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A

BIRGE HARRISON: ARTIST, TEACHER AND CRITIC

by

Andrea F. Husby

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

2003

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Abstract

BIRGE HARRISON: ARTIST, TEACHER AND CRITIC

by

Andrea F. Husby

Adviser: Professor Katherine Manthorne

Lovell Birge Harrison (1854-1929) was one of the few artists of his generation to receive national and international recognition as a talented artist, gifted teacher and articulate critic. Leaving the United States in 1876, he studied at the École des Beaux-Arts and, with other important artists of the period including his brother, Thomas Alexander Harrison (1853-1930), painted in several important artist colonies in France. His figure painting *November*, 1881, which was among the first American works purchased at the Paris Salon by the French government, prepared the way for other American artists to gain access to this important source of patronage.

Forced by ill health to leave France in 1883, Harrison embarked on a decade of extensive travel including eighteen months in Australia from 1890-91, where he painted and worked as a writer and illustrator. During this period, Harrison continued to pursue his personal expression of his pantheistic belief in the harmonious unity of man and nature while redirecting his art toward landscape painting. By the beginning of the twentieth century, having participated in almost all of the major exhibitions of American art, he was recognized as one of the America's foremost Tonalist landscape painters. Primarily concerned with

landscape, the Tonalist movement produced an art of poetic suggestion that is characterized by the harmonious modulation of color, simplified composition, and an interest in atmospheric effects.

Following his return to the United States, Harrison, like others of his generation, worked to secure a role for art in American society, first as a teacher and later as a critic. In 1904, he became the director of painting at the at the Arts and Crafts colony of Byrdcliffe, and in 1906, the head of the Woodstock Summer School of the Art Students League of New York. Harrison considered teaching to be his most enduring contribution to the development of American art.

Although he published numerous articles in the leading art journals of the period, Harrison's authoritative book *Landscape Painting*, 1909, remains the most comprehensive statement of his art theory and criticism, and established his reputation as one of the leading spokesmen of Tonalism. It continues to be sighted in studies of landscape painting of the period. His theoretical stance, that art is nature seen through the individual artist's temperament, aligned him to representatives of contemporary art movements, such as Robert Henri, Sadakichi Hartmann, and Charles H. Caffin, whose theories have historically been viewed as antithetical to Tonalism. Documenting Harrison's career reveals more than the diversity and richness of this period. It also reveals an artist who made a significant contribution to the development of American art.

Acknowledgments

Many people have assisted me in rediscovering Birge Harrison's life and contribution to American art. I would first like to extend my sincere thanks to the members of my dissertation committee, Professors Katherine Manthorne, Sally Webster, and Harriet F. Senie, all of The City University of New York, and Dr. Linda S. Ferber of the Brooklyn Museum, for their invaluable insights and kind words of encouragement.

Researching this topic has required the assistance of many people in art institutions, historical societies and libraries throughout the United States and abroad. I would like to express my gratitude to William H. Gerdts, Professor Emeritus of The City University of New York, for his generosity and for directing me to paintings and resources of which I was unaware. I also would like to thank the following individuals for their time and expertise: Jane Clark and John Ritchie in Melbourne, Australia; Mme. Valerie Lagier, the Musée des Beaux-Arts and Archeology, Rennes, France; Martha Severns, the Greenville County Museum; Tom Wolf, Bard College; Stephanie Cassidy, the Art Student's League of New York; Cheryl Liebold and Lorina Sehgal, the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts; Katherine Crawford, the Philadelphia Museum of Art; Michael Redmon, the Santa Barbara Historical Society; Sara Weiner, Columbia University; Constance Cain Hungerford, Swarthmore College; Alf Evers; Brigitta H. Bond and Ericka Jager Smith, the James A. Michener Art Museum; Susan G. Larkin; William L. Horton;

Kathy Keinholz, the American Academy of Arts and Letters; Sharma La Rose, the Plymouth Public Library; Samantha Kemple, the Butler Institute of American Art; Valerie Leeds; Robert Edwards; and Susan Beneditti, The Haggin Museum.

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Introduction

“Through all the dun colors of that period the works of its creative minds gleam -vivid, complex, harmonious, contradicting or enriching the sober prevalent brown. The treasure has long been buried. It is time to open it up.”

Lewis Mumford, *The Brown Decades*, 1931¹

Birge Harrison (1854-1929) was one of the few artists of his generation to achieve national and international recognition as a gifted artist, successful teacher and articulate critic.² Harrison should be numbered among those creative individuals who, although less well known today than those considered in Lewis Mumford's *The Brown Decades*, have nevertheless made substantial contributions to the development of American art. During the course of his long career, which spanned the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, Harrison participated in and frequently received honors at almost every major exhibition and exposition of American art. His authoritative book, *Landscape Painting*, first published in 1909, continues to be cited in studies of the period, although little is now known of its author. At present, it is only in Woodstock, New York, where Harrison founded one of the nation's most successful and enduring art schools, and transformed the village into a still thriving artist colony, that his name receives instant recognition.

Because of the complexity of the art world around the turn of the twentieth century, when artists struggled to define a new vision of landscape for a modern technological society, the period has increasingly attracted the interest of art

historians. Artists, who were well known in their own time but almost forgotten in our own, are being rediscovered. Beginning in the 1970's, art historians have begun to re-address this important period of transition in American art. As Wanda Corn noted in her survey of American Art scholarship,³ by expanding their methodologies beyond formalism and paying more attention to the historical and social context, art historians began to pursue their investigations of artists from this period, which Lloyd Goodrich's monographic studies of Homer, Eakins and Ryder in the 1930's and 1940's, had initiated. What has emerged is a view of the development of American art history as more than the advance of a series of impersonal stylistic "isms." It is the story of the personalities who, like Harrison, shaped not only the appearance of art but also its institutions, criticism and education. This examination of Birge Harrison's life and career also hopes to provide the historical context against which his contribution to the development of American art can be measured.

The post-Civil War generation experienced the most rapid change in the nation's history. In his book, *The Incorporation of America*, Alan Trachtenberg observes that the emergence of a modern social structure, as agriculture gave way to industrialization, resulted in the specialization of the work force, establishing "new hierarchies of control and also changed conceptions of that society, of America itself."⁴ As T.J. Jackson Lears has noted, this transformation produced strains both on individuals and the wider culture that gave rise to a growing sense of the lack of self-reliance and a resulting discontinuity and "weightlessness."⁵

Simultaneously, the increased leisure time and disposable income produced by this shift was beneficial to American art. The arts came to be viewed as an indication of the nation's modernization and "artists seemed in the advance wave of new thought that would affect every aspect of society."⁶ For the first time, there seemed to be a genuine possibility for the development of a culture in the United States in which artists would enjoy a professional status similar to that found in Europe and experienced by many of the artists of this generation while they had studied abroad.

Despite "the accusation that this era labored under a divided consciousness," marked by an "apparent estrangement between life and art,"⁷ these artists set not only personal goals in terms of the development of their talent, skill and professional status, but through their participation in the formation of art societies, art training and education, and art criticism, helped to define the broad cultural goal of establishing a role for art in American society.

Because this is a project of rediscovery, reliance on primary documents is essential. Unfortunately, almost all of Harrison's personal papers have disappeared. Those that remain are scattered throughout many collections.

There exists at present neither an accurate biography nor an analysis of Harrison's contribution to the art of this period. An extensive biographical section that "assumes a direct connection between artists and their art and takes seriously the notion of authorship,"⁸ serves as an elaboration and a clarification of the facts of Harrison's life that have previously been unknown or incorrectly reported. With the aid of newly discovered information, it becomes clear that Harrison participated

in many of the major events and currents shaping American art during the period. His biography offers one example of the manner in which these events influenced the career of individual artists. The facts of Harrison's life are also used throughout this dissertation as a framework within which to view his oeuvre and to suggest new interpretations of his work.

Two biographical articles on Harrison's life and work, John E.D. Trask's, "Birge Harrison," of 1907,⁹ and Charles Louis Borgmeyer's "Birge Harrison - Poet Painter," of 1913,¹⁰ present the most inclusive information on Harrison to date. Both articles attempt an objective criticism of his most recent landscape paintings but leave many aspects of his life and work unexamined.

For example, research into Harrison's formative years in Chapter One reveals that Harrison's early upbringing in the Unitarian Church informs his belief that art ministers to humanity's need for the spiritual,¹¹ and his desire to convey to the viewer through his paintings his experience of the harmonious unity of man and nature. While the two articles refer to his earlier career as a figure painter, they focus little attention on this period in his life. Addressing this gap, Chapter Two demonstrates that Harrison's training at the École des Beaux Arts, first under Charles-Emile-Auguste Durand and, after achieving the distinction of matriculating into the École, with Alexandre Cabanel, cannot be overestimated. Like other artists of his generation, the École des Beaux-Arts not only sharpened Harrison's technical skills but also furnished the basis of his art theory and criticism.

Significant in shaping American artists' view of themselves as professionals were the art colonies in the French countryside where Harrison was

an early participant. The influence of Jules Bastien-Lepage's Naturalism was particularly strong in all three colonies, Grez-sur-Loing, Pont-Aven and Concarneau, where Harrison developed from a student to an artist. Reviewing Harrison's extant early figure paintings in Chapter Five demonstrates that it was here that Harrison and other American students investigated current art movements, especially the plein-air aesthetics of Naturalism and Impressionism, and worked to synthesize them with the lessons learned at the École into an art of their own. These early works indicate that Harrison had begun to visualize his theme of man's relationship to nature by exploring the "affinities between particular states of mind and corresponding conditions of inanimate nature."¹² The exhibition of his best known figural work *November, 1881*, at the Paris Salon of 1882 demonstrates his successful synthesis of various influences into a work of individual expression. One of the first paintings done by an American to be purchased by the French government, its success signaled that American artists could hope to compete for official recognition and support.

The sense of camaraderie that developed in the art colonies encouraged constructive criticism offered in friendship and joint experimentation, and Harrison benefited greatly from it. For Harrison, this included the personal exchange between himself and his, perhaps more renowned, older brother, Thomas Alexander Harrison. Their paintings from this period raise the question of the degree to which their artistic dialogue advanced both brothers' growing confidence in the expression of their individual interpretations.

Although the eighteen months that Harrison spent in Australia, from late 1889 to 1891, are given only cursory notice in early biographies, closer investigation of this period in his life in Chapter Six reveals that this was an important formative period in his career as he redirected his art from figure to landscape painting. His interaction with artists from Australia's Heidelberg School illustrates the international connections enjoyed by American artists that extended beyond Europe. As demonstrated in the 1998 exhibition *New Worlds from Old*, the cross-influences of the artistic achievement of different nations are now being addressed by art historians.¹³ Harrison's illustrations for articles printed during this important transitional period in his work indicate that his experiences with the vastness of the Australia landscape expanded his horizons in both his life and art.

Although few artists of this generation achieved immediate success following their repatriation to the United States, the technological advances and expansion in the publishing industry allowed many to sustain themselves, as did Harrison after settling in Santa Barbara, California in 1891, as writers and illustrators. The success of several art periodicals such as *The Fine Arts Journal* and *The American Magazine of Art*, indicates that while returning artists complained of the lack of an "art world" in America, "prosperity and urbanization generated both interest in and facilities for the arts."¹⁴ As a consequence, the turn of the twentieth century witnessed the creation of art museums, artist societies, and institutions of art instruction, many established by these same returning artist as part of reaching their goals.

Harrison left an impressive resource of published materials (Appendix I) that reveal an artist who consistently explored the relationship between man and nature. As the overview of Harrison's artistic production in Part Two indicates, rediscovering a complete view of his oeuvre poses several problems. When he died, Harrison left nearly one hundred and thirty paintings. (Appendix II)

Although many museums, both here and abroad, contain some of his better-known pictures, there is no satisfactory record of the present whereabouts of much of his work. With only a few of his original canvases available, it has been necessary to reconstruct his artistic production based on reproductions found primarily in art journals from the period.

As Harrison matured as an artist he continued to synthesize influences, notably that of James McNeill Whistler. More importantly, he formed the conviction that in all great art, technique and meaning merge. Following his "love of the out-of doors and of landscape for itself,"¹⁵ he found that landscape painting served two important purposes in his art. Focusing his attention on landscape rather than the figure allowed for a more suggestive, and in his view, more effective expression of his belief in the unity of man and nature. Secondly, Harrison came to realize that the unsolved problems in art with which contemporary artists were struggling, were best explored in landscape painting. As his *Departure of the Mayflower*, c. 1887-88, his best-known work from this transitional period indicates, he was already pursuing several of the pictorial strategies characteristic of American Tonalism as a means to express his theme of the harmonious unity of man and nature.

Harrison has been identified as one of Tonalism's most successful artists and spokesmen. Until exhibitions and publications on the subject by Wanda Corn and William Gerds, Tonalism's place in the development of American art, as well as many of the artists associated with the movement, had been almost entirely forgotten.¹⁶ Privileging emotion over literalism, Tonalists focused on visualizing nature's atmospheric effects and moods. Tonalism offered Harrison an aesthetic that recognized the importance of technical mastery, particularly through the harmonious modulations of color and tone, as a means of conveying to the viewer the artist's personal response to his experience of nature. Engaged in the suggestion of the immaterial, Tonalism allowed for an expression of the spiritual, in Harrison's case his belief in the relationship of man and nature. Harrison's Tonalist compositions, however, are marked by a careful balance of these concerns with direct observation from nature. Throughout his oeuvre, the subject is convincingly rendered.

Although Harrison first received recognition as one of the country's finest painters of snowscapes, which appealed to him because of their decorative possibilities, he explored a variety of nature's moods. A review in Chapter Seven of Harrison's landscapes indicates the broad range of subjects that Harrison, unlike other Tonalists, pursued. These works can be divided into five broad categories based on imagery: his earliest seascapes from Santa Barbara California beginning around 1895, including later marine paintings in which the sky is the focal point for the expression of sentiment; snowscapes of Plymouth and Quebec; Whistlerian harbor scenes from Charleston, South Carolina; country scenes of farms and fields

from the Woodstock area, and scenes of New York City's thoroughfares and skyscrapers. All of Harrison's paintings are marked by a careful balance of direct observation of nature and plein-air technique, and an equal commitment to individual expression and the communication of the artist's impressions of this experience of nature.

Teaching provided a steady source of income for Harrison as he pursued his career as an artist. The establishment of important art schools during this period, another "aspect of efforts to focus attention on the arts and to raise the standards of training and taste,"¹⁷ can be seen as a fulfillment of this generation's duty to the development of another generation of American artists. As Chapter Eight illustrates, Harrison's experiences of the ateliers of Paris and the surrounding art colonies provided him with the model on which he based his instruction first at the Byrdcliffe Arts and Crafts colony and later at the Art Students League's Summer School in the Woodstock, New York.

Harrison frequently stated that the Art Students League's Woodstock School, which he established in 1906, was the only program in the nation committed solely to teaching the art of landscape painting. Because he believed that the future of American art lay in the direction of landscape painting, he considered the success of the school as his most important and enduring contribution to the development of art in America. His *Landscape Painting*, 1909, provides an overview of the assimilation and application of late-nineteenth century French influences in painting and criticism to American landscape painting during the period. It also affords a unique insight into Harrison's methods and the

theoretical basis for his instruction to his students. Unique among the artist colonies of the period due largely to Harrison's commitment to fostering individual expression, Woodstock attracted artists pursuing a wide range of artistic styles. As a brief overview in Chapter Nine demonstrates, Harrison's legacy as a teacher continued to influence American art well into the twentieth century, as his students from Woodstock made their own contributions to its development.

Like many critics at the turn of the century, Harrison believed that a unique form of American art was soon to emerge. The profusions of art styles and movements during the period produced a feeling of unrest in the art world. As did most critics, Harrison engaged in the ensuing debate that centered on the shift in balance between "tradition and temperament."¹⁸ As individual expression became an increasingly important criteria, more traditionalist artists and critics believed that the line had been crossed from individual expression to egoism; from an art with links to past traditions to one that led only to a succession of "isms" that confused both patrons and the public alike, rupturing the link between viewer and artist. Many critics were apprehensive that this process would lead to the isolation of art from society, and the negation of the common cultural goal of this generation of artists.

As his writings illustrate, Harrison leaned toward a moderate position in this debate. While remaining aware of the sense of possibilities as a new visual language for the "modern" age of the twentieth century emerged, he also valued the role that the tradition of art in Western civilization played in the creative process. In order to appreciate Harrison's relationship to the emergence of modernism in the

United States during the first two decades of the twentieth century, a review of the criticism focusing on the two other major movements of contemporary art - the "Ashcan" school and modernism, is necessary.

Because it has been asserted that Robert Henri's "Ashcan" school replaced the genteel tradition with which Tonalism has been identified, Henri offers an interesting comparison. While Henri's figurative realism may be seen as the antithesis of Harrison's poetic landscapes, a discussion of Harrison's *Landscape Painting* and Henri's *The Art Spirit* in Chapter Ten reveals the commonalities of their respective theories, which were based on their training in the ateliers of Paris, as well as their individual interpretations of these theories. Their support for unjuried exhibitions and their joint interest in the establishment of a Municipal Museum in New York City, for example, indicate that they shared common goals with regard to art and its role in American society.

One of the most interesting aspects revealed by an examination of Harrison's life, work and writing is his understanding of himself as a "modern" artist, a term that exemplifies the need for a contextual approach to understand the nuances of its original meaning. An exploration of contemporary criticism reveals a common ground between Harrison and other critics of his time who have been identified as supporters of modernism. The work of such critics as Sadakichi Hartmann and Charles H. Caffin, in particular the essays found in Alfred Stieglitz's *Camera Work*, an important source for the documentation of the emergence of modernism in American art, provide a more complete understanding of the nature of modernism and the critical debate that surrounded its emergence.

Examining the areas of common concern between Harrison and these contemporary art critics in Chapter Eleven offers an insight into the fermenting art world in the United States during the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. It also illustrates why American art historians' continued engagement in reassessing the traditional view of modernism as an "almost catastrophic change between the old and the new,"¹⁹ has resulted in a greater appreciation of the nuanced nature of modernism and the critical debate at this crucial juncture in American Art.

It is hoped that this examination of Harrison's art, teaching and criticism will identify his work as among the many artistic "treasures" that have long been buried and whose rediscovery will lead to a fuller understanding of the development of American art during this exciting period.

¹ Lewis Mumford, *The Brown Decades: A Study of the Arts in America 1865-1895* (1931; reprint New York: Dover Publication, Inc., 1971), 25.

² Charles Louis Borgmeyer, "Birge Harrison-Poet Painter," *Fine Arts Journal* 29 (October 1913): 605-606.

³ Wanda Corn, "Coming of Age: Historical Scholarship in American Art," *Art Bulletin* (June 1988): 199.

⁴ Alan Trachtenbuerg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1982), 4.

⁵ T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Anti-modernism and the Transformation of American Culture 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), 32.

⁶ H. Wayne Morgan, *New Muses: Art in American Culture 1865-1920* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978), 5.

⁷ Neil Harris, "The Gilded Age Reconsidered Once Again," *Archives of American Art* 23 (1983): 9.

⁸ Laurie Schneider Adams, *The Methodologies of Art, An Introduction* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1996), 101.

⁹ John E.D. Trask, "Birge Harrison," *Scribner's Magazine* 42 (November 1907): 576-585.

¹⁰ Borgmeyer, 582-606.

¹¹ Birge Harrison, *Landscape Painting* (1909; reprint New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911), 215.

¹² Ian Jeffrey, *Photography: A Concise History* (London: Thames and Hudson, Ltd. 1989), 100.

¹³ For recent scholarship on Australian artists and the development of landscape painting see, Elizabeth Johns et al, *New Worlds from Old, 19th Century Australian & American Landscapes* (exh. cat., Canberra: National Gallery of Australia & Hartford: Wadsworth Athenaeum, 1998).

¹⁴ Morgan, 89.

¹⁵ Letter from Birge Harrison to Percy William Holt dated March 6, 1923. The Percy William Holt Papers, 1912-1923, Department of Archives and History, State of Alabama, Montgomery, Alabama.

¹⁶ See, Wanda Corn, *The Color of Mood: American Tonalism 1880-1910* (exh. cat., San Francisco: The M. H. De Young Memorial Museum, San Francisco, 1972) and William H. Gerdts, *Tonalism: An American Experience* (exh. cat., New York: Grand Central Art Galleries, 1982). In his essay, "American Tonalism: An Artistic Overview," Gerdts

discusses the second generation of Tonalist artists and writers, such as Harrison, who were not addressed by Corn's earlier publication.

¹⁷ H. Wayne Morgan, *Unity and Culture: The United States 1877-1900* (London: Allen Lane/ The Penguin Press, 1971), 90.

¹⁸ Morgan, *New Muses*, 155.

¹⁹ Albert Boime, *The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century* (1971; reprint New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 1.

“No form of artistic expression leans more than painting upon both the intellectual and emotional experiences of the artist...”

John E. D. Trask, “Birge Harrison,” 1907¹

Chapter One

Germantown: 1854-1876

Lovell² Birge Harrison was born in Germantown, Pennsylvania on October 28, 1854, the third child of Apollos Wolcott Harrison and Margaret Louisa Belden (fig. 1.1).³ The family had moved to Germantown from Hartford, Connecticut where they had close ties to two prominent Connecticut families.⁴ As descendants of Richard Harrison, who immigrated from Chester, England c. 1640, the Harrison family had been instrumental in the founding of both New Haven and Bradford, Connecticut and shared a common ancestry to William Henry Harrison, the ninth President of the United States and Benjamin Harrison, the twenty-third President.⁵ The Beldens were a prominent shipbuilding and merchant family from Hartford and were well known in Simsbury, Connecticut for their philanthropic work.⁶ These family connections would prove advantageous for Birge Harrison in gaining access to several of the leading gentlemen’s clubs, such as the Century Club in New York City, during a period when such clubs provided much needed exhibition space for its artist members.

Apollos Wolcott Harrison (fig. 1.2) had been a successful perfume merchant before his business collapsed in the aftermath of the Civil War. By 1874, he had turned his enthusiasm for horticulture into a paying position as the secretary and treasurer of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society.⁷ Apollos Harrison was interested in art and may even

have been among the first to introduce chromolithography to the United States.⁸ He was a highly cultured man, speaking several languages, a musician and a lover of nature.⁹ All of his children were serious art students (figs. 1.3 & 1.4).¹⁰

Birge Harrison's tolerant disposition and belief in the beauty of nature were shaped by his family's Unitarian beliefs.¹¹ Drawing heavily on the Lockian tradition that all knowledge comes from sensory perception, these beliefs relied on a strong sense of the importance of the individual. Unitarianism's pantheistic tendencies developed from the concept of "Natural Religion," which held that Nature (Creation) was proof of the Creator and that man and nature were all part of the material reality of God and one within His natural laws of order and harmony.¹² The Germantown Unitarian Church to which the Harrison family belonged was a liberal Unitarian church leaning toward mid-nineteenth century Transcendentalism.¹³ As expounded by Ralph Waldo Emerson, Transcendentalism was also pantheistic, incorporating Emerson's mystical concept of the Over-Soul, and held that fulfillment of human potential could be accomplished either through a revelatory experience or a strong awareness of the beauty of the material world.¹⁴ These ideas would have a lasting effect on Birge Harrison and they helped shape his artistic vision. Indeed, his insistence on the development of the individual artistic temperament and careful observation of nature, are central to understanding his work. Most apparent is his somewhat pantheistic understanding of landscape as having a "body as well as a soul."¹⁵

Harrison's thinking differed from these Emerson-inspired Unitarian and Transcendental beliefs in one important respect. One of Emerson's most original contributions was the redefinition of the term "experience." In the Eighteenth century the

term referred to an event that “existed independent of the self.”¹⁶ Emerson emphasized the inner personal experience as “it rushes through the individual consciousness, including the drama of introspection.”¹⁷ For Emerson, the artist:

should *know* that the landscape has beauty for his eye because it expresses a *thought* which to him is good; and this because the same power which sees through his eyes is seen in that spectacle; and he will come to value the expression of Nature and not Nature itself, and so exalt in his copy of the features that please him.¹⁸

Harrison acknowledged the brilliance of Emerson’s philosophy and much of it corresponds to Harrison’s own theory of art, which placed a premium on the interpretation of the artist’s experiences of nature. Yet, Harrison saw Emerson’s approach as a variant of Puritanism. In Harrison’s view, its appeal was to the mind and the intellect alone and did not take emotion and feeling into account.¹⁹

For Harrison, to experience an event or nature was to respond to it both intellectually and emotionally, to feel its nobility, sentiment and beauty. The pantheistic spirit and emotional response to nature that inform Harrison’s oeuvre, beginning with his earliest figure paintings, anthropomorphizes nature, creating a visualized pathetic fallacy in which nature’s moods and man’s moods reflect one another in perfect harmony.

In Harrison’s view, Emerson’s series of studies and essays were an “anachronism,” devoid of “*joie de vivre*”²⁰ and antipathetic to the aesthetic ideals of his own generation. For Emerson, Nature was God. For Harrison, Nature was both God and Beauty, and to experience Nature was to feel It rather than to know It.

Many of the Unitarian beliefs to which Harrison was exposed as a young child were reinforced by his formal artistic training. Art education started early for him and his older brother Alexander, with whom he shared an early enthusiasm for art. Together the

two boys, sketchbook in hand, visited the studios of artists residing in Germantown and nearby Philadelphia.²¹ Not only was Thomas Sully, at the age of ninety, still painting in Philadelphia at that time, but Germantown itself also provided a rich environment for both brothers. The small village had a long artistic tradition and by mid- nineteenth century, had “developed into something of an art community.”²² James Reid Lambdin and his son George C. Lambdin, George B. Wood, W. H. Wilcox, Colin Campbell Cooper and Prosper Senat were well known Germantown artists.²³

The artist who perhaps influenced the two boys most directly was William Trost Richards. Alexander Harrison recounted that as a youth, he had enjoyed watching Richards paint and that this had inspired him to become an artist.²⁴ Richards had returned from Europe in 1867, residing at various periods in Philadelphia and Germantown, and began painting marine pictures. Richards’ close observation of nature and ability to project a sense of limitless space and “plein-air light and atmosphere”²⁵ resonate in Birge’s early marines from around 1896.

As young boys growing up in Germantown, which was known for its lovely gardens, Birge and his older brother worked for L. C. Baumann, one of the town’s most important flower growers.²⁶ Later, at the suggestion of their father, who had doubts about the profitability of a career as an artist, both boys pursued careers unrelated to art. Alexander joined the Coast Guard and Geodetic Survey, charting the waters of Maine, Rhode Island, Florida and the West Coast.²⁷ Birge began a career in fruit farming, from age sixteen to twenty-one, “conscientiously cultivating grapes and strawberries.”²⁸

In 1874, Birge Harrison began to study art seriously,²⁹ enrolling for lessons at the Philadelphia Sketch Club. Since the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art had no preliminary

school and beginners had to seek initial training elsewhere, the Sketch Club, established in 1860, offered the instruction he was seeking.

Beginning in 1874, Thomas Eakins was invited to teach at the Philadelphia Sketch Club by Earl Shinn.³⁰ Harrison enrolled in Eakins's class, which met at the club on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Although most studies of Eakins as a teacher focus on the scandal that resulted in his termination from the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in 1886, the kind of instruction Harrison would have received at the Sketch Club can be surmised by the methods that Eakins's used prior to his dismissal.

Eakins believed in "pure art" education, meaning that he geared his classes to the individual who intended to make art their profession.³¹ Perhaps because he believed in a classical course of study with its emphasis on the human figure, he moved his pupils quickly through the antique class into the life class where they would study the human body from live models. In the mid-1870's, Eakins, who "always delighted in pointing out analogies between science and art,"³² supplemented his life class instruction with anatomical study. While this was not mandatory, Eakins encouraged his students to attend Dr. William W. Keen's anatomical lectures, in which Dr. Keen demonstrated by dissection. Eakins supervised his students loosely, preferring that they work out their problems on their own, learning through the process itself. He was not a severe critic, and although he rarely praised his students' work, he was "never sharp or sarcastic."³³

While none of Harrison's works from this period are known, he seems to have made rapid progress between 1874 and 1876. In January, Eakins's class of twenty-five students at the Sketch Club petitioned the Academy to allow it to hold its classes at the still incomplete new building at Cherry and Broad Streets. The Board of Directors turned

down the request. But on February 14, 1876, Birge Harrison was one of the six members of the class, most them already established artists, who were given tickets of admission, allowing them use of the facilities at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.³⁴ Thomas Eakins substituted for Christian Schussele in the evening life classes and remained in this unpaid position for several years.³⁵

Harrison learned much under Eakins's tutelage. Not only did he achieve a level of competence that allowed him to sit in class with professional artists, but he also became familiar with the teaching methods of the *École des Beaux-Arts* in Paris, which he was soon to enter. Eakins's influence on Harrison can be seen more in his teaching style than in his artistic style. Eakins encouraged his pupils to master the fundamentals of art as well as to develop their own individual expression.³⁶ This struck a responsive cord in Harrison, given his Unitarian background.

Harrison's art makes several important departures from that of his first teacher. The most obvious difference between the two artists is Eakins's lack of interest in landscape and its poetic aspects. While Harrison's landscapes are dedicated to the infinitely changing moods of nature, these phenomena played little part in Eakins's work, which concerned itself with nature's "solid realities" rather than her elusive moods.³⁷ Harrison was to pursue his own interests, after exposure to other influences during his training at the *École*. In 1876, several events transpired that would send Harrison to Paris and down his own path.

One of the more established artists in Eakins's sketch class at the Philadelphia Club was William Sartain, the son of the engraver John Sartain, one of the leading artists in Philadelphia at the time. It was perhaps through this connection or through Sartain's

daughter Emily, who was also admitted to the life class in February 1876,³⁸ that John Sartain first saw some of Harrison's sketches and, "recognizing the germs of real talent sought out the elder Harrison and persuaded him to give his son, Birge, the advantage of an artistic education."³⁹ At the time, both John Sartain and Apollos Harrison, working on behalf of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society,⁴⁰ were preparing for the upcoming Centennial Exhibition that opened in Philadelphia in May of 1876, and they may have known each other in this capacity.

Although Sartain deserves much of the credit for launching Harrison's artistic career, another important factor in Apollos Harrison's decision would have been his own exposure to the new role that art was playing, not only at the Exhibition, but also in American culture. The Centennial Exhibition, which was intended to solidify and heal the nation's wounds from the Civil War, was the "first fair at which a major exhibition hall was devoted to the arts,"⁴¹ indicating that an awareness of the role that art was developing in post-Civil War America. "Intellectual in scope, it deepened individual expression yet tried to add a dimension to the national life for everyone."⁴² From May 10th to November 10th when it closed, ten million people out of a total national population of forty million visited the fair.⁴³ The popular and critical response to the art exhibited made the likelihood of making a living as an artist appear to be a possibility. Apollos Harrison became one of the "respectable fathers who had respectable grandfathers [who] now allow their sons to adopt the profession of art even before they have made failures at several other professions or trades."⁴⁴

The fair had further implications for Birge Harrison as he considered an art education. Deliberately international, the art hung in Memorial Hall indicated that "a

narrow and defensive aesthetic nationalism had given way in the presence of a great international bazaar.”⁴⁵ The exposure to the array of art from other nations struck a responsive cord for the young artist. The collection of pictures brought together at the great Centennial Exposition “was the first really great art wonder of his life.”⁴⁶ It no doubt opened his eyes, as it did to many aspiring American artists, that as one newspaper put it “the languid sleepy time when students were content to devote a few hours daily to drawing, being that no more was requisite for proficiency are over. The spirit of the age is intensely progressive in art as well as every thing else and the competition is equally great.”⁴⁷ For a young American art student in 1876 the only way to compete on this level was to study abroad.

The exhibition drew a great deal of critical attention, much of which illustrated the shift that was taking place in American art away from the “detailed scrutiny of nature in favor of generalized atmospheric effects” and the critical shift away from Dusseldorf and the Pre-Raphaelites.⁴⁸ While the critics in general were disappointed in the selection and quality of works from abroad, one work that was singled out for favorable comment was *Portrait of Mlle. Croizette*, by Charles Emile Auguste Carlous-Durand.⁴⁹

As luck would have it, Durand’s American pupil, John Singer Sargent, was in Philadelphia at the time. In a letter dated 1923, Harrison described the following events:

John Sargent came over from Paris to visit his home folks there; and seeing how entirely my interest and enthusiasm was caught by anything and everything concerned with the art of painting, my dear old pater, consented to my urgent plea that I be allowed to return to Paris with the young portrait painter. . . I, naturally, entered the art school of Carlous-Durand where Sargent had been at work for some time.⁵⁰

The only remaining obstacle to Harrison's study in Paris was financial. A year later, Kenyon Cox, proposing to follow Harrison's route to Paris from the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts wrote to his mother, estimating that the cost for him to study in Paris would be approximately one hundred dollars a month, "as the lowest sum at which I could work to the best advantage."⁵¹ This sum would have placed a burden on the strained finances of the Harrison household. Fortunately, the problem was solved by a legacy from a relative, which allowed first Birge, and later Alexander, to study in Paris.⁵² Within a month of the Fair's opening, Birge Harrison set off for the atelier of Carolus-Duran.

¹ John E.D.Trask, "Birge Harrison," *Scribner's Magazine* 42 (November 1907): 578.

² Confusion exists concerning Harrison's first name, which is often given as "Lowell." Primary legal documents available, see for example *Last Will and Testament of Lovell Birge Harrison*, Ulster County, Kingston, New York,(ED 220/L81, 1929) are in the name of Lovell Birge Harrison. Harrison rarely used his first name, preferring Birge. This practice was common in the family. His older brother, among the best known expatriate artists of the period, Thomas Alexander Harrison, is best known as Alexander and his younger brother Apollos Butler, also an artist, was known as Butler.

³ James Boyd, *The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society 1827-1927* (Philadelphia: The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, 1929), 388. The 1860 United States Census, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1860, (207) indicates that the family moved between the birth of their first child, Margaret Alexina (1851-1914) in Connecticut and the birth of their second child, Thomas Alexander (1853-1930) born in Philadelphia. The 1870 United States Census, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (338), lists the family home as 108 Queen Street, Germantown. Birge was one of five children, Margaret Alexina, Thomas Alexander, Apollos Butler, (1857-c.1890) and Wolcutt (1859-?) who is not listed in The 1880 United States Census and is presumed to have died in childhood. Butler's date of death is uncertain, but from reports in *The Studio*, 5, no.10 (Feb.8, 1890): 102, it appears that he may have died in late 1889 or early 1890. For important contemporary biographies of Alexander Harrison see, Charles Francis Browne, "Alexander Harrison," *Brush & Pencil* 4 (June 1899): 132-144; and Charles Louis Borgmeyer, "Alexander Harrison," *Fine Arts Journal* 29 (September 1913): 514-544.

⁴ Richard Harrison of Chester, England immigrated to Virginia with his four sons, Benjamin, Nathaniel, Richard and Thomas in the middle of the seventeenth century. Benjamin and Nathaniel remained in Virginia and it is this branch of the family that produced two Presidents of the United States, William Henry Harrison, the ninth president, and Benjamin Harrison, the twenty-third. Together with his two other sons, Richard and Thomas, Richard moved to New Haven and shortly thereafter, to nearby Branford, Conn. where he died in 1653. The Swain-Harrison House in Branford, built c. 1680, is part of the Harrison family legacy. See, Edward E. Atwater, *History of the Colony of New Haven to its Absorption into Connecticut* (New Haven, 1881), 619-20; and Francis Harrison Corbin, "Five Generations of Connecticut Harrisons," *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register* (Boston: New England Historical and Genealogical Society, 1916), LXX (Jan. 1916), 69-86. While residing in Connecticut Apollos worked as a civil engineer and surveyor until the family moved to Pennsylvania.

⁵ Margaret Louisa Belden was a close relative of Horace Belden Jr.of Simsbury, Conn. Both shared a common ancestry to Horace Belden, a ship-builder from Hartford. See, Josephine Pomeroy Hendrick, "The Belden Family," unpublished manuscript, The Simsbury Historical Society. The Belden House in Simsbury stood until 1997 when it was destroyed. As indicated by the titles of his paintings, Birge maintained close connection with both sides of his family, particularly his uncle A.M. Harrison in Plymouth, Massachusetts and the Belden family in Simsbury.

⁶ *United States Census Records from 1860-1880* indicates the loss of income suffered by the family and Apollos change in position. See also, Boyd, 388-89.

⁷ Boyd, 224.

⁸ Ibid., 388

⁹ Charles Louis Borgmeyer, "Birge Harrison-Poet Painter," *Fine Arts Journal* 29(October 1913): 585.

¹⁰ Maria Jo Chamberlin-Hellman, "Thomas Eakins as Teacher" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1981), 130. Chamberlin-Hellman's dissertation contains an appendix of all the students who studied with Eakins at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts (PAFA). It indicates that in addition to Birge, Alexander, Margaret, and Butler Harrison all studied with Eakins. (*id.*, 520) Margaret Harrison was the model for Eakins' singer in *The Pathetic Song*, 1881. See, John Wilmerding, *Thomas Eakins* (exh. cat., London: National Portrait Gallery, 1993), 103-04.

¹¹ Information on the Harrison family membership was provided by April Bennett, archivist of the Archives of the Germantown Unitarian Church, Membership Ledger. Although both the Harrison and Belden families were Congregationalists, Apollos and his family, including Birge Harrison's paternal grandfather who resided with the family, became members of the Germantown Unitarian Church on Nov. 26, 1865.

¹² Conrad Wright, *The Liberal Christians: Essays on American Unitarian History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), 8.

¹³ Oscar Fay Adams, "Samuel Longfellow," *The New England Magazine* 17 (October 1894), 202. Samuel Longfellow, brother of the famous Transcendentalist poet, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, served as pastor of the Germantown Unitarian Church from 1878 to 1882.

¹⁴ *Funk and Wagnalls New Encyclopedia*, 1963 ed., s.v. "Transcendentalism."

¹⁵ Birge Harrison, *Landscape Painting* (1909; reprint New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911), 156.

¹⁶ Donald Mc Quade, ed., "Art Essays, First Series (1841)," in *Selected Writings of Emerson* (New York: Random House, 1981), x.

¹⁷ Ibid., x.

¹⁸ Ibid., 289.

¹⁹ Birge Harrison, "The Artist...By One of Them...Namely...Birge Harrison," *The Plowshare* 6 (February 1917), n. p.

²⁰ Harrison, "The Artist....," n.p.

²¹ Borgmeyer, 586.

²² William H. Gerds, *Art Across America: Two Centuries of American Painting* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1990), 1: 264.

²³ Herbert Welsh, "The Artists of Germantown," *Site and Relic Society of Germantown*, Address #9, (, Germantown Historical Society, privately printed, 1913), 241-44.

²⁴ Unidentified newspaper clipping of an address delivered by Mrs. Florence Earle Coates to the Society of Arts and Letters in the "William Trost Richards File" of the Germantown Historical Society.

²⁵ Linda S. Ferber, *William Trost Richards: American Landscape and Marine, 1833-1905* (exh. cat., New York: Brooklyn Museum, 1973), 32.

²⁶ Welsh, 245.

²⁷ *Dictionary of American Biography*, 1960 ed., s.v. "Thomas Alexander Harrison."

²⁸ "Mr. Birge Harrison," *Table Talk*, May 2, 1890, 4. *Table Talk* was an Australian journal that featured much of the art news in Melbourne at the end of the 19th Century. It not only featured informative articles on artists living and working in Australia but also gave extensive coverage of the various exhibitions and studio sales in the area. Unfortunately this material is unavailable in the United States. It can be obtained through the Victoria State Library, Melbourne. I am indebted to Jane Clark of Sotheby's Melbourne for bringing this invaluable resource to my attention. Ms. Clark also provided an initial outline of Harrison's biography.

²⁹ Borgmeyer, 587.

³⁰ Unidentified clipping in the "The Philadelphia Sketch Club File" at the Philadelphia Free Library.

³¹ Elizabeth Johns, "Thomas Eakins and 'Pure Art Education,'" *Archives of American Art Journal* 23 (1983): 2.

³² Lloyd Goodrich, *Thomas Eakins His Life and Work* (exh. cat., New York: Whitney Museum, 1933), 77.

³³ *Ibid.*, 81.

³⁴ Chamberlin-Hellman, 504. The six students who gained admittance were: Thomas Anshutz, William Sartain, Lovell Birge Harrison, William Clark, Frederic James and Charles Stephens (*id.*, 132).

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 133.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, viii.

³⁷ Lloyd Goodrich, *Thomas Eakins* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 1:96.

³⁸ Student Records for the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Archives of American Art, roll 4317.

³⁹ "Mr. Birge Harrison," 4. During his lifetime, Apollos Harrison knew other members of the Philadelphia artist's community. Harrison S. Morris, recalls Apollos fondly as "a very cultivated friend." See Harrison S. Morris, *Confessions in Art* (New York: Sears Publishing Co. Inc., 1930), 87.

⁴⁰ Boyd, 224.

⁴¹ Robert W. Rydell, John E. Findling, and Kimberly D. Pelle, *Fair America, World's Fairs in the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000), 21.

⁴² H. Wayne Morgan, *New Muses: Art in American Culture 1865-1920* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978), 37.

⁴³ Rydell, 21.

⁴⁴ Morgan, 36.

⁴⁵ John P. O'Neil, ed., *In Pursuit of Beauty: American and the Aesthetic Movement* (exh. cat., New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1986), 28.

⁴⁶ "Mr. Birge Harrison," 4. Perhaps this experience was instrumental in Harrison's later choice of using the national and international expositions and exhibitions as one of the main venues for the sale of his work, rather than relying on art dealers or galleries.

⁴⁷ *The Sunday Mercury*, Oct. 21, 1877. Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Scrapbook 1877-92, Archives of American Art, roll 53.

⁴⁸ Susan Hobbs, et al. *1876: American Art of the Centennial* (exh. cat., Washington, D.C.: National Collection of Fine Art, 1976), 13.

⁴⁹ Hobbs, 10.

⁵⁰ Letter from Birge Harrison to Percy Holt, March 6, 1923, The Percy William Holt Papers, 1912-1923, Department of Archives and History, State of Alabama, Montgomery, Alabama. I would like to thank Mariea Caudill-Dennison, author of *Art of the American South, 1915-1945: Picturing the Past, Portending Regionalism* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois, 2001) for bringing this letter to my attention. Apollos later allowed his other two sons, Alexander and Butler to also go to France to study. All three sons exhibited at the 1889 Paris Exposition. Sargent left Paris for Philadelphia on May 15, 1876. See, Charles M. Mount, *John Singer Sargent: A Biography* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co. Inc., 1955), 45.

⁵¹ Letter from Kenyon Cox, to his mother, Helen Finney Cox, March 5, 1877, The Kenyon Cox Papers, Avery Library, Columbia University.

⁵² Welsh, 245.

Chapter Two

Student Years in France: 1876-1882¹

Like many young artists of his generation Harrison had several reasons to study in Paris. As Michael Quick has pointed out, during the 1870's and 1880's American artists became increasingly interested in ideas concerning art, and many traveled to Europe to study them.² Moreover, the growing prosperity in the northern states after the Civil War made such culturally broadening and cosmopolitan experiences affordable. This interest was facilitated by a revolution in travel and communications, particularly the illustrated press. Popular periodicals such as *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* and *Scribner's Monthly Magazine*, engendered a new consciousness of a wider world, which could no longer be ignored. Likewise, through international expositions such as the Philadelphia Centennial in 1876, Americans were beginning to realize that in addition to political, economic and industrial strength, culture played a role in establishing a country as a world power. Thus, the ideal of a national art, informed by other cultures, particularly those of Western Europe, became increasingly important.³

Many art teachers, who had studied abroad, urged their students to do the same. Thomas Eakins, for example, attended the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris and encouraged his students to take advantage of the training that the École offered. Most American students arrived in Paris eager to sharpen their technical skills, to learn what and how to paint in order to compete on an international level with the best European artists. What they found was a more enduring legacy, the impact of which had repercussions on American art, thought and art institutions. In order to fully understand the impact of the

influences that these students encountered, it is necessary to look beyond the confines of the École proper and to examine the many different kinds of cosmopolitan experiences that France offered.

As Lois M. Fink has noted, not only did these young art students attain the technical excellence that they sought, but they also discovered an example of Hebert Spencer's popular progressive theories of national superiority as revealed through its cultural achievement.⁴ They experienced a culture different from their own, one that valued the arts and understood the impact which the arts could have on a country's identity both at home and abroad, and therefore valued the artist as an important contributor to society.⁵

Entrance into the French art world for Americans and other foreign nationals was facilitated by governmental promotion of the arts in France following the Franco-Prussian War and the Commune. Eager to project an image of France as a modern, prosperous country whose cultural achievements were unrivaled in Europe, the system of art education established by the École and the several independent ateliers, such as that of Carolus-Duran, was free to all male students who qualified. Moreover, the fees the students paid for models and supplies were nominal.⁶ Through the Salon and other state-sponsored commissions, government patronage for the arts in France was generous even by European standards. An American student, although not able to compete for the Prix de Rome, could hope to have his paintings purchased by the French government for one of the many state-sponsored museums in Paris and in regional centers throughout the country.⁷

When the American artists who studied in Paris in the 1870's and 1880's returned home, they worked to establish a similar role for the arts in the United States and to "implant a standard of art hitherto unknown upon these shores . . . not only in terms of the standards of art production . . . but also in the administration and executive interests of art that have resulted in a strong foundation of a future American school of art."⁸

In addition, the teachers at the École des Beaux-Arts had presented their American students a valuable role model, teaching not only technique, but also showing them the importance of passing along their knowledge to the next generation of artists. Many of these young students, Birge Harrison among them, would later become teachers themselves. Through them, the experience of the École continued to be felt in American art for years to come.

Paris epitomized the cosmopolitan art world that American students sought and which they found to be relatively inexpensive. On arriving, the new student was likely to be taken under the wing of a fellow student and countryman who helped him secure inexpensive lodgings. Most students found housing in the Latin Quarter, which was one of the least expensive areas in the city and had the added advantage of being close to the École and many art supply shops.⁹ Harrison's address noted in the official records of the École and Salon indicates that he lived at one of the most frequently given as an address by Americans: 33 rue Touron.¹⁰ The standard pattern of finding lodging resulted in establishing a de facto student art colony within the larger social fabric of the city of Paris. Like their counterparts scattered about the French provinces, such enclaves, ensured a lively exchange of thought and opinion.

After hours spent in the studio, students could take advantage of the nightlife of cafes and theaters, enjoying, as Will H. Low put it, “for the first time and in common, the large liberty of thought and action that in France is vouchsafed to the children of the arts.”¹¹ Most importantly, the museums, exhibitions and art galleries in the capital offered sources of influences and an education in the arts that was second only to the École itself.¹² As J. F. Weir wrote in 1883, these “nameless influences” were important in the education of the artists since they provided, “a favorable art atmosphere- a milieu that is rich and inspiring”¹³ and it was this atmosphere that Paris alone could offer.

When Harrison joined Carolus-Duran’s atelier on the advice of John Singer Sargent, he entered one of the studios most popular with American students at the time. Duran’s classes were initiated at the request of the American artist Robert Hinkley in 1872, when he asked to become Carolus-Duran’s pupil. Within two years the number of students under Duran had grown to twenty, many being either American or British.¹⁴ Only a relatively small percentage of American students actually passed the examinations required for admittance into the École des Beaux-Arts. Formal admission was based on highly competitive examinations, “concours des places,” that were given in French. Admission to the École proper was limited to those students whose combined test scores placed them among the first seventy applicants, and also determined his vantage point in the crowded studio spaces.¹⁵ The student progressed in a series of stages from drawing from the cast to drawing and painting of the live model. Private studios, such as Carolus-Duran’s, which required neither a long waiting period nor an examination, helped to prepare the student for these exams. Since they were allowed to attend classes without official registration, it is difficult to obtain the exact date of Harrison’s attendance in

Carolus-Duran's studio. However, what official records exist, indicate that by February 17, 1877, Carolus-Duran certified that Birge Harrison was prepared to take the first entrance examination.¹⁶

These examinations included a proficiency in the technical aspects of painting, and also demanded a thorough grounding in the history and theory of Western art. Because art historians have focused on the role that technical experimentation played in the art of the period, there has been less scholarly attention paid to the impact that these aspects of the French Academy system had on the development of American art theory. An examination of Harrison's art theory as developed in his book, *Landscape Painting*, 1909, and in his journal articles in following chapters will reveal that these influences were as important as the technical mastery that he learned in the studios in shaping his art theory and teaching practices.

