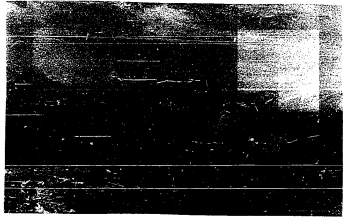


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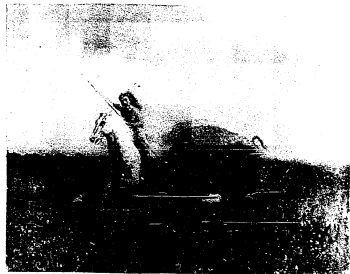


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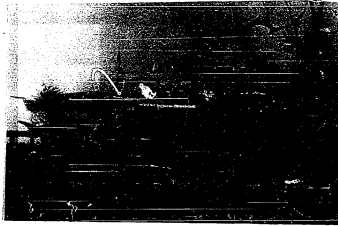


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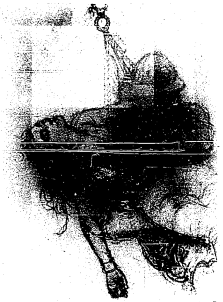


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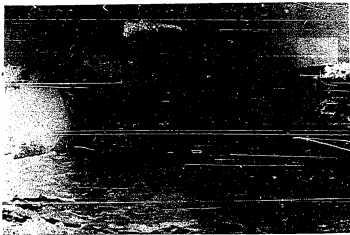


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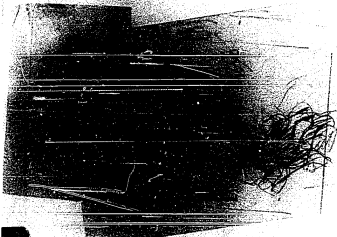


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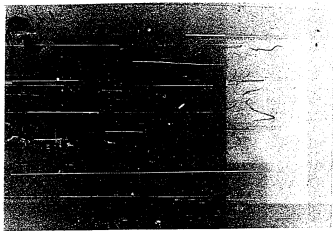


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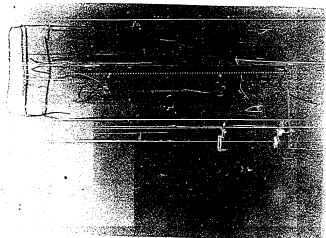


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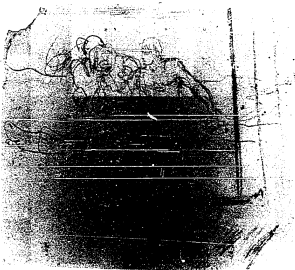


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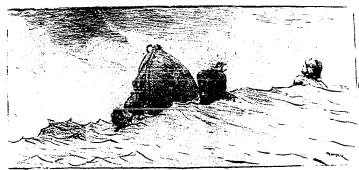


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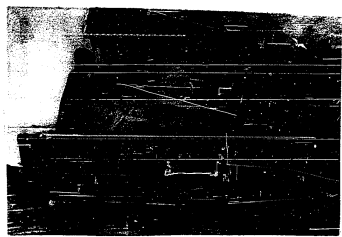


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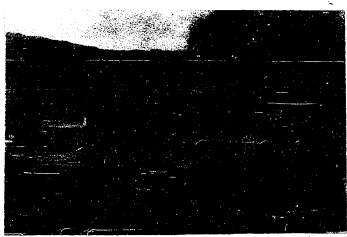


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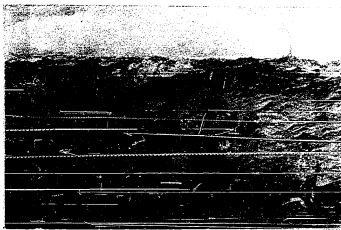


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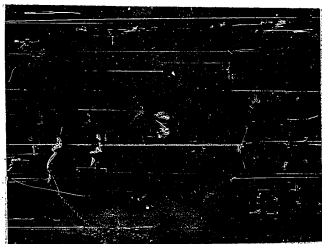


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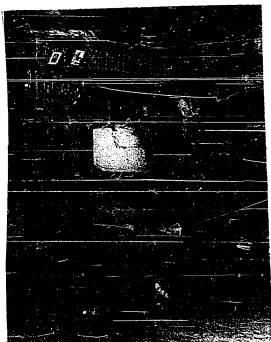


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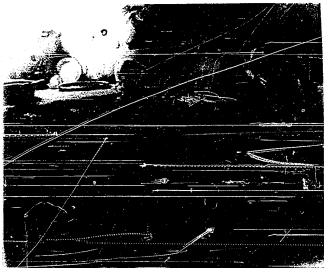


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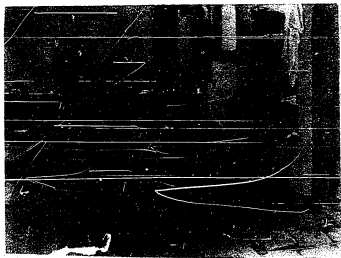


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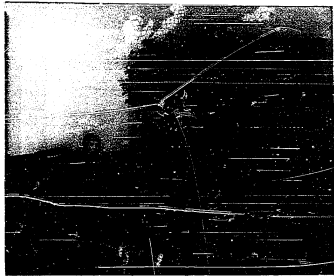


Fig. 141

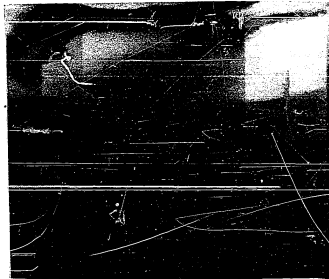


Fig. 143



Fig. 144

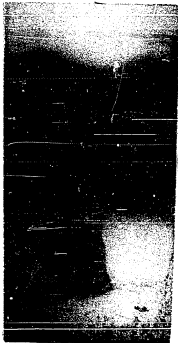
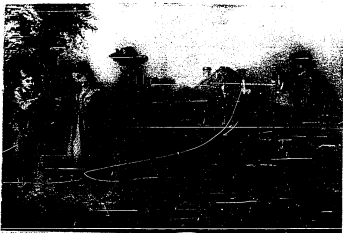


Fig. 145



THE BURIAL OF THE BIRD.

Fig. 146



Fig. 147