Harrison conceived the mastery of technique as a series of steps aimed at solving the technical problems that the artist encountered during the course of painting. Each solution was a step along the path toward developing the artist's personal technique which he considered, "an inalienable part of his personal vision which makes his art his own."¹⁷ In the studio of each of his masters, Carolus-Duran and later, Alexandre Cabanel, as well as through various stylistic innovations pioneered outside of the Academy during this period, he learned different approaches in his quest for proficiency and personal expression. Although he would later modify or discard certain aspects of each of his master's techniques stating that, "one of the chief delights of painting lies in the fact that each artist does, and of necessity must invent his own technique," the lessons

learned during his student years provided the groundwork for the development of his own personal expression.¹⁸

When he arrived at Carolus-Duran's studio in 1876, Harrison made life-long friends including Theodore Robinson, Will H. Low, J. Carrol Beckwith and Keynon Cox. Several of these artists have left descriptions of their experiences in Carolus-Duran's studio where the master himself was only in his early thirties. Although a newcomer could be subject to severe baiting, a result of the competitive nature of studio organization,¹⁹ this does not seem to have been the case in Carolus-Duran's classes during Harrison's stay there. In his letters home, Kenyon Cox described a fraternity-like atmosphere in which the most serious form of hazing amounted to little more than requiring the newly arrived students to sing a song from their own country. They were also responsible for running errands for the rest of the class until another, newer arrival took their place.²⁰

During the 1870's Carolus-Duran was considered a modern and innovative, if somewhat unorthodox artist.²¹ His instruction departed from that received in the official studios of the Ecole in several important aspects. While academic training was founded on the mastery of drawing, particularly of the nude figure, Carolus-Duran's teaching stressed direct painting. In this respect, his teaching methodology was similar to that which Harrison had probably encountered under Thomas Eakins, whose approach also stressed the early practice of painting.²² As a result of his enthusiasm for the Spanish master, Diego Vélasquez, Carolus-Duran emphasized laying in the main planes of the composition, which were established through the use of broadly brushed values and tones.²³

Harrison incorporated many of Carolus-Duran's lessons on technique into his own artistic production and years later, into his instruction to his own students. In his book, *Landscape Painting*, which grew out of his lectures to his students in Woodstock, New York, the application of tones and values are treated extensively since in Harrison's view, they constituted the most important technical aspects of landscape painting. Insisting that "nature deals in broken colors everywhere, but she never deals in broken values," Harrison cautioned his students to pay close attention to the preparation of their canvases, making sure that the first undertone laid down should be warmer than the overtone and that the whole be "painted over with the pearly tones that were true to nature."²⁴ The lack of fusion between the broadly brushed tonal planes, which he first learned in Carolus-Duran's atelier, allowed for each tone to relate to the one next to it. It is likely that Harrison may have developed his theory of "refraction" based on this practice.

Harrison defined refraction as "the intimate effect of one mass of color or value upon its adjoining mass, which results in the 'lost-edge,' and a general diffusion of tone, thus giving to pictures their atmospheric quality."²⁵ Believing that "good painting, after all, is a matter of analysis and synthesis," Harrison devoted an entire chapter to the use of values.²⁶ Because the artist's limited palette is "ludicrously inadequate . . . to translate the infinite value-scale of nature . . . the most important thing to consider is the value-key of our picture."²⁷ Attention to tonal gradation, value, the "lost-edge" and its resulting atmospheric effects, and refraction are all characteristics of the poetic landscapes of American Tonalism, for which Harrison was a major spokesman.

In addition to Carolus-Duran's emphasis on realistic representation, paint application and the formal elements of tone and value, Harrison also learned the

importance of stressing the interpretation of nature rather than its reproduction, a lesson that distinguished his generation of American landscape painters from the previous one. Carolus-Duran, while aware of the importance of the tradition of Western art, also recognized the danger in not allowing art students to develop their individual feelings because of a total commitment to tradition. In his studio, students learned that interpretation was what distinguished the personality of each of the great masters of the Western tradition in art and that, “without this individual point of view there can be no really original work.”²⁸

According to one biographical account of this period in Harrison’s life, he spent his mornings in Carolus-Duran’s studio studying the live model. He may have occasionally helped the master by painting the “accessories of his pictures” and may also have met other distinguished masters such as Gustave Doré, Jean-Léon Gérôme, and Jean-Jacques Henner there.²⁹

Only a small percentage of the more than eighteen thousand American students who studied in Paris in the late nineteenth century successfully attained matriculation into the École³⁰ and Harrison’s achievement can be seen as the result of his hard work.³¹ Shortly after passing the first “concours,” Harrison left Duran’s studio to matriculate into the École des Beaux-Art entering into the studio of Alexandre Cabanel on March 7, 1878.³² Unlike Carolus-Duran’s students, Cabanel’s did not publish reminiscences of their experiences in his studio. Although his popularity would fade in the early 1880’s as he grew “lazy with age and success,”³³ during the mid-1870’s Cabanel’s studio was one of the most sought-after placements in the École, perhaps because his students won more Prix de Rome and Salon acceptances and medals than those of any other master.³⁴

Like Carolus-Duran, Cabanel was a flexible teacher who allowed his students to pursue their own personal styles. His specialty was draftsmanship, which Harrison viewed as the “grammar of art,”³⁵ and the idealized female figure. Cabanel’s influence on Harrison is more easily discernable in the carefully drawn figures in his early work than in his later landscape paintings.³⁶ However, Harrison modified Cabanel’s approach to the figure as he sought to incorporate more modern concerns into his work. Although Cabanel’s figures seemed to capture the melancholy associated with modern life, they convey little of the subject’s inner life.³⁷ As a discussion of his figural works from this period, such as *The Appointment*, 1881, will indicate, Harrison sought to express the psychological state of the figure in his art. To accomplish this, he looked outside of the academy to the work of the French painter, Jules Bastien-Lepage, the Impressionists, the Barbizon artists and even his fellow students. As he later noted to his own students, outside study and their own investigations were necessary if artists were to develop their own personal expression.³⁸

Perhaps the most pervasive influence on this generation of American artists was the Barbizon school, which was already well known to American students when they arrived in France in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. William Morris Hunt had long been one of the Barbizon school’s chief proponents and by mid-century his work showed evidence of his indebtedness to this group. Hunt’s teaching followed the principle that the artist was an interpreter of nature and when asked for examples of this conviction he referred them to various the Barbizon painters, particularly Jean François Millet, Jean-Baptiste Corot, and Charles-François Daubigny. Other artists whose work demonstrates the early influence of the Barbizon school include such first generation

Tonalists as George Inness, Alexander Wyant and Homer Dodge Martin.³⁹ Americans were also adding paintings by the Barbizon to their collections and by the 1880's these artists were regular features at American galleries and auctions, where they demanded increasingly higher prices.⁴⁰

The rural figure subjects of many of the canvases painted by Americans during this period are the most recognizable marker of the Barbizon influence. While the significance of the America's adaptation of this imagery will be discussed later, it is important to note that in their images of rural peasants, the Barbizon artists may have been "seeking to escape from an age where the human condition was one of constant change," and that they found in the rural countryside evidence of "nature's rhythms and changing aspects a more constant condition," which held the possibility of mankind achieving a "union with the changing aspects and rhythms of nature."⁴¹

This school's influence, however, went beyond imagery. Harrison credited the Barbizon painters with nourishing the initial experiments in plein-air painting and the recording of the "pearly tones of out-door nature," begun by John Constable and the English landscapists, into a significant art movement with international influence.⁴² In strictly technical terms, he pointed to Millet as an example of "drawing by mass," which was of particular importance in landscape art. According to Harrison this kind of drawing allowed for the "synthetic grouping of masses of delicate and beautiful color," necessary if the artist was to "grab the essential and cast the little and the inessential behind."⁴³

Barbizon use of color had a significant impact on Harrison's art. His understanding that color, "more than any other artistic attribute . . . showed the

temperamental quality of a painter's product,"⁴⁴ is related to the Barbizon use of color to express the poetic moods of the natural world and to create emotional effects. He saw Corot's use of a cool green palette "restful... in the emotional sense," and particularly appropriate to landscape painting and valued Corot's adroit use of the color by placing "powerful notes of red, yellow or orange" to enhance the beauty of his delicate greens.⁴⁵ Harrison used these techniques in his early figure paintings, as well as his later Tonalist landscapes when he wished to "play upon the emotions by the simple use of pure color."⁴⁶

For Harrison as for much of his generation, however, the technical achievements made by the Barbizon school were not their most important contribution to art. Harrison's experience lead him to the conclusion that, "every young painter must at some time worship at the shrine of technique . . . but that it is a sign of . . . arrested development, when the...artist fails to graduate out of this chrysalis stage."⁴⁷ Quoting Millet, Harrison believed that technique "should always hide itself modestly behind the thing to be expressed."⁴⁸ For Harrison, technique was not an end itself but only a means to an end. As we will see, in his own paintings, Harrison developed a technique that was essential to conveying the meaning of his work, the expression of the beauty and nobility of nature.

The impetus toward this development came from the enduring legacy of the Barbizon artists, who provided the Americans with a new mindset that released them from the literal truth and nationalistic and religious overtones of the Hudson River School; these they replaced with a model of "a persuasively mysterious sentiment that seemed at once humble and exotic" and which appealed to the "individual mind" and

imagination.⁴⁹ By the late nineteenth century, American landscapists, and Harrison and the Tonalists in particular, had learned to trust themselves to express their “inner spirit” were fully engaged in “an effort to seek a correspondence between nature and experience and art.”⁵⁰

On the other end of the spectrum from the Barbizon artists, Harrison considered the Impressionists as a more radical influence that was gaining the attention of not only the art establishment and art critics, but also of American students in Paris. One of the major attractions of study in Paris was the abundance of opportunities to visit the city’s museums and galleries and to participate in the art debates of the period. Arriving in Paris in 1876, Harrison, like many of his fellow students, had the opportunity of experiencing Impressionism when it was still in the earliest stages of its development.

Of his introduction to Impressionism, Harrison recalled, “I remember the first exhibition which these men gave in Paris . . . and the bewilderment and scorn with which it was received by the critics and older painters . . . and the heroic struggle which they made against hopeless odds.”⁵¹ Years later, he would thank this school for freeing art, “from the fetters that bound us to the old system of in-door painting” and for giving artists, a fresh palette of pearl and opal and lapis-lazuli in place of the old snuff-colored affairs of our fathers.”⁵²

Harrison credited the French Impressionists, whom he preferred to term “illuminists, or painters of light,”⁵³ with the introduction of the word, “vibration” into the artist’s vocabulary.⁵⁴ Their special, although “purely technical triumph,” was the discovery that, “by the use of broken color in its prismatic simplicity the pulsating, vibrating effect of light could be transferred to the surface of a canvas.”⁵⁵ His later

reservation concerning the Impressionist's achievement reflected his belief that their method compromised the natural image. Mitigating their influence with his exposure to the Barbizon artists, he felt that the term "impressionism" was better reserved for the artist who:

Honestly and sincerely records his impressions of nature ... Velásquez, Titian, Rembrandt were as truly impressionists as were Manet or Monet or Sisley-because, in the canvases of these great masters of the Renaissance, there rings the true note of personality-proof of their honesty, their reverence, and their humility before nature.⁵⁶

While specific application of the many influences on Harrison's art will be discussed in connection with individual paintings, it is important to note that Jules Bastien-Lepage, who represented an innovative yet moderate model, was perhaps the most influential personality on late nineteenth-century American artists studying in Paris at this time. As evident by his showings at the annual Salons during the late 1870's until his death in 1884, Bastien's approach was a successful model. A former student of Cabanel, he forged a style that sought to "revitalize the French school from within" by synthesizing academic tradition and modernist experimentation, which appealed to American artists.⁵⁷

The American students appreciated Bastien-Lepage on several different levels. In his letters home, Kenyon Cox focused on his technical skill. Writing in 1878, of Bastien's *Le Communicant*, Cox admired his "superb drawing" and "perfect workmanship."⁵⁸ Of his *Joan of Arc*, Cox's admiration reached new levels. In his lengthy description he states that, "the technical painting of them is the finest thing I ever saw," and praised the "perfect mastery of form and color to a degree that I think no other painter ancient or modern has approached."⁵⁹ For Harrison, Bastien's importance lay in the fact that he

“had revised the old order of pictorial composition altogether. He had gone to Nature first of all . . . the consequence has been that *Joan of Arc* . . . is, and always will be a test picture...It epitomizes the ideas of the younger school.”⁶⁰ Because he believed that, “the artists have discovered that most of the unsolved problems of art lie in the open air,”⁶¹ Harrison maintained his commitment to the plein-air method throughout his life.

Written several years after Bastien-Lepage’s death, when this generation of students had had both time and experience enough to evaluate his impact, Harrison’s assessment agrees with recent scholars’ appraisal of Bastien-Lepage’s influence. Beyond his technical mastery, it was his, “absolute reliance on the power of the ‘innocent eye’ and rejection of academic formulas,”⁶² that had a more prolonged influence on American students who eagerly adopted his plein-air method. Harrison realized that plein-air painting had not simply appeared suddenly in Bastien-Lepage’s work. He credited the “little band of landscapists” from England, led by Constable, with the unique achievement of bringing the painting of landscapes out of the confines and strictures of the studio and out into the open air.⁶³ However, as his statement indicates, he also grasped the essential significance of Bastien’s achievement, that he provided a model for an entire generation of American artists.

In strictly technical terms, the plein-air approach greatly influenced what was known as the “Gray” manner of painting. While Americans studying abroad worked through several different movements that addressed the painting of light, including the Black, the White, and the Impressionist styles, it was the Gray manner that was considered the greatest of these modern movements by contemporary critics.⁶⁴ This approach, which “tended to favor an overall gray illumination with very little tonal

contrast,”⁶⁵ greatly influenced Tonalism. Harrison is one of several artists who adopted it in their figure paintings, and later adapted it in their landscapes.

Additional innovations that Bastien-Lepage offered were a lightened palette and a more textured painting surface, which defied the “slick” surface of academic paintings. True to the synthesizing quality of his art, many of the characteristics that have become associated with Bastien-Lepage’s art, “his manner of composing his outdoor scenes—utilizing high, panoramic viewpoints, sudden recessions into depth and the immersion of the figures in the central foreground of the landscape, leaving a free flow of open air above and around—owned its origin to Impressionism.”⁶⁶

Just as Bastien-Lepage had done, the challenge for Harrison, as for all of the young students at this time, was to synthesize the various influences that they encountered. The art colonies in the French provinces offered the place, time and artistic milieu for the practical application and working out of artistic problems which were necessary for such a synthesis to take place. From the end of July to October, the École de Beaux-Arts recessed for summer holiday. The artist colonies provided an escape from the heat and humidity of the late Parisian summers when the capital emptied and almost all productive work ceased. The relaxed atmosphere of these colonies offered relief from the pressures of deadlines and competition for the concours in the Parisian studios. They were where students became artists and where they, particularly the Americans, “enjoyed an enhanced status” within a social context that held artists in special regard.⁶⁷ This experience, and the familiarity with art exhibited by the local population, had a lasting impact on the young art students and helped them to form their own determination to

accomplish a professional standing for artists, as well as to help create an informed public appreciation for the arts upon their return to the United States.

In the summer art colonies students applied the techniques, the craft and skills that they had acquired, and were free to experiment with the latest styles that interested them. Most importantly, they could develop their own original modes of self-expression.⁶⁸ The atmosphere of camaraderie, mutual support and learning that characterized the French painting colonies were, according to R.A.M. Stevenson, another Carolus-Duran student, one of the reasons why “more than half of the ideas of the nineteenth century have been hatched”⁶⁹ at such enclaves.

The Barbizon art colony in Fontainebleau was popular with American artists and can be seen as the forerunner of many other colonies in the French countryside. These colonies offered a place where the young art student who “stupefies himself with studies that teach him the mechanical side of his trade,” could instead “walk in the great air, and be a servant of mirth, and not pick and botanise, but wait upon the moods of nature.”⁷⁰ Fontainebleau however, had two serious drawbacks. Its topography was limited to interior forest scenes and more importantly, as the younger men saw it, according to R.A.M. Stevenson, “it was especially difficult to get away from the old men who had made it their own, and yet do anything like art.”⁷¹

The nearby village of Grez sur-Loing on the other hand offered a greater variety of topographical subject matter. As Keynon Cox noted in a letter to his brother in 1879, “the landscape is so interesting and in so many varied ways that one might paint here a month of summers and not feel that he had exhausted all of it.”⁷² Another advantage of Grez, unlike Fontainebleau, was that the village had fallen from favor among most

French artists, allowing a largely Anglo-American population to imprint its own identity on the colony. Although French artists had frequented Grez since at least the 1860's, their presence there had diminished greatly by the 1870's. By the mid 1870's, one of the few French artists living near Grez in Recloses, was Jean-Charles Cazin, the prominent plein-air painter whose tonal paintings were slowly gaining recognition in the United States.⁷³ Léon Augustin L'Hermitte was one of the few French artists of note in Grez in 1881.⁷⁴ The lack of any established school of painting at Grez allowed the younger art students, who were seeking to develop their own individual styles, to freely experiment with the variety of the most current subject matter, techniques and styles gaining attention in Paris.

While many of the artists who worked in Grez were influenced by the Barbizon school's lyrical moods, they were also eager to experiment with the latest plein-air approach of Bastien-Lepage. The three art colonies that were popular with American artists, and at which Harrison spent the most time at during this period, Grez, Concarneau and Pont-Aven, were all major centers for the transmission of Bastien-Lepage's influence.⁷⁵ Bastien-Lepage, Cazin and Léon Auguste L'Hermitte all influenced the painters of Grez.⁷⁶ While Bastien-Lepage's and Cazin's influence can be seen in the works by Birge Harrison painted in Grez during this period, L'Hermitte had a more subtle influence on Harrison by directing his work away from the narrative.⁷⁷

Perhaps because of the urging of Thomas Eakins, who encouraged his pupils to get practical experience painting,⁷⁸ Harrison struck out for the Barbizon colony of Fontainebleau with several fellow Duran students almost immediately after arriving in

France in the summer of 1876. However, they stayed only briefly, choosing instead to set out for the nearby village of Grez-sur-Loing.⁷⁹

The previous year, Will H. Low along with fellow Duran students, Theodore Robinson, and the Englishmen R.A.M. Stevenson, Robert Louis Stevenson and Henry Enfield, along with the Irishman Frank O'Meara, had made a high-spirited foray into the forest surrounding Fontainebleau, ending their journey in Grez.⁸⁰ Three days of rain dampened their spirits and the village, although picturesque, seemed melancholic. As Low recalls, they "were very much bored with their first visit to Grez, although the inn was quaint, the fare good and our hostess kind."⁸¹ Perhaps it was the pleasant memories of the inn that drew Low back to Grez in the summer of 1876, this time with the newly arrived Birge Harrison.

Grez attracted many "parties of painters who came from Barbizon or elsewhere, to pass two or three days in tranquil festivity."⁸² It would be wrong to surmise that Grez attracted only painters, or that the Low group was the first to discover the village. The village attracted a variety of people and among its inhabitants were musicians, writers, the most famous and part of Low's group being Robert Louis Stevenson, at least one communard, Barrere,⁸³ and one "escaped convict," Rodolphe Salis, who would become the owner of the famous Café du Chat Noir in Paris.⁸⁴

Harrison wrote about Grez in two separate articles. Appearing in the 1893 issue of *Outing Magazine*, "In Search of Paradise with Camera and Palette," Harrison fondly recalled:

dear delightful old Gretz [*sic*], the most beautiful of all the artist haunts of France... a land of great pink moons and brooding mists, of silver birches and far reaching meadows, of deep dark pools and

of waterlilies ... a river to dream of, to read of in fairy tales, a poem in reeds.⁸⁵

The most interesting feature of the village, however, was the frequently painted ancient bridge, which figured prominently in the village's history.

Perhaps because of its rediscovery by American and British artists, Grez developed into an art colony comprised mostly of foreign artists with few Frenchmen. Harrison recalled many of the artists whom he met during his summers in Grez. They included the writer Robert Louis Stevenson, (the subject of Harrison's second article on Grez, "With Stevenson at Grez") his cousin, R.A.M. Stevenson, Theodore Robinson, Birge's brother, Alexander Harrison who arrived in 1879, and "John Sargent, down from the Paris schools for an outing; William Stott [of Oldman], Wendon [*sic* Welden] Hawkins, [Frederick Arthur] Bridgeman, [Frank] Fowler, [Will H.] Low and [Douglas] Volk"⁸⁶ as well as "[Willard L.] Metcalf, Joe [Arthur] Heseltine, [Henry] Enfield, Walter Ullman, Frank O'Meara, the handsome, debonair young Irishman who was to die before his great talent as a painter made its mark, Carl Larson [*sic* Larsson], and [Christian] Shredswig [*sic* Skredsvig], both now famous abroad as well as in their native Sweden. . . Bentz,⁸⁷ Walter [Launt] Palmer, and [Middleton] Jameson, a young Scottish painter."⁸⁸ R.A.M Stevenson recalled many of the same artists with the addition of [Hiram] Bloomer, Ernest Parton, J. M. Swan, and Edwin Ellis."⁸⁹

The diversity and youthfulness of the artists who passed through Grez created "a gay, rollicking, polyglot enthusiastic band ... that gathered around the hospitable board of le mere Chevillon," the owner and hostess of the Hotel Chevillon, the only inn in the village until the more respectable Hotel Beausejour opened.⁹⁰ Many of these "light-

hearted, rather disreputable youths”⁹¹ from both America and other nations became important artists.

Greuz was not all frivolity. These young students were there to become artists, and much hard work was accomplished. According to an 1883 article in *The Studio* on the colony, “something new is made everyday and as it hangs on the wall to dry it is open to criticism.”⁹² At the time there were almost two hundred studies and sketches painted in the panels of the dining room of the Hotel Cheyillon.⁹³ Although it is often difficult to ascertain the site of many of Harrison’s paintings, several of his early works were painted in Grez. In addition to his best known painting from this period, *November*, 1881, these works include *The Appointment*, 1881, *The Mirror*, [1876-82], *Young Girl in a Meadow*, [1876-82], *Le chemin du Moulin du Roi*, [1876-82] and a small marine sketch, signed “H. Birge,” now lost, which hung on the wall of the hotel.⁹⁴

Harrison offers one of the most direct examples of the benefit of the diverse artistic fraternity that developed at Grez. After the British and American contingents, the Scandinavian artists comprised the second largest group in Grez during this period. They began arriving in Grez in 1882⁹⁵ and included artists from Norway, Sweden and Denmark. It is not surprising that the Scandinavians would have found Grez an attractive art colony, which was becoming, “widely known” by 1880.⁹⁶ The two groups shared many of the same concerns.

As already noted, Paris was established as the international art capital of Europe by the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The trend toward realism had gained a wide following among the young Scandinavian painters, not only because it was a current style, but because its very newness, or modernity, aligned it with more liberal attitudes in

politics, and correspondingly, with a sense of rebellion against official methods of instruction in their countries, which these artists shared.⁹⁷ These artists found Bastien-Lepage's naturalism attractive for many of the same reasons as the Americans did, and in Grez, they found a colony of artists who were seriously pursuing Bastien-Lepage's plein-air aesthetic. Harrison listed two of the better-known Scandinavian artists who were in Grez with him during this period, Carl Larsson, and Chistian Skredsvig. Fernande Sadler, author of *L'Hotel Chevillon et les Artistes de Gres-sur Loing*, lists many more who, like many of the Americans, have been lost in the telling of the history of art in their own countries.⁹⁸ Among the better known who were also in Grez during this period were Christian Krøhg, Karl Nordström, and Richard Bergh. There were also a large number of Scandinavian women artists who worked in Grez including Emma Löwstädt, and Julia Beck.⁹⁹

The spirit of fraternity that developed between the Americans and the Scandinavians is demonstrated in Harrison's account of his struggle to produce *November*. Unhappy with the near-finished product but unable to pinpoint the exact cause of its failure, Harrison was at work on his canvas when "U,"¹⁰⁰ "a Scandinavian painter," walked past. Harrison asked his opinion of what the problem was. "U" proceeded to pick up Harrison's brush and set to work on an eighteen-inch section in the "left center" of the composition:

U's work vibrated and sparkled with light and with atmosphere, while mine lay flat and dead. It was as if a window had been opened in my own soul. U had shown me the secret of atmospheric painting had made clear to me in a single lucid demonstration the importance of vibration and refraction in landscape painting.¹⁰¹

Little wonder that Harrison would later encourage his own students in Woodstock to look to each other in order to learn their craft! “U” was not the only artist at Grez to exert an influence on Harrison’s art. A more detailed look at his early figural works will also indicate his indebtedness to Frank O’Meara.¹⁰²

The subject matter of a number of Harrison’s early figure paintings, a local girl placed within an outdoor setting, was a common theme among the artists at Grez. As William H Gerds has noted, “the subjects upon which they chiefly concentrated were limited: pure landscapes, landscapes with figures, and figural compositions, almost always set out of doors, and in these last categories, the figures were invariably local peasants.”¹⁰³ These artists were also united by the formal strategies that they pursued. Painting out of doors, in changing light, can be difficult. One of the advantages of Grez was its temperate climate accompanied by consistently gray days. Many of the artists shared Kenyon Cox’s opinion, preferring “gray days when there is full color and everything is not eaten up with the light,”¹⁰⁴ and seasons and times of day when “a delicious soft light”¹⁰⁵ permeated the landscape. These effects were rendered with close attention to tonal values, resulting in harmonious compositions that became one of the major indicators of the work painted in the colony.

By 1882, Bruce Crane, who had arrived in the colony in August,¹⁰⁶ had begun to identify the pursuit of these shared subject matter and strategies as the “Grez school,” with Cazin as its leader.¹⁰⁷ However, many of the common characteristics of the Grez paintings, “the freshness and directness of touch, the light tonality, the compositional unity of figure and landscape based on outdoor study, the atmospheric quality of light and

the importance given to value relationships”¹⁰⁸ were also hallmarks of the innovative work of Jules Bastien-Lepage, whose influence over the colony has already been noted.

Many of these characteristics, and their French origins, were later identified in the “gray movement, the mightiest movement of modern times.”¹⁰⁹ Identified by Otto Stark in 1895, the characteristics of this movement, “the fine technique, simplicity and breath of handling,” resulting in “pictures beautiful in repose, harmonious in tone, generally without shrill notes of any kind; good in values, in a monotone sense”¹¹⁰ are also characteristic of late nineteenth-century Tonalism. Although the artists at Grez would move away from the Gray aesthetic during the last decade of the nineteenth century,¹¹¹ Harrison’s paintings from his early figural works to his later landscapes provide an example of a direct link between the art colony of Grez and the Tonalist movement in the United States.

Harrison, like many of the Americans, tended to move between several of the art colonies located in the French countryside. A number of the artists at Grez, for example, frequently visited the nearby village of Cernay-la Ville, a colony favored by French artists, where the landscape artist Léon-Gérôme Pelouse was “the leading spirit.”¹¹² R.A.M. Stevenson and Robert Louis Stevenson had spent a brief period in the village as early as 1877. Harrison visited the village in the spring of 1878,¹¹³ and returned the following May, 1879 with Charles E. DuBois, Burnap and Theodore Robinson.¹¹⁴ On either visit, Harrison would have had the opportunity to met another Scandinavian artist, Peder Severin Krøyer, who had come to Paris in 1877 to study under Léon Bonnat.¹¹⁵

Although his itinerary is unknown, during the spring of 1879 or 1880,¹¹⁶ Harrison visited Italy, bringing back with him, “the usual six-by ten foot salon canvas.”¹¹⁷ He also

brought back a copy of a Botticelli that he kept with him throughout his life.¹¹⁸ Harrison always maintained that copying the old masters was an integral part of the artist's development.¹¹⁹

Birge Harrison's older brother Alexander (1853-1930) arrived in France in the summer 1879 to study with Jean-Léon Gérôme. Earlier when he was nineteen and after initially gaining "some business experience" in the Philadelphia area,¹²⁰ Alexander joined the U.S. Coast Guard and spent the next five years doing topographical studies of the coastal areas of the United States.¹²¹ He had most likely accompanied the survey team headed by his uncle, Alexander M. Harrison who later wrote "A Report to the Superintendent of the United States Coastal Survey upon Ancient Tumuli in East Florida, 1895."¹²² After deciding to become a professional artist, the younger Alexander Harrison quit government service in Seattle¹²³ and studied for eighteen months at the School of Design in San Francisco and perhaps spent another brief period of studying art in Philadelphia at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art before leaving for France.¹²⁴

By the mid-1880's, Alexander became one of the leading members of the expatriate American painters in France. This was due to his early successes at the Paris Salon¹²⁵ and his close personal association with Bastien-Lepage.¹²⁶ Although Alexander lived the rest of his life in Europe, he made frequent visits to the United States and continued to exhibit paintings here, often together with Birge, and served on various committees for almost every important international exposition involving American artists during the period. With Alexander's arrival, both Harrison brothers began to have more success exhibiting their paintings. Alexander's arrival initiated a dialogue in which

the two brothers explored common themes that they interpreted with uniquely individual results.

Although Birge Harrison would continue to work in Grez throughout his stay in France, he also visited the two other colonies at which Bastien-Lepage's influence was particularly strong, Pont-Aven and Concarneau, both in Brittany.¹²⁷ One reason for this may be indicated by a painting that he exhibited at the 1879, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art's annual exhibition. Although unlocated the title, *Models Wanted*,¹²⁸ hints at one of the drawbacks for the young artists in Grez. Years later, Harrison would write of Grez, "there is some difficulty in obtaining good models at Gretz, [*sic*] and their price is higher than elsewhere."¹²⁹ In Pont-Aven on the other hand, conditions for a young artist were more favorable. Here, the struggling student could find "numerous good studios at moderate rents, at twenty francs a month being held dear. Models are paid from one to two francs a day," but, he cautioned, "they are scarce and intractable."¹³⁰ Harrison preferred the nearby village of Concarneau that also offered "accommodations very similar to those at Pont-Aven, both in price and in quality of fare."¹³¹ Here he found the local Breton population "softened and toned down as it were by the neighborhood of the ocean ...the men more jovial the girls gentler and models are more plentiful and more amenable than at Pont-Aven."¹³²

As early as 1885, American journals remarked on the fact that American artists seemed drawn to the distinctive local costumes and customs in Brittany as well as the uniqueness of the Breton population.¹³³ In their painter's quest for lovely models, the American artists choose not to depict the harsher reality of life in Concarneau. Either as fisherman or farmers, the Bretons earned little, and many of the women supplemented the

household income by sewing or modeling. The famous local snowy white coiffe that covered the women's hair was both a demonstration of Breton cultural pride but also hid the shaven heads of the women who sold their hair for a "ten franc piece" at large fairs to the local wigmakers.¹³⁴

Both brothers were in Pont-Aven by the summer of 1880.¹³⁵ Unlike Grez, Pont-Aven had a continuous tradition as an artist's colony that early on had attracted many American artists. According to David Sellin, Pont-Aven was established in 1864.¹³⁶ As early as 1866, a group of artists, "two French, two English and seven Americans of which three, including Wylie, were originally from Philadelphia, three from Boston, and one from Brooklyn" were staying at the Hotel des Voyages.¹³⁷ The village also provided a safe haven during the destruction of the city of Paris during the Franco-Prussian war and the Commune that followed and the colony of artists continued to expand.¹³⁸ Robert Wylie, who was able to master the local Breton language, became the de facto leader of the colony until his death in February 1877, at the Hotel des Voyages.¹³⁹ Alexander Harrison, who spent a good deal of time in the colony during the 1880's and 1890's, "assumed a position in relation to the artistic life of the region similar to that which Wylie had enjoyed in the previous two decades."¹⁴⁰

By the time that Birge Harrison wrote, "Quaint Artist Haunts in Brittany Pont Aven and Concarneau," for the *Outing Magazine* in 1894, the village and the artist colony had grown noticeably larger than it had been during his stay there in the early 1880's.¹⁴¹ In his article, Harrison noted that there were "two rival houses of entertainment . . . the Hotel des Voyages and the Pension Gloanec . . . the choice between them will depend solely upon the condition of the pocket, for at either place the

newcomer will be sure of a homely welcome and most excellent fare.”¹⁴² Slightly more expensive at five francs a day, the Hotel also boasted as its hostess, Julia, who like Grez’s Mere Chevillon, was “a woman in ten thousand,” and to whom “many an impecunious painter owes...the means of prosecuting his studies and grasping the end of the tardy and long coveted success.”¹⁴³ For half the daily fare, one could stay at the pension Gloanc, the establishment of Marie Jeanne, and where “Nannie, Jeannie and Soise” served meals “midst much uproar and hilarity.”¹⁴⁴ Like the Hotel Chevillon in Grez, the day’s work was hung in the rear of the dining room, “paneled from floor to rafters with sketches and studies.”¹⁴⁵

According to Harrison, “Pont-Aven lends itself more freely to the painter of landscapes, houses and picturesque ‘bits’ than to the purely figure painter.”¹⁴⁶ Not surprisingly, the artists whom Harrison recalled as associated with Pont-Aven were mostly “landscape men who have drawn golden metal from this inexhaustible mine” and included “ [William Lamb] Picknell, Leslie, Thompson, Bolton Jones, Pelouse, Adrian Stokes, Burr Nicholls, [Thomas] Hovenden and Hunt.”¹⁴⁷

Harrison’s inclusion of William Lamb Picknell is particularly interesting. In Picknell’s best-known painting, *The Road to Concarneau* of 1880, the artist followed an aesthetic that is much different than that of the Gray movement found in Grez. Identified by Otto Stark as the “White Movement” or Glare aesthetic, it explored the effect of full sunlight with characteristically bright light, sharp shadows and clear skies.¹⁴⁸ Because Pont-Aven was an established artist colony with its own history of influences, it experienced different stylistic phases. The Glare aesthetic was popular until Robert Wylie’s death there in 1877. The exploration of light took a new direction around 1880,

the time of Harrison's arrival, with the introduction of Bastien-Lepage's more diffused light in place of the strong direct lighting effects.¹⁴⁹ This shift corresponds to the period when Bastien-Lepage's influence was peaking in France, and followed the general change in direction found in the works at the Paris Salon.¹⁵⁰

Perhaps because they were more interested in the figure placed out of doors than in landscape itself at this time, Birge and Alexander ventured to nearby Concarneau, "an offshoot of Pont-Aven, but an offshoot that has grown into a formidable rival."¹⁵¹ Only twenty kilometers from Pont-Aven, this village sits on the Bay of Biscay and its proximity to the ocean has played a key role in the development of the town's character. The canning of sardines pulled from the Bay was so dominate in the town that "sardine fishermen, sardine girls and sardine factories permeate the town and even the fences and hedgerows are built of the glittering remnants of sardine boxes."¹⁵²

Like Pont-Aven, the village had two hotels, the Grand and the Voyagers. Harrison gave an idyllic description of the day in the life of a painter in Concarneau. The passage is worth quoting in full as its tone illustrates the fluidity and charm of Harrison's writing style that he used in several of the travelogues, which he wrote for popular magazines during the early 1890's:

The painter's life in Concarneau is a quiet one, but his days are filled with enthusiasm and strenuous, loving work. Five o'clock upon any fine summer's morning will find a group watching the mists rise over the harbor, or the first rays of the sunlight tip the sails with crimson. By half-past eight o'clock the last sybaritic idler will have finished his *café-au-lait* and started out to work, either down upon the sands or through the old citadel and across the ferry to the fields and woods beyond. At half-past eleven comes breakfast. This is a leisurely meal, leisurely discussed to the accompaniment of much good-natured persiflage, and concluded usually, in fine weather, out under the trees upon the *place*, where one lingers long over black coffee and cigarettes. There is no

hurry, and every one takes time. If work is begun at two o'clock there still remain three or four good, solid painting hours, which any one of the *illuminati* knows to be amply sufficient. At five there is tea with the ladies, and often music, and after that a few depraved enthusiasts rush off and do a sunset sketch before dinner, which is at half-past seven. One or two athletes take long walks; a few others, perhaps, socially inclined, mix with the charming provincial society of the town, by far the greater number gather at the café, with its billiards and its little white marble tables, where the *juge de paix*, the *maire*, the doctor and the other notables gather over their dominoes and their *petits-verres*.¹⁵³

Despite this idyllic description, hard work was also a part of life in the colony.

Interested in pursuing the tonal variations of softer light, Harrison and other artists who had left the École found that the:

most agreeable season of the year in Concarneau is perhaps the winter and the early spring, for owing to the proximity of the Gulf Stream, the climate is always mild, and the prevailing weather in the year's infancy is a beautiful silvery gray, without rain. It is then that the most serious work is done. Then the Salon and Academy pictures are painted, and every hour of daylight is greedily employed. Early hours and self-concentration are the rule. Each painter lives very much like a hermit crab in his hole, coming from his studio only to breathe, to sleep and to take in sustenance.¹⁵⁴

Harrison's visits to Pont-Aven and Concarneau produced the figural works on which his first reputation as an artist rested. Harrison left the École after "six years of hard and conscientious labor, and drifted down to Brittany."¹⁵⁵ His hard work at the École and at Concarneau resulted in his first successful submission to the Salon in 1881, when he exhibited, *Une Epave* of 1880. Also known as *The Waif* and more recently as *Shipwrecked* (fig.2.1), this painting was "well hung in the Salon of 1881, where it excited a good deal of attention."¹⁵⁶

The importance of this achievement cannot be overestimated. Years of study for all aspiring students were focused on winning a place at the Salon. The Salon offered an opportunity to study the various interpretations of subjects, themes and perhaps stylistic innovations. To have one's work hung there marked the successful transition from student to artist and to have finally achieved a measure of success at a level of international competition that had been the reason for many of the American students to go abroad for their training. On a more practical level, the Salon also functioned as an international forum that brought together artists, critics, both private and government patrons, and dealers. Acceptance at the Salon was the American artists' route to establishing an international as well as national reputation, and hopefully, financial support.

Birge may have benefited from the reforms established after the controversial and heavily criticized Salon of 1880. The resulting reforms transferred the organization of the Salon from government officials to the artists under the direction of the Société Nationale des Artistes Français, whose membership was comprised of French artists who had exhibited at the Salon or other international expositions.¹⁵⁷ Although this new system would later come under criticism for favoritism and itself undergo reform in 1889, the reforms in place for the 1881 Salon gave the established Academy teachers a greater voice in the selection process. Having studied with both Cabanel and Carolus-Duran, Harrison could have benefited from the new process. Furthermore, Bastien-Lepage was selected to serve of the Salon jury in 1881 and 1882¹⁵⁸ and would have cast a favorable eye on those paintings that, like Harrison's, were sympathetic to his own aesthetic.

On the other hand, the reforms were aimed at limiting the size of the exhibition and fewer works were accepted than in 1880, resulting in greater competition for a place. For Birge to have *Shipwrecked* well hung and to have received some critical attention was an accomplishment that few of the thousands of American students attained. The following year, in the Salon of 1882, he had even greater success when two of his paintings, *Return from First Communion* (fig. 2.2) and *November* (fig. 2.3) were accepted.

Americans continued to win acceptance and favorable reviews at the Salons. By the early 1880's, they were the largest foreign group represented.¹⁵⁹ As participation by Americans increased, the Salons were extensively reviewed in American periodicals. By 1882, the critic for *The Magazine of Art* could write, "Mr. Bridgman and J. S. Sargent are supported by a whole school of gifted Americans whose works would do credit to any exhibition. Conspicuous among them are Daniel Strain, R. Hinckley, the brothers Harrison and W. A. Coffin."¹⁶⁰

Although it is only known through magazine illustrations today, *Return from the First Communion* (fig. 2.2) was known and exhibited in the United States, gaining national recognition for Harrison. This painting was shown, and illustrated in the catalogue from an original drawing by Harrison, at the "Special Exhibition of Paintings by Americans at Home and in Europe" at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts from November 7 to December 26, 1881.¹⁶¹ The illustration was also reproduced in reviews of the exhibition. The exhibition also included Harrison's other Salon painting, *Shipwrecked* and two more now unlocated works, *La tricoteuse* and *Motherless*. The second exhibition of this type organized by the Academy, it brought together for display in their

native country, many works by American artists. Harrison maintained close contacts with the Academy throughout his life and exhibited in their annual exhibitions and in several one-man shows throughout his career.

Another major venue for exhibiting works by artists working abroad was the Society of American Artists. In 1881, Harrison exhibited there for the first time, showing *The Fugitive* (unlocated). In December 1882, he became a member of the Society and exhibited again that year and in 1883.¹⁶² Harrison's participation in exhibitions in the United States provided an important link with his native country.

While these exhibitions were important in establishing a national reputation for the participating artists, they were also recognized by contemporary critics as fulfilling a larger purpose, one similar to that which the École and the Salon filled in France, which was "the organized patronage and systematic encouragement for the arts in whose honor it is reared; and its collections, whether permanent or temporary, are active educational forces whose influence thousands share."¹⁶³ The cultural goals that were being addressed at the Centennial Exhibition of 1876, and which had helped launch Harrison on his journey to France were equally valid in 1882. While American artists were no doubt motivated by the hope of selling their work at these exhibitions, it should also be recognized that through their participation in these events, they were helping to define the goals that their experience in the École had exposed them to and to which they would remain committed for the remainder of their lives.

Harrison's *November, 1881* (fig. 2.3) established his reputation as a figure-painter and remains his best known, and most reproduced work today. Obtaining perhaps the highest recognition then available to American artists in France, it was purchased by the

French government, which routinely acquired paintings at the Salon.¹⁶⁴ Although the government generally paid lower prices than private dealers, its purchase of a painting meant that the artist's work would be seen in one of the several museums that had been established for the edification of the French population and to secure France's reputation as the art center of Europe. It was not until 1879, that the French government purchased the first painting by an American, Henry Mosler's *Le Retour*.¹⁶⁵ Three years passed before the government bought another painting by an American. Birge Harrison's *November* was one of three paintings purchased at the Salon of 1882. The other paintings were *La Place de la Bastille, effect de Pluie en 1882*, a landscape by Frank Boggs, and *La Mort du Premier-Ne*, a genre scene, by Frank Penfold.¹⁶⁶ *November* was purchased on May 12, 1882, for one thousand, eight hundred francs and after a brief showing at the Luxembourg Museum, went to the Musée Municipal des Beaux-Arts, Ille-et-Vilaine, Rennes which had been established in 1801 and located in the heart of Brittany, where it remains today.¹⁶⁷

November was "the first in a series of figure paintings by Americans to be acquired by the French government over the next two decades."¹⁶⁸ Its acquisition conferred official recognition on Harrison that had international implications. Shortly after his success at the Salon, Harrison was invited to exhibit *November* at the Royal Academy in London in the summer of 1882. The Academy was another prestigious exhibition venue and together with the Salon and international exhibitions offered artists a "traditional route in exhibiting their work."¹⁶⁹ Additionally, Bastien-Lepage's plein-air naturalism was gaining recognition with the English following his visit there in 1879,¹⁷⁰

and the exhibition of several of his works at the Grovesnor Gallery in 1880. Unable to obtain *November* for the exhibition, Harrison sent *Spring* (unlocated).¹⁷¹

More importantly, the acquisition of *November* “served as a breakthrough for Americans into the higher circles of French culture.”¹⁷² Its purchase also had long-range implications for the direction of American art. The lasting importance of Harrison’s *November* for American art is that it “signaled that painting of such scenes of peasants in a limited tonal range was not only acceptable to the government but it was also encouraged, as the state continued to endorse French painters and to welcome foreign artists active in Paris.”¹⁷³ Bastien’s naturalist aesthetic had been sanctioned for use by aspiring Americans and images of peasants painted in this contemporary trend proliferated at the Salon for several years later.¹⁷⁴ Two American painters followed Harrison’s success so closely that they exhibited paintings in the same manner and with similar subject. In 1885, Walter Gay exhibited his *November*,¹⁷⁵ (fig. 2.4) and in 1896, Robert Vonnoh exhibited his painting *November*, 1890 (fig. 2.5).¹⁷⁶

On a purely personal level, 1882 was an equally important year for Harrison. During one of his visits to either Concarneau or Grez, where he spent the summer of 1882,¹⁷⁷ Harrison met Eleanor Henderson Ritchie, a young Australian art student (fig. 2.6). The couple fell in love and married soon afterwards.¹⁷⁸ Eleanor posed for at least one of Harrison’s paintings. Although lost today, its described as representing “a young lady artist (Miss Ritchie) at her easel, in a picturesque old Breton garret, gazing on her unfinished canvas,”¹⁷⁹ was included in an article in the *Art Amateur* on the Boston art dealer John A Lowell, who purchased several paintings from both Birge and Alexander Harrison while visiting Grez that summer.

Eleanor Ritchie was the daughter of Frances Ann Chrisp and John Miller Ritchie who arrived in Australia from England in 1842.¹⁸⁰ Successful ranchers, the Ritchie family owned a 26,000 acres estate named "Blyth Vale" at Streatham, not far from Melbourne. Eleanor, or "Nellie" as she was known to her family, was born on March 3, 1854, the first of nine children in the family. As a child she was always "very keen on drawing," and was often found wandering the family property with sketchbook in hand. Like Birge, Eleanor had siblings, in this case three of her sisters, Lillias, Agnes and Florence, who also pursued the study of art.

In 1876, the family took a trip to England and "while in London Miss Ritchie made up her mind to plunge into the life of the world about her, for her active and independent nature made abhorrent to her the conventional lot of the society young lady."¹⁸¹ She began her art studies at the South Kensington School in 1878 but left after nine months, and entered the Heatherley School. Becoming ill, she was ordered to journey to the Continent and stopped in Paris where she spent two years studying art with Arthur Loureiro¹⁸² and Edith Huybers. Although she had not yet exhibited her paintings, Eleanor was not an amateur but took her studies seriously as indicated by her later successes at the Paris Salon and in her numerous exhibitions in Australia.

At the peak of his professional career and happily married, Harrison's success was interrupted by an attack of "malaria of the malignant type."¹⁸³ The couple made a hasty departure from France and returned to the United States, arriving in February 1883,¹⁸⁴ and then continued almost immediately to Colorado, where Birge hoped to regain his health.¹⁸⁵

¹ Given the fact that Harrison was in Philadelphia for the Centennial Exposition, which opened on May 10, 1876, it seems likely that he arrived in Paris no earlier than June 1876. His presence in Grez-sur-Loing that summer indicates his arrival before the student summer break that usually started in July.

² Michael Quick, *American Expatriate Painters of the Late Nineteenth Century* (exh. cat., Dayton, Ohio: The Dayton Art Institute, 1976), 14.

³ H. Wayne Morgan, *New Muses: Art in American Culture 1865-1920* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978), 72.

⁴ Lois Marie Fink, "Nineteenth Century Evolutionary Art," *American Art Review* 4 (January 1978):105.

⁵ Later in his life, Harrison elaborated on his views on this matter in *The Plowshare*, "The Artist...By one of Them... Namely...Birge Harrison," 6 (February 1917), n.p. In this article he states, "the apathy of the American people in matters of art are the natural result of our history which required taming the wilderness and the imposition of Puritanical attitudes about art in the cultural history."

⁶ *Le Voyage de Paris, Les Américains dans les Écoles d'Art 1868-1918* (exh. cat., Paris: Musée de la Coopération de Franco-Américain, 1990), 13.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁸ Will H. Low, *A Chronicle of Friendships 1873-1900* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), 151. The establishment of the Society of American Artists, in 1877, exemplifies the impact that the pursuit of these cultural goals by this generation of artists had on the development of art in the United States. See, Jennifer A. Bienenstock, *The Formation and Early Years of the Society of American Artists* (Ph.D. dissertation, City University of New York, 1983).

⁹ "The American Students of the Beaux Arts," *Century Magazine* 23 (Nov. 1881-April 1882): 262.

¹⁰ *Le Voyage*, 17. The addresses most frequently given by American Students were in the fourteenth arrondissement: 203, Blvd. Raspail; 6 & 13, rue Boissanade; 81 & 131, Blvd Montparnasse; 33, rue Tournon; 12, 63 & 66, rue de Seine. According to the official student records of the École des Beaux Arts, *Centre d'accueil and de recherché des archives nationale* (CARAN) at the Archives Nationales, Paris, Harrison gave his address as 33, rue Tournon upon entrance into Cabanel's studio on March 7, 1878. (CARAN #AJ52/248 [records of *L'École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Éléves 1800-1945*], 5), indicating that he was part of the ad hoc artist colony that functioned within the larger geographical and social fabric of Paris.

¹¹ Low, 147.

¹² *Le Voyage*, 14.

¹³ J.F. Weir, "Art Study at Home and Abroad," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 66 (May 1883): 946.

¹⁴ *Le Voyage*, 17.

¹⁵ For a more complete discussion of the operations of the Ecole and the various private ateliers associated with it see, H. Barbara Weinberg, "Nineteenth-Century American Painters at the École des Beaux-Arts," *The American Art Journal* (Autumn 1981): 66-84, which includes a listing of the matriculation dates for many American students, and *The Lure of Paris: Nineteenth-Century American Painters and Their French Teachers* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1991).

¹⁶ CARAN, *Éléves de Carlos-Duran*, roll 2267 ("élevés H"); frame 204. Harrison did not succeed in passing however until 14 August 1877 when he earned official placement in the painting concours. It appears that Harrison spent almost nine months "auditing" classes in Duran's studio in preparation for the entrance exams.

¹⁷ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, (1909; reprint New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911), 136.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Albert Boime, *The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 49.

²⁰ Kenyon Cox, letter to his mother, dated June 16, 1878, np. Kenyon Cox Papers, Avery Library, Columbia University, New York City.

²¹ Marianne Dozema and Michael Malais, *Americans and Paris* (exh. cat., Waterville, Maine: Colby College Museum of Art, 1990), 197.

²² For a discussion of Eakins's teaching method see, W.C. Brownell, "The Art Schools of Philadelphia," *Scribner's Monthly Illustrated* 18 (1879): 737-50.

²³ Richard Ormond, *John Singer Sargent* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 16.

²⁴ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, viii. Harrison also addressed this issue in his article, "Refraction in Landscape Painting, Part II," *Palette and Brush* 1 (April 1909): 247-48.

²⁵ Ibid., 43.

²⁶ Ibid., 65.

²⁷ Ibid., 67.

²⁸ "H.," "A French Painter and His Pupils: Stenographic transcription of lessons given by Carlos Duran in his studio," *Century Magazine* 31 (January 1886): 373.

²⁹ "Mr. Birge Harrison," *Table Talk*, May 2 1890, 4.

³⁰ Weinberg, *Lure of Paris*, 132.

³¹ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 136.

³² CARAN, AJ 52/248, 5, no.423. According to the above article in *Table Talk*, Harrison may also have spent a year in Julian's atelier. However, records in the CARAN files do not

corroborate this information. It is possible that Harrison "audited" classes at other studios during his student years.

³³ "American Students of the Beaux Arts," *The Century* 23 (November 1881- April 1882): 262.

³⁴ Weinberg, *Lure of Paris*, 132.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 78. Although Harrison viewed drawing as "secondary in importance to color, refraction and vibration," in landscape painting, he maintained that "a good knowledge of drawing was essential to good workmanship." (*id.* 78.) Furthermore, he believed that drawing allowed the artist to "capture the character of his mountain outline [which] is as important as the character of an eye or mouth in a drawing of the human face." (*id.* 80).

³⁷ Weinberg, *Lure of Paris*, 132.

³⁸ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 135.

³⁹ For a discussion of Hunt's influence and the impact of the Barbizon mood on tonalist artists see Peter Bermingham, *American Art in the Barbizon Mood*, (exh. cat., Washington D.C.: National Collection of Fine Arts, 1985), 55-68.

⁴⁰ Bermingham, 73.

⁴¹ Ibid., 10.

⁴² Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 7.

⁴³ Ibid., 88.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 20.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 50.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 62. Harrison used these techniques in his early figure paintings as well as the "play upon the emotion by the use of color."

⁴⁷ Ibid., 229.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 45.

⁴⁹ Bermingham, 10.

⁵⁰ Elizabeth Broun, "American Painting and Sculpture in the Fine Arts Building of the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893" (Ph. D. diss., University of Kansas, 1976), 218.

⁵¹ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 35. Harrison was probably referring to the 1877 exhibition. Although it was the third annual show that this group exhibited together, it was the first time that the group had adopted the critics' term "Impressionists" to identify themselves. For a discussion

of this and the other exhibitions by the Impressionists. See *The New Painting: Impressionism 1874-1886*, Charles Moffet, ed. (exh. cat., San Francisco: Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, 1986), 189.

⁵² Ibid., 28.

⁵³ Ibid., 232.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 8.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 233.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 232. In his chapter, "Vibration" Harrison points out the necessity of avoiding broken values in the use of broken color to achieve vibration. Much of this information was also published in a series of articles that appeared around the time of the first publication of *Landscape Painting*. See "Vibration in Landscape Painting," *Palette and Brush* Part I (Sept. 1909): 269-71; Part II, (Oct. 1909): 12-13. He published his concerns about Impressionism in "The True Impressionism in Art," *Scribner's Magazine* 46 (Oct. 1909): 491-95. Harrison believed that it was impossible to capture the fleeting effects of nature's moods and produce a "solid" painting in one session.

⁵⁷ William S. Feldman, "The Life and Work of Jules Bastien-Lepage (1846-1884)" (Ph.D diss., New York University, 1973), 274.

⁵⁸ Cox, letter to his mother, dated June 10, 1878, n.p., Kenyon Cox Papers.

⁵⁹ Cox, letter dated Jan 29, 1880, n.p., Kenyon Cox Papers.

⁶⁰ Birge Harrison, "New Departures in Parisian Art," *Atlantic Monthly* 66 (Dec. 1890): 756. In this article, his first directly concerned with contemporary developments in the fine art, Harrison addressed the difference between the artists who had adopted the plein-air method and academic studio painters. According to Harrison, it was only with the advent of the plein-air method that one can begin to speak of "modern" art. This was a distinction that he maintained throughout his career as an art critic. As a painter, he aligned himself with the "modern men," particularly Bastien-Lepage, Cazin and L'Hermitte whose influences are found in his figure paintings from this period.

⁶¹ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 248.

⁶² Feldman, 158.

⁶³ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 5.

⁶⁴ For a discussion of the development of the various movements involving the artists approach to light see William H. Gerds, "Focus on Light," in *California Light 1900-1939*, Patricia Trenton and William Gerds, (exh. cat., Long Beach, California: Laguna Art Museum 1990), 19-31.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 25.

⁶⁶ Feldman, 268.

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- ⁶⁷ H. Wayne Morgan, *New Muses: Art in American Culture 1865-1920* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978), 19.
- ⁶⁸ Richard Schiff, *Cézanne and the End of Impressionism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), viii.
- ⁶⁹ R.A.M. (Robert Allan Mowbray) Stevenson, "Greuz," *The Magazine of Art* 17 (1894): 28.
- ⁷⁰ Robert Louis Stevenson, "Fontainebleau [*sic*]: Village Communities of Painters.-IV," *Magazine of Art* 7 (1884): 345.
- ⁷¹ R.A.M. Stevenson, 30.
- ⁷² Cox, letter to this brother, Will Cox, dated August 4, 1879, n.p., Kenyon Cox Papers.
- ⁷³ William H. Gerds, "The American Artists in Grez," in *The Painters in Grez sur-Loing* (exh. cat., Tokyo: The Japan Association of Art Museums, 2000), 270.
- ⁷⁴ Fernande Sadler, *L'Hotel Chevillon et les Artistes de Grez-sur Loing* (Fontainebleau: L'Informativur de Seine-et-Marne, 1984), 11.
- ⁷⁵ Gerds, *California Light*, 25.
- ⁷⁶ Gerds, "American Artists in Grez," 288.
- ⁷⁷ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 95. Harrison recounts that upon viewing one of the veteran French master's paintings for the first time, he asked the artist the title of the new canvas. L'Hermitte replied, "A picture which needs a title should never have been painted. What would you call it yourself?" This modern approach, which demands a greater degree of viewer participation, may account in part for the sense of narrative ambiguity found in several of Harrison's early figure paintings as well as the evocative titles of these works, such as *Shipwrecked*, and *The Mirror*.
- ⁷⁸ Lloyd Goodrich, *Thomas Eakins His Life and Work*, (exh. cat., New York: Whitney Museum, 1933), 63.
- ⁷⁹ Although Will H. Low's account of the foray in *Chronicle of Friendships*, 136, indicates that the group "discovered" Grez, the Irish painter Frank O'Meara first visited Grez in 1873 (Sadler, 9).
- ⁸⁰ Gerds, "American Artists in Grez," 267.
- ⁸¹ Low, 136.
- ⁸² R.A.M. Stevenson, 29.
- ⁸³ Birge L. Harrison, (*sic*) "In Search of Paradise with Camera and Palette," *Outing Magazine* 21 (January 1893): 312.

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- ⁸⁴ Birge Harrison, "With Stevenson at Grez," *Century Magazine* 93 (December 1916): 311.
- ⁸⁵ Harrison, "In Search of Paradise with Camera and Palette," 310.
- ⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 311.
- ⁸⁷ Sadler, 11. Bentz was an Irish writer.
- ⁸⁸ Harrison, "With Stevenson at Grez," 310.
- ⁸⁹ R.A.M. Stevenson, 29. Several important American artists who were in Grez during this period do not appear in either of these articles. According to Sadler, they include among others, Kenyon Cox, 11; Bruce Crane, 13. Gerds, "The Americans in Grez," also places Edward Emerson Simmons in Grez in 1880 (268).
- ⁹⁰ Harrison, "In Search of Paradise with Camera and Palette," 311.
- ⁹¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁹² "Grez par Nemours," *The Studio* 2 (July 1883): 16.
- ⁹³ *Ibid.*
- ⁹⁴ Sadler, 13.
- ⁹⁵ Michael Jacobs, *The Good and Simple Life Artist Colonies in Europe and America* (Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1985), 33.
- ⁹⁶ May Brawley Hill, *Grey Days: Robert Vonnoh in France* (exh. cat., New York: Berry-Hill Galleries, 1987), 8.
- ⁹⁷ Kirk Varnedoe, *Northern Light: Realism and Symbolism in Scandinavian Painting 1880-1910* (exh. cat., New York: Brooklyn Museum, 1982), 19. Varnedoe's book offers one of the most comprehensive treatments of late-nineteenth century Scandinavian painting available in English. For the Swedish painters at Grez see also: Ebba Dahlin Fisch, *The Importance of French Art for the Development of Late Nineteenth Century Swedish Paintings: Karl Nordstrom, Carl Larsson and Nils Kruegh in Grez-sur Loing in the 1880's* (Ph.D. dissertation, City University of New York, 1990). Fisch points out that artists in Sweden were unhappy with art instruction especially at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts. Like the Americans they came to Paris for instruction at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, for the exposure to international and cosmopolitan concerns, and for the exhibition opportunities, especially the Salon, which were found in France. See also, Gabriel P Weisberg, "Scandinavian Naturalism," in *Beyond Impressionism the Naturalist Impulse* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1992), 242-75.
- ⁹⁸ Sadler, 11-14.
- ⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 12-13. For a complete treatment of the Scandinavian presence in Grez, see Bo Lindwall, *Konstnarsskolonin i Grez*. AB Wiken, 1993. Although this book has not been translated into English, it provides a resource of the names and art works produced in Grez by this group.

- ¹⁰⁰ The identity of "U" remains unknown. I have been unable to locate any Scandinavian artist whose first or last name begins with a "U" who was in Grez in 1881 when *November* was painted. I believe that "U" may possibly refer to Walter Ullmann. According to Sadler, Ullmann was a naturalized Englishman whose parents were Danish. She characterizes him as "peintre de beaucoup de talent...toujours souffrant et triste." He died at age 20 on June 6, 1882 at the Hotel Cheillon. (Sadler, 12).
- ¹⁰¹ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 139.
- ¹⁰² For information on Frank O'Meara and the other Irish painters at Grez, see, Gabriel P. Weisberg, *Beyond Impressionism: The Naturalist Impulse* (New York: Harry Abrams, Inc., 1992), 140-144. Also see, Kenneth Mc Conkey, "The Bougereau of Naturalists: Bastien-Lepage and British Art," *Art History* 1 (September 1978): 371-82; and "From Grez to Glasgow: French Naturalist Influence on Scottish Painting," *Scottish Art Review* Special number 5 (November 1982): 16-34.
- ¹⁰³ Gerds, "The American Artists at Grez," 270.
- ¹⁰⁴ Cox, letter to his father, from Grez, dated September 5, 1879, n.p., Kenyon Cox Papers. (See also, Hill, 9; and Gerds, "The American Artists at Grez," 270).
- ¹⁰⁵ Cox., letter to his mother, dated August 26, 1879, n.p., Kenyon Cox Papers.
- ¹⁰⁶ Sadler, 13.
- ¹⁰⁷ Hill, 9.
- ¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 10.
- ¹⁰⁹ Otto Stark, "The Evolution of Impressionism," *Modern Art*, January, 1895, as quoted in Gerds, *California Light 1900-1930*, 23.
- ¹¹⁰ Gerds, *California Light*, 23.
- ¹¹¹ Gerds, "The American Artists at Grez," 272.
- ¹¹² Jacobs, 32.
- ¹¹³ Theodore Robinson Diaries, vol 3 (June 12, 1894-October 3, 1895, entry for February, no date), n.p., Frick Art Reference Library, New York City.
- ¹¹⁴ Charles Du Bois, letter to J. Alden Wier, from Cernay-la-Ville dated May 14, 1879, J. Alden Weir Papers, Archives of American Art, roll 71.
- ¹¹⁵ Weisberg, 243.
- ¹¹⁶ Julia Roland Myers, "The American Expatriate Painters of the French Peasantry, 1863-1893" (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, College Park, 1989), note 4, 250.

¹¹⁷ There is no record of the identity of this painting. However, Harrison exhibited two paintings at PAFA in 1879-*Models Wanted* and *The Fugitive*. See, *The Annual Exhibition Records of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts*, (hereafter, *PAFA*) Peter H. Falk and Andrea Ansell Bren, eds. (Madison, Ct.: Soundview Press, 1989), 2: 236. Both paintings are unlocated. He did not exhibit at *PAFA* in 1880.

¹¹⁸ This copy is unlocated. However, Harry Leith-Ross mentions its presence at the Harrison home in Woodstock, New York. See, Harry Leith-Ross, "Birge Harrison 1854-1929," *Publication of the Woodstock Historical Society* 4(July 1931): 31.

¹¹⁹ Harrison, "With Stevenson at Grez," 309.

¹²⁰ Herbert Welsh, "The Artists of Germantown, *The Site and Relic Society of Germantown*, Address #9 (private printing Germantown Historical Society, 1913), 245.

¹²¹ Alexander Harrison, letter to George Stevens, Archives of American Art, roll D42, fr.322. Also see, H. Barbara Weinberg, *The American Pupils of Jean-Léon Gérôme* (exh. cat., Fort Worth: The Amon Carter Museum Fort Worth Texas, 1984) and *The Lure of Paris*, 83-129.

¹²² A.M. Harrison, letter dated June 17, 1874, The Gratz Collection, Pennsylvania Historical Society; and Smithsonian Institute National Anthropological Archives no.MS 4325.

¹²³ David Sellin, *American Painters on the French Scene 1874-1914* (exh. cat., New York: Beacon Hill Fine Art, 1996), 18. Sellin suggests that Alexander met Fanny Osbourne in San Francisco after her return there from Grez in 1878, and that it was she who may have persuaded him to go to France. However, he does not footnote the information in this essay and I have been unable to verify it. Although several sources cite Harrison's attendance at *PAFA* prior to his departure for France, he does not list it as one of the schools that he attended. He does list the School of Design but as these records were destroyed in the 1906 earthquake and fire, the dates of his attendance cannot be verified. See, Alexander Harrison, "The Art League Publishing Co. Biographical Questionnaire," Archives of American Art, roll D10.

¹²⁴ Charles Bourgmeyer, "Thomas Alexander Harrison," *Fine Arts Journal* 29 (September 1913): 285. See also Charles Francis Browne, "Alexander Harrison-Painter," *Brush and Pencil* 4 (June 1899): 132-144.

¹²⁵ Although he received many honors before his death in his Paris studio on October 13, 1930, Alexander lists the following honors on the above mentioned Art League questionnaire: Gold Medal Exposition Universelle, Paris, 1889; Gold Medal of Honor, Vienna; Gold Medals at Munich, Dresden, Berlin; Diploma of Honneur Ghent; Officier de la Legion d'Honneur; Officier de l'Instruction Publique and Hon. Degree, Dr.of S. University of Pennsylvania. He was a member of artists associations in both Paris and the United States including: The National Institute of Arts and Letters, the Art Club of Philadelphia, the Bohemian Club of San Francisco, The Union Club, The Century Club, and The Players Club all in New York City; the Societe Nationale des Beaux -Arts, the Societe Internationale, the Cercle d'Union Artistique all of Paris; and the Berlin Secessionists.

¹²⁶ Jacobs, 62.

¹²⁷ Harrison's movements among the three artist colonies is difficult to ascertain. The following is a brief description compiled from various sources: Birge Harrison was in Grez in 1879 and 1880 (Meyers, note 4, 250); A photo dated c. 1880 taken in front of the Pension Gloanec with either Birge or Alexander, (Jacobs, 63) illustrates one of the major problems in researching this period of Harrison's life after Alexander's arrival in 1879. Several artists' memoirs mention "Harrison" but do not indicate to which Harrison they are referring. To compound the issue, Birge and Alexander had an uncanny resemblance to each other, adding to the confusion of memoirs written years after the events described had taken place. Birge gave his address as Pont Aven, Finistere and Paris for the Salon of 1881 (Lois M. Fink, *American Art at the Nineteenth Century Paris Salons* (Washington, D.C.: National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1990), 351); Sellin also places Birge and Alexander in Pont-Aven shortly after 1880 (David Sellin, *Americans In Brittany and Normandy 1860-1910* (Phoenix Art Museum, 1982), 39. Birge was also in Grez in 1881 (Myers, 250) and again in the fall of 1882 ("My Notebook," *The Art Amateur* 7(October 1882): 91).

¹²⁸ Falk, *PAFA*, 236.

¹²⁹ Harrison, "In Search of Paradise...." 312.

¹³⁰ Birge L. Harrison, [sic] "Quaint Artist Haunts in Brittany. Pont Aven and Concarneau," *Outing Magazine* 24 (April 1894): 26.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ Anne Goater, "A Summer in an Artistic Haunt," *Outing Magazine* 7 (October 1885): 10.

¹³⁴ Harrison, "Quaint Artist Haunts in Brittany," 28.

¹³⁵ Jacobs, 62.

¹³⁶ Sellin, *American Painters on the French Scene*, 10.

¹³⁷ David Sellin, *Peintres americains en Bretagne 1864-1914* (exh. cat. Pont-Aven, France: Musée de Pont-Aven, 1995), 4. According to Sellin this distribution of nationalities and within the American contingent, of state of origin, remained fairly consistent throughout this period. He notes the large number of artists from Philadelphia and indicates that early training at *PAFA* may have been one reason for their presence in the colony. This appears to be true for Birge who had attended class with Shinn, one of the early American colonists at the Pennsylvania Sketch Club.

¹³⁸ Sellin, *American Painters on the French Scene*, 12. For a discussion of the development of the colony also see Michael Jacobs's chapter "A Second Arcadia," in the *Good and Simple Life*, 42-88, which provides footnotes.

¹³⁹ Jacobs, 60.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 62.

¹⁴¹ Harrison, "Quaint Artist Haunts in Brittany," 26.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 27.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 28.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. Harrison also mentions several "Continental painters who have Concarneau as their temporary home. Jules Breton, Renouf, Kroyer, l'Hermitte, Paul Dubois and Guillon...and the regretted Bastien-Lepage spent some of the last months of his life there... Among the English and American painters of note who owe much to Concarneau may be mentioned (Edward) Simmons, William Stott, Alexander Harrison Aubrey Hunt, Hulton, Stanhope Forbes and C. (Clifford) P. Grayson" (*id.* 32). He does not indicate however which of these artists were present at Concarneau during his stay there.

¹⁴⁸ Gerds, *California Light 1900-1932*, 27.

¹⁴⁹ Although Harrison was perfecting the application of the Gray Aesthetic in his paintings of the period, it is possible that he experimented with the Glare Aesthetic popular in Concarneau. Lost today, *Return from the First Communion* is known only through an illustration that he drew for the catalogue for the *Special Exhibition of Paintings by Americans at Home and in Europe* (exh. cat., Philadelphia: PAFA, 1881), n.p. The illustration, unfortunately only in black and white, nonetheless suggests the presence of bright sunlight. The figure casts a sharp shadow on the ground almost directly beneath her indicating the sun at midday. Her face is also shadowed.

¹⁵⁰ Quick, 24.

¹⁵¹ Harrison, "Quaint Artist Haunts in Brittany," 30.

¹⁵² Ibid., 29.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 30-31.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 32.

¹⁵⁵ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 136.

¹⁵⁶ "Mr. Birge Harrison," 4. The article gives the following description of *The Waif* which fits the painting now known as *Shipwreck*: "This work was called *The Waif*, and represented two fishermen finding upon their storm-beaten shore the body of a young patrician child dressed in rich velvet and lace, and lashed to a broken spar. The waif was received and well hung in the Salon of 1881." Harrison's entry for the Salon of 1881 was *Une Epave*, which can be translated literally as the floatsom and jetsum that washes up on a beach, also fitting the description of *Shipwrecked*.

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- ¹⁵⁷ Lois Marie Fink, *American Art at the Nineteenth-Century Paris Salons*, (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1990), 120.
- ¹⁵⁸ Feldman, 39.
- ¹⁵⁹ Fink, *American Art at the Nineteenth Century Paris Salons*, 126.
- ¹⁶⁰ John Forbes-Robertson, "Salon of 1882," *The Magazine of Art* 5 (1882): 415.
- ¹⁶¹ *Special Exhibition of Paintings by Americans at Home and Abroad*, n.p.
- ¹⁶² Bienestock, 160. (See also, Archives of American Art, roll 455).
- ¹⁶³ Leslie W. Miller, "The True Mission of Art Schools," *The Continent* 4 (December 1883): 105.
- ¹⁶⁴ Susan Grant, "American Paintings Acquired by the French Government, 1879-1900" (M.A. Thesis, George Washington University, 1983), 24.
- ¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, Appendix I, n.p.
- ¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 36.
- ¹⁶⁷ CARAN. For the files on the purchase and delivery of *November* to the museum in Rennes see, F 21/2086, series artists, H, documents "B. Harrison," and F 21/4909B R (ennes), 1791-1938.
- ¹⁶⁸ Grant, 40.
- ¹⁶⁹ Weisberg, 8.
- ¹⁷⁰ Feldman, 31.
- ¹⁷¹ Algernon Groves, ed., *The Royal Academy of Arts: A Complete Dictionary of Contributors and their work from its foundation in 1769 to 1904* (1906; reprint New York: Burt Franklin, 1972), 4:7. Harrison wrote a letter dated June 5, 1882, to the French government asking for permission to send *November* to this exhibition. The reply, dated July 1882, indicates that this was not the usual government policy, and that as the painting was now the property of the government, Harrison would have to buy insurance or put up a bond to cover not only the transportation of the painting to England, but also any damages that might result from moving it. There is no further correspondence on the matter and the painting has not left the museum since. See also, footnote #182:CARAN, above. It is possible that this event led Harrison to paint *The Forest of Compiègne-A Surprise*, n.d. which has the same subject matter as *November* except that the young girl, dressed in a slightly different costume, is gathering twigs in the forest rather than raking leaves. This painting was first exhibited in 1890 at the Art Club of Philadelphia, *Second Special Exhibition* and was illustrated in the catalogue of the exhibition (Archives of American Art, roll N555). No other illustration exists. It was also exhibited at the World Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893. See, Carolyn Kinder Carr and George Gurney, *Revisiting the White City: American Art at the 1893 World's Fair*, (exh. cat., Washington, D.C.: National Museum of American Art, 1993), 256. The painting remained in Harrison's possession until his death in 1929. It is probably the same painting given to Swarthmore College in 1933, by Frederic Newlin Price. The painting has not been located by Swarthmore since 1977, and may have been

destroyed. I am grateful to Constance Cain Hungerford of the Art Department at Swarthmore for her help in providing me with information concerning the painting.

¹⁷² Weisberg, 153.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Fink, *American Art at the Nineteenth Century Salons*, 202.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 346.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 401.

¹⁷⁷ "Americans In Paris," *The Studio* 1 (January 6, 1883): 3.

¹⁷⁸ "Mrs. Birge Harrison, *Table Talk*, April 25, 1890, 9.

¹⁷⁹ "My Notebook," *Art Amateur* 7 (October 1882): 91.

¹⁸⁰ I am very grateful to John Ritchie for providing me with information regarding the Ritchie family.

¹⁸¹ "Mrs. Birge Harrison," 9.

¹⁸² Influenced by Bastien-Lepage's plein-air aesthetic, Loureiro immigrated to Melbourne in 1885 and became a leading member of the Heidelberg Movement with whom the Harrison's exhibited from 1890-91. See, Jane Clark and Bridget Whitelaw, *Golden Summers: Heidelberg and Beyond* (exh. cat., Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 1985), 21.

¹⁸³ "Mr. Birge Harrison," 4.

¹⁸⁴ "Americans in Paris," *The Studio* 1 (February 10, 1883): 45. Harrison's illness and hasty departure caused some concern among his friends. Theodore Robinson wrote of it to Kenyon Cox saying, "Did you hear of Harrison's return and ill health? I would like to know how he is." (Letter from Robinson to Cox dated February 26, 1883, Kenyon Cox Papers).

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

Chapter Three

Wanderlust Years: 1883-1891

Birge Harrison's departure from France marked the end of the first phase of his career. There followed a long period of "Wanderlust - a series of nomadic and extended travels,"¹ though America, Europe, India, the South Seas, Japan and Australia. This period in Harrison's life, until his permanent return to the East Coast of the United States in 1896, is the least known and understood. Although instrumental in developing "the catholic habit of mind and that power of searching observation which, combined, make materially for the success of his later work,"² these years have been characterized as Harrison's least productive.³ This observation, made by Charles Borgmeyer in 1913, was based on the incorrect assumption that Harrison produced few paintings and rarely exhibited. Exhibition records, however, indicate that this is not the case. While his output decreased from the frenzied pace of his last year in France, Harrison continued to exhibit in America and abroad.

Although his health was one motivation for Harrison's long period of travel, his work from this period also indicates that he was seeking a new direction in his art. The role that his writing and illustration played in this transition is an important element in understanding how Harrison arrived at his commitment to landscape. Equally important are the influences to which he was exposed while in Australia. Finally, personal tragedy also played a role in shaping the direction of his art toward landscape and launching his career as one of the best-known landscape artists in America. All of these elements also combined to help shape the future direction of his teaching and criticism.

After a stormy passage lasting sixteen days, the Harrison's arrival in New York was reported in *The Studio* on February 10, 1883.⁴ It was also reported that he planned to go to Colorado for several months in order to regain his health. By mid-March, the couple was reported to be in Colorado and planning to return to New York and "take a studio there."⁵ Like others before him, Harrison hoped that the high desert climate of New Mexico and Colorado would provide a healthy climate in which he could overcome the malaria that he had contracted in France. The great plains of the American Southwest reminded Eleanor of her native Australia. Unique to the area however, was the "picturesque Indian with his scarlet blanket draped in stately folds and the three storied mud-villages, full of life and color."⁶

Popular interest in the Southwestern region of the United States was piqued during the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia where scaled models of the Native cliff dwellings were shown.⁷ These mysterious dwellings, the artistry of local crafts, unsurpassed natural beauty, and a healthy climate all contributed to the romantic appeal of this area.

Although the Harrisons were among the earliest artists to travel in this still unsettled part of the country, they were not the first. Worthington Whittredge, who accompanied General John Pope on an inspection tour in 1866, visited Santa Fe and Albuquerque. Peter Moran and his brother Thomas traveled throughout the area in 1881.⁸ Only the year before Harrison's arrival, Willard Metcalf, who would become a life-long friend, had traveled to New Mexico also in search of better health,⁹ and produced illustrations for an article in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* that appeared in 1882. Like Metcalf, Harrison wrote and illustrated an article for *Harper's* describing his

experiences in New Mexico. Traveling by train on the Denver and Rio Grande Railway, the Harrisons originally intended to visit Santa Fe. Among the first American artists to become enthralled by the natural beauty of the surrounding area, the Harrisons decided to stay in nearby Espanola, “a non-descript collection of canvas tents and board shanties on a flat beside the river.”¹⁰

After a ten day hiatus to give his mind time to “assimilate the tones of the landscape” Harrison soon pitched his large white sun-umbrella and set up his easel in order to capture the “flashing, scintillating iridescent” local color of the landscape.¹¹ None of the paintings or sketches that Harrison executed during his stay has been located.¹² The illustrations for his article do not reflect this early interest in the effects of light on the landscape, focusing instead on the picturesqueness of Indian and Hispanic life. Working side by side, the Harrisons frequently found themselves surrounded by the local population.

Harrison’s illustrations, which he signed with a monogram designed by overlapping “B” and “H,” follow the pattern of illustrations found in similar travelogues written for popular magazines. His subjects range from the mundane, an Indian foot race (fig.3.1), to the more exotic, such as the religious rites of the Penitentes. One of his favorite subjects was pueblo architecture, particularly the old adobe church at Santa Cruz (fig. 3.2). All of his illustrations reflect his description of the area, where where “each adobe, each stray figure, frames itself into a brilliant little *genre* picture.”¹³ In these early illustrations, Harrison arrived at a formula that he would successfully apply to various locales.

The Harrisons did not remain in New Mexico. They also traveled among the Navajo Indians in Arizona¹⁴ and stopped briefly in Colorado Springs, Colorado.¹⁵ Living at times in the wilderness of the American Southwest, they camped out for several weeks at a time in the Rocky Mountains, relying on fresh fish that they caught for food and their own firearms as protection from the “Indians, desperados and bears that infested the area.”¹⁶ In 1883, Harrison exhibited *Friends or Foes* (unlocated), a North American Indian subject at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art.¹⁷ The same year, he exhibited at the Society of American Artists, which he had joined in 1882, and at the Boston Arts Club Annual Exhibition.¹⁸

After nine months in the Southwest, Harrison had still not regained his health and the couple returned to the East Coast, stopping briefly in October to view an exposition in Chicago that included his brother's painting, *Les Amateurs*.¹⁹ Their destination was Plymouth, Massachusetts. The couple had heard, probably through relatives there, of a doctor from Boston who prescribed a strict vegetarian regime as a cure for Harrison's malaria.²⁰

By January 1884, Harrison was in Atlantic City, New Jersey,²¹ preparing for a joint exhibition of his and Alexander's paintings. The first of many such exhibitions, the show opened at the American Art Galleries, on February 6, 1884. It included twenty-eight works by Alexander and fourteen by Birge. The brothers showed several of their best-known figural works, some of which had not been previously shown in New York, but many of which had been exhibited at the Paris Salon. Alexander's offerings included *Shipwrecked*, *Castles in Spain*, *Ophelia* and *Little Slave*, one of his Salon pictures of

1883. Birge showed *The Return from the First Communion, Calling Home the Cows, A Waif from the Sea* and his most recent North American subject, *Friends or Foes*.²²

Reviews of the exhibition called attention to the brothers' commitment to the plein-air method and high degree of craftsmanship as well as their indebtedness to French influences. Of *Friends or Foes*, one reviewer noted that Birge had painted "an American landscape with French eyes and made a picture which is only American in subject and name."²³ Another review indicated that Birge saw much promise in pursuing Western subjects and hoped to return to the West when his health permitted.²⁴

Harrison would not return to the West until 1891. During the next year, he resided at 3 North Washington Square²⁵ and at the Sherwood Building in New York City. At the Sherwood Building, he and Eleanor joined his old friends from Paris and Grez, Robert Bruce Crane, H. Burr Nicholls and his wife Rhoda Holmes Nicholls, and James Carroll Beckwith, whose uncle, John H. Sherwood had built the seven-story building at the corner of West Fifty-seventh Street and Sixth Avenue.²⁶ Opened in 1880, the building was unique in that it was designed specifically as studio space for New York City's growing artist population. Although the rent was expensive for many, it included studios, each with a parlor and sleeping area, as well as a restaurant. Unlike other studio buildings, such as the Tenth Street Studio downtown, the Sherwood was home to many female artists who were tenants, as well as the wives of artists who lived in the building. Known as the "headquarters of Art,"²⁷ the inhabitants included many artists returning to the city after studying in Paris. In a manner similar to their earlier experiences in the Latin Quarter, the Sherwood provided a space in which these artists were able to continue the slightly bohemian art milieu that had nourished so many of them during their student

days. Although sales did not always justify the inconvenience and disruption that the studio receptions caused, they were a part of life in the building and provided exhibition opportunities.

The Harrisons gave up their studio in the building in March 1885 and moved back into the Harrison family home in Germantown, Pennsylvania for a brief period.²⁸ Harrison participated in the first Prize Fund Exhibition of The American Art Association and the Fall Exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts in St. Louis, Missouri.²⁹

Having regained his health, Birge returned to Europe with Eleanor in 1885.³⁰ Landing in Holland, they traveled throughout Europe, and then, returning to France, they continued their wanderings there, “half for health’s sake but wholly for art.”³¹ Eleanor resumed her studies at the Academy Julian under Benjamin Constant and Jules-Joseph Lebferve. Both Harrisons exhibited at the 1886 Paris Salon. Eleanor showed *A Study of a Peasant* “which was well received and hung on the line,”³² and Birge exhibited *L'hallali!*³³ (unlocated). The foul air in the studios began to take its toll on Birge’s health and the couple headed for the more temperate climate of Southern France, Venice and eventually to Marseille where they embarked on a tour of the area that was to be the subject of Harrison’s three part travelogue “Thro’ the Land of the Marseillaise” that appeared several years later in the January, February and March editions of *Outing Magazine* in 1897.³⁴ Throughout their travels, the two artists sketched side by side. Harrison’s sketches of the local inhabitants were used as the illustrations for his article.³⁵

The couple eventually settled in Etaples. Harrison wrote about this port city, which at the time was becoming another important artist colony, in his article, “In Search of Paradise with Camera and Palette.” He saw this “gray, old fishing town” as one of the

latest, and in many respects, the best of the artist resorts of France.”³⁶ Situated on the coast of Picardy, the town had the requisite picturesqueness that attracted artists. Like other artist colonies, it had three hotels that provided good, cheap boarding facilities and the local fishermen were tolerant of the strangers in their midst. Its secret advantage over other colonies was the seemingly endless supply of models, both male and female, who eagerly dropped their chores in order to pose for two francs a day.³⁷ The Harrisons’ favorite model was a little fisher girl named Marie Duval.³⁸

The village, which was considered another center of Bastien-Lepage’s influence, had already attracted the attention of American artists before the Harrisons’ arrival. Ruger Donoho had painted *Autour de la ferme, à Etaples*, which was shown at the Salon of 1884 and in the United States.³⁹ At the same Salon, George Chambers also exhibited a scene from Etaples, *Les Dunes, Etaples en Picardy*,⁴⁰ and Walter Gay exhibited his *November, Etaples* at the 1885 Salon.⁴¹ Frank O’Meara, Harrison’s Irish friend from Grez, was with him in Etaples in 1887 and 1888, and like Harrison, found the village picturesque and less expensive than Grez.⁴² Eugene Lawrence Vail, who was also with Harrison at Grez in the summer of 1882, stayed in the village from 1886-1887.⁴³ The American artist George W. Clausen was there c. 1888-1889.⁴⁴ By the early 1890s, when Harrison returned for a visit, fifteen to twenty English and American painters were active in the colony.⁴⁵

The Harrisons took lodging at a house owned by Mr. and Mme. Pannier. Built before the 16th century, it stood on the west end of the Place de l’Etaples near the town hall.⁴⁶ The house, filled with art decorations and materials, had two outside studios that were accessed through a courtyard. Beyond the yard in a wooded area, was a walled

garden where Harrison built an enormous studio, most probably made of glass. These structures became popular during the 1880's and were constructed to take full advantage of the changes of light in all weather conditions. Given Harrison's health, such a structure was a necessity if he was to continue to paint in the *plien-air* method to which he was fully committed.

During the summer of 1886, Harrison's younger brother Butler, who had been studying in Paris, visited him in Etaples. His father, Apollos W. Harrison also made the trip to France to visit all three of his sons. Sadly, he died of pneumonia on the return voyage on August 22, 1886, aboard the *SS Queen*, sailing from Liverpool to New York City.⁴⁷ It is probable that Harrison's painting *The Departure of the Mayflower (1626)* (fig.3.3), which he painted in Etaples and exhibited in the Salon of 1888, is a poignant homage to his "good father who made it possible for me to begin unusually early the study of my beloved art."⁴⁸

The Harrisons continued to divide their time between Paris and Etaples until at least late 1888, and possibly until the summer of 1889. During that time they entertained both American and Australian artists. In July 1887, E. Phillips Fox, an Australian artist, visited Eleanor, his classmate at the National Gallery School in Melbourne.⁴⁹ Robert Reid visited them in September 1887,⁵⁰ and Richard Norris Brooke visited Birge Harrison's studio in November of 1888.⁵¹

The time he spent in Etaples was a productive period for Harrison. Not only did he complete *The Departure of the Mayflower* but he also painted at least three other paintings: *Along the Road* 1887;⁵² *Le baignade*, a pastel that he exhibited at the Salon of

1888 (unlocated), and *A Surprise in the Forest of Compiègne*, c.1887-89 (lost, presumed destroyed).

Birge Harrison and both of his brothers were represented at the Exposition Universelle of 1889 in Paris, as they had been at the Salon of 1888. Harrison submitted his *November*, for which he won a silver medal.⁵³ Alexander Harrison won a gold medal.

Alexander also played a key role in the events surrounding this controversial display of the wide-ranging French influence in the arts. He served jointly with Daniel Ridgway Knight as vice-president of the Parisian committee that juried the selection of works by American expatriate painters. Their selections, which were reflected in the galleries of the exposition that ran from May 5 until November 5, demonstrated the assimilation of French Academic ideas on American art both at home and abroad. The jury selection was heavily criticized as being biased in favor of American artists living in Paris. The charge that the men in Paris took control of the American section and received more than their fair share of awards had the immediate effect of the formation of the Paris Association of American Artists. Formed in 1890, the Association included prominent American expatriate painters, Alexander Harrison among them, as well as some of the best known French masters, including William Bouguereau and Jean-Léon Gérôme.⁵⁴ It also affected the selection of works by American artists for the Universal Exposition of 1900.

The awarding of medals for the Exposition on June 24 1889⁵⁵ sparked a controversy that resulted in the establishment of the Salons of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts. The power struggle that this schism caused among French artists is the subject of Birge Harrison's first article concerning art criticism. In "The New Departure

in Parisian Art," he gives an eyewitness account of the more dramatic moments in the confrontation between the "clique" of artists associated with the Academy Julian and a faction lead by Jean-Louis-Ernest Meissonier.⁵⁶ The precipitating event for the schism was the attempt by the Julian faction to deny the privilege of *hors concours* to non-French artists who had won medals at the Exposition. As Harrison portrays it, the real reason for the split was the recognition that the stronghold exercised by the Academy Julian over the jury selections at the Salons and other officially sponsored exhibitions had resulted in stifling individual creativity as artists, eager to receive the coveted medals, tailored their production to fit academic conventions.

The new society and its salon were designed to "make a clean sweep of all the old moss-grown tradition and fungus growths"⁵⁷ of the previous system, eliminating the awarding of medals. Alexander Harrison served on the first jury for painters and played a role in securing American participation. By eliminating the question of nationality and opening the salon to a greater diversity of styles and schools,⁵⁸ the new system hoped to restore originality in the arts. Reviews of the first Salon in 1890 recognized the variety of styles and it is interesting to note that the American art critic, Theodore Child, was also advocating a similar ideal. In his review of the Exposition, he takes the view that medals are "of small importance . . . What we seek for above all things, and rejoice to find is artistic individuality."⁵⁹

The controversies concerning the jury system for both the Americans and the French informs Harrison's teaching and criticism. They served to link the two ideals of respect for individual creativity and an open forum for exhibition. Throughout his career, Harrison championed this new direction in art. In the first decade of the twentieth

century, he would pursue this ideal by working jointly with Robert Henri in the United States.

In the fall of 1889, the couple began another European tour. However, during all of their wandering Eleanor remained homesick for her native land."⁶⁰ They embarked on a journey to Australia that took them through many of the Mediterranean countries, India and Ceylon and The South Seas. They arrived in Melbourne aboard the *S.S. Valenta* in late December 1889, with the intention of remaining for at least two years.⁶¹ The Harrisons arrived in Melbourne at a time when three forces, the Centennial celebration, calls for the federation of the Australian colonies, and the Heidelberg Movement, often referred to as the golden age of Australian art, converged to stimulate the city's already flourishing art world.

When Harrison arrived in Australia, he was employed as a writer and illustrator for *Harper's* and *Scribner's Magazines*.⁶² He quickly set to work. Less than six months after his arrival, the local paper, *Table Talk*, reported that he had already made "studies of the wide plains of the Western District of Victoria whose sweeping horizons and charming color have captivated his fancy."⁶³ He recorded his travels in "A Kangaroo Hunt"⁶⁴ (fig. 3.4) that he wrote and illustrated for *Scribner's Magazine*. He also drew several illustrations for Sidney Dickinson's article, "Station Life in Australia," (fig. 3.5) which also appeared in *Scribner's*.⁶⁵

Dickinson was a native of Boston who had arrived in Australia shortly before the Harrison's in 1889. He worked previously as a journalist at the *Boston Journal*, the *New York Times* and *Tribune*, the *Chicago Times* and the *San Francisco Bulletin*.⁶⁶ Engaged by the Australian government to make a four-month lecture tour of the country, he

praised its picturesque landscape. He quickly established himself as an influential critic. In his articles, especially those written for the *Australasian Critic*, he championed higher standards in criticism, which he found lacking in Australia. He also favored Hippolyte Taine's aesthetic theory that the artist paint his own time and milieu, which was tinged with the spirit of nationalism, gaining momentum in Australia at this time, and reflected in the work of the artists of the Heidelberg Movement. Dickinson was a strong supporter of this movement of Australian artists centered near Melbourne. These artists favored a traditional approach to art as well as the plein-air methodology of Bastien-Lepage's Naturalism in their urban and rural landscapes. Dickinson became a friend to both of the Harrisons and reviewed their work favorably.⁶⁷

Harrison's earlier success in publishing his adventures in New Mexico may have prompted him to turn toward writing and illustration as a supplemental source of income. Like his earlier travel article, Harrison's articles from Australia and France appealed to the American public's growing interest in the world in which they were quickly assuming a leadership position. As more Americans traveled abroad, these travelogues covered the less traveled areas of Europe, such as the South of France, and the more exotic lands of the Pacific Rim. In his leisurely style, Harrison takes his reader on a journey of shared adventures that he illustrates for their benefit. In his three part series, "Thro' the Land of the Marseilles," the illustrations are from grisailles that he executed in 1889, although the article was not published until 1897⁶⁸ (figs. 3.6 & 3.7).

Many American artists turned toward illustration as a source of income. Harrison's teacher Thomas Eakins, for example, made several monochrome studies, for use as illustrations for *Scribner's Magazine* from 1878-1881.⁶⁹ The last quarter of the

nineteenth century saw advances in the technology of reproduction in lithography, engraving and the introduction of photogravure and half-tone printing that produced high quality reproductions at low cost.⁷⁰ These technological advances came at the same time as increasing circulation for popular magazines. Those, such as *Scribner's*, that had positioned themselves well in the mass market, showed enormous growth.⁷¹ For artists, these advances meant a greater appreciation of their talents, which translated into better paying commissions.⁷²

As early as 1892, William Coffin addressed the issue of illustrations in his serial "American Illustration of To-day." His list of artists who had turned their hand illustration reads like a Who's Who of artists from Harrison's generation: John La Farge, Robert Blum, J. W. Alexander, F.D. Millet, Edwin Blashfield, Willard L. Metcalf, Will H. Low and Kenyon Cox.⁷³ These painter-illustrators of the late nineteenth century brought to their illustrations the same commitment to originality that marked their paintings and avoided the pitfall of mere imitation.

Although Eleanor had not returned to her native country for more than fifteen years, she had maintained a presence in its burgeoning art world through her participation in several exhibitions, including those of the Victorian Academy of Arts in 1883 and 1884; the newly formed Victorian Artists' Society in 1888, and the International Exhibition of 1888 that marked the celebration of Australia's Centennial.⁷⁴ Because her paintings were consistently well received,⁷⁵ she was considered among the most talented women artists in Australia during this period. Her arrival, with her artist husband, who had already established his reputation in France, occasioned a keen interest in their activities, which were reported in the Melbourne press.

Fortunately, this attention provides an insight into how the couple lived. After artists in Melbourne initiated the practice of “studio Wednesdays,”⁷⁶ during which they opened their studios to the public for inspection of pictures prior to public exhibition, the descriptions of the artists’ studios were frequently published. *The Sun* carried a description of the Eleanor’s studio only four months after her arrival. Located at 483 Collins Street West, she held a private viewing of her paintings in her studio prior to their exhibition at the Grovesnor Gallery. What emerges is a thumbnail sketch of the couple’s bohemian lifestyle. Not only were Eleanor’s paintings of interest, but the author describes with equal enthusiasm the studio props including a “Millet” cloak (a hooded cloak worn by shepherdesses of the Forest of Fontainebleau, and used frequently by that artist), Quimper-ware, jugs from Spain and Picardy, Egyptian scarves, German vases, and a Native American buck-skin garment. Taken together, these objects made Eleanor’s studio “one of the most interesting and attractive in the city.”⁷⁷

Eleanor and Birge would have been familiar with the practice of open studios from their stay at the Sherwood Building. From the description of her studio, they, like other American artists of the late nineteenth century had furnished their studio with memorabilia of their travels perhaps with an eye toward “projecting the painter’s taste and personality and as enclaves of an upper-crust Bohemia and as shrines to a quasi-religious ideal of beauty and cultural elevation.”⁷⁸ This effort was aimed at the visitor as consumer. In Eleanor’s case, not only were her paintings thus advertised, but the articles, specifically the copies of old master paintings, are described as objects that “will serve as excellent studies for her pupils,”⁷⁹ indicating that teaching may have been one of her reasons for returning to her homeland. However, there is no indication that she taught

while in Australia and this may have been a contributing factor in the Harrison's decision to leave Australia after eighteen months.

In the recent exhibition, *New Worlds from Old: 19th Century Australian and American Landscapes*, in 1998, art historians from both countries focused on the similarities between these two countries. Settlers in these new worlds were confronted with the same problems associated with the settling of an unsheltered land filled with exotic species. While attitudes toward the land are shaped by experiences of it, the depiction of the land is shaped not only by personal experience but also by the conventions used in the depiction. Although an in-depth analysis of the responses to the land in these two countries is beyond the scope of this paper, the similarity in the evolution of attitudes about the land and the manner in which they are expressed in the landscape art of each country evidences a strong commonality. Briefly stated, and admittedly oversimplifying, the pattern of development in the landscape genre of both countries proceeds from a fear of the wilderness, to an awe tinged with nationalism of the sublimity of its natural wonders, to contemplative landscapes reflecting the civilizing influence of man.⁸⁰

This last phase was in process when the Harrisons arrived. An "unostentatious but perceptible art movement, the result of an instinctive drawing together of the younger men,"⁸¹ was forming into the Heidelberg Movement named after a semi-rural suburb north of Melbourne. The development of this informal group of plein-air artists into an identifiable movement took place at Box-Hill and Eaglemont, both of which are also near Melbourne and later at the Charterisville estate at Heidelberg.⁸² It was born in 1885, when Tom Roberts returned from studying abroad and set up a camp at Box Hill, near

Melbourne, with two other Australian artists, Frederick McCubbins and Louis Abrahams. All three were committed to Bastien-Lepage's plein-air painting, particularly as practiced by the English Naturalists.⁸³ These three artists formed the nucleus around which the group's plein-air painting thrived.

Thomas William Roberts (1856-1913) was born in Dorchester, England in 1856 and immigrated to Australia with his family in 1869. He met McCubbins and Abrahams while studying at the National Gallery School. Finding his instruction limiting, he left for Europe in 1881 and pursued his studies at the Royal Academy School while also traveling on the Continent.⁸⁴ He became interested in the plein-air work of Jules Bastien-Lepage in 1882 and was also influenced by the tonal quality found in the work of James McNeill Whistler.⁸⁵ He was a founding member of the Australian Artist's Association when it broke away from the more traditional Victorian Academy of Arts, which had been founded in 1870, to provide instruction for both amateur and professional artists. Roberts left Melbourne in 1891 to follow Arthur Streeton (1867-1943) to Sydney. A painter, photographer, teacher and writer, Roberts is generally considered to be the leading light of the movement.⁸⁶

The artists associated with the Heidelberg School were pursuing interests very similar to Harrison's. Recent scholarship has moved away from interpreting their images of the Australian landscape as solely based on the desire to establish a national art. Taking a broader view, the works are also seen as exploring the relationship of man and nature, although more specifically within the context of experience of the vastness of nature found in Australia.⁸⁷

Scholars are also revising the view that the Heidelberg artists' high-keyed palette and the rapidly applied brushstrokes found in their sun-drenched scenes evidences a national adaptation of Impressionism. In fact, these artists frequently painted evening and twilight scenes that captured the "afterlight," the "roseate light that melds the ochres and olive greens of a summer twilight" against a "mauve tinted sky,"⁸⁸ (fig. 3.8) which was considered as characteristic of Australian light as the strong sunlight. These paintings illustrate the group's awareness of Bastien-Lepage's plein-air aesthetic.⁸⁹ His appeal for the Heidelberg artists, as it had been for the his American followers, was a combination of academic training and innovative investigations into out-of-doors painting with a special focus on the effects of light. The Australian painters, also aware of the innovative tonal harmonies found in the paintings of Whistler, worked toward adapting tonal strategies to the realities of Australian light. Similar to Harrison's approach to painting the figure in the landscape during this period, these artists were "aiming to create atmospheric envelope, in which their 'real' men and women could be seen to live and move in 'natural' surroundings."⁹⁰

Although dozens of artists were associated with the Heidelberg School, it is possible to document Harrison's acquaintance with only three of them: Tom Roberts, Charles Conder, and E. Phillips Fox. Of these three, Fox was Harrison's first and most extensive contact.

Emmanuel Phillips Fox (1865-1915) was born in Melbourne in March 1865. He studied at the National Gallery School of Victoria from 1878-1886, and painted in the area around Melbourne and in Gippsland, winning prizes for his landscapes. In February 1887, he departed for Paris, where he enrolled at the Academy Julian. After passing the

entrance examination for the École, he studied under Gérôme and Bouguereau.⁹¹ In July of 1887, he visited Etaples where he met Birge and Eleanor.⁹² The following winter, Fox became a student in the informal classes held by Alexander Harrison.

Painted in Etaples, Fox's *Autumn*, 1889, (fig. 3.9) offers an interesting comparison to Harrison's *November*. Both paintings are evocative presentations of an autumnal day. Fox's handling of the falling leaves, both the coloration and adaptation of Impressionistic brushstroke, is similar to that found in Harrison's work. However, while Harrison's *November* concentrates on the figure, Fox's *Autumn* is essentially a landscape painting. In a manner similar to other artists in the Heidelberg School, Fox uses the figure as an almost anecdotal touch meant to humanize the scene. As will be discussed later, in Harrison's composition by contrast, the figure is a major element in conveying the meaning of the painting. Similar to Harrison, however, and like the work of these other Australian artists, Fox's painting suggests that man's relationship to nature is part of her universal cycle.

Charles Conder was born in London in 1868 and arrived in Sydney in 1884, to work with his uncle, a surveyor in the New South Wales Lands Department. After spending two years traveling around the country, he attended classes at the Art Society of New South Wales. He worked as an illustrator for the *Illustrated Sydney News* from 1887 to 1888, when he moved to Melbourne in order to join Tom Roberts, whom he had met the previous summer, at Box Hill.⁹³ He joined Fox in Paris in the summer of 1890. In a letter dated May 2, 1890, shortly after his departure from Australia in April, he wrote to Roberts, "I think that you have a strong pair in the Harrisons. You know that Mrs. Harrison has a very good picture in the exhibition and I saw some impressions by her

husband after my own heart.”⁹⁴ This short notation indicates that Condor knew the Harrisons and was familiar with their work. It also implies that Roberts had also met the couple and to some degree considered them as part their group.

Harrison may have become familiar with Roberts work as early as 1886, while visiting the Colonial and British Exhibition in London, which included four of Roberts’ paintings.⁹⁵ As his paintings demonstrate, he shared with Harrison an awareness of the importance of color tones and values. It was this “doctrine of relative values that Roberts is traditionally held to have taught his friends.”⁹⁶ Like Harrison, he used interconnected brushstrokes of layered colors to achieve an atmospheric harmony in his paintings. Of all of the Heidelberg artists, Roberts, an accomplished portrait painter, was the most interested in figure painting. His work has a strong narrative element.

Harrison’s illustration, *The Shearing* (fig. 3.10), which appeared in Dickinson’s “Station Life in Australia,” closely resembles Roberts’ *Shearing the Rams* (fig. 3.11), which he painted from 1880-90.⁹⁷ Wool was the staple of the Australian economy, and quickly became an iconic image of Australian life. The subject was essayed by Australian artists throughout the country’s history. Roberts’ grand-scaled, heroizing image drew more comment in the Australian press than any other contemporary painting.⁹⁸ If Harrison was to illustrate station life, he could not have avoided painting the culminating scene of the annual cycle of life there. Rather than romanticizing the scene however, Harrison’s approach to the subject, in which the length of the shed seems to stretch endlessly with each sheerer working in his own cubicle, conveys the difficulty of this labor-intensive task.

Both Eleanor and Birge's paintings were well received by exhibition reviewers. Two paintings that he brought with him, *Misty Morning, Boulogne Harbor* (unlocated), a "spirited painting of shimmering grayish-green," and *Sweet Summer* (unlocated), "the best foliage work in the exhibition," were singled out from the one hundred and forty-four paintings, by several reviews of the 1890 exhibition of the Victorian Society.⁹⁹

In October 1890, the Harrisons rented a cottage in the suburb of Sandringham, visiting their Melbourne studio on Fridays.¹⁰⁰ Known twenty years earlier as Picnic Point, this ocean-side suburb south of Melbourne became a commuter community in 1887, with the opening of the railway connection to the city.¹⁰¹ As early as the summer of 1886-87, the Heidelberg artists, Tom Roberts, Frederick McCubbins, Arthur Streeton, and Louis Abrahams established a camp at nearby Mentone and painted near the village along the coastline at Rickett's Point.¹⁰² They continued to visit the area and were joined by other members of the group, including Charles Conder. Several of the School's best known-works were painted there.

Harrison also painted the area's sandy beaches. In 1891, he produced two large sea studies: *High Tide at Sandringham* and its companion piece, *Low Tide at Sandringham*. The first is described as "the sun's last rays light up the waves with little ripples of red-gold, and complete a delightfully soft effect by imparting the same color to the beach."¹⁰³ The sky was singled out for its high quality of craftsmanship. *Low Tide* was a twilight scene with a strong sense of motion "conveyed in the thin sheet of foamy water as its spread over the sand."¹⁰⁴ Although both paintings are unlocated, the description indicates that it was at Sandringham that Harrison first turned his hand to marine paintings. It is impossible to say whether or not they followed the Heidelberg

approach of depicting the coastline as the site of leisure activity for the figures that occupy its sandy beaches. As they are not mentioned, however, it is interesting to speculate that these two works are the forerunners of the marine paintings that Harrison executed throughout his career beginning in Santa Barbara around 1896.

After an extensive journey through Gippsland during the preceding months, the couple returned to their Melbourne studio and prepared to leave Australia. His Sandringham paintings were among those shown at the exhibition and sale of Eleanor's and Birge's work held on May 22, 1891 shortly before their departure for California. Reviews of the event indicate that landscape was increasingly the focal point of Birge's art. In addition to the two marines mentioned above, reviews also briefly describe other works with landscape titles. Several critics remarked on the simplicity of Harrison's compositions and his "aptitude for creating a picture out of very little."¹⁰⁵

Why the Harrisons decided to shorten their stay in Australia is difficult to ascertain. It may have been the result of a combination of factors. The demands of traveling through the countryside in order to fulfill his obligation to *Scribner's* and especially the long trip through Gippsland may have taxed Harrison's continually frail health. Moreover, it is not clear how successful they were in selling their work. Eleanor's apparent inability to establish a teaching career to supplement their income may have also been a consideration. It may also have been that the brief, golden period of the Heidelberg Movement was coming to a close. By May 1891, Fox, Condor, Streeton and Roberts had all left Melbourne.¹⁰⁶ Fox and Condor¹⁰⁷ left to seek training in Europe that was not available in Melbourne. Lack of patronage may have played a role in Streeton and Roberts move to Sydney. Or perhaps, still in the grip of wanderlust, it

was time for the Harrisons to move on to yet another chapter in their adventurous life together.

¹ John E.D. Trask, "Birge Harrison," *Scribner's Magazine* 42 (November 1907): 578.

² Ibid.

³ Charles Louis Borgmeyer, "Birge Harrison-Poet Painter," *Fine Arts Journal* 29 (October 1913): 590.

⁴ "Americans in Paris," *The Studio* 1 (February 10, 1883): 45.

⁵ "Americans in Paris," *The Studio* 1 (March 17, 1883): 88.

⁶ "Australian Portraits: Mrs. Birge Harrison," *The Sun* April 11, 1890, 13. The Sun was an Australian journal that featured a series of biographical sketches of prominent artists.

⁷ Charles C. Eldredge, Julie Schnimmel and William H. Truettner, *Art in New Mexico, 1900-1945 Paths to Taos and Santa Fe* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1986), 20.

⁸ William H. Gerds, *Art Across America: Two Centuries of Regional Painting* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1990), 3:149.

⁹ Ibid., 203.

¹⁰ Birge Harrison, "Espanola and Its Environs," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 70 (May 1885): 826. Metcalf's article "Along the Rio Grande," appeared in the April 1885 issue.

¹¹ Ibid., 831.

¹² It is possible that Harrison may have kept these works in his possession or revisited the area between 1896 and 1897. The 1897 catalogue for the exhibition, *Paintings by Birge Harrison and Alexander Harrison* (exh. cat., New York: The American Art Galleries, 1897) lists *In the Arizona Desert* (unlocated). Harrison's will also lists *Sunrise on the Desert, Arizona* (unlocated). Two of Eleanor's landscape paintings from this period are extant. (Private Collection.)

¹³ Harrison, "Espanola and Its Environs," 828.

¹⁴ Trask, 578.

¹⁵ Exhibition Records of the Society of America Artists, Archives of American Art, roll N455. Harrison joined the Society in 1882. Although he showed works from his French period at his second showing in 1883, he gave his address as Colorado Springs, Colorado. He did not exhibit again at the Society until 1894 when he showed the two paintings, *Le Soir* and *Le port de Saint Raphael* (unlocated) that he had show the previous year at the Societe Nationale des Beaux-Arts. (See, Lois M. Fink, *American Paintings at the Nineteenth-Century Paris Salons* (Washington D.C.: National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1990), 351). Harrison began exhibiting on a regular basis at the Society after 1897 (AAA, roll N456).

¹⁶ M. Hirst Browne, "Australian Women," *The Illustrated Sydney News*, May 9, 1891, n.p.

¹⁷ Peter H. Falk, ed., *The Annual Exhibition Records of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art* (Madison, Ct.: Sound View Press, 1989), 2:236.

¹⁸ Janice H. Chadbourne, Karl Gabosh & Charles Vogel, eds., *The Boston Art Club: Exhibition Records, 1873-1909* (Madison, Ct.: Soundview Press, 1991), 204.

¹⁹ "Art at the Exposition," *The Daily Inter-Ocean*, October 20, 1883, 13.

²⁰ "Mrs. Birge Harrison," *Table Talk*, April 25, 1890, 9. Birge Harrison's uncle A.M. Harrison, under whom Alexander had served in the U.S. Coast Guard, died in Plymouth, Mass. in 1881. He left a wife and daughter, Jennie Seaton Harrison, who would become the second Mrs. Harrison in 1896. (See, "Death of Capt. A.. Harrison," *The Old Colony Memorial*, Jan 13, 1881, 5).

²¹ Letters from Birge Harrison to Mr. J. Corliss dated January 4, 1884 and February 9, 1884. Artist's Files in the Archives of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts (PAFA).

²² *Catalogue of Paintings, Works of Alexander Harrison and Birge Harrison*, (exh. cat., New York City: The American Art Galleries, February 1884), n.p.

²³ "Art Babble," February 10, 1884, unidentified newspaper clipping, "Birge Harrison File" Library of William H. Gerds.

²⁴ "Art Notes," February 7, 1884, unidentified newspaper clipping, "Birge Harrison File," in the Library of William H. Gerds.

²⁵ Chadbourne, 204.

²⁶ John Davis, "Our United Happy Family: Artists in the Sherwood Studio Building, 1880-1890," *Archives of American Art Journal* 36 (1996): 19.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁸ Letter from Eleanor Ritchie Harrison to Mr. Gill, dated 24/3/1885, from Germantown, Archives of American Art, roll D10.

²⁹ *Illustrated Catalogue of Paintings by American Artists* (exh. cat., St. Louis: Museum of Fine Art, St. Louis, 1885), n.p. Harrison's only entry was *Summer Idyll*. Alexander Harrison's *Le Crepuscule*, one of his best-known seascapes, won one of the four prizes.

³⁰ "Mr. Birge Harrison," *Table Talk*, May 2, 1890, 4.

³¹ "Mrs. Birge Harrison," 9.

³² "Australian Portraits," 13.

³³ Lois Marie Fink, *American Art at the Nineteenth Century Salon* (Washington D.C.: National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1990), 351. Harrison listed his address as 15, rue Boissonade. The title, *L'hallali!* suggests that the subject may have depicted the final moments of the kill during a hunting scene.

³⁴ Birge Harrison, "Thro' the Land of the Marseillaise," *Outing Magazine* 29 (January 1897): 370-375; (February 1897): 430-437; (March 1897): 558-565.

³⁵ "Mrs. Birge Harrison," 9.

³⁶ Harrison, "In Search of Paradise with Camera and Palette," *Outing Magazine* 21 (January 1893): 313.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 314.

³⁸ Alison Rae, "The Traveler: An Old House at Etaples," *The Australasian*, May 9, 1891, 907. This is another journal published in Australia that featured native artists and although it was not in publication for long, it provides a wealth of information for art historians. A few copies are available in the Sidney Dickinson File, The Art Reference Library of the Boston Public Library.

³⁹ Gabriel P. Weisberg, *Beyond Impressionism: The Naturalist Impulse* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1992), 159.

⁴⁰ Julia Rowland Myers, "The American Expatriate Painters of the French Peasantry" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Maryland, College Park, Md., 1989), 346.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 347.

⁴² Julian Campbell, *Frank O'Meara 1853-1888* (exh. cat., Dublin, Ireland: Charlemont House, 1989), 30.

⁴³ Myers, 349.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 361.

⁴⁵ Birge Harrison, "In Search of Paradise with Camera and Palette," *Outing Magazine* 21 (January 1893): 313.

⁴⁶ Rae, 907.

⁴⁷ Letter of Administration for the Estate of A.W. Harrison, File #1070, 1886, Philadelphia City Hall.

⁴⁸ Letter from Birge Harrison to Percy Holt, dated March 6, 1923, The Percy William Holt Papers, Department of Archives and History, State of Alabama, Montgomery, Alabama, n.p.

⁴⁹ Mary Eagle, *The Oil Paintings of E. Phillips Fox in the National Gallery of Australia* (exh. cat., Canberra: The National Gallery of Australia, 1997), 73. Fox is an interesting example of the internationalism of Harrison's contacts. After meeting Birge in Etaples in 1887, he continued to study at the Academy Julian. In the winter of 1888/89, he attended Alexander Harrison's afternoon class that also included the Americans William King Amsden, Louis Paul Dessar, William Henry Hyde, De Witt Parshall, Charles Rollo Peters, Henry Bishop and Edward Henry Potthast. (See photo, *id.*, 15.) Fox was also a close friend of Robert Henri, James Fisher and Edward Redfield. (*id.*, 19).

⁵⁰ Letter from Robert Reid to his sister, dated October 7, 1887, Robert Reid Papers, Archives of American Art, roll 641.

⁵¹ Richard Norris Brooke, *Record of my work: serving to some extent as a history of my professional life*, 1888, 75, unpublished manuscript, Richard Norris Brooke File, Archives of the National Museum of American Art, Washington, D.C.

⁵² *Along the Road*, signed and dated 1887, Courtesy of Spanierman Gallery, New York City. *La Baignade*, (Fink, 351) and *A Surprise in the Forest of Compiègne* (Swarthmore College, presumed destroyed) was first exhibited at the Art Club of Philadelphia *Second Special Exhibition, 1890*, Archives of American Art, roll N554.

⁵³ Annette Blaugrund et al, *Paris 1889: American Artists at the Universal Exposition* (exh. cat., Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia, 1989), 31.

⁵⁴ Susan Grant, *American Paintings Acquired by the French Government, 1879-1900* (M.A. thesis, George Washington University), 97.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁵⁶ Birge Harrison, "The New Departure in Parisian Art," *The Atlantic Monthly* 66 (December 1890): 762.

⁵⁷ Fink, 122.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 762.

⁵⁹ Theodore Childs, "American Artists at the Paris Exhibition," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 79 (September 1889): 489.

⁶⁰ "Mrs. Birge Harrison," 9.

⁶¹ *Table Talk*, December 26, 1889, 10.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ "Mr. Birge Harrison," 4.

⁶⁴ Birge Harrison, "A Kangaroo Hunt," *Scribner's Magazine* 9 (April 1891): 419-429. Harrison produced six illustrations for his article. This article was republished as one of eight essays devoted to hunting in various locales around the world in *Hunting* by Archibald Rogers (New York: Scribner and Sons), 1896.

⁶⁵ Sidney Dickinson, "Station Life in Australia," *Scribner's Magazine* 11 (February 1892): 135-154. Harrison drew seven of the nineteen illustrations for this article. Americans were keenly interested in Australia during this period. The same issue of *Scribner's Magazine* also ran an article by Josiah Royce titled "Impressions of Australia."

⁶⁶ "Mr. Sidney Dickinson," *Table Talk*, August 30, 1889, 15.

⁶⁷ Dickinson was the art critic for the short-lived journal, *The Australasian Critic*. His ideas concerning criticism are found in his articles, "What Should Australian Artists Paint?" *The*

Australasian Critic (October 1, 1890): 21-22, and "Wanted: A Standard in Art Criticism," *The Australasian Critic* (June 1, 1891): 216-218. For one of his reviews of Harrison's work, see *The Australasian Critic* (January 1, 1891): 95.

⁶⁸ The Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts owns two of the original grisailles from the publication, both gifts of Mrs. R.J. Carson, Jr., *A Provencal Coopering Shop*, signed "B.H.", published under the caption, "Preparing for the season's wine and fish" in "Thro' the Land of the Marseillaise," *Outing Magazine* 29 (January 1897): 371 and *A Street in Terrascon*, signed and dated 1889, published under the caption, "Tarascon, The home of Tartarin" in "Thro' the Land of the Marseillaise," *Outing Magazine* 29 (March 1897): 563. My thanks to Cheryl Liebold, archivist at PAFA for bringing these works to my attention.

⁶⁹ Ellwood C. Parry III and Maria Chamberlin-Hellman, "Thomas Eakins as an Illustrator, 1878-1881," *American Art Journal* 5 (May 1973): 20.

⁷⁰ Edgar Breitenbach, "American Graphics in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Archives of American Art Journal* 30 (1990): 23

⁷¹ Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines 1885-1905* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 4: 5.

⁷² Neil Harris, "Pictorial Perils, The Rise of American Illustration," in *The American Illustrated Book in the Nineteenth Century*, Gerald W.R. Ward ed., (Winterthur Museum, The Proceedings of the Fourteenth Annual North American Print Conference, Charlottesville: The University of Virginia Press, 1982), 5.

⁷³ William A. Coffin, "American Illustration of To-day," *Scribner's Monthly Magazine* 9 (January 1892): 108.

⁷⁴ I am grateful to Mr. John Ritchie and Jane Clark of Sotheby's in Melbourne for sharing their research on Eleanor Ritchie Harrison and Birge Harrison. The material that they provided and to which I was directed has allowed me to fill in many of the gaps in Harrison's biography. At the 1883 Exhibition of the *Victorian Academy of Arts* Eleanor exhibited three paintings, *Tired Out*, and two paintings with French themes, *Near Cape Finistere*, and *An Interior in Brittany*. See, *Thirteenth Exhibition of the Victorian Academy of Arts*, (exh. cat., Melbourne: Victorian Academy of Arts Building, March 1883), 7-8. She exhibited a *Head*, and *A Fisherwoman* that were illustrated in the *Victorian Artists' Society*, (exh. cat., Melbourne: National Gallery, May 1888), 6-8. All of the catalogues referred to can be found in the Art Catalogue Archives of the State Library of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia.

⁷⁵ A review of the 1883 Exhibition at the Victorian Academy of Art, praised Eleanor's painting of a sleeping child as meriting special attention, "for the intense feeling of repose which pervades the figure of the child; the warmth of the atmosphere by which she is enveloped" ("The Victorian Academy of Arts," *The Argus*, Saturday, March 3, 1883, 13). In *The Argus* review of the Victorian Artists' Society her *Head* was singled out of as an example of her ability to express the character of her subject ("Victorian Artist's Society Review," *The Argus*, April 30, 1888, 11).

⁷⁶ "Art and Artists, Studio Wednesdays," *Table Talk*, April 26, 1889, 5.

⁷⁷ "Art Notes, Mrs. Birge Harrison's Studio," *The Sun*, April 25, 1890, 17-18.

⁷⁸ Sarah Burns, "The Price of Beauty: Art, Commerce and the Late-Nineteenth Century American Studio Interior," in, David C. Miller, ed. *American Iconology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 209.

⁷⁹ "Mrs. Birge Harrison's Studio," 17. This was also mentioned as her intention in "Mrs. Birge Harrison," 9.

⁸⁰ For a full discussion of this issue see, Elizabeth Johns, et.al. *New Worlds From Old; 19th Century Australian & American Landscape* (Canberra: National Gallery of Australia; and Hartford: The Wadsworth Athenaeum), 1998.

⁸¹ Reminiscences of Alexander Colquhoun, as cited in Jane Clark and Bridget Whitlaw, *Golden Summers: Heidelberg and Beyond* (exh. cat., Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 1985), 31.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 9.

⁸³ Christopher Allen, *Art in Australia From Colonization to Postmodernism* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1997), 58.

⁸⁴ Clark, 25.

⁸⁵ Ron Radford, *Tom Roberts* (ex. cat., Adelaide: Art Gallery of South Australia, 1996-1997), 186-189.

⁸⁶ Clark, 25.

⁸⁷ This position was the topic of a lecture given by Elizabeth John's at the symposium on New Worlds From Old, delivered on October 24, 1998. Titled, "What I learned in the Process: The Hazards of 'National Identity' in Interpreting Landscape Painting," Johns argued for a more inclusive approach. While not negating the fact that Australian nationalism was a strong force in society during the period in which they were painted, these images also evoke a broader, more universal approach to the relationship of man and nature.

⁸⁸ Radford, 70.

⁸⁹ Clark, 9.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁹² Eagle, 73.

⁹³ Clark, 15.

⁹⁴ See, The Tom Roberts Papers, Mitchell Library A2479, State Library of New South Wales, as cited in R. H. Croll, ed., *Srike to Bulldog: Letters from Sir Arthur Streeton to Tom Roberts*. (Sydney: Ure Smith Pty. Limited, 1946), 127. Conder was referring to the Victorian Artists'

Society exhibition in March 1890. Held only three months after their arrival, Harrison showed two paintings, *Sweet Summer* and *Boulogne Harbor*, both are unlocated.

⁹⁵ Letter from E. Phillips Fox to Tom Roberts from Etaples, dated 20 July, 1887, *The Tom Roberts Papers*, ML A2480, as cited in Eagle, 78.

⁹⁶ Clark, 56.

⁹⁷ Roberts exhibited this painting at his studio in May 1890 and again at the *Exhibition of Works of Victorian Artists and a Loan Collection of Pictures* in December 1890. (Clark, 132).

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 133.

⁹⁹ "Art and Artists, The Victorian Artists' Exhibition," *Table Talk*, April 3, 1890, 7. Also see reviews of the exhibition in *The Age*, March 29, 1890, 15; and *The Sun*, April 3, 1890, 6. A sketch of *Misty Morning* appeared in *Catalogue of the 1890 Winter Exhibition of the Victorian Artists Society*. (exh. cat., Melbourne: Victorian Artists Society, 1890), 14.

¹⁰⁰ "Art and Artists," *Table Talk*, October 3, 1890, 16.

¹⁰¹ Thomas Sheehy, *Sandringham: A Sketchbook History* (Melbourne: Victorian Society of Local History Writers Publication, 1972), 28

¹⁰² Jane Clark, unpublished manuscript of a lecture delivered in Sandringham, at the opening of the Coastal Art Trail, celebrating the artists of the Heidelberg School.

¹⁰³ "Art and Artists, The Birge Harrison Exhibition," *Table Talk*, May 15, 1891, 6.

¹⁰⁴ "The Birge Harrison Exhibition," 6.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* These works include: *Evening on the Bay*, *Now for a Swim*, and *Calling the Sea-Dog*, all unlocated.

¹⁰⁶ Clark, 25.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 18.

Chapter Four

Returning Home and a New Life: 1896-1929

After leaving Melbourne in late May or early June 1891, Eleanor and Birge arrived in Southern California, where, according to Voter Registration records, the Harrisons were residing in Santa Barbara County a year later in August 1892.¹ Their return to the United States coincided with the general repatriation of many of the artists of Harrison's generation, who by the 1890's sensed an improvement in the artistic climate in this country. In general, there were more opportunities for exhibiting their work as the various regions and individual states held industrial fairs, many of which included a fine arts section. In the New York area, private gentlemen's clubs, several of which had artist-members, also offered expanded exhibition opportunities bringing together artists and patrons. Both the 1889 Paris Exposition and the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, had proven that many of the returning artists were knowledgeable about current art trends and as proficient as their French counterparts. Increased patronage for American art followed.

As greater numbers of artists returned from study abroad, they sought to recreate the art world that they had enjoyed in Europe. Returning artists successfully founded professional organizations and societies that brought artists together to pursue specific interests and hold exhibitions.²

Known and advertised nation-wide for its sunny, healthy climate, Southern California was an ideal place for the Harrisons, in light of Birge's re-occurring malaria.³ It also offered the advantage of a growing artist community. With the extension of the Santa Fe Railroad into Los Angeles in late 1885, Southern

California attracted many artists, from across the United States, who brought with them a variety of experiences and styles.⁴ California's temperate climate was also an ideal place to practice plein-air painting. Harrison resided in Santa Barbara off and on for almost six years, where he painted the local landscape.

While San Francisco to the north and Los Angeles to the south had established artist's communities, Santa Barbara was also developing into something of an artist's colony. Here Harrison would have joined other artists such as Henry Ford Chapman, Edward Edmonson and Alexander Harmer, who were among the artists who painted in the area.⁵ Interested in encouraging the arts in their community, Santa Barbara's civic organizations attempted to provide exhibition opportunities for its artists. As early as February 1881, it held the "Art Loan Exhibition" in the Odd Fellows' Building, the first major public exhibition presented in Southern California.⁶

Harrison's activities in Santa Barbara for the first two years of his residence are not known. He continued to exhibit earlier figure paintings during this period. In 1891 he showed at the Annual Exhibition of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts⁷ and in 1892 at the Western Washington Industrial Exposition Company in Tacoma, Washington.⁸ It appears likely however, that he was unable to sustain a living solely from the sale of his paintings. Shortly after arriving in California, in February 1892, *Scribner's Magazine* published "Station Life in Australia," written by Sidney Dickinson with several illustrations by Harrison. Drawing on his early experience as a fruit farmer, Harrison also supplemented his income by raising walnuts on his property in nearby Montecito.⁹

The Harrisons left Santa Barbara in late 1892 or early 1893 for an extended visit to France. Harrison continued to write travel articles during this visit. His short reminisces of life in the French art colonies, "In Search of Paradise with Camera and Palette," was published in the sporting magazine, *Outing Magazine* in January 1893. His one extant work dated 1893, *Le Soir*, (fig. 4.1) which may have been painted at Frejus, France where Harrison stayed that year,¹⁰ was exhibited at the 1893 Societe Nationale des Beaux Arts Salon.¹¹ This period in Harrison's life has been characterized as one of "incubation."¹² As *Le Soir* illustrates, he was engaged in redirecting the focus of his work away from the figure and toward landscape.

During this period, American landscape painting was moving toward a transition away from description and toward suggestion. Nowhere was this more evident than in the art galleries of the 1893 Columbian World's Fair in Chicago that opened on May 1 and closed on October 31, 1893. While it is not certain that Harrison was in Chicago during this period, it seems likely that he would have scheduled his journey across the country to stop in Chicago for what was the most anticipated art event in many years. A visit to the fair would also have afforded him an opportunity to view his own paintings within the context of the best of contemporary American art.

Birge's brother Alexander sat on both the Advisory Committee and the Jury of Selection representing American Artists in Paris and showed several paintings including two of his most famous, both from 1885, *In Arcadia* and *Twilight*, *Le Crepuscule*, a marine. Birge was represented by two figure paintings, both of

which had been previously shown in the United States- *A Surprise in the Forest of Compiègne (In the Forest of Compiègne-A Surprise)* and *The Departure of the Mayflower*, which received a medal.¹³

Both of these paintings were figural works, essentially academic and narrative. As demonstrated by the art shown at the Fair, by 1893, narrative was no longer the primary concern for American artists. A new direction in American art could be detected at the exhibition.¹⁴

For the “new men” of the 1870’s and 1880’s, Harrison’s contemporaries, the traditional concept of expression had been redefined, shifting from specificity and narration, to an attempt to communicate something of the artist’s own personality.¹⁵ This new approach was apparent in the strong showing of landscapes on view at the Fair, particularly those of George Inness and James McNeill Whistler. Both artists simplified and abstracted their subject by the use of “broadly painted masses that suggested rather than described the natural world.”¹⁶ Each did so for his own purposes. Whistler’s work was purely aesthetic while Inness’s was personal and spiritual. Together, however, their landscapes established a new criterion for American art, a new definition of pictorial unity in which “all must work towards a harmony of technique, of abstraction and of the artist’s own person with nature’s moods.”¹⁷

As a discussion of his *Evening on the Seine*, c. 1889, (fig. 4.2) will illustrate, Harrison was already familiar with Whistler’s work. He may well have visited Inness in his studio as early as 1885.¹⁸ In any case, the new approach to landscape painting, following Inness’ lead of painting from subjective experience was evident

in the work of several artists who exhibited at the Fair. As Elizabeth Broun notes in the discussion of the “Poetic Landscapes” on view at the Fair, in her dissertation, *American Paintings and Sculpture in the Fine Arts Building of the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893*, the “more advanced Americans” were pursuing a subjective landscape style “based more on their own experience than on artistic examples.”¹⁹ Of particular interest with regard to Harrison's marines painted in Santa Barbara only a few short years later, is Dwight W. Tryon. His two marines, *Daybreak* of 1885, in which the “tonality of the picture unifies the strips of water, lands and sky in one harmonious mood,” and *Sunset at Sea* of 1889, in which the “use of tone, flattened composition and suppression of detail to achieve the effect of a purely emotional, subjective response,”²⁰ are illustrative of the late-nineteenth century poetic landscape style now known as Tonalism.

Other artists representing this approach to landscape painting included Hugh Bolton Jones, Walter L. Palmer, Ben Foster, Charles Harold Davis, and John H. Twachtman.²¹ Taken as a whole, these works suggested a new direction in landscape painting that emphasized poetic personal expression, which was visualized in harmonious tonal modulations.²²

The Harrisons returned to Santa Barbara by July 21, 1894, when Birge closed on a contract for the construction of several stone houses, including a studio, on a previously purchased five acre parcel of property near Cold Springs in the nearby town of Montecito.²³ The date of his return suggests that even if he had missed the World's Columbian Exposition, he would have had the opportunity of viewing many of the same works at the California Midwinter International

Exposition that was held in San Francisco from January to July 1894. This fair, the first of its kind on the West Coast, aimed at obtaining “as many as possible of the best pictures which had been exhibited at the Columbian Exposition.”²⁴ The California landscape painters William Keith and Arthur Mathews, both Tonalists, served on the selection committee for the Fine Arts Exhibition and their own works were highlighted in the exhibition.²⁵

As a discussion of Harrison’s paintings done in France and his work in Australia will illustrate, Harrison was already exploring similar aesthetic concerns, that is, a more suggestive approach to his subject and an interest in tonal gradations and atmospheric effects, while moving toward a greater emphasis on the landscape element in his work. The landscape paintings at either of these Fairs would have presented Harrison not only with examples that addressed his interests and applied this aesthetic to landscape, but also with an indication that this was possibly the future direction of American art, making the redirection of his art toward landscape a logical next step. Shortly after his return to California, Harrison took up landscape painting. He also painted several marines that remain among his finest Tonalist works.

Montecito was rapidly becoming popular with wealthy Easterners who were building palatial homes in the area. Harrison’s property was adjacent to “Arcady,” Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead’s 150 acres of “scenic property bounded by Sycamore Canyon, El Camino Viejo, Eucalyptus Hill Road and a meandering rural creek.”²⁶ Its centerpiece was an ornate Tuscan villa.

A well educated, cultured and idealistic man, Ralph Whitehead was the son of a wealthy textile manufacturer was born in Saddleworth, Yorkshire, England.²⁷ He attended Oxford University, where he was influenced by John Ruskin and later, William Morris and Arts and Crafts movement. In 1892, he married Jane Byrd McCall, a young woman from a prominent Philadelphia family who had studied art in Paris. In 1893, Whitehead published his book, *Grass of the Desert*, which articulates his ideas about the interrelationship of art and life, and provided the framework for the establishment of an art colony in the United States.²⁸

Whitehead began constructing and furnishing Arcady in a style that reflected the ideals of Ruskin and William Morris. As one contemporary describes them, the Whiteheads were an interesting couple who entertained lavishly.²⁹ Eventually the estate included several cottages and studios used by promising young painters, sculptors and musicians.³⁰

Given their interest in the arts, it is not surprising that they would have become friendly with the Harrisons and included the couple in their circle of highly accomplished acquaintances. The letters and journals of Jane McCall Whitehead provide a glimpse of what life was like for the Harrisons during this period. Their friendship would eventually bring Harrison to Woodstock, New York several years later.

Both of the Harrisons frequently accompanied Whitehead on riding excursions into the mountains in the area and in nearby Ojai. It was probably during one of these trips that Harrison painted *California Landscape* in 1895, his first extant pure landscape painting. In a letter to her mother, Mrs. Peter McCall,

Jane recalls lunching with the Harrisons and Professor Holden, "one of the great astronomers of the day."³¹ In February, Mrs. Whitehead reported to her mother the news that Eleanor Harrison was expecting her first child. Apparently however, the energetic Mrs. Harrison was "still painting and going about as usual."³²

Birge reluctantly agreed to take on Mrs. Whitehead's art education, thus inadvertently beginning his teaching career. Although "he would rather die than give a lesson,"³³ Harrison agreed to advise her on her painting. Harrison continued to give Mrs. Whitehead lessons for the remainder of his stay in Montecito.

On May 1, 1895, Jane McCall Whitehead's journal starkly notes the tragedy that had befallen Birge Harrison with the simple phrase, "Mrs. Harrison died."³⁴ Records indicate that Eleanor Harrison, died of complications resulting from the stillborn death of their son Linton Ritchie on April 27, 1895.³⁵ An obituary in the local paper notes of Eleanor that, "She was a portrait painter of ability and a lady greatly beloved in Santa Barbara for her kindheartedness and cordial qualities. The mother and her little dead infant will be laid in one grave."³⁶ The immensity of this tragedy on Birge can be gauged by his silence on this period of his life. In articles written after this period, Harrison never mentioned his first wife and their life together.

Jane McCall Whitehead's diary indicates that Harrison continued to live in Montecito until July 1896, when he left for the East.³⁷ Harrison apparently stored several of his paintings in a "secret cupboard" in the barn that he used as a studio.³⁸ They were not found until Harrison's second wife, Jenny, wrote asking that five

paintings be sent East, possibly for the joint exhibition of paintings by Birge and Alexander held in 1897 at the American Art Galleries in New York City.³⁹

Born on January 28, 1865, Jenny Seaton Harrison was the stepdaughter of Alexander M. Harrison, Birge's uncle, who died in 1881.⁴⁰ A. M. Harrison had shared a close relationship with both Birge and Alexander. Birge had probably first met Jenny in 1883 when, suffering from the lingering effects of malaria, he and his first wife, Eleanor had sought medical advice in Plymouth, Massachusetts.

Jenny and Birge were married on November 28, 1896, four months after Harrison had left Santa Barbara and a year and a half after Eleanor's death. The Harrison family was among the socially prominent families in Plymouth. An article in the local newspaper, *The Old Colonial Memorial*, noted that Birge was an artist of some reputation and that he intended to remain for the present in the Plymouth area to pursue his art.⁴¹

After they returned from their honeymoon, the couple resided at the home of Jenny's mother, Anna Harrison, at 28 Warren Avenue. The one-and-a-half-story, Greek Revival-style house, which is still standing, is situated on the main coastal road into what was once one of Plymouth's premier summer vacation areas. Although the couple traveled extensively in the early years of their married life, they considered Plymouth their home until they moved to the Byrdcliffe art colony in 1904.⁴²

The rear of the house faces the sand dunes and beaches of Plymouth Harbor. Finding himself for the first time in many years living in a snowy climate, Harrison

appreciated the special appeal of the winter landscape and made it his primary subject, earning his reputation as a landscape artist specializing in snow effects.⁴³ Harrison was “fascinated by the beauty of our New England winter, especially when the whole country was transfigured and glorified by the white beauty of the snow.”⁴⁴ He exhibited his first of many such pictures at the Society of American Artists in 1897.⁴⁵ As indicated by two of his works, now known only through reproductions, he quickly applied himself to capture these effects, painting both the village, in *Plymouth at Sunset*⁴⁶ (unlocated) and the harbor, in *Plymouth Harbor in Winter*.⁴⁷ (unlocated).

Other professional artists in the vicinity included W. L. Williams, a landscape artist,⁴⁸ and the native, Mr. C. H. Hayaden, who had studied at the Academy Julian in Paris.⁴⁹ However, Plymouth offered a limited art world. The local Black and White Club held infrequent exhibitions of paintings by local artists and some drawing classes, but there is no indication that Harrison belonged to, or participated in, any of these activities.⁵⁰

Shortly following his marriage, Harrison dedicated himself to organizing the second joint exhibition of his and Alexander’s paintings. The exhibition received warm reviews that acknowledged both brothers as “having ranked high among those of the younger American painters for some years past.”⁵¹ With forty-nine paintings by Birge, including several of his recent marines from Santa Barbara, and only eleven by Alexander, and two by their deceased younger brother Butler, it would appear that the exhibition was designed to announce to the American art

world a new direction in Birge's art and his resumption of a more active role on the American art scene.

Throughout his career, Harrison rarely used an art dealer as an intermediary, nor did he enjoy the support of a single patron, and relied instead on exhibitions to market his work. Voluminous correspondence between Harrison and many of the museums and galleries at which he exhibited indicates that he acted as his own agent. The popularity of his work among institutions and individual viewers across the country allowed him to successfully secure a level of income from the sale of his work that afforded the Harrisons a comfortable lifestyle.⁵² He exhibited his landscape paintings in many major international expositions or exhibitions during the first two decades of the twentieth century, including the Trans-Mississippi International Exposition, Omaha, 1898; the 1900 Paris Universalle; the Pan-American Exposition, Buffalo, 1901, where he won a bronze medal; the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, 1904, winning a silver medal; The Pan-Pacific International Exposition, 1915; and the Luxemburg Exhibition, 1919.

He continued to exhibit frequently at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, The National Academy of Design, and the Society of American Artists. He also exhibited at many of the art museums and institutes across the United States, including The Boston Art Club, The Corcoran Gallery of Art, The Detroit Museum of Art, the Carnegie Institute of Art, Pittsburgh, the Carolina Art Association, Charleston, South Carolina, The Heron Institute, Indianapolis, the City Museum of St. Louis, the Rhode Island School of Design, the Milwaukee Art Society, the

Worcester Art Museum, the Rochester Memorial Art Gallery, the Mahoning Institute, Youngstown, Ohio.

It appears that Harrison spent at least part of the period from 1896 to 1901 in Boston painting winter landscapes. At the 1901 Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York, he chose not to show the Santa Barbara marine shown a year earlier in Paris. Instead, he selected three more recent landscapes, two with titles, *Boston Common in Winter* and *Harvard Bridge at Twilight*,⁵³ that indicate that he had been working in the Boston area. The former was selected as particularly meritorious by one critic at the 1901 Exposition who found it “absolutely true” and although it “is small, knocks many big salon attempts silly.”⁵⁴ By the late 1890’s, led in part by the group of Ten American Painters, Boston was enjoying a renaissance in the arts.⁵⁵

Patronage for American art followed and it is perhaps for this reason that Harrison chose the Doll and Richards Gallery in Boston for the opening of his first of many one-man exhibitions in January 1900, where, to Harrison’s surprise, it was both a financial and artistic success.⁵⁶ The exhibition traveled to the Art Institute of Chicago in February and in March to the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Comprised solely of landscape paintings, it marked the completion of the redirection of Harrison’s work from figure to landscape painting.⁵⁷ The exhibition of thirty-four paintings, including marines from Santa Barbara and more recent winter landscapes, was warmly received, especially in Chicago, where it competed with an exhibition of Whistler’s work. One Chicago critic noted that it formed “as

strong and interesting a group of landscapes as we have seen here within my memory”⁵⁸ and lauded Harrison’s interpretation of even commonplace subject

As early as 1900, Harrison also turned to New York City as a site for painting and marketing his work. By 1900, the City was already becoming much as today, a city of “great shows” where, according to at least one critic, there was “vastly more in New York worth looking at than there was ten years ago.”⁵⁹ By the turn of the last century, New York City’s skyline had been transformed by the proliferation of multi-storied office building. Continuing to grow to greater heights, the skyscraper emerged during this period as an original architectural form that defined the city’s modernist image.⁶⁰ In November 1900, Birge and his brother Alexander took “Simmon’s big studio in the Carnegie”⁶¹ and planned to work there for most of the winter. By January the two brothers were hard at work and optimistic about producing some worthwhile paintings.⁶²

Although there are no known paintings of New York by Alexander, Birge painted the city in almost every season. He found a unique beauty in the city’s skyscrapers and sky-line⁶³ and immediately began to address this subject in his work. His *New York in 1900* (unlocated) represents “a twilight effect looking up Park Avenue towards the old Grand Central station.”⁶⁴

Harrison was keenly aware of his architectural surroundings, an issue that he addressed in his article “Personality in Architecture,” written in 1917. He believed that the shape that a building took should conform to the ideals, characteristics and needs of the individuals or societies for which it was built and that the skyscrapers of New York City admirably fulfilled this requirement.⁶⁵ As a

painter, he “never ceased to marvel at the unexpected beauty of some of these fairy-like structures, towering skyward with an airy grace and lightness that is bewilderingly lovely.”⁶⁶

While of his best-known paintings of New York are of the city’s busy thorough-fares and modern structures such as the Flat-Iron building, Harrison did not confine himself to this subject. Among the first subjects that he painted was *Winter in Central Park* (unlocated).⁶⁷ He also painted the city’s fashionable neighborhoods such as Washington Square and Fifth Avenue. Harrison’s picturesque views of the city were very well received by the critics, and were the subject of an article that contained several illustrations of this subject.⁶⁸ His New York City scenes continue to be considered among his finest work.

Turning his attention to the expanding art market in New York City, Harrison joined several professional and social institutions that provided exhibition opportunities. At the height of his career, Harrison was a member of the most prestigious professional societies for artists.⁶⁹ These memberships and related exhibitions provided an important link to the emerging world of late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century American art. Because they served to establish his professional credentials, Harrison rarely failed to list these institutions in the preface to the catalogues of his one-man shows. The establishment of professional societies and standards were part of the social fabric of America during this period of transition to a more specialized, modern society.⁷⁰ For Harrison’s generation of artists who had studied abroad, the establishment of institutions of art and art

societies, and as well as their spread across the United States, was an important step toward the goal of securing a role for the arts in American culture.

While international expositions and even annual exhibitions at institutes of art enabled Harrison to address a large audience, the expositions were an irregular source of income, and the annual exhibitions drew their viewers from many economic classes. The gentlemen's clubs, especially those in New York City, who attracted members from among the wealthiest men of the city, offered a more reliable source of sales. Among the memberships in various institutions to which Harrison belonged, none offered a greater possibility for patronage than the Century Club. Membership into this club, one of the most venerable in the country was extremely difficult to achieve. As a rule, only the most successful artists and, in general those who came from privileged backgrounds, were admitted. Harrison's acceptance was no doubt eased by his family's lineage, which included no matter how tenuous, a familial connection to President Harrison. Holding exhibitions monthly, the club was an early supporter of American art.⁷¹ It also offered the opportunity of one-man shows in its art gallery to artist-members. Beginning with his interest in scenes of New York City, Harrison frequently exhibited in the club's exhibition dedicated to contemporary American art. A review of the exhibition records indicate from 1904, the date of his first one-man show there, until 1911, the Club hosted three one-man exhibitions of Harrison's work.⁷²

It appears that Harrison did not maintain a residence in New York City, preferring instead, to stay at the Century Club, which is located at 7 West Forty-

third Street, and to rent studio space as needed. Among his studio addresses were 26 East Twenty-sixth Street and 139 West Fifty-fifth Street.⁷³ Several of his paintings depict areas of the city neighboring these locations.

With the return of so many well-trained artists, the art market was extremely competitive. Artists supplemented their income through writing and teaching. While in Plymouth, Harrison taught students privately,⁷⁴ and also wrote, publishing his three part travelogue, "Thro' the Land of the Marseillaise," for *Outing Magazine* in 1897.

While Harrison made his home in Plymouth, he continued to travel extensively. In 1899, he and his wife returned to Santa Barbara, where he renewed his friendship with the Whiteheads.⁷⁵ In 1900, he traveled to Paris for the Exposition⁷⁶ and to Chicago for the opening of his one-man show there.⁷⁷ Two years later, he traveled again to Paris, to visit Alexander.⁷⁸ Harrison would continue to travel throughout his lifetime, revisiting Europe and circling the globe more than once.

His interest in capturing the effects of wintry landscapes led him to visit the French-Canadian city of Quebec in the winter of 1901. He found the city rich in material to paint.⁷⁹ Impressed by this "marvelous hill-city, aspiring ever skyward, mounting up and up to the wide Plains of Abraham," he was intrigued by this far northern city's adaptation of its architecture to take advantage of every ray of sunlight.⁸⁰

Harrison painted the varying aspects of Quebec during his frequent visits to the city. Moonlit cloud studies emphasized the broad expanse of the St. Lawrence

River on which the city is situated. Although unable to return the following winter because of his wife's health,⁸¹ Harrison continued to return to the French-Canadian city during the winter months for several succeeding years. In 1904, the Harrisons spent the winter at The Clarendon Hotel on the Isle d'Orleans on the St. Lawrence River.⁸² "Hammering away at some effects all winter," Harrison produced at least twenty "good"⁸³ canvases that winter. Taking a different approach, as in his well known painting, *A Glimpse of the St. Lawrence*, 1904 (fig. 4.3.), he emphasized the city's characteristic division into upper and lower towns.

It is possible that some of these paintings furnished several of the illustrations for Harrison's article, "The Habitant in Winter," published in *Scribner's Magazine* in 1908. The last of his travelogues, the article chronicles his adventures in the Kamouraska region of Canada, one hundred miles northeast of Quebec. Focusing on the harsh existence of the loggers in the area in four of the illustrations, one of which is still extant, Harrison returned to the figure for his illustrations. Now titled *The Loggers*, c. 1904, the painting was illustrated in the article under the title "Piling up the logs" (fig.4.4).⁸⁴ That Harrison exhibited a painting with a similar theme, *Logging in Winter* (unlocated) in 1905 at the National Academy of Design, indicates that the paintings, which were later used as illustrations, were probably done during the winter of 1904. The vast and primitive character of the far north seems not to have appealed to Harrison and he returned to city of Quebec for subject matter.

Harrison's activities in Canada appear to have been primarily limited to painting in Quebec. However, in 1907, he consented to exhibit four of his recent

paintings including one of his most innovative to date, *Shadows of Quebec*, c. 1906.⁸⁵ Returning after a hiatus of several years, Harrison continued his innovative compositions of the hilly city in 1910. That winter the Harrisons stayed at the Chateau Frontenac hotel. Looking down on the wharfs of the lower town and the St. Lawrence River,⁸⁶ on one side, and across the ice-bound expanse of the river to the Height of Levi on the other, Harrison found his “best inspiration” for a series of paintings that remain among his most recognized works.⁸⁷

In 1904, Harrison accepted a “well-paid job to profess art at Woodstock in the Catskills for the summer—that being my off season.”⁸⁸ This offer came from Harrison’s friend from Santa Barbara, Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead, whose utopian arts and crafts colony, Byrdcliffe, had just finished its first season. Located in the Catskills, adjacent to the farming community of Woodstock, New York, Harrison had visited Ralph and Jane McCall Whitehead there the previous November.⁸⁹ Harrison replaced Bolton Brown and Herman Dudley Murphy, who had been the art instructors during the colony’s first summer but who were not returning for the summer season in 1904. Harrison arrived in June to assume his new position.⁹⁰

Harrison’s arrival in Woodstock began the most productive decade of his life. At age fifty, he not only began a successful career as a teacher, but his exhibition schedule increased dramatically as his Tonalist landscapes grew in popularity with viewers and critics. Upon their arrival, they moved into “Carniola,” one of the many houses constructed on the Brydcliffe complex that had been the home of Bolton Brown.⁹¹ They later built a house on the hillside overlooking the Bearsville Valley, and eventually moved into Woodstock itself

when they bought the Old Lasher farm house off the road leading to Saugerties (fig. 4.5).⁹²

It was with the Harrisons' arrival that the art colony came together as community of artists, marked by the same congenial atmosphere that Harrison had experienced during his early years in France. The couple held an open house every Sunday, helping to alleviate student's homesickness and build a sense of family among them.⁹³ After one summer season at Brydcliffe, Harrison resigned from his position as an art instructor but continued to reside in nearby Bearsville. In 1906, when the Art Students League of New York, decided to relocate its summer school from Lyme, Connecticut to Woodstock, Harrison was asked to head that school. As they had at Byrdcliffe, the Harrisons continued to generously opened their home to the students, building a sense of community among them. Mrs. Harrison also invited both old and new students, instructors and friends to an annual "surprise" costume party to celebrate Harrison's birthday, where the couple enjoyed themselves as much as the young art students.⁹⁴ Both of these occasions became regular events that were continued for many years.

Under his direction, the school became one of the most prominent summer schools in the country, and Harrison maintained that it was the only one of its kind solely dedicated to landscape painting. Under his leadership, students worked hard at developing their skills but also enjoyed themselves in an atmosphere of Bohemian high spirits that sometimes rankled the local population but which Harrison's personal charm was able to assuage. During these years, Harrison not only headed the school and taught classes, but equally important, under his

considerate guidance and “appreciation of the beginner’s point of view,” he developed within each of his students an individuality of expression.⁹⁵ His book *Landscape Painting*, published in 1909, is a compilation of his lectures to his students.

Harrison continued to be a presence in Woodstock for the remainder of his life. Described as “a thin man wearing old-fashioned spectacles he was never conspicuous other than he usually wore a watermelon pink necktie with his tweeds,” his one idiosyncrasy was to drive around town in his old model T Ford truck on tires that were almost worn through.⁹⁶ When the Artists’ Realty Company, later known as the Woodstock Artists’ Association was founded in 1919 as an exhibition venue for local artists, Harrison was one of its first members and investors. He served for several years on its jury as a representative of a more conservative approach to art while his former students Andrew Dasburg and Henry Lee Mc Fee represented a more modernist one. Because of the high regard in which his former students held Harrison as an artist and as a person, the juries functioned without rancor.

Woodstock also presented Harrison with an almost unlimited supply of subjects for his canvases. His paintings of the countryside in all seasons, but particularly in the winter, when he was free from his teaching responsibilities to focus on his art, comprise an important category of his oeuvre. His *Woodstock Meadows in Winter*, 1909, for example, was considered his most important snow scene.⁹⁷ Plagued by ill health, in 1911 he decided to give up his teaching, turning the school over to his assistant John F. Carlson, in order to concentrate his energy

on his painting.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, he continued to pursue an active exhibition schedule and to travel to other art colonies.

Harrison and his wife visited several of the artist colonies that were an integral part of the development of American art at this period. Although a comprehensive study of the interaction and exchange of influences among artists at these turn of the century colonies has not yet been undertaken, Harrison's extensive network of acquaintances, working at various colonies, indicates a level of mutual exchange that, although beyond the scope of this paper, is an interesting aspect of the developing direction of American art.

From February 1908,⁹⁹ until 1912,¹⁰⁰ Harrison frequently visited the thriving art colony at Cos Cob, Connecticut where his old friends from France, J. Alden Weir and Theodore Robinson had found admirable material for their own work. As early as the 1880's Weir had decided that this small coastal town, adjacent to Greenwich and a short train ride from New York City, was an ideal place to live and pursue his art. Ten years later, Robinson reached the same decision. The presence of John Twatchman, and his students from the Art Students League who followed him also helped to establish the town as a thriving art colony.¹⁰¹

By this time, two friends from Byrdcliffe, Leonard Ochtman and Herman Dudley Murphy were also at the colony.¹⁰² It is probable that Harrison painted *Morning on the Mianus* (unlocated) during his 1908 visit.¹⁰³ He returned the following year, staying from at least January to March, 1909.¹⁰⁴ His *The Old Inn at Cos Cob* (unlocated) dates from this period.¹⁰⁵ The painting is a nighttime scene of

the Bush-Holley House, a boarding house near the train station, after a heavy snowfall. The house overlooked the millpond, the Mianus River and the Long Island Sound¹⁰⁶ and was also near the harbor area of the Lower Landing, the location of Harrison's other two Cos Cob paintings, *Misty Morning* and *The Bridge at Cos Cob*, c. 1912. The house became a gathering spot for visiting artists who enjoyed the congenial atmosphere and the camaraderie of other working artists.

An example of the impact of Harrison's indirect influence on the art of another community can be found in Charleston, South Carolina. Here, Harrison participated in "the dynamic interchange of people with different talents and different interests which shaped the cultural renewal" of the city, now known as the Charleston Renaissance.¹⁰⁷

Harrison's association with the art community in the city began as early as 1901 when he first exhibited *Fisherman's Cottage*, *Sunrise* and *Winter Sunset Looking East* at The South Carolina Inter-State and West Indian Exposition, in 1901-1902.¹⁰⁸ From 1905 to 1917, he became a regular exhibitor at the Carolina Art Associations annual exhibitions.¹⁰⁹

By the late fall or early winter of 1908, Harrison, in poor health and eager to find a more hospitable climate,¹¹⁰ approached Charles Henry White for information about Charleston and secured an introduction from White to John Bennett, a writer, etcher and illustrator who played a major role in the city's cultural revival.¹¹¹

Harrison had read White's article on the city in the November 1907 issue of *Harper's Monthly Magazine*. White's praise of the city's "infinite moods. . . endless variety and superabundance of beauty . . . within a days journey of New

York . . . and still shunned by the artist”¹¹² appealed to Harrison who continually searched for subjects for his landscapes. While in Charleston, the Harrisons stayed at Villa Margherita, to which White refers in his article. Located at the edge of the battery at 4 South Battery, the Beaux-Arts style villa still stands across a green garden just opposite the harbor, which White described as “a great luminous expanse of water stretched like a sea of silver as far as the eye could follow.”¹¹³ Harrison’s series of Whistlerian paintings of the harbor, the first of which he was already working on in his studio in Woodstock in June of 1908,¹¹⁴ are among his most lyrical works. He continued to be active in the art community until 1921, when he helped to organize and served on the jury selection for the All-Southern Exhibition at the Gibbs Memorial Art Museum in 1921.¹¹⁵

Harrison came to love the city and wrote about its unique architecture and quaint charm in his article, “Three Beautiful Cities,” published by *Art and Progress* in June 1912.¹¹⁶ He sent several artists to the city including two of his former students, Harry Leith-Ross and Alfred Huty. Although Leith-Ross apparently stayed only one season to teach an art class there in 1917,¹¹⁷ Huty, who arrived in 1919, divided his time between Woodstock and Charleston for the remainder of his life and was one of the major contributors to its Renaissance.

Many of Huty’s drawings and etchings of the city were reproduced in several articles including “Old Charleston as Pictured by Alfred Huty,” written by Harrison and published in the *American Magazine of Art* in November, 1922. A year following Huty’s arrival, he was appointed the first director of the School of

the Carolina Art Association. In 1923, he helped found the Charleston Etcher's Club.

Although she never studied formally under any one teacher, Alice Ravenel Huger Smith, a major force behind the city's Renaissance, frequently stated that the informal instruction and advice that she received from Birge Harrison was one of the main influences on her work.¹¹⁸ Harrison, who used one of the kitchen buildings on the Smith property as his studio while in Charleston, advised Smith on technique he also told her to "paint something every day from memory."¹¹⁹ This advice helped form Smith's approach to her art, which is a blend of Western technique and the influence of Japanese prints.

Throughout this period, Harrison maintained an increasingly active exhibition schedule. In 1907, his reputation as one of America's foremost landscape painters was secured by an exhibition of more than thirty of his landscape pictures. The exhibition traveled to such important museums as the Art Institute of Chicago and the Cincinnati Museum, as well as Century Club in New York City. The same year, John E. D. Trask, writing for *Scribner's Magazine*, published the first major essay, "Birge Harrison," to profile Harrison and his work. In combination with his continued exhibition successes, this article brought added attention to Harrison and his Tonalist landscapes.

His growing reputation as a leader in American art of the period was further enhanced with the publication of his authoritative book, *Landscape Painting* in 1909.¹²⁰ As evidenced by another article "Birge Harrison's Paintings," written in 1911, by Leila Mechlin for the November issue of *Art and Progress*, Harrison was

quickly gaining national recognition. Capitalizing on this, he orchestrated another tour of his work in 1912. More ambitious than the previous one, it traveled to the country's best known museums including, the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art, the Cincinnati Museum, the Art Gallery at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York, the Rhode Island School of Design, the Corcoran Gallery of Art, and the Toledo Museum of Art. This tour too was followed by an extensive article on Harrison written by Charles Louis Borgmeyer in 1913, for the *Fine Arts Journal* and emphasized his poetic interpretation of nature. By this time, Harrison had reached the peak of his professional career. Not only had he gained a national reputation as a leading spokesman for the Tonalist movement,¹²¹ and as a teacher but as an artist, Harrison believed that the his work from 1911 to 1912, was of "a new and far higher order than anything of mine which preceded it."¹²²

Following the success of the 1912 tour, Harrison began organizing the third joint exhibition of his work and that of his brother, Alexander. The initial plan called for the joint exhibition to begin at the Albright Art Gallery in Buffalo in the fall of 1913, and then travel to several western museums where Birge had not exhibited recently.¹²³

Intended as a retrospective, the exhibition included an illustrated catalogue with a preface written by the critic, Arthur Hoeber, that served as a biography and an appreciation of the contribution to art made by both brothers. In his essay, Hoeber noted that both artists placed the pursuit of their interpretation of nature over investigations into technique for its own sake. He differentiated between these interpretations by stressing Alexander's "extraordinarily faithful" rendering of

water in his marines and Birge's snow scenes and street scenes of New York.¹²⁴

Hoeber ended by noting that both brothers, "represent a very serious side of American art accomplishment" and that as they have been "so thoroughly identified with the past thirty years of native endeavor this exhibition possesses a deep significance of which their countrymen and women should be unqualifiedly proud."¹²⁵

The show included almost a hundred and fifty works. Alexander exhibited several of his most famous figure and marine paintings such as *In Arcadia* and *Solitude*, both lent by the Luxembourg Museum in Paris. Birge showed only one figure painting, *The Departure of the Mayflower* and the rest, including his best known snow scene, *Woodstock Meadows in Winter*, were landscape paintings that included scenes of New York City, Quebec, Cos Cob, Woodstock and Charleston.¹²⁶ The initial large-scale exhibition traveled intact to the larger art institutions around the country, while the smaller institutions accepted either an abbreviated version or chose to exhibit the work of only one of the brothers.¹²⁷

Financially and critically, the exhibition was a tremendous success. The original schedule was extended and the show toured the country from 1913 to 1915, to glowing reviews in many cities. As Hoeber had previously, other critics also noted Alexander's skill as a figure and marine painter and also commented on the inclusion of several landscapes among his canvases. Birge was praised for his snow scenes, and the serial approach to his Quebec paintings, which were linked to Monet's similar exploration of light at specific times of the day or year.¹²⁸ Other reviews pointed out the "different lines of development" that each brother had

followed, Alexander as a “successful marine painter especially in moonlight effects,” and Birge, “who yields nothing to his brother,” as an artist who catches the “mood of a landscape, the atmospheric and light effects that make its character.”¹²⁹

Beginning in 1914 until 1921, Harrison regularly visited the New Hope, Pennsylvania art colony where he visited his niece, Margaret Fulton. After studying with her uncle at Woodstock in the summer of 1912,¹³⁰ Margaret left to study with William Lathrop and it was here that she met her future husband, the widely recognize artist Robert Spencer, whom she married in 1914.¹³¹ Although she also painted, Margaret, the only woman in the 1907 class at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, is better known today as an architect.¹³² Shortly after their marriage, the couple moved to their home, “Rabbit Run” and remained there until Spencer’s death in 1931.

Although Bucks County had a long tradition as a home to artists, it was with the arrival of William Langson Lathrop and Edward Redfield in 1898, that New Hope became as a center of late American Impressionist landscape painting.¹³³ By 1902, both Lathrop, known for his landscapes of rural life done in a high-keyed Tonalist manner, and Redfield, known for his winter scenes¹³⁴ were conducting classes there and the colony began to attract a number of younger artists. By 1915, the colony was gaining a national reputation. That year for example, Guy Pene Du Bois wrote an important article on “The Pennsylvania Group of Landscape Painters,” that hailed the group’s landscape work as representative of a uniquely American expression.¹³⁵

Initially, Harrison boarded at the Brick Hotel, and may have rented the third story of the post-office building in town as his studio.¹³⁶ According to Beth Wiggins, the daughter of John Folinsbee, the Harrisons later rented the Arnold House where Birge built a studio behind the house, looking toward the river.¹³⁷

Although it is evident that Harrison painted in New Hope, few of the paintings produced there are known.¹³⁸ Harrison painted in the colony in both the summer and winter months and was frequently visited there by the John Folinsbee and his family, and Harry Leith-Ross and his wife, as well as his niece and her husband.¹³⁹ Following Harrison's invitation, Folinsbee and Leith-Ross, former students from Woodstock, arrived in New Hope around 1916.¹⁴⁰

Because Leith-Ross did not move permanently to New Hope until 1935, he is not usually associated with the colony. Folinsbee, however, was one of its important younger members and his work addressed a wide range of subjects from rural landscapes to scenes of the working class, in an original manner.¹⁴¹ The Folinsbees in particular played an active role in the development of New Hope.

Despite these close ties, Harrison's influence on the New Hope community has been discounted by recent scholarship.¹⁴² While it is true that the Tonalist aesthetic, with the exception of Lathrop's painting, may have had little discernable effect on the art produced in the colony, as this brief sketch implies, there may be less direct avenues, as is the case in Charleston, South Carolina, in which Harrison may have influenced the colony especially with regard to his two former students, Folinsbee and Leith-Ross.

With the outbreak of the First World War in the summer of 1914, Harrison responded immediately to the crisis in Europe. He joined the American Artists' Committee of One Hundred which was organized on August 20, 1914.¹⁴³ Comprised of former students of the French system of art training, the Committee listed as its members some of the most famous artists of Harrison's generation. Led by William A. Coffin, The Committee was assembled as a fundraising organization to channel money through the Committee of the Fraternité, headed by M. Léon Bonnat, to French artists and their families devastated by the war. Their "Relief Fund for the Families of French Soldier-Arts" sponsored an exhibition of American artists and the organization was able to raise as much as \$17,000.00 during the first year alone.¹⁴⁴

When the war was over, this group formed the basis for the organization of the 1919 Luxembourg Exhibition. Held at the Luxembourg Museum in Paris, the exhibition was part of a joint effort by the French government and the Committee that envisioned two exhibitions, the first by artists of the "American School," held from October to November 1919, and a second exhibition of French artists that was to be held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art the same year. The object of this effort was to demonstrate the friendship and close ties that united the two countries.¹⁴⁵ Birge Harrison exhibited *Clair de lune sur la riviere*,¹⁴⁶ which was purchased by the French Government and entered the collection of the Luxembourg Museum.

Harrison expressed his strong feelings about the war and its impact on American art in his article for the April issue of *The American Magazine of Art*,

“Art and the European War.” He predicted that the changed situation in France, and the impact of active military service by nearly two-thirds of the artists there, would result in a “nobler and more serious art than ever before”¹⁴⁷ thus prophesying the backlash against modernism and the call for a return to more conventional forms of art that developed in post-World War I France that Kenneth Silver explores in his book, *Esprit de Corps* (1989).¹⁴⁸

In terms of the War’s impact on American art, Harrison noted that the art market in the United States was almost at a standstill. The reason for this, he noted, was that the “psychology of war,” in which man’s most primitive and tribal instincts surface, is antagonistic to the “psychology of art,” which is the love of beauty. He also predicted that following the calamity in Europe, the future of Western art would develop in America.¹⁴⁹ In an address to the Fellowship of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, in February 1919, he reiterated this position and also stated that if American art hoped to fill this position, it was incumbent on American artists to exhibit their works throughout the country in order to educate the public and generate an appreciation for art that would appeal to all levels of American society.¹⁵⁰

The Harrison brothers held their fourth and final joint exhibition at the American Art Galleries on April 19, 1921.¹⁵¹ Alexander was again represented by studies of nudes and landscapes from various foreign locations. Birge showed fewer paintings than his brother, but included several scenes of New York City. Reviews of the exhibition stressed Alexander’s technical expertise and interpretation of his subject. One critic noted, however, that as the work of an artist

who has resided abroad for much of his life, Alexander's work "misses the racy quality which belongs to the American school in its dealings with earth and sea;" while Birge was viewed as more successful in capturing the "invigorating effect of the American environment in which he has painted his subjects."¹⁵² While both brothers sold paintings, the prices were extremely low,¹⁵³ indicating that by the early 1920's the market for poetic interpretations of nature had disappeared as other influences both native and European were at work shaping American art.

Harrison's slide into obscurity is also indicated by the reviews of his last exhibition in 1924 at the Howard Young Galleries, which characterized his art as predictable in the preponderance of "pink skies" and monotonously lyrical compositions.¹⁵⁴ The critical reception given Harrison's paintings is indicative of that received by many of the artists of his generation, particularly the Tonalist landscape painters, whose contribution to American art was first disregarded and then forgotten during the second decade of the twentieth century.

In the obituaries at the time of his death on May 11, 1929, in Kingston, New York, Birge Harrison was best remembered for his role in the Woodstock art colony as well as his winter landscapes.¹⁵⁵ The best summary of Harrison's life, however, was given years earlier by his friend, Arthur Hoeber:

Few have a wider acquaintance with men who have been doing things in this world, in an art direction and with his extensive travel in all lands he has absorbed the best of modern ideas, and there has come to him ample recognition of his efforts. His greatest delight, however, is yet before his easel. The glory of creation is still his dearest joy. To this, with the enthusiasm of a student, he bends all his energies, and counts that day lost when he has not painted.¹⁵⁶

¹ *The Great Register of Santa Barbara County, 1892*. Santa Barbara: Santa Barbara Historical Society, The Gledhill Library, 1892, 22. The register lists the Harrison's as residing in Hope Precinct as of August 19, 1892. *The Index to the Santa Barbara Tax Assessment Roll, 1892*. Santa Barbara: Santa Barbara Historical Society, The Gledhill Library, 1892, n.p., also lists Harrison.

² Michael Quick, *American Expatriate Painters of the Late-Nineteenth Century* (exh. cat., Dayton, Ohio: Dayton Art Institute, 1976), 40.

³ Letter from Birge Harrison to Harrison Morris, March 1899, Artists Files, Archives of The Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art (hereafter, *PAFA*). Harrison's view of Santa Barbara as a place to regain one health is documented in this letter, with a return address of Santa Barbara, in which he states that his second wife's "health is unsatisfactory so we made a dash out here."

⁴ William H. Gerdts, *Art Across America: Two Centuries of Regional Painting 1710-1920* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1990), 3:293.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, 3: 294.

⁷ Peter Falk, *The Annual Exhibition Records of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art* (Madison, Ct.: Sound View Press, 1989), 2: 236.

⁸ *Art Catalogue of the Western Washington Industrial Exposition Company* (exh. cat., Tacoma, Tacoma, 1892), n.p. Washington: Archives of the Washington State Historical Society.

⁹ David F. Myrick, *Montecito and Santa Barbara From Farms to Estates*, two volumes (Glendale, Ca.: Trans Anglo Books, 1987), 2: 177.

¹⁰ Birge Harrison, "Napoleon's Deportation to Elba," *The Century* 46 (May 1893): 639.

¹¹ Lois Marie Fink, *American Art at the Nineteenth Century Salons* (Washington, D.C.: National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1990), 235.

¹² Charles Louis Borgmeyer, "Birge Harrison- Poet Painter," *Fine Arts Journal* 29 (October 1913): 590.

¹³ Carolyn Kinder Carr and George Gurney, *Revisiting the White City: American Art at the 1893 World's Fair* (exh. cat., Washington, DC: Smithsonian Press, 1993), 395. As Carr indicates, the awards system at the time was controversial and medals were not received until three years after the Fair closed (112). Within the context of the 1893 World's Fair exhibition, Harrison's *The Departure of the Mayflower* takes on a different meaning than was perceived at the 1889 Paris Exposition. In the specific context of the Fair, the painting, one of a handful with colonial subjects, could be interpreted as an American history painting, exemplifying the contemporary trend toward the genrefication of history painting in American Art. Any personal motivation would have been subsumed by the context of the Fair, within which it has been interpreted as expressing, "the underlying

message of the idea of the nation's progress from simple quaint beginnings to a level of supreme accomplishment in industry and the arts." (124)

¹⁴ Ibid., 255.

¹⁵ David C. Huntington, *The Quest for Unity: American Art Between the World's Fairs, 1876-1893* (exh. cat., Detroit: The Detroit Institute of Art, 1983), 26.

¹⁶ Ibid., 20.

¹⁷ Ibid., 21.

¹⁸ Birge Harrison, "Subjects for the Painter in American Landscape," *Scribner's Magazine* 52 (December 1912): 766.

¹⁹ Elizabeth Broun, "American Paintings and Sculpture in the Fine Arts Building of the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago 1893" (Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, 1976), 95.

²⁰ Ibid., 102.

²¹ Ibid., 96-130.

²² Ibid., 107.

²³ "La Lomita Notes," unidentified newspaper clipping dated July 21, 1894, in the Birge Harrison File, Archives of the Montecito Historical Society, Montecito, California. Cold Springs was a general landmark designation rather than a specific site. Maps at the Montecito Historical Society indicate that the property was carved out of the estate of Ralph Whitehead. It is now located on Sycamore Canyon Road. Harrison did not sell the property until September 1900.

²⁴ *The Official History of the California Midwinter International Exposition* (San Francisco: H. S. Crocker Co., 1894), 118.

²⁵ Ibid., 120.

²⁶ Maria Churchill, "Browsing," *Montecito Life*, June 1, 1989, 5.

²⁷ Alf Evers, *Woodstock: History of an American Town* (Woodstock: Overlook Press, 1987), 398. Evers's book remains the most comprehensive source of information on Whitehead and the founding of the Byrdcliffe Colony. I would like to thank Mr. Evers for his generosity in sharing his personal archives with me.

²⁸ Ibid., 398-406.

²⁹ Constance Ealand, "Memories of Constance Ealand," unpublished manuscript, unnumbered, in the Archives of The Santa Barbara Historical Society, Gledhill Library, Santa Barbara, California.

³⁰ Evers, 409.

³¹ Letter from Jane Byrd McCall Whitehead to her mother Mrs. Peter McCall, no date. The Byrdcliffe Collection, Archives of the Winterthur Museum Research Library, Delaware. The letters and papers of Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead are also in this collection. This material chronicles the long friendship between Harrison and the Whiteheads. McCall-Whitehead's papers indicate a constant series of visits and appointments between them beginning with the first entry dated July 15, 1894 and continuing at Byrdcliffe several years later. I would like to thank Robert Edwards, author of *The Byrdcliffe Arts and Crafts Colony*, for bringing this material to my attention.

³² Letter from Jane Mc Call-Whitehead to her mother, dated January 7-12, 1895, The Byrdcliffe Collection.

³³ Letter from Jane Mc Call-Whitehead to her mother, dated February 1895, The Byrdcliffe Collection.

³⁴ Calendar of Jane Mc Call-Whitehead, entry dated May 1, 1895, The Byrdcliffe Collection.

³⁵ *1895 Record of Deaths for Santa Barbara County*, 44. County Court House, Santa Barbara, California.

³⁶ "La Lomita Notes," unidentified newspaper clipping, Monticeto Historical Society, dated May 2, 1895.

³⁷ Calendar of Jane Mc Call-Whitehead, entry dated July 4, 1896. The Byrdcliffe Collection. This is the last time that Harrison's name is mentioned as being in Santa Barbara until his return visit in 1900.

³⁸ Myrick, 177.

³⁹ *Paintings by Birge Harrison and Alexander Harrison* (exh. cat., New York: American Art Galleries, 1897), n.p. The Philadelphia Free Library.

⁴⁰ *1865 Record of Births*, Town Hall, Plymouth, Massachusetts. For the death of A. M. Harrison, see obituary notice, "Death of Capt. A.M. Harrison," *The Old Colony Memorial*, January 13, 1881, 5. Plymouth Public Library.

⁴¹ "Wedded," *The Old Colonial Memorial*, December 5, 1896, 4.

⁴² *Plymouth Directory. 1896-1899*, Town Hall, Plymouth, Massachusetts. From 1899 to 1904, Harrison listed his address as Plymouth in the many exhibitions in which he participated. Jenny appears to have inherited the house upon the death of her mother, Mrs. Alexander M. Harrison in 1900. See, *The Old Colonial Memorial*, September 29, 1900, 4. I would like to thank Sharma La Rosa, Plymouth Public Library, for her assistance in gathering material concerning Plymouth.

⁴³ Harrison maintained this reputation throughout the remainder of his life. See, "Birge Harrison Noted Artist Dies," *New York Times*, Sunday, May 12, 1929, 28.

⁴⁴ Birge Harrison, "The Appeal of the Winter Landscape," *Fine Arts Journal* 30 (May 1914): 195.

⁴⁵ *Society of American Artists Winter Exhibition*, (exh. cat., New York: Society of American Artists, 1897) no.219, Archives of American Art, roll N455.

⁴⁶ *Plymouth at Sunset* was illustrated in *The Sixty-Seventh Annual Exhibition of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts* (exh. cat., Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, 1898), n.p.

⁴⁷ Illustrated in John E. D. Trask, "Birge Harrison," *Scribner's Magazine* 42 (November 1907): 578.

⁴⁸ "A Fine Picture," *The Old Colonial Memorial*, April 9, 1897, 4.

⁴⁹ "A Native Artist," *The Old Colony Memorial*, August 7, 1897, 4.

⁵⁰ "Art Exhibition," *The Old Colony Memorial*, March 13, 1897, 2; and "Painting Class to Open," July 2, 1904, 4.

⁵¹ "Pictures by the Harrison Brothers," *New York Times*, April 14, 1897, 6.

⁵² Correspondence indicates that Harrison used the Artists Packing and Shipping Company located at 139 W. 54th St. New York City, to store his paintings and to ship them to exhibitions that he himself arranged directly with museum directors and gallery owners. As an early example of his success indicates, Harrison's paintings sold well. In a letter to Harrison Morris dated January 19th 1900, he notes the sale of several of his paintings at his solo exhibition at the Doll and Richards Gallery in Boston (Secretary's Files, Archives of PAFA). According to a entry in the diary of his life-long friend, J. Carroll Beckwith in May 1912, Harrison was making "about \$10,000 a year, sending his collections of pictures about the country" (J. Carroll Beckwith Diaries, Archives of American Art, roll 4801).

⁵³ *Catalogue of the Exhibition of Fine Arts*, in the *Official Pan-American Exposition Art Handbook* (Buffalo, New York: David Gray Publishers, 1901), nos. 278 & 280.

⁵⁴ Unidentified newspaper clipping, Reginald Cleveland Coxe, "Paintings at the Exposition," *Hauenstien Scrapbook*, 3 (1901), 47, in the Pan-American Exposition File, William H. Gerds Library.

⁵⁵ Trevor J. Fairbrother, *The Bostonian Painters of an Elegant Age, 1870-1930* (exh. cat., Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1976), 3.

⁵⁶ Letter from Birge Harrison to Harrison Morris, dated January 19, 1900, Artists Files, Archives of PAFA.

⁵⁷ *Exhibition and Private Sale of Oil Paintings by Birge Harrison* (Boston: Gallery of Mssrs. Doll and Richards, 1900), n.p. Archives of American Art, roll NDR3; *Catalogue of the Works of Birge Harrison - Paintings*, (exh. cat., Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago,

1900) n.p. and *Catalogue of Works in Oil by Birge Harrison* (exh. cat., Philadelphia: PAFA, 1900), n.p., Archives of PAFA.

⁵⁸ Newspaper clipping, "Studio Chat," *Chicago Record*, February 2, 1900, np. Art Institute of Chicago Scrapbook, Ryerson Library, 12: 28.

⁵⁹ "Point of View: New York as a Place to Live In," *Scribner's Magazine* 28 (January 1900): 123.

⁶⁰ Robert A.M. Stern, Gregory Gilmartin & John Massengale, *New York 1900: Metropolitan Architecture and Urbanism* (New York: Rizzoli, 1995), 145.

⁶¹ Letter from Alexander Harrison to Harrison Morris, dated November 12, 1900, Artists Files, Archives of PAFA.

⁶² Letter from Alexander Harrison to Harrison Morris, nd, received 1/18/1901, Artists Files, Archives of PAFA.

⁶³ Harrison, *Landscape Painting* (1909; reprint New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911), 251.

⁶⁴ Unpublished manuscript, in "Birge Harrison File," Archives of The Gibbs Museum, Charleston, S. C. The painting was offered as the first prize in the American Federation of Arts Membership Competition for the Southern States ("Federation News," *The American Magazine of Art* 13 (December 1922), 544).

⁶⁵ Birge Harrison, "Personality in Architecture," *The American Magazine of Art* 8 (October 1917): 491.

⁶⁶ Harrison, "Personality in Architecture," 491.

⁶⁷ *Winter in Central Park* (unlocated), Century Association Exhibition, June 1, 1901, Archives of American Art, roll N/CA 1.

⁶⁸ "Picturesqueness of New York Streets: Illustrated in the Paintings of Birge Harrison," *The Craftsman* 13 (January 1908): 397-99.

⁶⁹ These included: the Society of American Artists, the National Academy of Design, the National Institute of Arts and Letters, the New York Water Color Club, the Ends of the Earth Club, the Century Association, the National Arts Club, the Mac Dowell Club, the Salamagundi Club, the American Federation of Arts, the Union International des Beaux Arts et des Lettres, the London Authors Club, and the Fellowship of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.

⁷⁰ T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), 187.

⁷¹ Linda Henefield Skalet, "The Market for American Painting in New York: 1870-1915" (Ph. D. diss., John Hopkins University, 1980), 77.

⁷² Skalet, 251-259.

⁷³ Letter from Birge Harrison to Harrison Morris, dated Feb. 20th 1905, Secretary's Files, Archives of *PAFA*.

⁷⁴ Letter from Birge Harrison to Harrison Morris, dated December 3, 1899, Artists Files, Archives of *PAFA*.

⁷⁵ Letter from Birge Harrison to Harrison Morris, dated March 23, 1899, Artists Files, Archives of *PAFA*.

⁷⁶ Letter from Robert Reid to Sally Ann, dated March 20, 1900, The Robert Reid Papers, Archives of American Art, roll 641.

⁷⁷ "Studio Chat," 28.

⁷⁸ Letter from Birge Harrison to Harrison Morris, dated November 19, 1902, Secretary Files, Archives of *PAFA*.

⁷⁹ G. M. Fairchild, Jr., *From My Quebec Scrapbook* (Quebec: Frank Carrel, 1907), 138.

⁸⁰ Birge Harrison, "Three Beautiful Cities," *Art and Progress* 3 (June 1912): 606.

⁸¹ Letters from Birge Harrison to Harrison S. Morris, dated November 21, 1902, and December 13, 1902, Secretary's Files, Archives of *PAFA*.

⁸² "Personals," *The Old Colonial Memorial*, May 7, 1904, 4.

⁸³ Letter from Birge Harrison to Harrison Morris, dated April 2, 1904, Curatorial Files/*Glimpse of the St. Lawrence*, Archives of *PAFA*.

⁸⁴ Birge Harrison, "The Habitant in Winter," *Scribner's Magazine* 4 (March 1908): 288.

⁸⁵ Fairchild, 137.

⁸⁶ Letter from Birge Harrison to John E. D. Trask, dated January 26, 1910, Secretary's Files, Archives of *PAFA*.

⁸⁷ Borgmeyer, 599.

⁸⁸ Letter from Birge Harrison to Harrison Morris, dated April 4, 1904, Curator's Files/*Glimpse of the St. Lawrence*, Archives of *PAFA*.

⁸⁹ Letter from Jane McCall-Whitehead to Ralph Whitehead dated November 4, 1903, The Byrdcliffe Collection.

⁹⁰ Jane McCall-Whitehead, calendar entry for June 8 and 9, 1904, The Byrdcliffe Collection.

⁹¹ Evers, 427.

⁹² Harry Leith-Ross, "Birge Harrison 1855 (*sic*)-1929," *Publications of the Woodstock Historical Society* (hereafter *PWHS*) 4 (July 1931): 31.

⁹³ Anita M. Smith, *Woodstock, History and Hearsay* (Saugerties, NY: Catskill Mountain Publishing Corp., 1959), 47.

⁹⁴ Leith-Ross, 31.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁹⁶ Smith, 48.

⁹⁷ Borgmeyer, 602.

⁹⁸ John F. Carlson, "The Art Students League of New York in Woodstock," *PWHS* 9 (September 1932): 17.

⁹⁹ Letter from Birge Harrison to John Trask, dated February 8, 1908, Secretary's Files, Archives of *PAFA*. Harrison may have visited the colony as early as 1898, as indicated by the Emma Holley address book dated 1898, Archives of the Historical Society of Greenwich. I would like to thank Susan G. Larkin for bringing this information to my attention. I would also like to thank her for her generous assistance in dealing with Harrison's paintings from the colony.

¹⁰⁰ Susan G. Larkin, "A Regular Rendezvous for Impressionists: The Cos Cob Art Colony 1882-1920" (Ph.D. diss., City University New York, 1996): 255.

¹⁰¹ Gerdt, *Art Across America*, 1:120.

¹⁰² Susan G. Larkin, *The Cos Cob Art Colony: Impressionists on the Connecticut Shore* (exh. cat., New York: National Academy of Design, 2001), 215.

¹⁰³ This painting is unlocated and is known only from an illustration in the Archives of *PAFA*. It was first exhibited at the Century Association's *Exhibition of Paintings Sketches and Drawings by Kenneth Frazier, Birge Harrison, William H. Hyde Allen Tucker, February 1909*, no. 15, Archives of American Art, roll N/CA1.

¹⁰⁴ Letters from Birge Harrison to Mr. Macbeth dated January 17, 1909, and March 17, 1909, Macbeth Gallery Papers, Archives of American Art, roll N Mc7.

¹⁰⁵ The painting was illustrated in Borgmeyer, p. 598; and in Harrison's "The Appeal of the Winter Landscape," 405.

¹⁰⁶ Larkin, *Cos Cob Art Colony*, 16.

¹⁰⁷ Martha R. Severens, *The Charleston Renaissance* (Spartanburg, S.C.: Saraland Press, 1998), 6.

¹⁰⁸ *Exhibition of Fine Arts, The South Carolina Inter-State and West Indian Exposition*, nos. 113 and 114 respectively. (exh. cat., Charleston, South Carolina, December 1, 1901-June 1, 1902), n.p. Archives of the South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, South Carolina.

¹⁰⁹ "Birge Harrison File," Archives of The Gibb's Museum of Art/ South Carolina Art Association, Charleston, South Carolina.

¹¹⁰ Letter from Birge Harrison to John Trask, February 22, 1908, Secretary's Files, Archives of *PAFA*.

¹¹¹ Letter from Charles Henry White to John Bennett dated December 26, 1907. no. 21-152, The John Bennett Papers, Archives of The South Carolina Historical Society. I would like to thank Martha Severens for directing me to this information.

¹¹² Charles Henry White, "Charleston," *Harper's Monthly Magazine* 115 (November 1907): 852.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 855.

¹¹⁴ Letter from Birge Harrison to John Bennett dated June 11, 1908 from Bearsville. no. 21-147-3, The John Bennett Papers.

¹¹⁵ Birge Harrison, "The All-Southern Exhibition," *The American Magazine of Art* 12 (May 1921): 166-169.

¹¹⁶ Severens, 185. Severens notes Harrison's presence in Charleston in the winters of 1911, 1915, 1921 and 1922. Letters from Harrison to the Macbeth Gallery in New York indicate that he was also there in February and March 1912. A letter from Birge Harrison to Percy William Holt, dated March 6, 1923 indicates that he was also there at this latter date. The Percy William Holt Papers 1912-1923, State of Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.

¹¹⁷ Letter from Birge Harrison to John Bennett dated April 2, 1917, The John Bennett Papers.

¹¹⁸ Alice Ravenel Huger Smith, "Reminiscences," 4, The Alice Ravenel Huger Smith Collection, South Carolina Historical Society. See also, Martha R. Severens, *Alice Ravenel Huger Smith: An Artist, a Place and a Time*, (exh. cat., Charleston: South Carolina Art Association/Gibbs Museum of Art, 1993).

¹¹⁹ Elise Pinckney, "Miss Alice Smith: Low Country Artist," *South Carolina Magazine* (June 1957): 6.

¹²⁰ "Art at Home and Abroad- An Interesting Account of the Relation of Color, Music and Many Other Subjects Treated in Convincing Style," *New York Times*, November 14, 1909, 13. Because he saw the success of this book as an indication of the "widely diffused interest in art" in America, Harrison approached Scribner's with the idea of writing a series, "The American masters of Painting" or "The American Artist Series" that would highlight the life and work of American artists. The project was rejected. See, Letter from Birge Harrison to W.C. Brownell, dated November 24, 1909 in "Birge Harrison File," The

Scribner Archives, the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey.

¹²¹ Another indication of Harrison's growing reputation as one of the nation's well-respected art critics was his appointment as Contributing and Advisory Editor for The American Federation of Arts, 1916-1917. "The American Federation of Arts Officers 1916-1917," *The American Magazine of Art "Art and Progress"* 9 (May 1918), n.p.

¹²² Letter from Birge Harrison to John Trask, dated February 24, 1912, Secretary's Files, Archives of PAFA.

¹²³ Letter from Birge Harrison to John Trask, dated December 22, 1912, Secretary's Files, Archives of PAFA.

¹²⁴ Arthur Hoeber, *A Retrospective of Paintings in Oil by Two American Artists: Mr. Alexander Harrison, N.A. and Mr. Birge Harrison, N. A.* (Special Exhibition Catalogue, St. Louis: City Art Museum of St. Louis, Series 1913, No. 18, November 1913), x. Art Reference Library of the City Art Museum of St. Louis, Missouri.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, xi.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, i.

¹²⁷ The exhibition opened in October 1913 at the Buffalo Academy of Fine Arts/Albright Art Gallery and then traveled to the Art Institute, Chicago; The City Art Museum, St. Louis; Toledo Museum of Art; Detroit Museum of Art; Carnegie Institute, Pittsburg; Vanderbilt Gallery, Academy of Design, New York; Corcoran Gallery of Art; Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art; the Worcester Art Museum; The Milwaukee Art Society; and the St. Paul Institute, St. Paul, Minnesota.

¹²⁸ Unidentified newspaper clipping from a Chicago newspaper, Birge Harrison Folder, Artists Files, the Art Reference Library of the Indianapolis Museum of Art.

¹²⁹ Unidentified newspaper article, Detroit Museum of Art Scrapbook, Archives of American Art, roll D13.

¹³⁰ *Ledger of the Summer School of the Art Students League of New York*, unnumbered, arranged chronologically, Archives of the Art Students League, New York.

¹³¹ Thomas Charles Folk, "The Pennsylvania School of Landscape Painting" (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 1987), 28.

¹³² "She Built a Legacy in the Desert," unidentified article in the Margaret Fulton Spencer File, Artists' Database, James A. Michener Art Museum, Doylestown, Pa. Margaret Spencer is best known for her design of the Las Lomas Estates near Tucson, Arizona.

¹³³ Folk, 15-17.

¹³⁴ Gerds, *Art Across America*, 1: 277-78.

¹³⁵ Guy Pene Du Bois, "The Pennsylvania Group of Landscape Painters," *Arts and Decoration* 5 (July 1915): 353.

¹³⁶ Folk, 28.

¹³⁷ Telephone interview with Folinsbee's daughter, Mrs. Elizabeth Wiggins on September 8, 1999. Ms. Wiggins indicated that the Folinsbee's lived near the Harrison home and were very close to the couple, whom she referred to as "Uncle Birge" and "Aunt Jenny." Although only a child of four or five at the time, Ms. Wiggins remembered Harrison's "wonderful white mustache" and described his wife as "short, round and warm hearted."

¹³⁸ Harrison's will lists only two paintings with titles referring to New Hope. They are *The Church at New Hope, Pa.*, oil on canvas, 40in. X 30 in. and *Frost Morning near New Hope, Pa.*, oil on canvas, 24in. x 19 ¼ in. See, Appendix I. Both are unlocated.

¹³⁹ Interview with Mrs. Elizabeth Wiggins.

¹⁴⁰ Sam Hunter, *American Impressionism: The New Hope Circle* (exh. cat., Fort Lauderdale, Florida: The Museum of Art, Fort Lauderdale, 1985), 38 & 40.

¹⁴¹ Hunter, 38.

¹⁴² Folk, 29.

¹⁴³ "Relief Fund for the Families of French Soldier-Artists," William Coffin Papers, Archives of American Art, roll 109.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ "Exhibition of American Painting and Sculpture to be held by invitation of the French Government at the Luxembourg Museum in Paris," Archives of American Art, roll NYHS 4.

¹⁴⁶ *Exposition d'Artistes de l'Ecole Americain* (exh. cat., Paris: Musee du Luxembourg, Octobre-Novembre 1919), no. 129. See also, *Catalogue sommaire illustre des peintures, A-L*, Musée d'Orsay, 1986, #RF 1980-112, p. 225.

¹⁴⁷ Birge Harrison, "Art and the European War," *The American Magazine of Art* 7(1916): 271.

¹⁴⁸ For a discussion of this phenomena and the manner in which the war effort in France cast modernism in terms of a "Germanic" strain of art, as opposed to the classicism of the French approach, see Kenneth Silver, *Esprit de Corps: The Art of the Parisian Avant-Garde and the First World War, 1914-1925* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 1989. This post-war attitude was responsible for the decision of the French government to exclude from the 1919 Luxembourg Exposition, the art by American artists, including Max Weber, Charles Sheeler, Joseph Stella, Andrew Dasburg, Henry Lee McFee, William Zorach Louis Bouche and Alfred Maurer, who had adopted a European modernist approach to their work. See, "Minutes of a Meeting of Luxembourg Committee held December 31, 1919," The William Coffin Papers, Archives of American Art, roll 109. The

exclusion, and the American reaction to it, highlighted the fractious nature of American art at the time.

¹⁴⁹ Birge Harrison, "Art and the European War," *The American Magazine of Art* 7 (1916): 272.

¹⁵⁰ Birge Harrison, "Address to the Fellowship of the Pennsylvania of the Academy of Fine Arts," unpublished manuscript, n.p., Secretary's Files, Archives of *PAFA*.

¹⁵¹ Announcement of the exhibition and unrestricted public sale, Alexander Harrison Folder Secretary's Files, Archives of *PAFA*.

¹⁵² Unidentified newspaper clipping from the "Birge Harrison File," Reference Library of the Indianapolis Museum of Art.

¹⁵³ "Paintings Sold at Auction," *American Art Annual* 18 (1921): 259.

¹⁵⁴ "Birge Harrison," *New York Times*, January 13, 1924, sec. 7: 9.

¹⁵⁵ "Birge Harrison Noted Artist, Dies," *New York Times, Sunday* May 12, 1929, 28.

¹⁵⁶ Arthur Hoeber, "Birge Harrison, N. A., Landscape Painter," *The International Studio* 44 (July 1911): 5.

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Our ideal has always been to transcribe for others as much of the *beauty*, the *sentiment*, and the *nobility* of nature as lay within our power.

Birge Harrison¹

Chapter Five

Figure Paintings in France

Birge Harrison was one of the few artists of his generation to receive national and international recognition, first as a figure painter and later as a landscapist. Harrison explained the redirection of his art as a gradual process:

My first pictures, naturally, were figure pictures, but the love of out-of-doors and of landscape for itself was so strong in me that my models were posed always out of doors in the woods and fields. Gradually they decreased in size and importance until they finally disappeared entirely, or became only a spot here or there to add to the tonality or the color quality of the landscape itself...I painted constantly in many lands, trying always to render faithfully my own impressions.²

In this passage, Harrison accurately described the course of his career. He also stresses two of the elements common to the different phases of his work: his dedication to plein-air painting and his commitment to his own personal expression. If beauty is the keynote of Harrison's visual expression, as Charles Borgmeyer noted in 1913,³ then balance is the minor key. One of Harrison's finest achievements as an artist is the balance that he maintains between direct observation of nature, and his personal artistic response to its beauty.

Harrison's work must be approached on two levels, the meaning of his work, and the style of its expression. The first, that man exists in a harmonious relationship with nature, remained constant throughout his long career. The second developed as his experiences and the artistic influences of the period came to bear

on his art. It is important to recognize that in Harrison's oeuvre, technique and meaning merge.

For Harrison, the means of expression, technique, was a "means-never an end."⁴ As Richard Schiff has noted, within the nineteenth-century literature of art "technique" connoted craftsmanship, which could be taught and which the student was obliged to learn. The term, however, was also used interchangeably with "style" which implied the "presence of a unique individual."⁵ The terms were also used to connote the expression of "human values" such as sincerity, truth, originality and self-expression.⁶ In his writings, Harrison used the terms interchangeably. In his art, he used technique as a means to reinforce the meaning of his painting.

The redirection of Harrison's art from figure to landscape is both as simple as his statement indicates and as complex as the late-nineteenth century shift toward landscape painting in general. One of the lessons that this generation of artists learned while studying in France was that "art could be about art and not necessarily about nature."⁷ On a purely technical level, plein-air painting, and landscape in particular, held Harrison's interest because it posed "unsolved problems of art that we moderns have to work out."⁸ Two of the problems that Harrison sought to conquer dealt with unlocking the secrets of creating the feeling of space in landscapes through the effects of light and atmosphere and conveying a sense of motion on the static surface of the canvas.

In spite of his keen interest in his craft, Harrison never fully subscribed to the "art for art's sake" movement.⁹ While "beauty" is a keystone of Harrison's

work, it is in particular the beauty of nature; its infinite variety of moods and transitory moments that interested him. The goal Harrison consistently pursued in his art was “to transcribe for others as much of the *beauty*, the *sentiment* and the *nobility* of nature”¹⁰ as he was able. When speaking of transcription, it is important to remember that in his writings, as in his art, Harrison made the distinction between recording “actual truths,” the scientific or factual truths, and what he termed the “visual truths,” that is, the artist’s vision, the moods and impressions of his experience of nature which he rendered for his viewer.¹¹

Both his figure paintings and his landscapes demonstrate Harrison’s implementation of this distinction and reflect his ideal that art “should suggest more than it expresses.”¹² This distinction is part of the lasting legacy of the Barbizon tradition, and it distinguishes the approach to landscape of Harrison’s generation and that of the previous generation of Hudson River artists. Harrison’s art strikes a balance between realism and expressionism, between direct observation and personal interpretation.

Although Harrison indicated that his inclusion of the figure in his landscape paintings was for artistic reasons, this is not quite the case. As John E.D. Trask pointed out in his important assessment of Harrison’s work, an “atmosphere of human life”¹³ is always present. Harrison’s “civilized” landscapes, in which the presence of man or man’s hand is seen or alluded to, often by the use of a lighted cottage window or twinkling lights on a distant harbor, can be viewed in the context of the social changes that America was experiencing during his lifetime.

This was a period of profound transition. The United States was being transformed from an agricultural economy and society into a modern, industrial, and urban nation. This social change precipitated a rethinking of the traditional approaches to landscape that is now recognized as a “crucial interval in American art history.”¹⁴ American landscape artists sought various solutions as they chose between city and country subjects, and how those subjects were to be represented. Harrison’s Tonalist scenes represent his personal response to these forces. Although he could at times demonstrate nostalgia for the picturesqueness of America’s rural past,¹⁵ he did not shirk from lending his own interpretation of her soaring city skyscrapers.

And yet, when looking at his entire artistic production, another level of meaning emerges. Harrison always strove to “apply to the subject before him that which is universal.”¹⁶ The viewer is struck by not just the “atmosphere of human life,”¹⁷ of man’s presence in nature, but on further study, by the suggestion of his harmonious existence within nature.

The unifying meaning of Birge Harrison’s art is found in his pantheistic beliefs to which his early Unitarian upbringing predisposed him. While his visualization of the universal and harmonious unity of man and nature was redirected from the figure within the landscape to the landscape itself, the meaning of his work remained unchanged. Using tonalist strategies and his considerable mastery of technique, Harrison constructed a framework within which man exists harmoniously in the natural order of the world.

All of Birge Harrison's early figural pictures were painted in the three French artist colonies of Grez, Concarneau and Pont-Aven, and were influenced by the work of Jules Bastien-Lepage. Bastien's influence was widespread among American artists and in their iconography and technique. Harrison's paintings illustrate this influence. A few general remarks, particularly with regard to iconography of the rural French peasantry and the American artists' handling of this subject, provide a framework within which to survey their interpretation in Harrison's hands.

The theme of French country life, was at its height of popularity in the Paris Salon during the 1880's. Due to the efforts of William M. Hunt, among others, who had introduced the works of the Barbizon School in the United States, American artists and their audience admired their paintings. Without a peasant class of their own, American artists studying in France had adapted this subject to express middle-class values.¹⁸ However, around 1880, just as Harrison was painting his rural figures, a shift in their depiction can be detected away from the monumentality of the Barbizon figures and toward an imagery that explored more modern concerns, especially psychological themes.¹⁹

Bastien-Lepage's paintings from as late as the mid-1870's demonstrate that he was still struggling to find a balance between Academic practice and his own stylistic tendencies.²⁰ Bastien's "predilection for subjects in deep reverie and inner contemplation, which was one of the constants in his career,"²¹ can be traced to the sense of inwardness found in the figures of his master, Cabanel. Employing technical expertise learned from his teacher, Bastien explored the psychological life

of his figures in an innovative way. His most characteristic device is a high horizon that raises the ground line upward, producing a “sudden telescopic transition from the extreme close-up to the panoramic distance.”²² The composition is thus concentrated on the figure and in particular on its facial expression, which reflects the mental state of subject. Bastien’s interest in his subject’s states of mind reached a peak with his representation of the figure of Joan of Arc, in *Jeanne d’Arc Ecoutant les Voix*, c.1880, who stands transfixed in a state of hallucinatory religious ecstasy.

This aspect of Bastien’s work was understood and commented upon by American critics. As early as 1883, W.C. Brownell noted in his article, “Bastein-Lepage: Painter and Psychologist,” that the various expressions of the inner life of Bastien’s peasants, were not “pictorial” nor “poetic” but “psychological.”²³ Brownell approved of Bastien’s modernist concerns, stating, “M. Batstien-Lepage’s wild-eyed young peasants are as clearly ‘human documents’ as the characters of Zola. The attitude of these two artists is nearly identical.”²⁴

Bastien’s interest came at a time when the modern-day science of psychology, while still in its infancy, was gaining popular attention. As early as the 1860’s, the French physician Jean-Martin Charcot had begun a “clinical analysis of hallucination and allied mental states” and had given a series of lectures on the subject that analyzed “the meaning of external signs and physical characteristics associated with nervous reactions.”²⁵ By the early 1880’s, some French critics were linking Bastien’s representations of peasants with Charcot’s work.²⁶

In short, Bastien's work offered to American artists not just new pictorial strategies, but also ideas of how those strategies might be used to explore modern themes. Harrison may have had a personal interest in psychology as his mother may have suffered from mental illness.²⁷ However, like most of his fellow Americans, he addressed this subject with more restraint than Bastien. His figures, while lost in meditative poses and revelries, rarely experience the extremes of religious ecstasy or hallucination as Bastien's.²⁸ Harrison's less emphatic treatment, perhaps influenced by Frank O'Meara, his friend from Carolus-Duran's studio and fellow artist at Grez,²⁹ can be seen as an early example of Harrison's preference for the subtly of suggestion.

Bastien's "concentration on the emotional and internalized psychic life"³⁰ of his subjects raises the issue of the presence of both naturalistic and anti-naturalistic characteristics in his work as well as the possibility of proto-symbolist tendencies. The issue revolves partly around the prevailing notions of artistic "impressions" during the late-nineteenth century. As already noted, during the 1880's, there was a growing awareness of the presence of two realms of "reality," the objective world and the psychic world of private thought.

Richard Shiff has pointed out that understanding these notions, particularly as addressed by Hippolyte Taine during his lectures at the École, recognized that two levels of "impressions" could exist within a work of art: the first, "the sensations generated by contact with the external world," and second, the "completely private, idiosyncratic sensations of dreams and fantasies."³¹ While he was clearly interested in this private world, Bastien avoided the extreme

subjectivity of representing ideas rather than natural objects that would later develop into Symbolism. Through the technical strategies that he employed in constructing his paintings, he was able to root the mental states of his subjects in the observable, natural world, even though his subjects in several cases, the visions of Joan of Arc for example, were not.

That the source of Bastien-Lepage's naturalism resided in his technique rather than his subject matter was commented upon at the time. Again, Brownell provides an example of this insight, stating that:

The salient characteristic of M. Bastien-Lepage's much discussed technique is, not its eccentricity, but its uncompromising realism... No one can have ever observed...the cold light of a sun hidden behind a monotonous and amorphous curtain of grey mist adding a quality to the already light green of the leafage and to the never discordant notes of whatever else may be of local color in the landscape, and have found the famous artist's sense of reality at fault.³²

Bastien used technique to balance the real and the ideal in his art, and to reinforce the subject that he was exploring. The altered states that he depicted become a reality because of the physicality of his figures and the convincingly represented, objective landscape in which he places them.

Bastien's provocative strategies were re-interpreted by his followers to suit their own purposes. A review of Harrison's figure paintings demonstrates this influence and his own personal interpretation of it in his peasant paintings. While Bastien combined the naturalism of his setting with the representation of the reality of the interior states of minds of his figures to produce a visualization of both levels of reality, Harrison set his figures in a naturalistic landscape in which Nature's mood corresponds to the mood of the figure. First evident in his figure paintings,

but present throughout his career, Harrison used technique and a personally forged style to reinforce the meaning of his picture.

Interestingly, the influence of another proto-symbolist French artist, Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, has been linked to Harrison's early figure paintings. Like Bastien-Lepage, Puvis' innovative approach was directed toward restoring Academic art to its nobility of purpose.³³ And, like Bastien's naturalism, Puvis' art appealed to American artists who favored innovation that did not challenge the traditional orthodoxy of the French academy.³⁴

Commenting on his purchase of two Birge Harrison paintings in Grez in the fall of 1882, John A. Lowell, in describing one of the pictures, now lost, of a "girl blowing a horn to call the farm-hands home to supper" noted that "the light is very peculiar" and the effect produced on the eye is similar to that found in "the celebrated mural paintings at the Pantheon by Puvis de Chavannes."³⁵ Harrison was quite conscious of the impact of Puvis's technical breakthrough. In his discussion of mural painting, he stated:

It is quite certain at any rate that when Puvis de Chavannes in his decorations at the Sorbonne and the Pantheon cut the color-scale and value-scale in half, we were all conscious of an unaccustomed and quite peculiar fitness of the means to the end; or of a truth that was higher than the truth of nature, because it was the truth of art.³⁶

Puvis' influence on the American adaptation of the French peasant theme has recently been noted by Bailey Van Hook. In her book, *Angels of Art Women and Art in American Society 1876-1914*, Van Hook demonstrates the differences between the representation of the female form in traditional Academic approach used by the French masters such as Jean Leon Gerome and Alexandre Cabanel and

the female form as represented in the French peasant paintings of late-nineteenth century American artists working in France. In contrast to the voluptuousness of the Academic nudes, the “youth and assumed innocence” of these figures project a distinctly American sense of wholesomeness in the young French peasant girls as represented by American artists. These images indicate not only the degree to which these students were willing to adapt their academic training to suit their own needs but also the investiture of these figures with cultural concerns directly related to American society, in this case, “the 19th century American preoccupation with women’s purity and rigorous standards of propriety.”³⁷ Accordingly, “the pure, nonerotic quality of American images relates to the art of Puvis de Chavannes, who, although he had no American pupils, was widely admired in America.”³⁸ Through the use of formal devices, “flat, decorative space and pale, ethereal colors,”³⁹ Puvis removed his idealized figures from the world of “real flesh and blood women.”⁴⁰ In representing French peasant figures also in a highly idealized fashion, the American artists chose not to follow the example of Bastien-Lepage whose images could be seen as coarse and perhaps too peasant-like.

The American artists’ idealized depictions of the female beauty also raise the issue of the nature of the realism of these plein-air naturalists. Because their commitment to objective verism was moderated by the liberating influence of the Barbizon school, these artists were also drawn to personal interpretation. Again, Bastien-Lepage presented a successful example of balancing these currents.

It should also be remembered that these idealized representations were a logical outcome of the Academic training, at which these artists were eager to

demonstrate their proficiency. As students, these artists had been taught to recognize the beauty found in the human form and in particular in the female form. Their training emphasized a process of refinement as they moved from sketch to finished canvas.⁴¹ Furthermore, during this period, the term “beauty,” when describing the female figure, was often used synonymously with the term “ideal.”⁴² By fashioning these images of folk peasants in their own manner, American artists were synthesizing the influences to which they were exposed and which they felt free to adapt to their own cultural needs and personal expressions.

Unfortunately, there are no extant student paintings by Birge Harrison, so it is difficult to trace the development of these ideas to specific images. However, there is a little-known work, which appears to be among his earliest, which illustrates the direction that his art was taking as he moved from student to artist in the art colonies of Grez and Brittany. *Girl in the Woods*, n.d. [1876-82] (fig. 5.1), illustrates one of Harrison’s central themes as a figure painter, the female peasant figure placed out of doors in a composition that merges figure and landscape.⁴³

This oil painting depicts a young woman seated in a wooded interior, leaning against a tree in the left foreground. She is turned to the right, hands resting in her lap, while her head, its blonde hair catching a ray of sunshine, faces forward, her gaze directed away from the viewer. She wears a vaguely peasant style of dress. Both her pose and her facial expression suggest a sense of reverie.

The light glistens off the foliage and falls in an irregular, serpentine patch behind and to the left of the figure, establishing a recession that eases the constricting space of the wooded setting that is created by the uptitled picture plane

and the telescoping of the foreground and background, both compositional elements characteristic of Bastien-Lepage's work. Light is also a key element in understanding the motivation of Harrison's painting. The shadow cast by the trees across the right hand portion of the canvas covers both the figure and landscape, merging the two. Even in this early work, Harrison evidences his understanding of the manner in which technique can reinforce meaning. The placement of the figure in the wooded environment, and the use of light suggest their essential unity. By merging the woman and nature this early painting explores Harrison's theme of the relationship of man and nature.

The naïve execution of the subject recalls Eakins's instruction to his students to "learn to draw in color."⁴⁴ Harrison has done exactly this, using a pale yellow-gold color to outline the contours of the figure and then filling it in with a roughly blended mix of other colors. Still perfecting his craft, Harrison was struggling with the problems inherent in painting the figure out of doors, which he found:

involves a simultaneous attack on nearly every problem in the wide domain of art. You have first all the out-door questions of atmospheric vibration and refraction, and the consideration of the color-scale and value-scale; then in addition to these you have practically all the in-door problems, which include figure composition and arrangement in addition to the usual problems of drawing and modeling.⁴⁵

Seeking to address these questions, Harrison turned to the styles current in France during the period.

The composition of *Girl in the Woods* is similar to two of Harrison's more accomplished paintings, *November*, 1881 (Fig. 2.3) and *The Mirror*. All three

show, the influence of Bastien-Lepage. The figures are all placed on an upwardly tilted forest floor and are surrounded by trees, which are cut off at the top of the painting. There is little or no indication of a horizon line. This compositional device establishes a feeling of intimacy and introspection, but also presented problems. In Harrison's own words, "the suppression or nearly total elimination of the sky tends to convert the canvas into a sort of transcendent still-life."⁴⁶ Nevertheless, its successful use was recognized in France as, "helping to introduce into France a new style, where the subject is, so to speak, a corner of nature."⁴⁷

The rapid progress that Harrison made in mastering his craft is evident when we compare *Girl in the Woods* to *The Mirror*.⁴⁸ In *The Mirror*, [1876-1882] (fig. 5.2) Harrison has again chosen an interior wooded springtime setting. More ambitious than the earlier painting, this vertical composition pairs two young female figures, one a fair, blonde woman who resembles his first wife Eleanor Ritchie,⁴⁹ with a dark haired woman. She rests her hand, in a gesture of intimacy, on the shoulder of a crouching female figure with dark hair, over which she stands in a gesture of intimacy. The paired figures recall the tradition of European female "friendship" paintings.

A mirror-smooth pond dotted with water lilies reflects the images of the two figures. Bastien's influence can again be seen in the uptitled picture plan and telescopic treatment of the picture space as well as in the detailed painting of the foreground water lilies and reeds. The inclusion of the pond serves two purposes: first, it helps to introduce a sense of space into the closed interior scene, and second, the introduction of water, and especially the mirror-like effect of its smooth

surface and reflecting images transforms the pond from a landscape feature to “nature’s mirror,” which alludes to the infinite; universalizing the intimate scene and reinforcing the meaning of the painting.

Harrison was aware of the pictorial problems that his composition presented. In general, he avoided painting more than one motive in a single composition and later cautioned his students to do likewise. However, he did acknowledge that there are some happy moments when nature furnishes “two points of nearly equal interest in the same scene”⁵⁰ as when a subject is reflected in a pool or stream, “the reflection being often more beautiful than the scene which it reflects.”⁵¹

He manages to avoid the problem of confusing the view with more than one focus by using closely keyed soft pastel colors and values to paint the landscape elements as well as the costumes of the figures. His choice of coloration illustrates the lasting influence of Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot’s art on Harrison’s work. It was from this Barbizon master of silvery landscapes that Harrison acknowledged learning the emotional effect of different colors.⁵² In *The Mirror* Harrison uses the cool greens, blues, soft grays and browns of the interior forest to unify the composition and to convey the sense of “restful beauty of a gray-green landscape by Corot.”⁵³ The inclusion of the spot of red in the scarf worn by the standing figure was a device also used by Corot to “enliven the effect”⁵⁴ that Harrison admired. Likewise, the dewy mist that lingers over figures and landscape is reminiscent of Corot’s poetic landscapes that were seen as part of the Romantic tradition of communicating emotion and the bonds between man and nature.⁵⁵ The

atmospheric effect created by the dew provides another link between the foreground elements, which are rendered in precise detail, and the slightly more sketchy background forest foliage.

The technical execution of this painting is nearly flawless, and the canvas glows with a luminosity that is unmatched in Harrison's figure paintings. It exemplifies the surface beauty, the "dexterous manipulation of pigment" found in Harrison's work, and which he used with particular effect for quiet and idyllic subjects.⁵⁶ In this respect, *The Mirror*, presages the Tonalist landscapes of his later period. Synthesizing several sources, Harrison has accomplished a mastery of the technical elements of color and atmosphere. He has transformed a potentially divided composition into a single image in which the elements of landscape, figures, and their reflection in nature's mirror, the pond, are bound together into a single unified image. The intimacy established by this interior wooded scene emphasizes the interconnectedness of the figures to each other and to the natural world that enfolds them in a scene of complete harmony and balance.

The interior setting of these two paintings suggests the area around Grez that Harrison described as a land of "brooding mists, of silver birches and far reaching meadows, of deep dark pools and water lilies and a river to dream of."⁵⁷ Harrison painted another scene of young female subject in this art colony.

Young Girl in a Meadow, [1876-82] (fig. 5.3) continues the theme of reverie in his work. In this painting, however, Harrison abandons the close space of the interior forest. A young girl, again dressed in simple peasant garb, sits among the daisies in an open field. Placed in the immediate foreground, her back is to the

viewer and turned slightly so that her face is seen only in profile, a pose that Harrison used repeatedly in his paintings at this time. More brightly lit than the previous paintings, and possibly illustrating Harrison's awareness of the Glare aesthetic popular among Americans in France during this period, this work continues his interest in the spring season that compliments the youthfulness of his sitters. The execution of this painting is less finished than most of Harrison's figure works from the period. Except for the figure itself, the forms are not well delineated, an approach that Harrison also used in his more ambitious *November*, 1881.

The subject was apparently popular among American painters. Both Charles Sprague Pearce's *Gathering Herbs*, c.1881, and Will H. Low's *Daisies, Montigny-sur-Loing*, 1876, are similar in subject and composition to Harrison's. More interesting is a comparison of this work to an interpretation of a similar theme by Harrison's brother, Alexander, who arrived in France in 1879.

In his *Les Enfants Jouant, Grez*, n.d. (fig. 5.4, unlocated) Alexander's approach is more complex than Birge's. His composition includes two young boys sitting in a sunlit field and slightly turned toward each other with a stone wall, trees and bushes visible in the background. As in Birge's composition, the figures are placed in the foreground. The treatment of the pictorial space is similar in both and is derived from Bastien-Lepage's spatial strategies. Each boy gazes downward and like Birge's young girl, appears lost in his own thoughts. While boys did not appear as often as young girls in paintings of this type by American artists, Alexander painted them frequently and successfully. These paintings indicate that

artistic dialogue between the brothers early in their development as artists. While the influence that each exerted over the other changed over the years, it remained an important aspect in both of their work.

The village of Grez owns one other painting by Birge Harrison. Like *Young Girl in a Meadow* its execution is sketchy. According to the label on the stretcher, the title, *Une chemin entre la grande route et maison Mme. Blackburn a Grez*, n.d. [1876-82] (fig 5.5), is descriptive of the subject. Another inscription on the back of the frame reads “A lane near the Murger’s house at Grez.” The painting shows the figure of a man dressed in blue and wearing a straw hat walking along a rutted country lane. Unlike Harrison’s other paintings from this period, this sketch focuses more on the landscape than on the figure. While it may have been a study for a larger figure piece, this work illustrates Harrison’s early interest in landscape and pleinairism.

Better known than any of the previous works mentioned here, Harrison’s *Appointment*, 1881 (fig. 5.6), illustrates his interest in themes in which water plays an important role. This painting also suggests a comparison of similar themes explored by the two Harrison brothers.

Like his other paintings from the period, this work shows an adaptation of Bastien’s technical vocabulary in its diffusion of light. Here we find the light of an early summer evening with the last rays of the sun twinkling off the calm water, a high horizon, again with no indication of a skyline, and a sudden shift from foreground to background. As in his *Young Girl in a Meadow*, Harrison has allowed space to surround the figure, in this case a beautiful young woman, again

seen only in profile, who is seated in a small wooden rowboat. The boat, cropped at the bottom of the painting, juts diagonally across the immediate foreground.

Julia Myers has noted that the probable site of this painting, the Loing River and the bridge, which spans directly behind the Hotel Chevillon (fig. 5.7), was a popular subject for painters in Grez.⁵⁸ Alexander painted the site, exploring a theme similar to *The Appointment*, in his 1883 painting, *Les Amateurs* (fig 5.8). Once again, Alexander's composition is more ambitious. Two figures, a young girl and young boy are fishing from a small rowboat. The mood set by the pair's playfulness and the diffused daylight is much more lighthearted than the watchfulness of Birge Harrison's single figure in *The Appointment*, who waits in the early evening light. While Alexander's couple is clearly enjoying the ritual of courtship, Birge's solitary figure watchfully awaits her rendezvous.

The composition of both works shows the influence of Bastien-Lepage, but Birge's placement of the boat is the more innovative of the two, suggesting a modification of the approach that the Impressionists adapted from Japanese prints. Birge Harrison's cropping of the boat in the immediate right foreground suggests a continuation of the scene beyond the space, and by implication, the narrative of the painting.⁵⁹

The reverse is true in the works by the two brothers painted in Brittany. In these paintings, on which both brothers' reputations were built, Alexander's approach to his subject is the more innovative.

Shipwrecked,⁶⁰ 1880, (fig. 2.1) was Birge Harrison's first work to be shown at the Paris Salon when it was exhibited in 1881. Alexander also exhibited

paintings with a similar theme- *Un Naufrage*, 1881 (unlocated), which also translates as “Shipwreck,” and *Les naufrages de Glenans*, exhibited at the 1884 Salon.⁶¹

The site of Birge’s painting is the fishing village of Concarneau in Brittany, which sits on a small inlet of the Bay of Biscay that opens onto the Atlantic Ocean. The scene is the most narrative of Birge’s paintings and contains a strong element of pathos. The lifeless body of a young child has been discovered on a sandy beach by two fishermen. The child’s body is still bound by ropes to a broken mast suggesting a desperate but failed attempt to save his life. The position of the body is reiterated in the form of the dead fish lying nearby in the foreground, suggesting a connection among all living things that are subject to nature’s moods.

The younger of the two fishermen registers the shock of their discovery, dropping to his knees, laying aside his catch and gesturing dramatically, hands rising to his face. The older, gray-bearded man, perhaps more accustomed to dealing with the aftermath of nature’s violent moods, remains standing, stoically looking down at the child. In the background, the crashing ocean waves indicate the cause of this tragedy, a violent ocean storm. Harrison uses the same narrative approach in other figure paintings, inviting the viewer to not only imagine the situation that led to the scene being presented but also to an identification of the viewer’s experience and emotions with the situation depicted in the narrative art.⁶²

At the Salon of 1880, Alexander exhibited his first Salon entry titled *Cote de Bretagne*,⁶³ (unlocated) indicating that he had been painting the coastal area of Brittany soon after his arrival in France.⁶⁴ Alexander explored a theme similar to

Birge's *Shipwrecked* in *Les naugrages de Glenans*, c. 1884, that is now known only through an illustration in *Art Amateur*, where it was illustrated as *Graves of the Shipwrecked* (fig 5.9).⁶⁵ Without a photographic reproduction, it is impossible to address the technical handling of this work. However, working only from the illustration, drawn by the artist from his painting, it is still possible to determine that in his approach, Alexander eliminated the narrative element. Depicting only a group of weather-beaten wooden crosses massed along a sandy beach, presumably all also victims of storms, he relied on the indirect evocation of sentiment rather than the dramatic approach used by Birge. Again, each brother has chosen a similar theme but the individuality of expression is clear.

The three figures in Birge's painting *Shipwrecked* are finely drawn. The landscape elements however, are more sketchily rendered suggesting Bastien-Lepage's approach, as does the gray, even light in which the scene is cast. The color scheme of grays, light browns and muted mauves, heightens the viewer's awareness of the wintry scene. The paint is applied in broken colors using a layering effect, a technique that Harrison used to great advantage in his later landscape paintings as a means of visualizing the vibration of light. Also presaging his later interest in marine painting is the depiction of the still unsettled ocean in the background.

In the presentation of his theme, Harrison has moved beyond the mid-nineteenth century approach to marine painting, which generally represented a struggle between man and nature by depicting a "strong sense of ongoing action in which the fate of the humans hangs in the balance."⁶⁶ As in the work of other late-

nineteenth century artists, in Harrison's scene this struggle is over, and the viewer is presented with "a feeling of aftermath," often underscored by waves breaking on the shore or the partial clearing of the stormy weather.⁶⁷ This shift in representation follows one in the cultural perception from a linear to a more cyclical and cosmic perception of time, which sees man as part of nature's endless cyclical rhythms. In his use of formal elements, his arrangement of forms, and particularly his choice of coloration, Harrison maintains the mood of aftermath and also represents an anthropomorphic metaphor that comments on man's relationship with nature. As part of the natural order, man, like all living things, is subject to her moods.

Harrison's *Return from the First Communion*, 1881 (fig. 2.2), now known only from a drawing by Harrison and published illustrations, received very favorable attention when it was exhibited in Philadelphia in 1881. This may have played a role in his decision to submit it as well as his other painting from 1881, *November*, to the 1882 Paris Salon.⁶⁸ The painting was described in an article in *Art Amateur* as showing, "a pretty young peasant girl walking home through the field, in her cloud of gauze; clasping her hands and mystically meditating. The effect of sunshine is strangely broad and good."⁶⁹ Harrison's figure is his clearest statement of virginal innocence and purity, and exemplifies the cultural implications of peasant imagery for American artists in France.

In his effort to show Bastein-Lepage's influence on Harrison's work, one reviewer, Edward Strahan, seems to have overstated the interpretation of the state of mind of the young girl. While her shaded, down-turned face is certainly

meditative, it hardly compares with the expression of the mystical experience found in Bastien's *Joan of Arc*. Strahan need not have tried so hard to find Bastien's influence, as it is clearly evident in Harrison's handling of the compositional elements.

Bastien had addressed this subject much earlier in his career in *Le Communiant*, which he showed at the Salon of 1875 and which was one of his most influential paintings.⁷⁰ Harrison's treatment of the subject differs significantly from Bastien's, which is painted without his characteristic compositional innovations. The extreme frontality and sparseness of Bastien's image of a young girl dressed all in white placed in front of an empty medium grey background intentionally evokes associations with an iconic image of a Byzantine Madonna.⁷¹

Harrison's small painting *Peasant Girl from Brittany*, c.188(0?) (fig. 5.10)⁷² is much closer to Bastien-Lepage's *Le Communiant*. This half-length figural work, shows a young peasant girl dressed in native Breton costume, with a blue and white cape and white lace coiffe encircling her face like a halo. The golden brown background is painted with decorative arabesque designs. Unlike the severe frontality of Bastien's image, however, Harrison's figure bends her head slightly, casting her eyes down toward the right and avoiding the viewer's gaze. This gesture is similar to that made by the figure in *Return from First Communion*, suggesting that this small painting may have been a study for the larger one.

As indicated by the description of the painting in Strahan's article, in his *Return from First Communion*, Harrison seems to have abandoned the diffused

illumination and grey tonality associated with Bastien's paintings. As already noted, artists in the colonies of Pont-Aven and Concarneau were exploring the effects of bright sunlight, the Glare aesthetic, to a greater degree than those at Grez. If the Strahan's description is accurate, and the illustration, with its patches of shadows and sunlight streaming through the gauze veil, indicates that it is, then this work can be seen as another example of the way in which Harrison sought to synthesize several influences as he worked toward developing his own original style.

The successful accomplishment of this synthesis is demonstrated in Harrison's best-known painting from this period, *November*, 1881 (fig. 2.3).⁷³ The impact of this work on Harrison's career and the ramifications of its purchase by the French government have already been discussed. *November* represents Harrison success in addressing all of the artistic problems inherent in painting the figure out of doors. Another forest interior, it depicts a peasant girl raking autumn leaves. Although Brittany has been suggested as the site of this painting,⁷⁴ the birch trees and the costume worn by the girl indicate a location in the forest area near Grez.⁷⁵ The few commentaries on the painting have focused on the technical aspects of the work and in particular Harrison's success at conveying an autumnal forest interior⁷⁶ and the amplification of a "November mood by the somber neutral tonality"⁷⁷ composed of grays and browns with dashes of oranges all in the same value range.

Perhaps following Charles Bourgmeyer's observation that the work was "painted entirely in the open, as the Plein-air school was in full vogue,"⁷⁸

commentary on the painting has focused on those elements that demonstrate Bastien's influence, such as the use of grey, diffused light, the flatten spatial treatment, titled foreground and the leafy, almost tapestry-like enclosure of the figure.⁷⁹

Harrison adapted several types of brushstrokes that he applied to the girl's form. Her face for instance, is finely modeled and the paint application smoothly blended, suggesting the influence of his teacher Cabanel. For her clothing, however, he adapted Bastien-Lepage's square brushstrokes and a layering of closely related colors.⁸⁰ His depiction of the leaves, in which he used the comma-like strokes often associated with the Impressionists, is perhaps the most surprising element of the painting.

Almost all of the commentary on this painting, as on much of Harrison's oeuvre, is adversely impacted by reproduction. Many of his works, while widely reproduced, are today infrequently exhibited. In the case of *November*, the result is that the impressionistic brushstroke that Harrison used to depict the autumn leaves cannot be appreciated in the reproductive image, and the leaves in particular appear to be more sharply delineated than they are in the actual painting. Thus, much of the spontaneity that these strokes convey is lost to the viewer.⁸¹ Harrison's use of the impressionistic brushstroke simultaneously gives an accurate depiction of fallen leaves while creating a textured surface on the canvas that further suggests the layers of leaves on the forest floor.

In his rendering of the birch trees in *November*, Harrison's direct observations from nature are so detailed that they include the moss that grows on

the trunks; at the same time his intricate treatment of the play of light on the forms is impressionistic. His attention to solving the problems in combining these techniques indicates both his commitment to the plein-air aesthetic and also his mastery of the sense of “vibration” in painting that he credited as the important contribution of the Impressionists. Harrison would later bring his technical mastery of this latter formal element to his landscape paintings.

In *November*, Harrison successfully used technique as a means to end. The narrative element of *November* has been discounted in commentaries on the painting. However, it is in the narrative that one discovers an indication of Harrison’s motivation for painting the scene. So successful is his merging of figure and background that few descriptions of the painting include the presence in the middle ground of the rabbit that has been startled by the girl raking leaves. The presence of a second rabbit, its head down as it munches on the fallen leaves has gone unnoticed. This oversight is also probably due to poor reproductions of the image. Nevertheless, the failure to take note of these narrative elements results in a reading of the scene that suggests the girl’s attitude as “placid”⁸² or, alternatively, that she averts her gaze in order “to ponder the state of nature and to raise, by implication the larger question of the purpose of existence.”⁸³

Another proposed reading, in which the narrative element is taken into account, suggests that both girl and animal are suspended in a moment of “temporary arrest,” that fraction of a second when everything is about to change and when, according to Harrison, “human mind is most vividly conscious of change.”⁸⁴ It is true that the outward demeanor of the girl in *November* fails to

suggest this level of activity. However, when Harrison addressed this subject for a second time, in *The Forest of Compiègne*, c. 1885-90 (Fig. 5.11), the major change in representation is the increased sense of motion, conveyed by the girl's startled pose. *November* can be seen as Harrison's first attempt to essay his lifelong interest in the theme of the changing aspects of nature. He would continue to pursue this theme throughout his career; taking it in a new direction in his landscape paintings.

Harrison's figure paintings were only the beginning of his long journey as an artist. These works represent his initial success at synthesizing the influences to which he was exposed at the time. In them, he succeeded in forging an individual style shaped by a vision of the inter-relatedness of man and nature. During the years that followed his early success, Harrison continued to perfect his craft and crystallize his vision in an effort to better articulate the ideas that he wished to convey through the power of suggestion.

¹ Letter from Birge Harrison to Will Johnson, as quoted in Nicholas Chilcott, *Will Johnson: A Champion of American Art* (Chicago: Adams Press, 1975), 85.

² Letter from Birge Harrison to Percy William Holt, dated March 6, 1923, The Percy William Holt Papers, 1812-1923 Department of Archives and History, State of Alabama, Montgomery, Alabama.

³ Charles Borgmeyer, "Birge Harrison- Poet Painter," *Fine Arts Journal* 29 (October 1913): 591.

⁴ Chilcott, 85.

⁵ Richard Shiff, *Cézanne and the End of Impressionism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), xviii.

⁶ *Ibid.*, xiv.

⁷ H. Barbara Weinberg, "Late-Nineteenth Century Painting: Cosmopolitan Concerns and Critical Controversies," *Archives of American Art Journal* 23 (1983): 23.

⁸ Birge Harrison, *Landscape Painting* (1909; reprint New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911), 9.

⁹ Borgmeyer, 592.

¹⁰ Chilcott, 85.

¹¹ Birge Harrison, "The True Impressionism in Art," *Scribner's Magazine* 46 (October 1909): 492.

¹² Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 155.

¹³ John E. D. Trask, "Birge Harrison," *Scribner's Magazine* 42 (November 1907): 576.

¹⁴ Derrick R. Cartwright, "The City and the Country: American Perspectives 1870-1920," *American Art Review* 12 (2000): 110.

¹⁵ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 249.

¹⁶ Trask, 579.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Julia Rowland Myers, "The American Painters of the French Peasantry, 1863-1893" (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, College Park, 1989), 29.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 29-30.

²⁰ William S. Feldman, "The Life and Work of Jules Bastien-Lepage (1848-1884)" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1973), 49.

²¹ Ibid., 51.

²² Ibid., 102-103.

²³ W. C. Brownell, "Bastien-Lepage: Painter and Psychologist," *The Magazine of Art* 6 (1883): 271.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Feldman, 130.

²⁶ Ibid., 131.

²⁷ A Letter of Administration for the estate of A.W. Harrison (File #1070-1886), Records Division, City Hall, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, which was filed in lieu of a will upon the death of Harrison's father in 1886, indicates that Harrison's mother was residing in an institution for the mentally ill at the time.

²⁸ Gabriel P. Weisberg, *Beyond Impressionism: The Naturalist Impulse* (New York: Abrams, Inc., 1992), 156.

²⁹ Ibid., 141.

³⁰ Shiff, 44.

³¹ Ibid., 4.

³² Brownell, 267.

³³ Edward Lucie-Smith, *Symbolist Art* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1985), 81.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ "My Notebook," *Art Amateur* 7 (October 1882): 91.

³⁶ Birge Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 151.

³⁷ Bailey Van Hook, " 'Milk White Angels of Art': Images of Women in Turn of the Century America," *Woman's Art Journal* (Fall 1990/Winter 1991): 24.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Bailey Van Hook, *Angels of Art: Women and Art in American Society, 1876-1914* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 60. Van Hook's book is an elaboration of the issues raised in her earlier article. For a fuller discussion of the relationship of the depiction of the female figure by French and American artists, see pages 22-47.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 160.

⁴³ *Girl in the Woods* is in the John G. Johnson Collection in the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The lack of technical competence in execution has led independent curator, Jane Clark, who has done work on Birge Harrison, to suggest this picture was painted by Birge's younger brother Butler Harrison (Letter to Lawrence Nichols, Esq, from Jane Clark, in File #1002, inv. # 2816, Curator's Files, Philadelphia Museum of Art). However, in a letter dated Jan. 12, 1913 from Harrison to John Trask of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art, concerning the probability of a sale of one of his paintings, Harrison states, "John G. Johnson also needs a Birge Harrison. The only one of mine he ever owned was the very first picture I ever painted. I was horrified to see the other day that he had presented this antique naiveté to the Wiltach Collection" (Secretary's File, Archives of PAFA). Johnson began assembling his collection in the late 1880's, the first catalogue of the collection was published in 1892 and included Harrison's painting (*John G. Johnson Catalogue of Paintings*, The Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1941).

⁴⁴ Lloyd Goodrich, *Thomas Eakins, His Life and Work* (exh. cat., New York: Whitney Museum, 1933), 76.

⁴⁵ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 85.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁴⁷ "The Salon from the French Critic's Point of View," *The Art Journal* 44 (new series, 1882): 271.

⁴⁸ *The Mirror* is in the Haggin Museum, Stockton, California. It has been dated 1910. However, the date has been applied based on the brass plate fixed to the frame that reads "Birge Harrison, N.A. 1910." Harrison was made a full member of the National Academy of Design in 1910 and this is most likely a reference to that event. The subject and style of the painting clearly dates to his early figure works from the 1880's. By 1910, Harrison was at the peak of his landscape career and had abandoned large figural compositions.

⁴⁹ The figure resembles an early photograph of a very young Eleanor that was recently discovered in the Ritchie family papers (fig. 2.6). Jane Clark, one of the few art historians familiar with Ritchie and her work concurs that this is a possibility.

⁵⁰ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 90.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 23.

⁵³ Gary Tinterow, Michael Pantazzi and Vincent Pomerode, *Corot* (exh. cat., New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1996), 25.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 262.

⁵⁶ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 105.

⁵⁷ Harrison, "In Search of Paradise with Camera and Palette," *Outing Magazine* 21 (January 1893): 310.

⁵⁸ Myers, 253-255. See also, William H. Gerdt's discussion of the painting, "The American Artists in Grez," in *The Painters of Grez-sur-Loing* (exh. cat., Tokyo: The Japan Association of Art Museums, 2000), 271.

⁵⁹ Maria and Godfrey Blunden, *Impressionists and Impressionism* (New York: Rizzoli Publications, 1980 ed.), 131.

⁶⁰ "Mr. Birge Harrison," *Table Talk*, May 2, 1890, 4. This article gives the following description of *The Waif*, which fits the painting now known as *Shipwrecked*: "This work was called *The Waif*, and represented two fishermen finding upon their storm-beaten shore the body of a young patrician child dressed in rich velvet and lace, and lashed to a broken spar. *The Waif* was received and well hung in the Salon of 1881." Harrison's entry for the Salon of 1881 was *Une Epave* (Lois M. Fink, *American Art at the Nineteenth Century Paris Salons* (Washington D.C.: National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1990), 351). Harrison may have painted a study for this painting. Fernande Sadler mentions a marine sketch signed "H. Birge," among the sketches that hung at the Hotel Cheillon. (Fernande Sadler, *L'Hotel Cheillon et les artistes de Grez-sur-Loing* (Fontainebleau, L'Informateur de Seine-et Marne, 1938), 13).

⁶¹ Fink, 351.

⁶² Lawrence Otto Goedde, *The Tempest and Shipwreck in Dutch and Flemish Art, Convention, Rhetoric and Interpretation* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989), 121. For a discussion of the adaptation of rhetorical devices also see p. 18.

⁶³ Fink, 351.

⁶⁴ Alexander was engaged in marine painting even before his arrival in France. His *Sunset at Sea*, an oil on canvas, signed and dated 1878, and now in a private collection, depicts three sailing boats racing over the choppy waves of an open sea toward a brilliant sunset. The painting was exhibited in the exhibition, *Early Artists of the Bohemian Club*, at St. Mary's College in Moraga, California from August 17-October 13, 2002.

⁶⁵ *The Graves of the Shipwrecked* was illustrated in *Art Amateur* 11 (June 1884) and was reviewed and illustrated in the January 1885 issue. The critic found this work inferior to Alexander's *Twilight*, which had also been shown at the 1884 Salon (28).

⁶⁶ David C. Miller, "The Iconology of Wrecked or Stranded Boats in mid to late Nineteenth Century American Culture," in *American Iconology*, David C. Miller, ed., (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 186.

⁶⁷ The shift in presentation has been linked to the changing perceptions of time in American culture during this period "under the impact of a new awareness of natural history." This shift postulated a more cyclical notion of time, with links to "cosmic dimension of meaning in providential or human history." (Miller, 188-208).

⁶⁸ Fink, 351.

⁶⁹ Edward Strahan, "Works of American Artists Abroad, The Second Philadelphia Exhibition," *Art Amateur* 6 (December 1881): 6.

⁷⁰ Feldman, 75.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² *Peasant Girl from Brittany*, signed and dated, is in the collection of the National Park Service, Longfellow National Historic Site, Cambridge, Mass. It was originally owned by Samuel Longfellow, brother of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and remained in the family home in Cambridge. Samuel was the pastor at the Germantown Unitarian Church from c. 1877 to 1882. He knew the Harrison family who were members of his congregation. In a letter dated "Germantown X-mas-1878" and addressed to Anne, he mentions sending a painting by Miss Harrison, "one of our young ladies," to her. (Samuel Longfellow Papers, 1878-1880-Archives of the Longfellow National Historic Site). A conservation report in the curatorial files at the site lists the date of this painting as 1886. However, the numeral that has been read as "6" looks much more like a "0." Additionally, in style and subject, it is closer to Harrison's work during the early 1880's than in 1886.

⁷³ My thanks to Mme. Valerie Lagier at the Musee des Beaux Arts and Archeology, Rennes, France for generously allowing me access to both the painting and the museum's files.

⁷⁴ Denis Delouche, *Les Peintres et Le Paysan Breton* (exh.cat., Ursa-le Chasse-Maree, 1988), 78.

⁷⁵ Letter to the author from Andre Cariou, Head Conservator at the Musee des Beaux-Arts de Quimper.

⁷⁶ Myers, 357.

⁷⁷ William H. Gerds, "The American Artists in Grez," in *The Painters in Grez sur Loing* (Tokyo: The Japanese Association of Art Museums, 2000), 271.

⁷⁸ Borgmeyer, 587.

⁷⁹ Feldman, 169

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ For a discussion of the understanding of the use of this brushstroke and the blurring of the distinction between the “genuinely spontaneous sketch” and its use in completed painting to evoke spontaneity and therefore originality during the period, see Shiff, 75-77.

⁸² Weisberg, 256.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 153.

⁸⁴ Birge Harrison, “Recent Tendencies in Marine Painting,” *Scribner's Magazine* 49 (April 1911): 474.

Chapter Six

The Transition to Landscape

Only a few paintings from the period of extensive travel that Harrison undertook following his departure from France in 1882 have been located. However, when these few are considered in conjunction with his work as an illustrator, an indication of the redirection of his art during these years emerges. Although he continued to pursue his theme, the harmonious relationship of man and nature, he began to alter the visual language that he used to suggest their essential unity.

In his earlier works, Harrison generally set his figures in wooded interiors. Within the confines of this space, he showed nature as reflecting the introspective mood of the figure. As Harrison moved toward a greater degree of suggestiveness in his work, the narrative became increasingly ambiguous and the landscape began to dominate his compositions. Following the precedent set by *November*, it increasingly suggests nature's transient moments or seasons. Figures are placed in a more spacious, although not quite panoramic setting, and simultaneously decreased in size. Progressively, Harrison relied on the atmosphere to envelop the figure, thereby suggesting the idea of man as part of nature's cycles. The paintings from this period of "wanderlust," can be viewed as an intermediary step toward his later poetic, Tonalist landscapes that visualize the same theme but only suggest a human presence.

It is understandable that Harrison's work from this period remains little known. None of his pictures painted in Australia, and only a few of those that he brought with him from Europe, have been located and these rarely exhibited. For example, one of his major works from this period was *The Departure of the Mayflower (1626)*, c. 1886-88. During the 1890's this work, shown at the Paris Salon of 1888 and at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893, was "so well known as to require no words of description."¹ Currently located at a college outside of Philadelphia, the painting is in very poor condition.² Harrison's other painting at the 1893 Fair, *A Surprise in the Forest of Compiègne* has presumably been destroyed. Two other smaller paintings, both in good condition, *Along the Road*, 1887, and *Le Soir*, 1893, are in private collections.

Painted in Etaples, *The Departure of the Mayflower (1626)* is unique in his oeuvre because of its colonial subject as well as its relationship to the death of Harrison's father in 1886. However, Harrison's treatment of the subject, and his use of technique, indicate the direction that his work would take over the next decade.

Shortly after arriving in Etaples in 1886, Harrison built a large studio in the garden of the house where he lived.³ Its construction reflects the artistic process to which Harrison ascribed throughout his career. While Harrison adapted some of the techniques associated with Impressionism, he seriously questioned if any "really great landscape was ever wholly painted in the open," maintaining that such paintings must "necessarily be hasty, ill-considered, somewhat raw, and lacking in the synthetic and personal quality which is the distinguishing mark of all great

art.”⁴ In his judgment, nature’s fleeting effects passed too quickly for the landscape artist to commit to canvas. Harrison believed that “the final picture must always be painted from memory”⁵ and spent the better part of his early career training his capacity to recall, which he termed the “sub-conscious servant,” in order to paint not only what he saw with his eyes but also what he “saw” through his mind.⁶

The construction of a studio was an intermediary step in the process of training his memory. It was probably constructed using large panels of glass, a type of structure popular among plein-air painters in France at the time because it allowed them to capture the natural effects of light and color.⁷ This aid, however, was not always available. Although he worked to train his memory in order to successfully visualize the particular effect of nature that he sought to capture, an additional step that he used, and that he would later encouraged his students to follow, was to make sketches and color studies of the scene, from which he would develop finished paintings. Through this effort, which he combined with his considerable technical skills, Harrison succeeded in producing works of “true synthetic beauty. . . unattainable for the mere copyist.”⁸

The scene of *The Departure of the Mayflower* (fig. 3.3) represents a young Pilgrim girl, clad in a heavy dark cloak that partially obscures her face, standing on the sand dunes. She is turned away from the viewer toward a ship that sails out to sea in the upper left quadrant of the painting (fig. 6.1). Seen in three-quarter profile, she gestures toward the ship with upraised arms as she takes a step toward it. At her feet lies scrubby vegetation. Behind her and to her left, stands the edge of a forest.

The painting is Harrison's only known attempt of a historical subject.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, when the colonial revival sparked by the 1876 Centennial Exhibition was peaking, history painting underwent a process of "genrefication."⁹ Moving away from depicting the heroic events of the country's early history, artists exchanged the idealized conventions of grand-manner history painting intended to educate the viewer, for narrative scenes that stressed the human side of history, particularly American colonial history. They adopted more informal settings to represent the effect of historical events on ordinary people. American history paintings were rarely shown at the Paris Salon during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Of the few that were shown, many, like Harrison's, followed the popular trend of depicting such footnotes to history rather than important historical events.¹⁰

The narrative of Harrison's farewell scene appears straightforward. Yet it confused contemporary critics. The painting has been variously interpreted as depicting different events in the history of the colonization of the new world. Part of the confusion resulted from the inclusion of the date, 1626, in the title.

When it was first shown at the Salon of 1888,¹¹ it was erroneously thought by French critics to represent one of the original group of Pilgrims left behind in Holland and separated from her family, a friend or a lover who were headed to the new world, because the ship was too small.¹² Confusion concerning this subject is evident at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition where the painting was exhibited under the title *The Return of the Mayflower*.¹³ American critics interpreted the title as referring to the return of the *Mayflower* to England from

Plymouth. Another interpretation was offered by Herbert Bancroft in *The Book of the Fair* (1893). Bancroft described the painting as representing a young Puritan girl, watching the approaching vessel that carried her lover.¹⁴ By the time that the painting was reproduced in Borgmeyer's extensive article on Harrison in 1913, the original title *The Departure of the Mayflower* without the inclusion of the 1626 date had been reinstated.¹⁵

Harrison's approach to his painting is partly responsible for the confusion concerning the narrative. Although Harrison had spent part of the fall of 1883 in Plymouth, Massachusetts, he did not include any identifiable landmarks in the painting that might suggest this site. The girl's costume is only vaguely colonial and could as easily be one of the "Millet" cloaks that Harrison owned. He has stripped the composition to bare essentials leaving a landscape setting that approximates his description of the area around Etaples: "Bare, bleak and exposed to all the winds of a stormy coast . . . the town is separated from the shore by three sand dunes and scrub pines . . . beyond these and half a mile distant, commences the . . . a land of pastures and woods."¹⁶

Although the art colony at Etaples had several advantages for the artist, it was the "peculiarly rich gray tone of the skies," that held his interest.¹⁷ Several influences on his work during this period are discernable. Although the focal point in *The Departure of the Mayflower* is the foreground figure of the girl, the landscape also commands attention. The high horizon line and overall spatial treatment recalls Harrison's indebtedness to Jules Bastien-Lepage.

The placement of the seascape in the upper right corner, is similar to that in his earlier painting, *Shipwrecked* (fig. 2.1). The reflection of light on the waves, which is applied with a thick impasto, demonstrates his familiarity with marine subjects. By this time, his brother Alexander, whose *Crepuscule* caused a sensation at the Salon of 1884, had gained a reputation as one of the best marine painters among both French and American artists and it is clear that Birge's approach to the sea is indebted to his brother. This exquisitely rendered detail indicates Harrison's early interest in marine subjects, an interest that he would later explore more fully.

The influence of the French artist Jean Charles Cazin can also be seen in Harrison's work from this period. Cazin had been in Grez during the same period as Harrison. Also there at the time was Harrison's friend, Frank O'Meara. O'Meara was greatly influenced by the quality of poetic reverie in Cazin's work and had adopted the French artist's muted palette and soft hazy atmospheric approach.¹⁸ As already noted, O'Meara was in Etaples in 1887, when Harrison was working on *The Departure of the Mayflower*.

By the late 1880's Cazin's reputation was growing in France and America. He was known as a master of painting gray skies and an atmosphere effect that enveloped his landscapes and privileged suggestion over literalism.¹⁹ Harrison's treatment of the gray skies of Etaples and the coastal atmosphere is reminiscent of Cazin's work. In his handling of the cloud-filled sky and atmosphere, Harrison demonstrated his continued interest in the problems associated with plein-air painting. Like Cazin, Harrison used pearly gray tones in the sky, as well as a

muted, softly hazy, atmosphere that envelops the scene and suggests more than is depicted.

The Departure of the Mayflower is a transitional piece. In it, Harrison balanced his skill at figural representation with his growing interest in the beauty of nature's elusive moments. As in his earlier figural works, nature's moods reflect human sentiments. In this instance, however, the evocative landscape is not a backdrop to the figure, but carries equal weight in conveying a sense of loss.

The tragic death of Harrison's father in 1886 suggests a more personal interpretation. His choice of this Pilgrim subject may have been intended to allude to the Harrison family's American roots and contribution to its history, and through them to his father. In this work, Harrison again demonstrates his mastery of technique as a means to an end. *The Departure of the Mayflower* not only evokes Harrison's heartsickness at the loss of his father, it is also a fitting homage to the man who had allowed him to follow his passion of becoming an artist. By his melding of figure and landscape into a cohesive statement of grief, Harrison rises above description and narrative and successfully conveys a universal sense of loss.

Harrison's growing interest in solving artistic problems inherent in out-of-doors painting and in exploring the potential of the landscape as an effective agent of suggestion is evident in two other paintings from this period. *Along the Road*, 1887 (fig. 6.2) and *Le Soir*, 1893 (fig. 4.1), reveal his growing mastery of the technique of "refraction," which he defined as the visual approximation of the "intimate effect of one mass of color or value upon its adjoining mass"²⁰ found in nature. Composed of two different characteristics, value refraction calls upon the

artist to lower the value as he approaches the juncture of two masses. Color refraction uses the intensifying effect of complementary colors on each other.²¹ When used skillfully, refraction results in a general diffusion of tone that resulted in the atmospheric quality, or mood, in paintings that was also referred to in French as *envelope* and in America as the “lost-edge.”

Referring to James McNeill Whistler’s nocturnes as examples of value refraction, Harrison acknowledged Whistler as one of the masters of this technique, stating that it is his use of this “one quality that his work owes all of that emotional, appealing and poetic charm which is its distinguishing trait.”²² In terms of color refraction, Harrison pointed to the Barbizon artists, and particularly Corot, as masters of complementary colors that are not applied *alla prima* as the Impressionists would, but over a carefully selected undertone. The result is the layering of colors found in Harrison’s own landscapes. For Harrison, the hallmark of “modern” painting was the “mood,”²³ the effect that the picture communicated. Harrison credited both Cazin and Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot as the first artists to perceive that nature’s choicest moments occur in the evening and dawn hours when nature’s “veiling mist”²⁴ reveals her beauty. Like both of these artists, Harrison skillfully exploited this insight in achieving a poetic lyricism in his work that is first evident in these two paintings from this period.

In both works, Harrison also chose commonplace subjects and achieved a balance between the figural and landscape elements similar to those popularized by Cazin.²⁵ In *Along the Road*, 1887 (fig. 6.2), Harrison’s subject is a young girl resting at the edge of a road in the late afternoon. In *Le Soir*, 1893 (fig. 4.1), it is an

old woman walking through the village center in the early evening. In both paintings man's daily cycle of activity is subsumed into the universal natural order. In the earlier work, Harrison strove to maintain a balance between the figure and his interest in the landscape. By 1893, Harrison's figure has diminished substantially, as he increasingly transferred the evocative elements of the painting from figure to landscape and more specifically to the effects of light.

His illustrations for articles written during this transitional period reveal a similar movement toward greater emphasis on landscape. Although he included one landscape in each of the three parts of the series "Thro' the Land of the Marseillaise," the figural element is more pronounced in these works from 1887, than in his later illustrations done during his stay in Australia from 1890 to 1891.

For example, in his illustrations for "Station Life in Australia," which accompany the text written by Sidney Dickinson, the scale of the figures, compared to the flat open landscape, conveys the sense of the vastness of the Australian landscape. This is particularly pronounced in *Driving the Culls to Market* (fig. 6.3) where the figure, who stands with his back to the viewer, is placed next to a serpentine road that leads the viewer's eye toward the distant horizon, which is dominated by a lone tree. The same sense of the land is conveyed in the more panoramic view in *Night on the Plains* (fig. 6.4) for the same article.

The change in Harrison's approach to the figure from 1887 to 1893, may have been influenced by the placement of figures in the landscapes of Australian artists associated with the Heidelberg Movement. At least two years before Harrison's arrival in Australia in December 1889, these artists were painting urban

and rural scenes in which figures were integrated in a manner similar to that which Harrison would adopt in his paintings after 1887.

For example, in Frederick McCubbin's *Winter evening, Hawthorne*, 1886 (fig. 6.5), the figure, walking toward home in the falling dusk, merges with the tall grass of the hill in the foreground. In 1889, shortly before Harrison's arrival in Australia, Arthur Streeton's shepherd in *Golden Summer, Eaglemont*, 1889 (fig. 6.6), almost disappears into the golden light falling on the rolling fields. Just as Harrison would in his illustrations, in their exploration of the relationship of man and nature, the Heidelberg group visualized their motives in terms of their experience of vastness of nature in Australia.

The subjugation of the figure to the landscape element was new to Harrison's work, and his experience in Australia was almost certainly responsible for moving his painting in this direction. However, what he learned was not limited to understanding the techniques of the Heidelberg school, but was also the result of his encounter with the vastness of the Australian land itself.

Although Harrison had experienced the wide-open spaces of New Mexico in 1883, his illustrations of it offer little indication of his personal response to the land. Rather, they focus on the picturesqueness of the region. Similarly, the illustrations from his 1887 trip to the area around Marseillaise remain preoccupied with the character of the people. None of these illustrations convey the sense of Harrison's personal interaction with the vastness of the land itself that is communicated in the illustrations from Australia.

These two influences, Harrison's personal experience of nature's vastness and the pictorial subjugation of the figure to the landscape, provided an impetus for Harrison to allow the landscape alone to carry the meaning of his work. Both figuratively and literally, they broadened his horizons.

¹ "American Pictures at the Trans-Mississippi and Inter-National Exposition at Omaha, Nebraska," *Brush and Pencil* 3 (October 1898): 42.

² *The Departure of the Mayflower*, in the collection of Swarthmore College, has a large rip in the lower left quadrant and three large puncture holes in the bottom half of the canvas. The paint is cracked and lifting from the canvas in several areas.

³ Allison Rae, "The Traveler: An Old House in Etaples," *The Australasian*, May 9, 1891, 907.

⁴ Birge Harrison, *Landscape Painting* (1909; reprint: New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911), 171.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Gabriel P. Weisberg, *Beyond Impressionism. The Naturalist Impulse* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1992), 24.

⁸ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 176.

⁹ Barbara J. Mitnick, "Paintings for the People: American Popular History Painting, 1875-1930," in *Picturing History: American Painting 1770-1930*, William Ayers, ed. (exh. cat., New York: The Fraunces Tavern Museum, 1993-94), 166.

¹⁰ Lois M. Fink, *American Art at the Nineteenth Century Paris Salons* (Washington D.C.: National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1990), 160.

¹¹ Ibid., 351.

¹² Such an interpretation was erroneous however, because it was the *Speedwell*, and not the *Mayflower*, that left Delftshaven on July 22, 1620, leaving behind the bulk of the congregation of Pilgrims in Leyden. See, L.D. Geller, *The Pilgrims: A Brief History* (Plymouth, Mass.: Cape Cod Publications, 1920), 2. The *Mayflower* actually left from Plymouth, England in September 1620, arriving in New Plymouth in November 1620. See, Alan Brinkley, *The Unfinished Nation: A Concise History of the American People* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993), 35.

¹³ Elizabeth Broun, "American Paintings and Sculpture in the Fine Arts Building of the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893" (Ph. D diss., University of Kansas, 1976), 263. However, the *Mayflower* departed Plymouth on April 5, 1621 after the first winter, which had decimated the Pilgrim group, leaving only twelve women of whom four were young girls. All of the original settlers remained in the new world (Geller, 12). Rather than standing on the shore it is more likely that they would have watched the departure from the fort on the hillside of the bay that had already been constructed to provide protection. See, Ethel J.C. Noyes, *The Women of the Mayflower and the Women of the Plymouth Colony* (Plymouth, Mass., 1921), 96.

¹⁴ Hubert Howe Bancroft, *The Book of the Fair* (Chicago/San Francisco: The Bancroft Co., 1893), 683. Bancroft may have confused Harrison's pilgrim subject with Douglas Volk's *Puritan Maiden* that was also exhibited at the Exposition (Broun, 279).

¹⁵ Charles Louis Borgmeyer, "Birge Harrison-Poet Painter," *Fine Arts Journal* 29 (October 1913): 581. It was exhibited as *The Departure of the Mayflower* at the 1891 PAFA Annual Exhibition (Peter Falk, ed., *The Annual Exhibition Records of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art* (Madison, Ct.: Soundview Press, 1989), 236).

¹⁶ Birge Harrison, "In Search of Paradise with Camera and Palette," *Outing Magazine* 21 (January 1893): 313.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 314.

¹⁸ Julia Rowland Myers, "The American Expatriate Painters of the French Peasantry, 1863-1893" (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, 1989), 248.

¹⁹ William A. Coffin, "Jean Charles Cazin," *Century Magazine* 55 (January 1898): 397.

²⁰ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 48.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 63.

²² *Ibid.*, 54.

²³ Birge Harrison, "The 'Mood' in Modern Painting," *Art and Progress* 4(July 1913): 1015.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 1019.

²⁵ Coffin, 397.

Chapter Seven

The Tonalist Landscapes

As Charles Borgmeyer noted in 1913, the aesthetic intention of Harrison's figure paintings differs little from that of his landscapes.¹ This intention conforms to the definition of Tonalism for which Harrison was a major spokesman.

Harrison's interest in capturing the poetic, atmospheric effects that accompany the transitory times of day in his figure paintings was redirected in his landscapes by focusing on the sky and atmospheric effects to communicate nature's varying moods. Similarly, Harrison found that by exploring nature's various seasons, particularly by concentrating on snowscenes, he could convey his impression of nature's infinite variety. In Harrison's landscape paintings, the suggestiveness present in his earlier figure paintings was infused into the landscape itself, so that the human figure was no longer needed. At the same time, by limiting himself to scenes that suggested a human presence, he was able to convey a sense of the oneness of man and nature.

As outlined by Clara Ruge in 1906, Tonalism was viewed as a distinctly American synthesis of the ideals of the Barbizon school with certain Dutch influences and "French technical discoveries."² The terms "Tonalism," "tonality," "tonal" and "tone" were applied in a variety of ways that was debated during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.³ According to "The Critic" writing for the *Art Collector*, "tonality, tone, quality, serious quality, etc., as applied to art, have no meaning except what convention gives them: they all mean the same

thing.”⁴ The term was generally applied to color modulation, but it was also often used to mean key or value. It could be, and was, expanded to include “atmosphere, air, movement, timbre, ‘intelligent,’ ‘get-there,’ and every word that has been used in trying to express it.”⁵

Despite the imprecision of the language used to describe Tonalism, the synthesizing process to which Ruge referred resulted in a “cohesive approach”⁶ to a landscape art of poetic suggestion that visualized nature’s moods. This art of suggestion is characterized by a harmonious modulation of color, simplification of compositional elements, diffused light and an interest in atmospheric effects found most frequently in the transitional periods of the seasons or days, which were used as a metaphor to express the individual artist’s emotional response to nature. Although art historians have also used the terms “Quietist” and “Intimist,”⁷ this approach is most frequently referred to as Tonalism.

Rediscovered by American art historians after Wanda Corn’s groundbreaking 1972 study of the movement in *The Color of Mood: American Tonalism 1880-1910*, Tonalism has emerged from the shadow of Impressionism, another fluidly defined contemporaneous movement. Tonalism was not only a popular aesthetic, but also helped define the “American School” during the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth.

As early as 1898, when a retrospective of sixty paintings by George Inness was shown in Paris, the French critic Arsene Alexandre was already noting the emergence of an American school.⁸ As Diane Fischer has pointed out, works in the Tonalist manner dominated the landscapes presented at the American section of the

1900 Universal Exposition in Paris.⁹ At the time when the United States had established itself as a world leader in the political and economic areas, American participation in this exhibition was a conscious effort to assert America's maturity as an art-producing nation on a par with France and other European countries. Landscape paintings in particular represented America's artistic independence from Europe and constituted "a distinct school of American landscapes, purely and entirely American."¹⁰

The perception of Tonalism as a distinctly American school influenced by the cosmopolitan experiences of European training is evident as late as 1910, in Christian Brinton's preface for the Exhibition of American Art in Berlin and Munich. As Brinton suggested, however, by this time the work of The Ten, The Eight and the "brilliant experimentalists" under Alfred Steiglitz were challenging Tonalism's once privileged position.¹¹

Whether Tonalism constituted an art movement has been debated. Focusing on the first generation of Tonalists, particularly James McNeill Whistler and George Inness, Corn did not address the work of a younger, second generation of artists. When this group, which included Harrison, was discussed in 1982 by William Gerds, Diane Sweet and Robert Preato, in *Tonalism: An American Experience*, a revised view emerged. Tonalism was seen as constituting a legitimate art movement, with a tendency toward certain shared formal characteristics that were recognized by critics, such as Ruge, as a distinct aesthetic. Several artist-writers, including Birge Harrison, Leonard Ochtman, Henry Ward Ranger, and Arthur Hoeber,¹² articulated a common theoretical and aesthetic

approach characteristic of Tonalism. Tonalists also benefited from the patronage of collectors, such as Charles Lang Freer, Thomas B. Clarke, William T. Evans and George A. Hearn, who favored works in the Tonalist aesthetic.¹³ Paintings in the Tonalist style were exhibited widely, notably at The Lotos Club of New York City, whose membership included several Tonalist artists and collectors. As Gerdtz has indicated, Tonalism began to coalesce into a movement around 1896, at the very time that Harrison began painting marine subjects in this manner.

As his figure paintings indicate, Harrison's art was already developing toward Tonalism as a result of a synthesis of French influences and the exchange of ideas among fellow artists, including his brother, Alexander Harrison, at the art colonies of Grez, Pont-Aven and Etaples. Like other Tonalists, Harrison also admired the artists of The Hague School, who infused the realism of their landscapes with "emotion and rich artistic qualities."¹⁴ He particularly admired the "exquisite silvery quality"¹⁵ suggested by the cool gray or violet-gray tone found in the works of the seventeenth-century Dutch master, Jan Vermeer.

As in his earlier figural works, Harrison's landscapes reveal his understanding of the use of formal elements as a means of visualizing his meaning, the unity of man and nature. In his figure paintings, Harrison had expressed this unity by placing his figures in landscape settings whose mood mirrored the psychological mood of the figure. In his landscapes, he relied on his mastery of painting the circumambient air which "envelops every object lying out under the wide arch of the sky, rather than the object itself."¹⁶ to convey the same message.

Harrison struggled with the possibility of producing evocative landscapes from the direct observation of American scenery with its “clear cut and defined shores . . . gay and brilliant and singing in color,”¹⁷ that lacked the natural dreaminess and light of European landscape. To solve this problem, Harrison looked to the work of George Inness, who shared his belief that the primary function of art was to appeal to the emotions.¹⁸

Visiting Inness’s studio, while he was working on “a large picture of Niagara Falls,”¹⁹ Harrison found an example of how to resolve his struggle. Following Inness’s advice he discovered that the “constantly shifting and kaleidoscopic effects which are peculiar to our changeable climate” produced “another kind of beauty which, however much it might differ from that to which I had been so long accustomed abroad, was none the less intrinsic and admirable” and equally adaptable to “pictorial expression on canvas.”²⁰

Harrison’s concern for capturing the quality of light particular to the Eastern United States confirms his commitment to the direct observation of nature. While mood and suggestiveness are of primary importance in Harrison’s work, he nevertheless always strove for a balance between these concerns and the subject itself. Although Diana Dimodica Sweet has concluded that “we are simply expected to respond to light and shade, color and texture and the subtle interplay of shapes”²¹ of his work, this is not entirely accurate. As Harrison noted, “while all good art suggests more than it expresses it must of course suggest something and suggest that something clearly . . . There is a point where absence of definition in a picture becomes mere obscurity.”²²

Harrison chose not to explore the brilliant color and light found in America, but like Inness and other Tonalist artists, preferred the softer light of transitional periods, of “twilight and pearly dawn, moonlight and mist.”²³ In Harrison’s case, it is possible that his familiarity with Emersonian Transcendentalism may have predisposed him toward these times of day. It is clear from his work that Harrison, like Emerson, found a special beauty in these moments of transition, “as if the form were just ready to flow into other forms.”²⁴

In his writing, Harrison credited Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot and Jean-Charles Cazin for perceiving that nature’s choicest pictorial moments are when the veiling mists of dawn or evening are present.²⁵ These ephemeral moments constituted what Harrison, and other Tonalists, referred to as nature’s “moods.” For Harrison, the meaning of a painting, and the message that the artist sought to communicate, was found in the “fascinating spirituality of nature,”²⁶ made visible in her infinite display of natural effects, because he believed that it is at these times that she presents her most immaterial aspect. Contemporary critics recognized this spiritual quality in Tonalism. The presence of a sense of spirituality in art offers the viewer an experience of a world larger than himself. Harrison’s personal response was consistently filtered through his pantheistic beliefs. For Harrison:

any landscape has a soul as well as a body. Its body is our Great rock-ribbed mother-earth with her endless expanse of fields and hills, of rivers and surging seas. Its soul is the spirit of light- of sunlight of moonlight, of starlight, which plays ceaselessly across the face of the landscape.²⁷

While it is difficult to separate what is specifically Unitarian in Harrison’s approach to landscape art from the still-intact legacy of Transcendentalist

pantheism that informed the era's spirituality, it is clear that Harrison's early introduction to Unitarian beliefs played a key role in his personal response to nature, which reaffirmed the unity of all living things.

In Tonalism, mood constituted the essential beauty of the scene, and it was the artist's experience of this realization that provided the inspiration for the creation of the painting. It was this desire to communicate to the viewer his own subjective experience of this event that gives Tonalist works a sense of a spiritual dimension and its characteristic suggestiveness. The viewer is meant to feel what the artist felt. Harrison believed that the artist's job was to use both his gift of artistic vision and his mastery of technique to construct a painting that allowed this shared experience to occur.

George Inness also provided a model for expressing the spiritual dimension characteristic of these works. Like Inness, Harrison believed that the emotion expressed unified the painting and that it was from this that true beauty flows.²⁸ For Harrison, this unifying emotion was the meaning of his experience with nature. Like Inness and other Tonalists, Harrison realized that in order to render nature's soul, which he defined as her "*essential* beauty,"²⁹ he must strip away unnecessary details and edit the scene into a simplified composition.

Like other Tonalists such as Bruce Crane and J. Francis Murphy who stated, "If I have my sky, I have my picture,"³⁰ Harrison also focused much of his attention on the sky as the pictorial element that most immediately inspired him to paint a given scene. As his marines and landscapes reveal, it is the sky in Harrison's

landscapes that best express the spiritual dimension by capturing “the poetry of out-of-door nature, her mystery, and her ever-varying and shifting moods.”³¹

Harrison pursued his goal of expressing nature’s spiritual dimension through a choice of subject matter that was more varied than that of other Tonalists. In general, however, he limited his subjects to the more intimate, non-dramatic and lyrical aspects of nature, preferring to depict the “symbolic elements of man’s interaction with nature rather than depicting nature in isolation.”³² As Inness indicated as early as 1878, the “civilized landscape” was “peculiarly” powerful in communicating “human sentiment,” man’s interaction with nature recorded in the changes that his “labor, effort, suffering, want, anxiety, necessity, love”³³ have made to the natural environment. The exception to this rule is Harrison’s earliest marine paintings done in Santa Barbara around 1896.

Like most Tonalists, Harrison did not finish his canvases out-of-doors. Rather, he relied on memory, or as he referred to it, his “subconscious servant,” to record the essential elements of the scene that had provided the inspiration for his work as well as particular effects of light and color. Harrison devoted a chapter in *Landscape Painting* to an explanation of the “sub-conscious servant,” which he defines as that part of the brain that “stores up all of the information of life,” that is, all forms of learned or “mechanical” knowledge and behavior.³⁴ The “reasoning ego,” the ability to think abstractly is located in the other half of the brain. That Harrison devoted a chapter in *Landscape Painting* to this subject indicates his sustained interest in psychology and to some extent, in alternative states of consciousness.³⁵ In order to facilitate his work, Harrison made sketches out-of-

doors, in which he concentrated on capturing his initial sensation. He also focused on the effects of light and color, paying particular attention to effects of vibration and refraction.

Reliance on mimetic techniques emphasized the decorative aspects of the work. This was one of Tonalism's most distinguishing characteristics and one that separated it from Impressionism.³⁶ For Harrison, this method was the only way to achieve the "synthetic and personal quality that is the distinguishing mark of all great art."³⁷ He achieved this through the manipulation of natural forms in order to obtain the desired synthetic or decorative quality necessary in a work of art.

Harrison believed that art appeals to the viewer on two levels. Associative in character, the first level is readily accessible to the average viewer. More difficult to appreciate is the intrinsic beauty of the work of art itself. This level requires that the viewer first possess "true vision," that is, a sensitivity to beauty; and second, that he have some knowledge of the formal elements of art and the manner in which they are combined to produce a work of beauty. He defined a work of beauty as one of "subdued tones of harmoniously blended color."³⁸ Harrison was also of the opinion that the "civilized man finds his highest aesthetic pleasure" in this beauty and that "harmony was [his] delight."³⁹

Such observations have led some art historians to assail Tonalism as elitist. In her book *Art and the Higher Life*, Kathleen Pyne, for example, notes the impact of the positivist theories of Herbert Spencer on the work of such Tonalist artists as Thomas Dewing and Dwight Tryon. Harrison's statement about the "civilized man" reflects at least in part, the prevailing positivist mind-set. Pyne however, goes

on to assert that “the tonal aesthetic of Dewing, Tryon and others preserved a northeastern cultural norm that reified Anglo-American hegemony,”⁴⁰ in part as a reaction against current social problems in the United States, as well as contemporary art trends, and resulted in the “elitism of Dewing and his colleagues.”⁴¹ While Pyne’s conclusions may be valid for Dewing and Tryon, it is not necessarily applicable to all Tonalists without further investigation into the ideas of those individual artists who are acknowledged as members of the movement.

Despite the above statements, for instance, there is no indication that Harrison shared Dewing’s “personal sense of embattlement against this perceived assault of modernism.”⁴² Like others of his generation who had embraced the concept of a cultural goal for American society, Harrison was convinced that Americans could be educated to appreciate the beauty of art. This appreciation was not intended to reify Anglo-American hegemony. For Harrison, an awareness of beauty in all of its forms would awaken American society “to claim for themselves some of the joy and beauty of life.”⁴³ It was toward this goal that he directed his art teaching, and his writing.

Tonalism’s popularity was declining toward the end of his life, perhaps because it was “too aesthetic,”⁴⁴ that is, too concentrated on the decorative qualities of art, and lacking in narrative and associative qualities for the average viewer. However, Harrison was convinced that the increase in public awareness with its accompanying demands for “the best music, the most beautiful pictures, the noblest public monuments, the finest architecture,”⁴⁵ had improved the climate for art in

this country and indicated that the American public was well on its way toward achieving this appreciation. In addition, his steadfast faith in the necessity of personal expression in art provided a basis for tolerating the wide range of styles that accompanied the advent of modernism in this country.

Harrison's own artistic principles stressed the decorative in his work. This aspect of his work is most clearly exemplified in the appeal that winter landscapes held for him. Covered by a mantle of snow, the decorative line of scene is more clearly exposed, emphasizing the compositional unity of the painting. Harrison frequently manipulated natural forms to create a beautiful object, a work of art, characterized by a harmonious unification of all elements that can be seen as analogous to the beauty found in the natural world. Applying this approach, Harrison's oeuvre is remarkable for its consistency. In general, his paintings maintain a carefully controlled, narrow range of low toned hues and values and skillfully modulated color harmonies that strengthen the unity of the composition.

Color was the most important formal element that Tonalists employed for the visualization of both natural beauty and the artist's emotional response to that beauty. Harrison believed that color had a "mysteriously controlling influence on what might be called the psychology of a picture."⁴⁶ As he had in his figure paintings, Harrison explored the emotional effects of color in his landscapes. His observations of this effect, as well as his insistence on harmony and unity have been interpreted as part of a therapeutic response to the stress of modern living that was characteristic of the Tonalist aesthetic. However, there is no indication in his

writings that Harrison used the emotional associations of color in his paintings to serve as a buffer “from the harsh and jangling world of work and haste.”⁴⁷

His interest in the psychological or emotional effects of color can be more instructively viewed as indicative of his desire to convey his personal response to nature. In his writing, he does maintain that the artist’s selection of his palette was a “matter of temperament.”⁴⁸ Harrison relied on his substantial technical mastery of the use of values found in his color scheme, refraction, and the veiling, or softening effect, produced by a unifying colored atmosphere or “envelope.” Using these techniques, he was able to visualize the transitory effects of nature, the “half times between day and night” when even the “banal”⁴⁹ was transformed into the beautiful.

The veiling effect produced by these techniques was supplemented by Harrison’s brushstroke, which ranged from heavily applied wet strokes to thinly brushed dry ones within a single canvas. Like other Tonalists, he mixed his colors on the canvas in order to capture the quality of vibration, which he defined as the “scintillating effect of living light.”⁵⁰ Unlike the technique used by the Impressionists, Harrison obtained this effect by painting a “cool overtone painted freshly into a warm undertone,” and took care not to “cover up the warm undertone completely, rather letting it show through brokenly all over the canvas; the vibration being secured, naturally, by the separate play of the warm and the cold notes.”⁵¹ This layering of carefully modulated tonalities and values in his work produced the harmonious effect that is the hallmark of Tonalist paintings. In addition, Harrison, following Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot’s example, frequently

injected unexpected colors into the scheme to increase chromatic intensity. Unlike some Tonalists, notably Henry Ward Ranger,⁵² who relied on the use of glazes to produce an overall tonal effect, Harrison avoided this practice. He believed that the use of glazes “must be discarded by the modern painter for the very simple reason that it precludes all possibility of vibration.”⁵³

His handling of paint resulted in an active paint surface. As Ruge indicated, surface quality was one of the major concerns characteristic of Tonalism.⁵⁴ In Harrison’s view, “quality,” which he defined as “the elusive and exquisite surface beauty,”⁵⁵ raised the question of the relative value of a work of art. So important was this aspect of a work of art for Harrison that he believed that it was the “intrinsic beauty of the work itself that decides its value.”⁵⁶

By the late-nineteenth century, as painting became more self-referential, brushstroke was generally accepted as signifying the artist’s originality and individuality. Following the advent of Impressionism, greater emphasis was placed on this metaphoric value, as well as the concept of the stroke suggesting spontaneity and a genuine response to nature. In his book, *Cézanne and the End of Impressionism*, Richard Shiff expands this process to other pictorial devices stating that “any given technique operates as a metaphor.”⁵⁷

Applying this argument to Harrison’s landscape, it becomes clear that the visual language that he employed, his choice of palette, the veiling atmospheric envelope, the vibration of light across the canvas, the layering of colors in carefully modulated tones and values, and particularly his emphasis on refraction, was intended to demonstrate the interconnectedness of all things through nature’s

effects. Harrison used these devices, as well as the pictorial devices of simplification and abstraction to augment the natural scene, which he presented to the viewer. As such, Harrison's technique can be seen, as he stated, as means to an end, as a metaphor for his experience of nature as a harmonious oneness of all things, which he wished to convey to the viewer.

Because color played a pivotal role in his work, Harrison was keenly aware of the necessity for improving the quality of pigments available to artists. He made a careful study of the effectiveness of various binding agents in an effort to develop a less fugitive pigment and deduced that pure linseed oil was the best mixing agent available. His study of this issue resulted in the development of a replacement for the vermilion then in use. Its makers named the pigment "Harrison red."⁵⁸ He was particularly leery of using lead as a mixing agent, and with good reason. Around 1913, he developed a case of lead poisoning that required that he cease using oil paints for a prolonged period.

He turned this adverse condition to his benefit. Seeking an alternative medium that could approximate oil paint, he undertook an extensive investigation of pastels. His essay on the topic, "The Case of the Pastel," which was published in 1915, continues to be noted by American art historians today.⁵⁹ Applying a combined method of study with trial and error, Harrison began grinding his own pigments and to make his own pastel sticks. Through diligent research, he discovered a paper porous enough to hold the pigments, thus eliminating the problem of the lack of adherence.⁶⁰ As exemplified by such paintings as *Early Morning, Low Tide*, c. 1910, the result of this endeavor was a work that was in

“every sense a true painting.”⁶¹ His pastels were frequently exhibited as oils and occasionally sold as such, much to Harrison’s consternation.⁶²

Harrison had been exhibiting works in pastel since at least 1888, when he showed *La baignade* at the Paris Salon.⁶³ Although there had been a lack of appreciation of pastels in the United States, the 1880’s saw a revival of interest in the secondary mediums of pastel and watercolor. Spurred by the success of the Jean Francois Millet, Whistler and the French Impressionists, especially Edgar Degas, American artists began exploring the expressive potential of this medium.⁶⁴

In 1884, the Society of Painters in Pastel was established to advance interest and patronage of pastels. Harrison exhibited with the group in 1889.⁶⁵ In 1890, Childe Hassam, among others, founded the New York Water Color Club. Harrison exhibited three pastels at the Club’s First Annual Exhibition.⁶⁶ He continued to show pastels regularly throughout his long career. Although interest in pastels may have been part of the anti-academic stance taken by the younger generation of artists returning to America after studying abroad, for Harrison, an artist’s choice of medium was a question of temperament.⁶⁷

Harrison exhibited landscape subjects for the first time at the 1897 joint exhibition of paintings by himself and his brother, Alexander, held at the American Art Galleries in New York City.⁶⁸ Several had titles that referred to Santa Barbara, California where Harrison had resided for almost six years between 1891 and 1896.

Although most of his California paintings are now unlocated, one landscape from this period has recently been rediscovered. *California Landscape*, 1895 (fig. 7.1) is the first known extant, pure landscape painting by Harrison. The painting

depicts the area near Ojai, California, where Harrison took frequent camping trips with his friend and neighbor Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead.⁶⁹

Looking eastward across the mountain range, Chief Peak, located in the upper left corner, is barely visible in the far distance. Suggesting late afternoon, the tip of the mountain is strongly lit, revealing the vibrant mauves and pinks of the rocky hillside, while a long shadow is cast across the rocky valley floor and creeps up the mountainside. The modulation of values from the heavily shadowed foreground to the brightly lit background, provides a rare instance in his work of sharp contrasts in values in a single composition.

California Landscape may depict Ojai's "Pink Moment" which occurs during the fall and winter months as the sunsets reflect off the mountains, giving them a pink glow.⁷⁰ The mountain range in the far distance produces a "sinuous, living line" that "helps to avoid the domination of the horizon line...producing a psychological effect that is one of the most potent things in art."⁷¹ It is a device that Harrison would use with success throughout his career as a landscape artist.

Despite the absence of a veiling atmosphere, both the brushstroke and lack of specific detail convey a sense of the poetic. In this early landscape, it is possible that Harrison was using a glazing technique, a practice that he later dropped in favor of allowing the final varnish to achieve a mellowing of the pigments. Harrison's choice of subject, nature in her wildest state, without any suggestion of human presence or interaction, is unusual in his oeuvre. However, it does find a parallel in the marine paintings from this period.

Marine Paintings

Harrison's interest in marine themes with oceanic effects is evident in his earlier figure paintings, beginning with his first Salon work, *Shipwrecked*, 1880, and continuing through one of his last works for the Salon, *The Departure of the Mayflower*, c. 1886-88. Descriptions of paintings that he exhibited in Australia indicate that Harrison was already exploring the marine as an independent subject before his arrival in Santa Barbara. A review of the exhibition held just prior to his departure describes six paintings with marine themes,⁷² and comments extensively on two, *High Tide at Sandringham* and its companion piece, *Low Tide at Sandringham*.

Describing *High Tide at Sandringham*, the critic draws the reader's attention to the effects of the light from the setting sun, and to the twilight effect in the same scene in *Low Tide at Sandringham*. In his description, the reviewer perceived Harrison's artistic interests in the marine subject, the use of color for evocative effect, and solving the problem of fixing motion onto the rigid surface of the canvas.

Harrison's earliest located marines with coastal themes were painted in Santa Barbara around 1896, the same period in which he executed his first landscape. In these works, Harrison began to explore the possibilities of the ocean's "infinite inexhaustible moods" and the "new face of beauty" that she presents to "every devoted lover who approaches her with reverence and affection."⁷³

His interest in marines can be traced back to his childhood days in Germantown. Among the many resident artists that he and his brother Alexander visited, William Trost Richards had the most direct and lasting effect on both of the brothers' work. Richards and the Harrisons shared a pantheistic belief in nature.⁷⁴ However, their approaches differ significantly. While Birge acknowledged Richards as "among the master draftsman of the sea,"⁷⁵ his style did not reflect Harrison's concern for subjective expression. This difference can in part be accounted for by the general shift toward more subjective expression that occurred in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Correspondingly, interest in solving the artistic problems inherent in the exploration of a more suggestive visual language, particularly with regard to the handling of light, also accounts for the difference in style between these two artists, each representative of the their own generation. Whereas Richards, influenced by Ruskin and the American Pre-Raphaelites and interested in describing nature, emphasized draftsmanship, Harrison, concerned with suggesting nature's moods and his personal response to his experience of them, emphasized color as a signifier of emotion.

A more immediate influence on Harrison's approach to marine paintings was his brother, Alexander. The two artists shared a desire to convey "all of the mysterious grandeur and dignity and power which is the ocean's most compelling charm."⁷⁶ A comparison of only a sampling of their marine paintings illustrates that the two brothers shared a common interest in exploring the two problems involved in their subject, color and motion. The earlier artistic dialogue that had waned during the previous decade as each brother pursued his own interests,

resumed with Birge Harrison's marine paintings from Santa Barbara. However, this dialogue had changed. Rather than a mutual exchange of ideas and influences, which marked their earlier figure works, it appears that at this time Birge leaned on his older brother. Both brothers' marines can be described as "the epitome of poetic realism."⁷⁷

Beginning with the sensation caused by the exhibition of his marine painting, *The Wave* (fig. 2.2) at the 1885 Paris Salon, Alexander Harrison was recognized as one of the master marine painters of his age. Considered a modern picture in that it shows "no human figure contemplating the sea for the viewer to identify with; and presents the experience directly to the viewer, without an intermediary, for the viewer's own interpretation,"⁷⁸ it quickly became the standard by which other modern marines were judged. Birge's marines, painted a decade later and also devoid of human presence, appear modeled after it. Skillfully crafted in composition and modulation of tone to produce a lyrical effect, Alexander's marines revealed his love of "the ocean's gentler moods."⁷⁹ Birge's marines address these same moods, and employ the same "tender and opalescent color schemes of twilight, moonrise and dawn"⁸⁰ to convey them to the viewer.

Birge's *Night Sinks into the Sea*, 1896 (fig. 7.3) bears a striking resemblance to *The Wave*. Set in mid-ocean, both compositions are simplified, showing only two primary elements, sea and sky. The color modulations and low tones are carefully controlled to enhance the lyrical effect and to produce a harmonious unity. At the same time, both artists accurately describe the change in the water's

color as it passes over the ocean bottom and as it becomes almost transparent with the motion of the waves.

Birge's *Serenity on the Pacific*, 1896 (fig 7.4) and Alexander's *Sunset* (fig. 7.5), painted around 1892 to 1893, when Birge visited France, also share compositional similarities. In these coastal scenes, the land, sea and sky are diagonally arranged across the canvas. The viewer's eye is led from the near shore, past the gently rippling waves toward the ocean beyond, terminating at the distant horizon where the ocean merges with an endless sky. Both paintings suggest the endless motion of the waves as they lap onto the sandy, moonlit beach.

Birge believed that he and other American marine painters were successful in conveying the sense of motion in their pictures by relying on line "to impress the spectator with a vivid feeling of essential instability of the scene, making him feel that the motion which has been for an instant arrested is immediately to be resumed," and by choosing to show the "instant of temporary arrest, of wave motion."⁸¹ However, the problem that remained unsolved for the modern marine painter was the convincing depiction of motion on the rigid picture plane.⁸² In his view, Whistler had come close to solving it by imitating the repetitious patterning of form that forces the eye to follow it in a given direction.⁸³ The repetition of the elliptical shapes in Alexander's *Sunset*, and the elongated rectangular shapes in *Serenity on the Pacific* that are formed by the rippling effect of the waves breaking on the beach appear to be exploring the possibilities of Whistler's theory.

Beyond these technical concerns, Birge demanded of marine painting, as he did of all art, that something be said, a message delivered, a symbolism

attempted.⁸⁴ By reducing his compositions to the primary elements of land, sea and sky, resulting in a composition wherein a substantial portion is rendered as a misty and suggestive void, Harrison succeeds in conveying the impression of “unencumbered space” evoking “a sensation of eternity.”⁸⁵ The rhythmic, ceaseless motion of the waves invites the viewer to contemplate and also take part in the scene, one of calmness, harmony and lyricism.

In his earlier figure paintings, Harrison anthropomorphized nature, “projecting human feeling onto it, making it more expressive and using it as a device for “discharging and articulating feeling.”⁸⁶ These devices created a picture of the harmony and oneness of man and nature. In his marines, and later, in his landscape paintings, Harrison used the characteristically Tonalist techniques of simplified composition, atmospheric veiling, and the modulation of color and value to re-create his experience of nature’s lyrical moods, and to invite the viewer to share it. In the process of creating a landscape that conveys emotion, the artist creates an illusion of a directly observed objective reality, which, on further contemplation, suggests subjective and personal associations.⁸⁷

Given the fact that Harrison lost his wife and infant son during the same period that he began painting his earliest marines, it is not surprising that these works resonate with contemplative feeling. One might speculate that for a second time, Harrison turned toward his art to express an intensely personal sense of introspection and a profound sense of loss, the pain of which is eased in these marine paintings by the contemplation of the eternal cycle of nature, symbolized by the timeless motion of the waves on the shore.

In marine paintings from Santa Barbara, Harrison's "vast sky always lends nobility"⁸⁸ to the picture. As we have already noted, it was the sky that provided the initial inspiration for Harrison to paint a given scene. In his later marines, Harrison combined his interest in the sea with the subject of cloud-filled skies as an opportunity to communicate the infinite variety of nature. Using the expressive potential of majestically cloud filled skies to convey of the nature's grandeur, he also combined this motive with a nighttime setting to convey his impression of her mystery. Furthermore, he frequently painted this theme in conjunction with the motive of the reflection of light on various bodies of water, including oceans, lakes, and rivers.

In Harrison's cloud-filled night scenes the form is of secondary importance. In purely technical terms, Harrison viewed these moonlight effects as advantageous for "training the eye to simplicity of vision . . . the broad masses alone are visible and the shadows lie all over the picture in one big soft value."⁸⁹ In terms of poetic expression, he believed that nocturnal scenes expressed the "brooding sense of mystery which gives to night its most poignant charm,"⁹⁰ and he pursued moonlight themes in many of his paintings. Combining night scenes with large bodies of water increased the charm of this type of painting twofold.

One of his most successful extant paintings of this subject, *The Soaring Cloud*, c. 1908⁹¹ (fig.7.6), combines all of the elements that were of interest to him: a moonlight scene of a broad body of water that reflects the moonlight breaking dramatically through a cloud that soars through the night. Barely visible in the background, a mere pinprick of light shining from the distant shore provides a

weak secondary source of man-made light. This light suggests a human presence in the scene, but it is so small and weak that it pales by comparison with nature's magnificent display. Although the scene at first appears to be painted in a monochromatic tone, closer inspection reveals unexpected passages of opalescent mauves and blues applied in layers, each revealing the one beneath it, which enliven the canvas surface.

In his *The Hidden Moon*, c. 1907⁹² (fig.7.7) Harrison has contracted the illumination of the moon that is partially covered by a cloud to the bare minimum. So little light is shed that it is impossible to tell where the horizon line falls. Water and sky merge into a single, dense atmospheric effect. This work exemplifies the "one big soft value" created by such moonlight effects that Harrison sought to capture.

Scenes of Charleston Harbor

Harrison also pursued his interest in painting this effect using as his subject the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina, one of the "most delightful, the most wistful harbors in America."⁹³ In 1908, he exhibited *Moonlight off Charleston Harbor* (fig. 7.8),⁹⁴ one of a series of tonal paintings of this subject that reveal an unexpected range of opalescent colors in an otherwise darkly toned composition. Singular in his oeuvre for their presentation of one of nature's most dramatic effects, Harrison's paintings on this subject convey nature's nobility by using a low horizon line to allow for a sweeping view of a majestically cloud-filled sky.

Harrison also painted the harbor under a different effect, and his impressions of it are among the clearest examples of Whistler's influence. That

Harrison was engaged early in his career in an investigation of Whistler's tonal techniques is evidenced by his pastel, *Evening on the Seine*, c. 1890 (fig. 4.2).⁹⁵ It shares with Whistler's Venetian nocturnes from the early 1880's, an interest in the tonal moodiness of the reflection of evening light on a body of water. As a study of refraction, which is "distributed evenly all over the canvas,"⁹⁶ the veiling of images through the atmospheric envelope, diffusion of tone, and of the carefully balanced values, as well as the use of a bird's-eye perspective, it demonstrates how thoroughly familiar Harrison was with Whistler's tonal techniques.

These concerns are illustrated in his *Moonlight on Charleston Harbor*, c. 1908⁹⁷ (fig. 7.9). Despite the near identical title with *Moonlight off Charleston Harbor*, the two works present Harrison's different impressions of the same subject. Whereas *Moonlight off Charleston Harbor* emphasizes the drama of vast moonlight sky, and hence, nature's nobility, *Moonlight on Charleston Harbor* suggests the atmospheric moodiness of *Evening on the Seine* and ultimately of Whistler's nocturnes. This view of moonlight reflecting through a layer of fog, rising off the pearly mauve and blue waters, is among his most lyrical paintings. The inclusion of the passenger ferry injects a more pronounced note of human activity into the composition that is missing in *Moonlight off Charleston Harbor*. It is present however, in another painting of the same subject, *Rosy Moonlight off Charleston Harbor*, c. 1908 (fig. 7.10), which shows two ships passing in the night.

These works are the closest that Harrison comes to tipping the carefully maintained balance in his work toward the obscurity against which he warned. As dreamy as these impressions seem, they nevertheless correspond to the natural

atmospheric effect found in the harbor area. Recent photographs taken from the same vantage point along the walkway encircling the Battery from which Harrison probably painted these pictures shows that the effect of water, sky and fog in the harbor during the winter months is strikingly similar to that rendered in these works (fig. 7.11). The broad expanse of water in the foreground of these paintings corresponds to this vantage point, where one looks directly over the water, without the mitigating space of beach.

The one important exception, however, is that Harrison contrived his composition in order to obscure what is the harbor's most identifiable, and controversial landmark, Fort Sumter. In his paintings of the scene, he has carefully placed a ship so that it blocks the natural view of the fort, which sits on an island in the middle of the harbor. He did this, no doubt, to achieve the an effect similar to those found in Whistler's nocturnes "wherein the eye broods dreamily over he whole scene."⁹⁸

Harrison's moonlit impressions of Charleston's harbor can be compared to his view of one of the city's oldest landmarks. In *St. Philip's Church by Moonlight*, n.d. [1908-19] (fig. 7.13), the church's distinctive steeple, rebuilt in 1838 after a devastating fire three years earlier, and damaged during the bombardment of the city during the Civil War,⁹⁹ is recognizable through the dark evening mist. Harrison presented a view of it looking northward up Church Street, capturing its most distinguishing feature, the four columns and pediment of the Greek temple façades that front the building on three sides. However, Harrison made artistic choices to convey a mysterious effect. The mud-brown color of the

church has been transformed into an ethereal sentry by the light of the moon that casts a blue-gray tone over the whole of the composition. In order to concentrate on the essential characteristics of the church, the façade and the steeple, he manipulated the placement of the building so that the graveyard, to the right of the façade depicted, does not appear in the composition, an arrangement that does not correspond to the site nor to an illustration of the church in his article on the city written in 1912.¹⁰⁰ In visualizing his impression of the church in moonlight, Harrison followed his own advice that all of the elements of a painting should contribute “to the grace, or the beauty, or the force, or the sentiment”¹⁰¹ of the picture.

His impression of a similar subject, *Old St. Michael's Church, Charleston*, 1919 (fig. 7.14), a replica of the original painted in 1908,¹⁰² is a rare instance during this period in which Harrison pursued the effects of sunlight. Although filtered through a hazy atmospheric film, the church's white-painted wooden steeple, looking much as it does today, glows brightly against a cloudless blue sky. This approach corresponds to his impression that “the prevailing color scheme of the city is that special silver-white which gleams so radiantly against the deep blue of the tropic sky.”¹⁰³

Harrison's paintings from Charleston demonstrate the range of his work and his ability to adapt a variety of techniques in order to convey his impression of the scene before him. Yet, his interest in marine themes continued throughout his long career, as he continued to pursue the infinite variety of nature's moods that are reflected in watery environments.

Harrison's visits to the art colony at Cos Cob, Connecticut, which began around 1908, resulted in at least two examples of his interest in painting the shoreline. In his *Bridge at Cos Cob*, c.1912¹⁰⁴ (fig. 7.14), Harrison focused on the sparkling effects created by the reflection of light on the rippling water. A thick blanket of fog obscures the shoreline of the Lower Landing harbor area. From a vantage point closer to the old seawall at the shoreline, the atmosphere appears less dense, revealing a vast cloud-filled sky. The form of the bridge, as well as the details of the structures along the shoreline, are clearly visible, suggesting a human presence in this once thriving commercial shipyard.¹⁰⁵

Harrison painted a slightly different variation of this subject in *Misty Morning*, c. 1912¹⁰⁶ (fig. 7.15). Also of the Lower Landing, it shares the same concerns with the reflection of light on the water and foggy atmospheric effect. In *Misty Morning* and *The Bridge at Cos Cob* the compositional elements are placed almost identically, and a thin layer of snow covers both scenes. However, through the fog, in the left background of *Misty Morning* one can barely discern the Cos Cob power plant, which provided power for the New Haven train line into New York City.¹⁰⁷ The presence of the boat in the foreground of *Misty Morning*, along the curve of the river bend, and the electrical pole suggest a greater degree of human activity, although again, no human presence is visible. A comparison of these two paintings demonstrates the subtlety found in Harrison's suggestions of his impressions of a particular scene through slight variations in his composition.

Snow Scenes of Plymouth and Quebec City

Both *Misty Morning* and *The Bridge at Cos Cob* are winter landscapes. It was as a painter of snow scenes that first brought Harrison national attention as a landscape painter.¹⁰⁸ He pursued this particular natural effect throughout his career, under various conditions and subject matter. Almost immediately upon his arrival in Plymouth in 1896, Harrison began to paint the snowy winters of New England. The appeal of winter landscapes for Harrison was twofold: first, a blanket of snow covers the non-essential details, exposing for both artist and viewer the decorative line of the scene, on which the compositional integrity relies, and which was essential for the creation of a work of art; and second, the subtle color harmonies, the “thousand exquisite and varied tints, found in the whiteness of snow”.¹⁰⁹

Harrison’s *Winter Landscape*, n.d. [1896-1906] (fig.7.16), demonstrates both the structure and color of the winter scene that appealed to Harrison. It is a simple composition of a fence, barren tree, haystack, and saltbox-style house common to the area around Plymouth, placed in a heavily snow-covered ground. The decorative line of the fence, tree, and house are clearly visible and follow each other in a zigzag line that unites the pictorial elements. The low horizon reveals the effects of a crimson-streaked wintry sunset, or sunrise. Although devoid of figures, the lighted windows of the house suggest a human presence in this civilized landscape, a device that Harrison used extensively.

One of Harrison’s earliest and most successful snowscapes was *Fisherman’s Cottage, Moonlight* (fig. 7.17). This painting, first exhibited at the

Clausen Gallery, New York, in 1901,¹¹⁰ was shown with its companion piece, *Fisherman's Cottage-Moonlight, no. 2* (unlocated) indicating as does several of his other paintings, that Harrison shared the Impressionists interest in capturing the ephemeral effects of nature's moods by painting a series of the same subject, a practice that he continued throughout his career. The setting may be one of the many small fishermen's cottages that once stood along Plymouth Harbor, not far from Harrison's house on Warren Avenue.¹¹¹

Once again a heavy snowfall has covered the unessential details of the scene, highlighting the contours of the pictorial elements: two wooden-slate houses, a wooden fence, a large boulder and shrubs. A cloudless sky of shifting mauve, blues and blue-gray tones fills the upper two-thirds of the picture plane. Responding to the keynote set by the sky, the snow is one of Harrison's "wonderful color symphonies created out of complementary colors," and "so subtly stated that to the non-professional eye it appears to remain a pure and virgin white."¹¹² In his harmonious modulation of the tonal effects that characterize his plein-air snow scenes, Harrison succeeded in discovering "in nature beauties which were hitherto unsuspected and invisible."¹¹³ Harrison's snowscapes from Plymouth demonstrate his ability to transform the most commonplace subject when it is seen "under some rare and fleeting 'effect' [and] that which was banal has become beautiful."¹¹⁴

It was perhaps in search of heavy snowfall, which he preferred to paint, that sent Harrison to Quebec in the winter of 1901. The city's dramatic setting along the St. Lawrence River had attracted artists for generations. While appreciative of its natural setting, Harrison also admired the French-Canadian city's unique

architecture of high-pitched roofs that fit into the “general effect of the city [and] how they help it to climb the heights upon which it is built.”¹¹⁵ Harrison captured this effect in one of his best-known paintings from Quebec, *A Glimpse of the St. Lawrence*, 1904 (fig. 4.3) that is probably one of twenty canvases that he “hammered away at” during the winter of 1904.¹¹⁶ In this sunset scene the roofs of the wooden structures of the Lower Town, seen from a slightly elevated vantage point, appear to cling to the sliver of land at the base of the hill and then progress up the cliff known as Cape Diamond. The treatment of the effect of twilight sky on the snow, with its layers of carefully modulated tones and values is similar, to that in Harrison’s paintings of Plymouth.

The Shadow of Quebec, c. 1906¹¹⁷ (fig. 7.18), is one of Harrison’s most innovative paintings of Quebec City. Painted from the Upper Town, the composition provides a natural bird’s-eye perspective of the wharves of the Lower Town, with the frozen St. Lawrence stretching toward the opposite shore. The steep cliff of Cape Diamond, with the outline of the Chateau Frontenac and its pinnacle, is silhouetted on the ice floes clogging the river, casting a long, blue-mauve shadow across the river and the immediate foreground. An atmospheric haze lingers where the river meets the distant hills in the far background. Unlike his earlier paintings, some human activity is present as workers scurry among the wharves. Harrison has successfully suggested, rather than depicted, the unique topography of the city.

In 1910, while staying at the Chateau Frontenac,¹¹⁸ Harrison began a series of paintings that use the same bird’s-eye perspective as found in *The Shadow of*

Quebec. As Charles Borgmeyer noted, the scene, a panoramic view of the wharves of the Lower Town with the great St. Lawrence stretching beyond to the horizon, is similar throughout a series of paintings done at this time. In each of the pictures, the dramatically foreshortened perspective of the dark brown structures results in a geometric, decorative pattern of dark and white rectangles that anchor the composition, which is severely cropped in the immediate foreground. The varying moods and resulting color schemes, seen through a veiling haze, is a unique representation of changes in the effects of light that range from “the silver-gray of dawn”¹¹⁹ to the deep blue of a moonrise over the river.

Even within specific times of day, Harrison concentrated on capturing the varying effects of light and snow. In his *Floating Ice*, c. 1910¹²⁰ (fig. 7.19), for example, Harrison chose a restricted palette of silver-grays, punctuated with tones of mauve, rose, and mother-of-pearl of the morning dawn to suggest the brittle coldness of the winter scene. In *Early Morning Low Tide*, c. 1910 (fig. 7.20), a pastel, he captured another effect of early morning by choosing a color scheme keyed to the opalescent azure of which he was fond. In *Sunshine and Mist*, c. 1910 (fig. 7.21), the same scene as seen in a brighter light, he introduced a pale, ethereal amber into the bluish-gray scheme in order to capture the effects of the weak winter sunlight on the half-frozen river. In the *Lights of Levis*, 1912¹²¹ (fig. 7.22), Harrison used a deeper bluish palette to capture the moonrise over the river and heights beyond. The lights of the distant city shine as a darkening night atmosphere falls.

Country Scenes of Woodstock, New York

Several of Harrison's best-known works from the area near Woodstock, New York, also evidence his continued interest in snow scenes. His country scenes, especially those from the Woodstock area, continue to be viewed as among Harrison's finest paintings as well as "among the finest produced by the Tonalist movement."¹²² They exemplify the simplicity of Harrison's choice of subject, not only in their commonplace subject matter but also in the reduction of the essential pictorial elements.

As John E.D. Trask noted early in Harrison's career as a landscape painter, if this reduction "seems more intellectual than sensual, it is perhaps by very reason of its ability to stimulate imagination."¹²³ It is in these scenes of simple farm houses, barns and sawmills set among rolling hills that the quality of association is most evident, a quality that draws the viewer into the painting, by stimulating his imagination. A note of nostalgia for the "pastoral and bucolic beauty of country life"¹²⁴ emerges from these picturesque scenes of farmhouses that become an integral part of the natural environment that surrounds them. However, Harrison was able to avoid sentimentality by balancing reality and his personal interpretation of the beauty of nature. He translated this into the abstracted artistic beauty of the painting. As in his paintings of other subjects, an atmospheric effect, particular to each painting, pervades the scene, fusing the compositional elements into a harmonious expression that suggests the relationship of man and nature.

Harrison considered his *Woodstock Meadows in Winter*, 1909 (fig. 7.23) to be one of his finest paintings¹²⁵ and it was widely recognized as such. In 1915, the

painting was listed as one of the most important pictures to see in America.¹²⁶ As he did in several of his Woodstock paintings, Harrison used a panoramic view that retains the sense of a human scale by situating the viewer in the immediate foreground space that is contiguous with that of the pictorial space. A heavy mantle of snow has obscured all unnecessary details in the landscape, exposing the graceful line of the stream that creates an asymmetrical composition, balanced on each side by the forms of the buildings and hills. The particular quality of light in the scene, “the diaphanous yellow in the moon’s reflection,”¹²⁷ illuminates the carefully modulated tones of the bluish sky that are reflected in the cool blue overtones and tints of mauve layered over a warmer undertone of brownish red in the snow-covered ground. Harrison has enlivened the canvas surface by applying dashes of various warm colors across the painting. An atmospheric haze envelops the forms, all of which are painted using the “lost edge” technique of refraction.

According to Alf Evers, the scene is quite accurate, as it would have appeared in 1909. The stream, one of two that joined to form Tannery Brook, which runs through Woodstock village, cuts across Wild Clove Meadow. Mead’s Mountain is on the left and Overlook Mountain is on the right.¹²⁸ Referring to the site as “the hill,” near his Bearsville home on the Glasgo Turnpike, Harrison noted that by 1914, he had painted the scene “six times under as many different effects, and that I shall probably paint it as many times again,”¹²⁹ which indeed he did.

Another painting of the same location, shown from a vantage point that obscures the stream, is *Farmstead in Winter*, c. 1911 (fig. 7.24), also known as *The Farm House*.¹³⁰ From this angle, the farmhouses are seen from behind and placed

closer to the foreground. Several of his canvases from Woodstock are of the same scene, each seen from a slightly different vantage point, and each capturing the quality of light particular to the effect created by one of nature's several moods. Among his various interpretations are *Homeward Bound*, *Winter Moonrise*, *Frosty Morning* and *Frozen Brooks*, which was made into a holiday greeting card.¹³¹

In *The Old Sawmill*, c. 1910¹³² (fig. 7.25), Harrison painted the Reynolds' sawmill in Shady, a small hamlet of Woodstock, adjacent to Bearsville. The picture shows the boiler room to the right of the mill that was added in 1905.¹³³ However, following his own conviction that "Nature is not all beautiful by any means,"¹³⁴ Harrison omitted the smokestack that stood in front of it. Although a working site, no figures are visible and Harrison merely suggests human presence through the tracks in the snow, which curve up from the lower left. A sense of quiescence pervades the scene, as a misty atmospheric effect, which softens the edges of the forms and casts a familiar bluish-gray tonality that unifies the composition, travels down from the surrounding hillside and settles over the wintry scene.

Harrison painted another collection of farm buildings that are still standing, barely, on Wittenberg Road near Shady, in two other paintings, *The Red Barn*, unlocated,¹³⁵ and *Morning After the Snow*. *The Red Barn*, c.1908 (fig. 7.26), is composed of several buildings, arranged along a curving muddy path. Their snow-covered rooflines, tilted at various angles, create a pattern of receding rectangles that gradually fade into the mist that hovers over the mountain in the background. In *Morning After the Snow*, n.d. [1908-10](fig. 7.27), painted in a cool palette of

muted colors under an atmospheric effect that blurs edges of the buildings,¹³⁶

Harrison has included the presence of a single figure seen walking along the road in the lower right side of the canvas. The figure contributes to the suggestion of moderated human activity, as nature itself remains dormant on this winter day.

The most recent of Harrison's country scenes to be discovered take a different approach to his subject. In *Snow Bound*, n.d. [1920-29]¹³⁷ (fig. 7.28), Harrison has limited himself to two simple wooden structures. Unusual in Harrison's work, the scene is painted in bright sunlight. The dazzling blue of the sky is intensified by the whiteness of the snow that clings to the trees in the background. While the upper, sunlit half of the composition is painted in an unusually high key for Harrison's work, the lower half, shaded by trees laden with newly fallen snow, is painted in more subdued blues and mauves. The small red building, to the left of center, provides a spot of warmth among the symphony of white. *Winter Landscape*, n.d. [1920-29] (fig. 7. 29), also done in bright sunlight, is one of Harrison rare pure landscapes. More than any of the subjects that Harrison selected, these country scenes exemplify his conviction that "one of the artist's chief functions, as it should be his chief delight, is to watch for the rare mood when she [Nature] wafts aside the veil of the commonplace and shows us her inner soul in some bewildering vision of poetic beauty."¹³⁸

Urban Scenes of New York City

Far different in terms of subject matter, but not in intention, are Harrison's paintings of New York City. Harrison was one of the few Tonalist artists to choose New York City as a subject for his painting. In doing so, however, he was

following the advice of George Inness, who told the younger artist, “there is material for an artist’s lifetime within a quarter of a mile of Madison Square.”¹³⁹

As early as 1900, when he and his brother, Alexander took a studio there, Harrison began concentrating on the “ever shifting and varying effects”¹⁴⁰ of this quintessential American city. He began exhibiting paintings with titles referring to the city the following year.¹⁴¹ Harrison grew to appreciate the city’s uniqueness, finding that none of the capital cities of Europe could compare “either in color, in effect or in the unexpected character and beauty of its piled-up buildings.”¹⁴²

The five boroughs, having been incorporated into a single metropolis in 1898, New York City by the turn of the last century was seen not only as embodying newness but also as “being ever new,”¹⁴³ energetic, progressive, and the embodiment of modernity in a nation that defined itself by these same characteristics. American artists at the turn of the century who chose the city as their subject were faced with problem of capturing this attitude in their paintings. Harrison’s approach to this subject was to select New York’s celebrated modern subjects, its skyscrapers and streets lit throughout the night, and to paint them using the Tonalist aesthetic. In her recent book, *The Great American Thing*, Wanda M.Corn has suggested that the use of these pictorial strategies provided American artists at the turn of the last century a means of accommodating the new conditions of modern life by making, “aesthetic order from a city of chaotic modernity.”¹⁴⁴

Visualizing the city in this manner permitted Harrison to explore the varying effects and moods of nature in an urban context. He continued to situate man in terms of his relationship to nature, reminding the viewer that despite the

construction of a modern society based on technological progress, man is still part of the natural order. Finally, it allowed for the creation of a work of art that suggested the city's potential for beauty.

Harrison chose to find the poetry and picturesqueness in the city's celebrated modernity. His cityscapes convey his personal impressions of New York's impersonal urban scene. In this, he was accompanied by such photographers as Edward Steichen and Alfred Steiglitz, who shared the Tonalist interest in mood and evocative lighting effects¹⁴⁵ and who published similar photographic images in the journal, *Camera Work*. In fact, several of Harrison's paintings of New York are very similar to the subjects proposed by Sadakichi Hartmann in his "A Plea for the Picturesqueness of New York," published in *Camera Notes*:

Then take Madison Square. Place yourself at one of its corners on a rainy night and you will see a picture of peculiar fascination: Dark silhouettes of buildings and trees surrounded by numerous light reflections, are mirrored in the wet pavement as in a sheet of water.¹⁴⁶

Like Hartmann, Harrison was responding to the imperative that the artist must paint his own place and time. Just as the early advocates of Pictorial photography did, Harrison's response was to see the modern urban subject of New York through the filter of nature's effects, in various seasons and times of day. Softening the "ideal that largeness, loudness and fastness which New York has persuaded the Americans is metropolitan,"¹⁴⁷ Tonalism provided a means for creating a patina in this often coarse city; an elegance and beauty that aligns it with older European cities, "whose patience and age were commonly celebrated."¹⁴⁸

In each of his paintings of the city, Harrison accurately captures each building's distinct architectural identity. In his cityscapes, Harrison joined the pioneers in the fields of painting and photography in the emergence of a "standardized iconography of a New York" in which artists, focusing on the city's distinctive buildings, "conceptualized it as a series of distinctive sites and novelties," and recognized such variety as a signifier of the modern age.¹⁴⁹

In one of his first paintings of New York, *Fifth Avenue in Winter*, c. 1903¹⁵⁰ (fig. 7.30), Harrison used the vertical format characteristic of his cityscapes, which allowed him to capture the city's towering structures and to portray its irregular skyline, here seen through a winter snowfall. The view is looking north on Fifth Avenue from about Forty-sixth Street.¹⁵¹ The painting shows the fashionable avenue when church steeples were the most prominent feature. The first church on the left, the Collegiate Church of St. Nicholas built in 1872, no longer exists. The spires of St. Patrick's Cathedral are visible above the buildings on the right. Moving up the avenue, the square tower on the left is that of the old St. Thomas Episcopal Church, before it was destroyed by fire in August 1905. The church, considered one of the finest examples of ecclesiastical architecture in the city, contained one of John La Farge's earliest murals as well as Augustus Saint Gaudens's *The Adoration of the Cross*.¹⁵² The last steeple is that of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, built in 1873.

The wintry sky and falling snow blur the outlines of the buildings. The color scheme, keyed to the muted rusts, browns, and grays of the buildings and the sky, is relieved by a bright spot of red on the carriage in the center of the

composition. The figures, dashes of black amid the prevailing snow, capture the pace of the city, which is not stopped, only slowed, by the storm.

Harrison painted another of the city's famous churches, the Judson Memorial Church that sits on the south side of Washington Square where Harrison had lived in 1885.¹⁵³ His *Christmas Eve on Washington Square*, c. 1903-07¹⁵⁴ (fig. 7.31), known now only through an illustration in *The Craftsman*, shows the Romanesque structure as viewed from across the Square. Built in 1892, by the architectural firm of Mc Kim, Mead, and White as a Baptist Church, its distinctive, Florentine tower and tiered arcades are visible through the winter night. John La Farge's stained glass windows shine brightly as the Christmas service takes place.¹⁵⁵

Harrison painted Fifth Avenue several times. His *Fifth Avenue at Twilight*, c. 1910¹⁵⁶ (fig. 7.32), captures some of the wonder with which he viewed his subject. He described the point of view as:

just above 59th St. looking down the avenue
and across the Plaza. The low reddish building at the
right is the Vanderbilt house with the University Club
towers just beyond. At the left of the canvas and across
the avenue are the hotel Netherlands and the Savoy. The Plaza
Hotel itself is not visible being too far to the right to be
the line of vision.¹⁵⁷

Not mentioned, but seen through the misty haze, stands the Gorham Hotel, providing a backdrop for the spires of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, with a glimpse of the spires of St. Patrick's Cathedral visible on the left. The University Club, built in 1899, is on the northwest corner of Fifth Avenue and Fifty-Fourth Street.¹⁵⁸

Here, Harrison captured the effects of an early evening rain. The wet pavement reflects the electric lights in these “fairy-like structures”¹⁵⁹ and the newly modernized city light posts. Unable to hold back the nightfall, the buildings stand like “mysterious sentinels”¹⁶⁰ over the plaza. Bare tree limbs frame the composition, forming arabesques that cross the front of the picture plane. Several figures carrying umbrellas cross the expanse of the plaza. The late evening light, shining through a break in the storm clouds, which have been transformed into mauve steaks against the sky, silhouettes the buildings, their architectural details blurred by the rainfall but still identifiable, and accentuates the avenue’s irregular, and almost jagged, skyline.

Harrison also painted the area after a first snowfall looking down Fifty-Ninth Street as it runs parallel to Central Park with the Netherlands and the Savoy hotels in the background. Unlocated, *Fifty-Ninth Street, New York in Winter*, c. 1908 (fig. 7.33), is known only through its reproduction in “The Picturesqueness of New York Streets: Illustrated in the Paintings of Birge Harrison.”¹⁶¹ One review of the painting, noting how accurate Harrison’s impressions of the city were, asked “How many root bound citizens refresh their memory of winter by this very scene of the first snowfall? There is a sense of crackling snow under feet, of the flurry of it through the trees and about the rooftops.”¹⁶²

By 1900, this fashionable area already had a reputation as New York’s “billionaire” district. With the presence of such wealthy entrepreneurs as Cornelius Vanderbilt, it symbolized New York as the financial center of the United States in

much the same way that the city's transportation system and entertainment facilities did.

Harrison painted both of these aspects of the city. In his *Grand Central and The Biltmore in Hazy Twilight*, c. 1903-10 (fig. 7.34), the viewer glimpses the domes of the old Grand Central Depot, which was destroyed in 1910 to make way for the present terminal, through the descending mist of a wet, New York twilight. He also painted New York's famous pleasure palace, Madison Square Garden, in his pastel, *Twenty-Seventh Street and Madison Avenue* n.d. [1903-10] (fig. 7.35). Although a small picture, its vertical composition and sense of atmospheric space successfully capture the monumentality of the entertainment complex that dominated the heart of the city.

Completed in 1890, Madison Square Garden, which stood on the block bounded by Madison Avenue, Fourth Avenue and Twenty-Sixth and Twenty-Seventh Streets, was the epitome of the Beaux-Arts ideal that a building should not only be well planned and functional but should, "in its materials and designs, bring joy and beauty to the urban scene and help socialize the populace into civility."¹⁶³ Taking an unusual bird's-eye perspective, similar to that in his 1910 paintings of Quebec, looking down Twenty-Sixth Street toward Madison Avenue, the distinctive yellow buff-brick of the Garden's Moorish turrets and famous Renaissance tower, sets the color scheme for this snowy scene. The city's largest entertainment center emerges from the light snowfall, a sense of calm pervading an area already well-known as one of New York's liveliest. Presiding above all is Saint Gaudens's golden statue of Diana. In his pastel, Harrison used a limited

palette within which he carefully modulated both in color and light to present an image both modern and beautiful, both impersonally urban but personally experienced.

Diagonally across Madison Square stands the Fuller Building, better known as the Flatiron Building. Built in 1902-03, it was one of the first buildings to “convincingly express the romantic characteristics of the skyscraper.”¹⁶⁴ The Flatiron captured the imagination of many artists, particularly the pictorialist photographers.¹⁶⁵ The October 1903 issue of *Camera Work* reproduced Alfred Stieglitz’s evocative photogravure of the building,¹⁶⁶ along with Hartmann’s essay “The ‘Flatiron-Iron’ Building-An Esthetical Dissertation.”

Hartmann’s characterization of the building as capturing the modern “zeitgeist”¹⁶⁷ resonates in Harrison’s paintings. Harrison shared Hartmann’s conviction that the skyscraper reflected an architecture of “our own country and in our own time”¹⁶⁸ that met the unique needs of the metropolis in a logical manner. Similar to Hartmann’s poetic view of the Flatiron, as a painter Harrison envisioned the innovative architectural form whose “airy grace” he sought to capture on canvas.¹⁶⁹

Harrison painted the famous skyscraper in a serial-like manner, under three different conditions: in a blizzard, after a snowfall, and after a spring rain. In all three works, he showed the building straight on, from the vantage point of the triangular island at the intersection of Fifth Avenue and Broadway at Twenty-Third Street. This vantage point allowed him to create a sense of space in the foreground, across the intersection, for viewing the twenty-three-story building against a

relatively open sky. It also places the viewer at the center of the composition, allowing him to participate in the scene. Interestingly, unlike Stieglitz's famous 1903 photogravure in which the building is viewed from across Madison Square Park, its charm depending on detaching it from its urban setting and connecting it to the natural environment of the park,¹⁷⁰ Harrison's viewpoint places it at the commercial juncture of one of New York's busiest thoroughfares.

Harrison shows a gentle side of winter in his *Flat-Iron in Winter*, c. 1905¹⁷¹ (fig. 7.36). The building, its lighted windows aglow in the evening haze, is seen situated among the other structures at the intersection. The domed building directly behind it is the Merchant's Bank of New York at 141 Fifth Avenue. The skyscraper is cropped at the top, and its triangular shape is emphatic.

As in his other depiction of the building, in *Flat-Iron in a Blizzard*, c. 1905¹⁷² (fig. 7.37) the foreground space is contiguous with the viewer's, helping to create a human scale in the midst of the multistoried buildings. Even though the skyscraper, cropped more severely than the previous painting, its presence still looms over the scene. Transportation struggles to carry-on in the face of nature's onslaught, as carriages, wagons and trolley cars make their way across the open expanse of the intersection, where snow, whipped by the intersections infamous winds, blows in swirls across the composition.

Painted in a muted palette with bluish highlights, *The Flat-Iron after Rain*, c. 1905¹⁷³ (fig. 7.38) shows the building in a lyrical mood. Rain has washed away most of the snow covering the street, and the lights from the street posts reflect off

the wet pavement. The building, its outline blurred by the falling rain, is cropped almost at mid-height creating a forcible impression of its “towering height.”¹⁷⁴

A review of Harrison’s New York City scenes indicates that contrary to the opinion that the forms of these buildings are so obscured that they lack physicality and that the viewer is therefore “simply expected to respond to light and shade, color and texture and the subtle interplay of tones,”¹⁷⁵ these paintings portray specific identifiable buildings and New York City scenes that were topical and which audiences at the time recognized and responded to. Although he continued to address nature in all of her varying moods as his primary concern, Harrison was as deliberate in his answer to the question of what to paint in New York City as he was in how to paint it. Even these few surviving images of his cityscapes, many of which concentrate on the city’s famous thoroughfares, indicate that he was well aware of its importance as a modern financial and cultural center. In his choice of subject matter he attempted to address its characteristically modern diversification, from its fashionable neighborhoods, and entertainment centers to its defining skyline of skyscrapers.

In these works, as in all of his paintings, Harrison maintained a balance between the direct observation of reality and his impression of it in order to convey to others nature’s beauty, sentiment and nobility, as well as man’s relationship with it. Harrison’s landscape paintings are a direct expression of the ideal that is at the core of his aesthetic that, “the artist simply keeps up with the spirit of his times; but in so doing is, we like to think, learning to speak in new terms of beauty, a little finer, a little more spiritual than hitherto known to the world.”¹⁷⁶

¹ Charles Louis Borgmeyer, "Birge Harrison-Poet Painter," *Fine Arts Journal* 29 (October 1913): 596.

² Clara Ruge, "Tonal School of America," *International Studio* (January 1906):60. For a contemporary view of the influence of the modern Dutch painters, commonly referred to as the Hague School, see E. B. Greenshields, *Landscape Paintings and Modern Dutch Masters* (New York: The Baker and Taylor Co., 1906). One of the most distinguishing characteristics of this group of painters, is their attention to the creation of space through light and atmospheric effects. When combined with a simplification of the composition and reduction of detail, their work is viewed as possessing the power of suggestiveness, the hallmark of modern painting at the time.

³ "The Critic," "Tonality," *The Art Collector* 9 (January 1, 1899): 74. An exchange of views on the definition of the term in the same volume of this journal also included the following articles: Leigh Hunt, "Tonality," (December 1, 1898): 36-37; and "A Further Word on 'Tonality,'" (February 1, 1899): 100-101.

⁴ *Ibid.* 74.

⁵ "The Letter Writer," "A Reply to 'The Critic' on 'Tonality,'" *The Art Collector* 9 (January 15, 1899): 85.

⁶ William H. Gerds, "American Tonalism: An Artistic Overview," in *Tonalism: An American Experience* (exh. cat., New York: Grand Central Art Galleries, Inc., 1982), 18.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁸ "Foreign Notes," *The Art Collector* 9 (November 15, 1898): 26.

⁹ Diane P. Fischer, "The 'American School' in Paris, The Universal Exposition of 1900" (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 1993), 1. See also, Dianne P. Fischer, "Constructing the 'American School' of 1900, in *Paris 1900, The 'American School' at the Universal Exposition* (exh. cat., Montclair, New Jersey: The Montclair Art Museum, 1999), 74-83.

¹⁰ Elizabeth Robbins Pennell, *Some Interesting Things about American Art at the Paris Exposition* (Boston: Noyes, Platt & Co., 1900), n.p.

¹¹ Christian Brinton, "American Art in Germany: The Value of our Present Exhibition in Berlin and Munich," *The Craftsman* 18 (June 1910): 318.

¹² Diana Dimodica Sweet, "American Tonalism: An Explanation of Its Ideas through the Work and Literature of Four Major Artists," in *Tonalism: An American Experience*, 29-37.

¹³ Robert R. Preato, "Collectors of American Tonal Painters: Charles Lang Freer, Thomas B. Clarke, William T. Evans and George A. Hearn," in *Tonalism: An American Experience*, 39-48.

¹⁴ H. Wayne Morgan, *New Muses: Art in American Culture 1865-1920* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978), 70. Harrison illustrated Anton Mauve's *A Flock of Sheep*, in *Landscape Painting* (reprint 1909, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911), 70.

¹⁵ Nicolas Chilcott, *Will Johnson: A Champion of American Art* (Chicago: Adams Press, 1975), 84.

¹⁶ Birge Harrison, "Painting at Woodstock: The Work of a Group of American Landscape Painters," *Arts and Decoration* 2 (May 1912): 247.

¹⁷ Birge Harrison, "Subjects for the Painter in American Landscape," *Scribner's Magazine* 52 (December 1912): 765.

¹⁸ George Inness, "A Painter on Painting," *Harper's Magazine* 56 (1877-1878): 458.

¹⁹ Harrison, "Subjects for the Painter in American Landscape," 766. It is difficult to ascertain to which painting Harrison is referring. Inness's *Niagara Falls*, was painted in 1885, the most probable date for Harrison's visit as he was living in New York City at that time. However, the painting measures 16x24 inches, not constituting a "large picture." Inness's other, larger painting of the Falls, *Niagara*, was painted in 1889, when Harrison was still in France.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Sweet, 31.

²² Birge Harrison, "The 'Mood' in Modern Painting," *Art and Progress* 4 (July 1913): 1016.

²³ *Ibid.*, 1015. Harrison did not essay an autumnal theme very frequently, when he did, as indicated by his *Autumn on the Farmington River*, c. 1900 (Private Collection) his approach was to tone down the colors of New England's fall season, by veiling the characteristically brilliant foliage in an enveloping mist.

²⁴ Donald McQuade, ed., "Art: Essays, First Series (1841) in *Selected Writings of Emerson* (New York: Random House, 1981), xxxv.

²⁵ Harrison, "The 'Mood' in Modern Painting," 1019.

²⁶ Birge Harrison, *Landscape Painting* (1909; reprint New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911), 157.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 156.

²⁸ Inness, 458.

²⁹ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 15.

³⁰ Birge Harrison, "Painting at Woodstock: The Work of a Group of American Landscape Painters," 248

³¹ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 227.

³² Eugene Taylor, "The Interior Landscape: George Inness and William James on Art from a Swedenborgian Point of View," *Archives of American Art Journal* 37 (1997): 2.

³³ Inness, 461.

³⁴ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 166.

³⁵ When addressing the issue of how the "sub-conscious servant" continues to function even during sleep, Harrison recommends that the reader see "the very remarkable book on "Sleep" by Hon. John Bigelow" (*id.* 167). The book to which he refers is *The Mystery of Sleep* by John Bigelow, L.L.D. (New York: Harper & Bros.), 1913. This book is a quasi-scientific approach to how the functions of the mind change in response to altered psychological states. Bigelow clearly believes in a spiritual realm and quotes Swedenborg extensively.

³⁶ Gerdtz, *Tonalism: An American Experience*, 26.

³⁷ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 171.

³⁸ Birge Harrison, "The Appeal of the Winter Landscape," *Fine Arts Journal* 30 (May 1914): 193.

³⁹ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 193.

⁴⁰ Kathleen Pyne, *Art and the Higher Life: Painting and Evolutionary Thought in Late-Nineteenth Century America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 203.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*, 205.

⁴³ Birge Harrison, "The Artist...By One of Them....Namely....Birge Harrison," *The Plowshare* 6 (February 1917): n.p.

⁴⁴ Gerdtz, *Tonalism: An American Experience*, 27.

⁴⁵ Harrison, "The Artist...By One of Them....," n.p.

⁴⁶ Birge Harrison, "Recent Tendencies in Marine Painting," *Scribner's Magazine* 49 (April 1911): 473.

⁴⁷ Sara Burns, *Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 144.

⁴⁸ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 117.

⁴⁹ Harrison, "The 'Mood' in Modern Painting," 1015.

⁵⁰ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 31.

⁵¹ Birge Harrison, "Vibration in Landscape Painting-Concluded," *Palette and Bench* 2 (October 1909): 12.

⁵² Henry Ward Ranger was one of leading spokesmen of the Tonalist movement. Racy Hosted Bell's *Art Talks with Ranger*, (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1914) presents Rangers art theory is comparable to Harrison's *Landscape Painting* as one of the most articulate statements of the Tonalist aesthetic. For a discussion of Ranger's use of glazes see Lance Mayer and Gay Myers, "'The Color -Charm of the Tone-Picture' Ranger, Glazes and the Tonalist Technique," in Jack Becker et al, *Henry Ward Ranger and the Humanized Landscape* (exh. cat., Old Lyme: Florence Griswold Museum, 1999), 35-41. Ranger placed a greater emphasis on continuing the traditions of craftsmanship as found in the works of the Old Masters. While Harrison believed that the art of the present was indebted to that of the past, as a dedicated plein-air painter, he did not advocate a return to the techniques that they used.

⁵³ Birge Harrison, "Vibration in Landscape Painting," *Palette and Bench* 1 (September 1909): 270.

⁵⁴ Ruge, 60.

⁵⁵ Harrison, *Landscape Painting* , 104.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 103.

⁵⁷ Richard Shiff, *Cézanne and the End of Impressionism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), xv.

⁵⁸ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 116.

⁵⁹ See for example, Doreen Bolger, et al., *American Pastels in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (exh. cat., New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989-1990) for references to Harrison's writings and works in pastels.

⁶⁰ Unfortunately, this problem was not completely resolved. In 1918, one of Harrison's best known pastels, *Red Saw Mill*, was smeared so severely while in transit from The Detroit Museum to The Toledo Museum of Art that Harrison initiated a law suit in order to collect damages for \$1200.00. In a letter dated December 28, 1918, he asked Robert Macbeth of the Macbeth Galleries to arbitrate the matter (The Macbeth Papers, Archives of American Art, roll N Mc 51).

⁶¹ Birge Harrison, "The Case of the Pastel," *Art and Progress* 6 (March 1915): 157.

⁶² Harrison wrote a letter addressed to Mr. Myers, dated January 5 1914, in which he attempted to explain to the purchaser that the pastel, which he purchased from an exhibition where it was represented to be an oil painting, was in no way inferior to a work done in oil. Secretary's Files, Archives of PAFA.

⁶³ Lois M. Fink, *American Art at the Nineteenth Century Paris Salons* (Washington D.C., The National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1990), 351.

⁶⁴ Diane H. Pilgrim, "The Revival of Pastels in Nineteenth-Century America: The Society of Painters in Pastel," *The American Art Journal* 10 (November 1978): 48.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁶⁶ Harrison exhibited *Evening on the Seine*, (now at The North Carolina Museum of Art) *Boys Bathing* (unlocated) and *Midwinter* (unlocated) in the *First Annual Exhibition of the New York Water Color Club* (exh. cat., New York: New York Water Color Club, Fall 1890). Records of the New York Water Color Club, Archives of American Art, roll 653. Although he was in Australia at the time, Harrison gave the address of his longtime friend from Grez, H. Burr Nicholls, a practice that he used frequently while traveling during this period. His participation in this exhibition indicates that he maintained a presence in the American art world during this time of extensive travel.

⁶⁷ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 107.

⁶⁸ *Paintings by Birge Harrison and Alexander Harrison* (exh. cat., New York: The American Art Galleries, April 12-19, 1897), n.p.. Other paintings shown with California titles but now unlocated were: *California Tarweed in bloom*, *Landscape near Santa Barbara*, *A Ranch near Santa Barbara*, *California Pastures*, *A tranquil evening off Santa Barbara*, *A Road near Santa Barbara*, *Summer in California*, and *Sunrise near Santa Barbara*.

⁶⁹ Letter from Jane Mc Call-Whitehead to her mother, dated September 2, 1894. See also, calendar entries for October 10, 1894, and December 9, 1894. The Byrdcliffe Collection, Winterthur Museum Research Library.

⁷⁰ The Ojai location was confirmed by James Blakely, a local historian of Ventura County and the Coastal Range of the Santa Ynes Mountains. I would also like to thank William Horton for this help in identifying the site.

⁷¹ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 93.

⁷² "Art and Artists," *Table Talk*, May 15, 1891, 6. The titles mentioned are *High Tide at Sandringham*, *Low Tide at Sandringham*, *Evening on the Bay*, *A Glimpse of Lake Tyers*, *In Now for a Swim*, and *Calling the Sea-Dog*.

⁷³ Birge Harrison, "Recent Tendencies in Marine Painting," *Scribner's Magazine* 49 (April 1911): 477.

⁷⁴ Linda S. Ferber, *William Trost Richards: American Landscapes and Marine, 1833-1905* (exh. cat., Brooklyn: Brooklyn Museum of Art), 34.

⁷⁵ Harrison, "Recent Tendencies in Marine Painting," 472.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 469.

⁷⁷ Richard Boyle, *American Impressionism* (Boston: The New York Graphic Society, 1974), 78.

⁷⁸ Fink, 234.

⁷⁹ Harrison, "Recent Tendencies in Marine Painting," 472.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid., 474.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 469.

⁸⁵ Donald B. Kuspit, "Timely Space by the Timeless Sea: Modern Views of the Beach," in William Gerds et al., *At the Water's Edge* (exh. cat., Tampa: Tampa Museum of Art, 1990), 41.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 44.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 93.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 74.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 44.

⁹¹ *The Soaring Cloud* is not dated. However, it was exhibited for the first time in Harrison's one-man show at the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy in December 1908. See, *Catalogue of Collection of Paintings by Birge Harrison* (exh. cat., Buffalo: Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, 1908-1909), no. 29. It was also illustrated in several articles on Harrison including Leila Mechlin, "Birge Harrison's Paintings," (381) and Borgmeyer, "Birge Harrison: Poet-Painter," (584).

⁹² Although undated, Birge Harrison showed *The Hidden Moon* at the *Exhibition of Landscape Paintings by Birge Harrison*, (exh. cat., New York: The Century Association, April 1907), no.29. Harrison was admitted as an associate member in 1902 and as a full member in 1910 (Barbara Novak and Annette Blaugrund, eds. *Next to Nature: Landscape Paintings from the National Academy of Design* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 155).

⁹³ Charles Henry White, "Charleston," *Harper's Magazine* 115 (November 1907): 853.

⁹⁴ National Academy of Design Exhibition Records, Birge Harrison File, Library of William H. Gerds. *Moonlight off Charleston Harbor* was formerly titled *Charleston Harbor*. I am grateful to Sara Weiner at Columbia University for the opportunity to

examine the work at which time it was discovered that Harrison had written the title "Moonlight off Charleston" in pencil on the back of the wooden frame..

⁹⁵ Exhibited at the First Annual Exhibition of the New York Water Color Club, in 1890, the work was most likely executed before Harrison departed for Australia in the fall of 1889. It was his first non-figurative and his most innovative work at the time.

⁹⁶ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 54.

⁹⁷ Harrison began exhibiting paintings of Charleston harbor as early as 1908, with his *Moonlight in Charleston Harbor*. See, *Catalogue of a Collection of Paintings by Birge Harrison* (exh. cat., Buffalo: Buffalo Fine Arts Academy/Albright Knox Gallery, 1908], no. 50).

⁹⁸ Donald Holden, *Whistler, Landscapes and Seascapes* (New York: Watson-Guption Publishers, 1976), 54.

⁹⁹ *Book of the South Carolina Inter-State and West Indian Exposition*, (Exposition Publication, Charleston, South Carolina, December 1901-May 31, 1902), 1: 15, in the Archives of the South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, South Carolina.

¹⁰⁰ Birge Harrison, "Three Beautiful Cities," *Art and Progress* 3 (June 1912): 607.

¹⁰¹ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 98.

¹⁰² The original painting, purchased in 1916 by Joseph G. Butler, Jr., was destroyed in a fire that swept through the third floor gallery of Mr. Butler's home in Youngstown, Ohio in 1917. At Butler's request, Harrison painted the existing replica in 1919. I would like to thank Samatha Kimpel, Assistant Curator for Collections at The Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio, for providing me with this information, which she gathered from previously undocumented portions of the Institute's archives that included letters from Harrison to Butler. In his letter dated December 7, 1918, to Butler, Harrison refers to the title of his painting as *Old St. Michael's Church, Charleston*.

¹⁰³ Harrison, "Three Beautiful Cities," 610.

¹⁰⁴ Although a date of 1915 has been assigned to *Bridge at Cos Cob*, this painting now at the Butler Institute of American Art, is listed in *Exhibition of Paintings by Birge Harrison* (exh. cat., Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art, December 1912), no. 6.

¹⁰⁵ Susan G. Larkin, *The Cos Cob Art Colony: Impressionists on the Connecticut Shore* (exh. cat., New York: The National Academy of Design, 2001), 76.

¹⁰⁶ *Misty Morning* was illustrated in Borgmeyer, 591.

¹⁰⁷ I would like to thank Susan G. Larkin for identifying the site of this painting.

¹⁰⁸ As indicated by a review of an exhibition of his paintings at the Century Club, Harrison had secured his reputation as a specialist in snow effects by 1904 ("Snowscapes for

Christmas Pictures of Winter by Birge Harrison at the Century Club," *The New York Times*, Sunday, December 25, 1904, 7).

¹⁰⁹ Birge Harrison, "The Appeal of the Winter Landscape," *Fine Arts Journal* 30 (May 1914): 194.

¹¹⁰ *Catalogue of Paintings by Birge Harrison* (exh. cat. New York: The Clausen Gallery, March 18-30, 1901), no.2 and no.3, n.p.

¹¹¹ I am grateful to Lee Regan at the Plymouth Public Library for this information.

¹¹² Harrison, "The Appeal of the Winter Landscape," 195.

¹¹³ Harrison, "The 'Mood' in Modern Painting," 1019.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1015.

¹¹⁵ Harrison, "Three Beautiful Cities," 607.

¹¹⁶ Letter from Harrison to Harrison Morris, April 2, 1904, Secretary's Files, Archives of *PAFA*.

¹¹⁷ *The Shadow of Quebec* was exhibited at the 1906 Winter Exhibition at the National Academy of Design, no. 209 (National Academy of Design Exhibition Records, Birge Harrison File, Library of William H. Gerdts).

¹¹⁸ Letter from Birge Harrison to John E. D. Trask, dated January 26, 1910, Secretary's Files, Archives of *PAFA*.

¹¹⁹ Borgmeyer, 599.

¹²⁰ *Floating Ice* was exhibited in *Exhibition of Landscapes by Birge Harrison* (exh. cat.: New York: Century Association, December 1911), no.21,n.p. Archives of American Art, roll N/CA-1. The title of this painting was discovered written on the stretcher recently by the private owner.

¹²¹ Letter from Birge Harrison to John Trask, dated December 12, 1912, Secretary's File, Archives of *PAFA*. Harrison asked Trask to change the name on the painting from *Moonrise over Levis* to *The Lights of Levis* and noted that "the above picture, shipped today is still wet."

¹²² William H. Gerdts, *Art Across America: Two Centuries of Regional Paintin, 1710-1929* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1990), 1:170.

¹²³ John E.D.Trask, "Birge Harrison," *Scribner's Magazine* 42 (November 1907), 583.

¹²⁴ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 249.

¹²⁵ Letter from Birge Harrison to Mr. Stevens, Director of the Toledo Museum of Art, dated August 1, 1913, Archives of The Toledo Museum of Art. Although the painting is

dated 1909, in a letter that Harrison wrote to John Trask, dated December 29, 1908, he indicates that the painting was painted in 1908. Secretary's Files, Archives of PAFA.

¹²⁶ Lorinda Munson Bryant, *What Pictures to See in America* (Chicago: Jane Lane Co., 1915), 225.

¹²⁷ Borgmeyer, 602. In a letter to Harrison, dated September 25, 1916, Mr. Stevens indicates that the painting "seemed to have undergone some decided change in color." The painting was returned to Harrison who examined it and found that since it had never been varnished, the colors had dried out unevenly. After a week of drying it in the sun, Harrison applied the finishing coat of varnish. Archives of The Toledo Museum of Art.

¹²⁸ Letter from Ellin K. Roberts, Woodstock Librarian, to Susan Strickler, dated October 31, 1978. Archives of The Toledo Museum of Art. See also, Ms. Strickler's entry in *The Toledo Museum of Art: American Paintings* (Toledo: Toledo Museum of Art, 1979), 57.

¹²⁹ Harrison, "The Appeal of Winter Landscape," 195.

¹³⁰ *Farmstead in Winter* was illustrated as *The Farm House* in Leila Mechlin's 1911, article, "Birge Harrison's Paintings," 380. In 1913, it was illustrated as *The Farmstead in Winter*, in Borgmeyer's article, "Birge Harrison Poet-Painter," 593. This confusion exemplifies one of the problems with regard to Harrison's work. Descriptive titles are frequently assigned by owners or galleries, which then enter into the literature on Harrison. In part, this is due to the titles that Harrison frequently assigned to his works. Contemporary exhibition catalogues of his work are replete with vague titles such as "Winter Moonrise;" "Winter Sunset;" "Moonlight," etc. *Farmstead in Winter* was exhibited in 1910 at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art, Falk, *PAFA, Annual Exhibition Records* 2: 237) and at the Art Institute of Chicago the same year, Falk, *AIC Annual Exhibition Records*, 410).

¹³¹ Unidentified reproduction in the "Birge Harrison File" at the New York Public Library indicates that *Frozen Brooks* c.1910, which was exhibited at the *Second Special Exhibition of Eminent Living American Painter* (exh. cat., Philadelphia: The Art Club of Philadelphia, December 1910), no.19 was made into a holiday greeting card by the Sterling Engraving Company and Suffolk Engraving & Electriotyping Company of New York. *Winter Moonrise* appeared in the exhibition, *Tonalism: An American Experience*; *Homeward Bound* is unlocated, and *The Frosty Morning* appeared in the Christie's East sales catalogue #7307, for June 6, 1992 (askart.com).

¹³² *Old Saw Mill in Shady*, was exhibited in 1910, Falk, *PAFA Annual Exhibition Records*, 2: 237. The painting was illustrated as *The Old Saw Mill* (Borgmeyer, 587).

¹³³ Identification and description of the scene taken from the Curator's Files, The Murdock Collection, The Wichita Art Museum.

¹³⁴ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 229-30.

¹³⁵ *The Red Barn* was exhibited in *Catalogue of a Collection of Paintings by Birge Harrison* (exh. cat., Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, Albright Art Gallery, December, 1908),

no.30. Unlocated, it is identified by a newspaper clipping in the Birge Harrison File, New York Public Library.

¹³⁶ Birge Harrison File, The Library of the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art, Memphis, Tenn.

¹³⁷ The title, *Snow Bound*, is inscribed on the stretcher. I am grateful to Christie's East, New York City, for providing me with the opportunity to examine this work as well as *Winter Landscape*. A letter from Harrison to the Macbeth Galleries dated October 27, 1921, suggests that at this time Harrison was using a higher keyed palette in his work (The Macbeth Papers. Archives of American Art, roll N Mc51).

¹³⁸ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 229-30.

¹³⁹ As quoted in, "The Picturesqueness of New York Streets: Illustrated in the Paintings of Birge Harrison," *The Craftsman* 3 (January 1908): 398.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Harrison exhibited *Winter in Central Park* (unlocated), in June 1901 at the Century Association, Archives of American Art, roll N/CA-1.

¹⁴² Harrison, "Subjects for the Painter in American Landscape," 767.

¹⁴³ Wanda M. Corn, "The New New York," *Art in America* 61 (July-August 1973): 60.

¹⁴⁴ Wanda M. Corn, *The Great American Thing, Modern Art and National Identity 1915-1935* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 163.

¹⁴⁵ Corn, "The New New York, 61.

¹⁴⁶ Sadakichi Hartmann, "A Plea for the Picturesqueness of New York," *Camera Notes*, v. 4, no. 2 (1900): 91-94 & 97; reprinted in *The Valiant Knights of Daguerre, Selected Critical Essays on Photography and Profiles of Photographic Pioneers by Sadakichi Hartmann*, Harry W. Lawton and George Knox eds., with the collaboration of Wistaria Hartmann Linton (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 57.

¹⁴⁷ William Dean Howells, "Letters of an Altrurian Traveler," *The Cosmopolitan Magazine*, 16 (December 1893), reprinted in Neil Harris, ed., *The Land of Contrasts, 1880-1901*, (New York: Braziller, 19070), 345.

¹⁴⁸ Corn, *The Great American Thing*, 163.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ *Fifth Avenue in Winter* was exhibited at the Century Association on June 6, 1903, along with another New York scene, *Washington Square North*, Archives of American Art, roll N/CA-1. It was also reproduced in Borgmeyer (601).

¹⁵¹ Description of the site provided by the Museum of the City of New York in a letter to the Spanierman Gallery, New York City. I would like to thank the Gallery for making this information available to me.

¹⁵² "St. Thomas Church completely wrecked by fire," *The American Architect and Building News* 88 (Saturday, August 12, 1905), 49.

¹⁵³ Janice H. Chadbourne, Karl Gabosh and Charles Vogle, eds., *The Boston Art Club Exhibition Records* (Madison, Ct.: Sound View Press, 1991), 204. Harrison gave his address as 3 North Washington Square, New York for the 1885 Boston Art Club Exhibition.

¹⁵⁴ *Exhibition of Paintings by Birge Harrison* (exh. cat., Art Institute of Chicago, 1907), no. 46. This painting is listed as a pastel. It was illustrated in "The Picturesqueness of New York Streets," n.p.

¹⁵⁵ Kenneth T. Jackson, ed., *The Encyclopedia of New York City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 628.

¹⁵⁶ *Special Exhibition of Oil Paintings by Birge Harrison* (exh. cat., Detroit: Detroit Institute of Arts, 1910), no. 15.

¹⁵⁷ Letter from Birge Harrison to Mr Griffith, dated November 29, 1910, Archives of the Detroit Institute of Arts.

¹⁵⁸ Robert A. M. Stern, Gregory Gilmartin and John Massengale, *New York 1900. Metropolitan Architecture and Urbanism 1890-1915* (New York: Rizzoli, 1995), 233.

¹⁵⁹ Harrison, "Personality in Architecture," *The American Magazine of Art* 8(October 1917): 491.

¹⁶⁰ Corn, "New New York," 61.

¹⁶¹ "The Picturesqueness of New York Streets," n.p.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 399.

¹⁶³ David Garrard Lowe, *Stanford White's New York* (New York: Watson-Guption Publications, 1999), 134.

¹⁶⁴ Stern, 164.

¹⁶⁵ For an overview of the many artists who painted the building during this period see, Bruce Weber *The Prowed Tower: Early Images of the Flatiron Building*, exhibition at the Berry-Hill Galleries, New York City, 1991.

¹⁶⁶ Alfred Stieglitz's photogravure, *The "Flat-Iron,"* was published in *Camera Work*, No.4 (October, 1903), n.p.

¹⁶⁷ Sidney Alan (Sadakichi Hartmann), "The 'Flat-Iron' Building- An Esthetical Dissertation," *Camera Work* no. 4 (October 1903) 37. Note, all references to *Camera Work* are taken from the Krause-Thompson Organization edition, a 1969 reprint of the original.

¹⁶⁸ Birge Harrison, "Personality in Architecture," 491.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ This view corresponds to the advice given to artists by Giles Edgerton in "How New York has Redeemed Herself from Ugliness-An Artist's Revelation of the Beauty of the Skyscraper," *The Craftsman* 11 (January 1907): 469.

¹⁷¹ *Flat Iron in Winter*, is now lost. It was badly damaged in 1925, when Harrison lent it to a theatrical group as a backdrop for their play. Harrison received \$600.00 from the insurance company and the painting was forwarded to the Macbeth Gallery, The Macbeth Papers, Archives of American Art, roll N Mc 51.

¹⁷² *Flat Iron in a Blizzard* was exhibited at the Century Association, February 4, 1905, Archives of American Art, roll N/CA-1. It was also reproduced in Borgmeyer (588).

¹⁷³ *Flat Iron after Rain* was exhibited at the Century Club, February 4, 1905, Archives of American Art, roll N/CA-1. If it shows the building in a spring rain, as the author of "The Picturesqueness of New York Street," who also illustrated it, indicates, then it was probably painted the previous year, 1904. (199) The painting was illustrated in Trask (577), and in Borgmeyer (602).

¹⁷⁴ Borgmeyer, 602.

¹⁷⁵ Sweet, 31.

¹⁷⁶ Harrison, "The 'Mood' in Modern Painting," 1020.

Here for the first time in the history of painting landscape is receiving the same serious attention which has from time immemorial been accorded to figure painting.

Birge Harrison, "Painting at Woodstock"¹

Chapter Eight

Brydcliffe and The Woodstock Art School

Birge Harrison believed that his most enduring contribution to the development of American art was his role as a teacher, first as the painting instructor for the Byrdcliffe Arts and Crafts Colony in 1904, and later as the founder and director of the Art Students League's school of landscape painting in nearby Woodstock, New York, from 1906-1911.² He saw this role as fulfilling "the universal duty of the older to the younger generation."³ a conviction that he no doubt arrived at while experiencing firsthand the Beaux-Arts systematic application of it in their education of many generations of artists.

In fact, the teaching methodology that Harrison adopted, with its emphasis on instructional criticism of student work, is modeled after the instruction that Harrison himself received as a student at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts under Thomas Eakins, and later at the École under Carolus-Duran and Alexandre Cabanel. Many of the artists of Harrison's generation turned to teaching as a means of supplementing their income. They also sought to fulfill an implicit contract between generations of artists to pass along their knowledge and experience in the hope of advancing the arts. In the United States, this contract can be viewed as part of the cultural goal of securing a role for art in American society.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the landscape genre maintained a privileged position in the hierarchy of painting. As we have already seen, the generation of American landscape artists of which Harrison was a part was dedicated to the principles of plein-air painting to which they were exposed as students studying abroad. This method precipitated an evolution of landscape painting from one that relied on studio compositions to one that relied on the direct observation of nature. Harrison's generation of artists were not taught the techniques of plein-air painting, necessary to convey the artists' personal experiences of nature directly to the canvas, in the studios of the École.⁴ Rather, they discovered these techniques for themselves in the art colonies of Europe, particularly France, where this innovative approach, which emphasized the importance of natural light and color, gained importance due to the influence of Jules Bastien-Lepage and the Impressionists.

In order to teach American students this innovative way of approaching landscape painting, artists established a number of out-of-door schools in the United States upon their return. By the 1890's, "summer school outdoor teaching had become a significant, even vital aspect of American art instruction."⁵ Among returning artists who conducted summer out-of-door schools were: John Twachtman at Newport, Rhode Island, and later at Cos Cob, Connecticut; Joseph De Camp at Annisquam, Pennsylvania; Walter Shirlaw at the Adirondack Summer School of Art, which later became the Catskill Summer School at Napanock, New York, under Theodore Robinson; and William Merritt Chase's Shinnecock School. The Art Students League established a summer school in Old Lyme in 1902, under

Frank Du Monde.⁶ These schools not only provided professional training for students interested in exploring the aesthetics of plein-air painting, but as their numbers grew, paintings done in this manner were exhibited more frequently, leading to an acceptance of this aesthetic by critics and the public, which had a lasting impact on the development of American art. Among these colonies few are better known than the one at Woodstock, New York.

Some art historians have identified a “Woodstock style” of landscape painting that resulted from Harrison’s influence as director of the Art Students League’s summer school there during the formative years of the colony. Linking it to the American Scene paintings and mural projects of the Federal Works Arts Project, Karal Ann Marling, for example, has broadly described it as a regional style that emphasized the description of spirit and mood, which was characterized by contemporary art journals as possessing a “peculiar ‘fuzzy’ tone, attributable to the soft, feathery brushstrokes laid over the structural bones of the compositions.”⁷

However, as Alf Evers, a prominent historian of the colony, has rightly noted, a definition of the “Woodstock School” remains elusive. Evers recognized that the common element among the wide variety of styles that developed in Woodstock was each artist’s “attempt at finding a compromise between European innovations and American tradition.”⁸

It is to Harrison’s credit that it has remained difficult to define the artistic production of the colony. The development of a particular style or school of painting would have been in direct opposition to Harrison’s convictions as a teacher and the manner in which he conducted the school. Harrison was opposed

to the development of any specific type of “school” of art. He found the “tendency of all schools to develop a *school*”⁹ to be the main weakness in European instruction. His educational philosophy, and the approach that resulted from it, is best summarized in his statement that “the whole intent of art training should be to develop individual artists, each differing from the other to the full breadth and extent of personal temperament.”¹⁰

Under Harrison, Woodstock developed into more than a site for a summer school; it also developed into an art colony that provided a sense of artistic community that nourished artistic creativity. Many of Harrison’s former students, such as John Carlson, Harry Leith-Ross, Alfred Hutton and Andrew Dasburg, remained in the area as permanent residents and participated in the development of the colony. By the 1920’s the town was host to a number of artists pursuing widely divergent interests. At least six major summer schools, including courses dedicated to landscape and figure painting, design, and lithography were being held in Woodstock.¹¹

Birge Harrison’s teaching career began with his informal instruction to Jane Bryd McCall Whitehead in 1895, at Arcady, the Whitehead estate, in Santa Barbara, California.¹² It was natural that Ralph Whitehead turned to his old friend to fill the position of art instructor vacated by the resignation of Bolton Coit Brown and Hermann Dudley Murphy after the first year of instruction at his utopian Arts-and-Crafts colony of Byrdcliffe.

Brown, known today as one of the early masters of lithography, had been an art instructor at Stanford University and an avid collector of Japanese prints.

Whitehead and Brown first met in 1901-02.¹³ Whitehead had already enlisted Hervey White, a novelist associated with the Jane Addams Hull House in Chicago, to find a site in Oregon for a utopian arts and crafts community, dedicated to the principles espoused by William Morris.¹⁴ When this effort failed, Whitehead asked Brown for his assistance. Brown began scouting the farmlands of New York for a proper site. By the spring of 1902, Whitehead, White and Brown settled on Bearsville, located adjacent to the small town of Woodstock in the Catskills as the location for the community.¹⁵

Years later, Harrison wrote about the fortuitousness of this choice in terms of its advantages for the landscape painter. The broad valley in which the town is situated combined an “immense variety of landscape features,”¹⁶ including flat meadows, the winding Sawkill River that cuts through the valley, and the Catskill Mountains. Even the town itself was deemed picturesque and a worthy subject for the painter’s brush.

The location was also well suited to Ralph Whitehead’s purposes. It provided a rural setting necessary for establishing an environment in which a return to a simpler lifestyle, less dependent on modern machinery and in closer contact with nature, would enhance the craftsmen’s lives. This ideal lay at the core of Whitehead’s view of the Arts-and-Crafts movement and the utopian community that he hoped to make a reality.¹⁷

Whitehead had outlined the framework of his essentially anti-modernist utopian community based on the movement in his book *Grass of the Desert*, published in 1892.¹⁸ Although the community never achieved financial success,

the initial plan called for it to achieve a degree of profitability. The nearby town of Woodstock provided the added advantage of being situated close to the railroad, which could be used to ship goods produced at the colony to the booming markets in New York City.

Unlike many of the other Arts-and-Crafts communities established in the United States around the turn of the century, such as the Roycroft Colony in East Aurora, New York, Byrdcliffe was the rare instance of one that enjoyed a degree of financial independence due to Whitehead's support. Having inherited a small fortune from his family's manufacturing business in England, Whitehead unreservedly threw his personal financial resources behind his project.

On the wooded hillside just above Woodstock, Whitehead built a sprawling complex. The colony included houses for the instructors and "Villetta," the largest building, where the students boarded. It also contained a studio with an adjacent library with more than 1,200 square feet of floor space that overlooked the valley; a pottery studio; a well-equipped metal shop with a forge, lathe and furnace; and a carpentry shop.¹⁹ Each of the residences was given a name. Whitehead's home, "White Pines," was the main house on the compound. When the Harrisons arrived in the summer of 1904, they moved into "Carniola," Brown's rambling thirteen-room residence that rivaled Whitehead's own house.²⁰

The instructors for the summer of 1903 included Bolton Brown, as drawing master; Hervey White; the Canadian Dawson-Dawson Watson; the Scottish lithographer John Duncan; and the Boston artist Hermann Dudley Murphy, who taught painting as well as the craft of frame making.²¹ At least two of the known

pieces of furniture produced by the Byrdcliffe colony are decorated with Tonalist landscapes. Attributed to Murphy, they are painted on the doors of two wooden chests. The two sets of panels are treated as a single painting surface. They show a sunset scene, painted in muted tones, of a river winding through a wide green valley with mountains in the distance. The other chest, which bears the date of 1904 on the inside of the door panel, is a similar scene done in even softer tones²² (fig. 8.1). As indicated by these panels, in terms of the painting department, the prevailing aesthetic at Byrdcliffe was Tonalism. This continued under Harrison during 1904, and under Leonard Ochtman, who replaced Harrison in 1905.

Unfortunately, the colony's dependence on Whitehead's financial support placed him in a position of almost total control over most aspects of the community, often frustrating the creative and free-spirited artists who had come as students and instructors. Like Brown and Murphy, who both resigned after the first summer season, most did not remain long. Several former instructors however, continued to live in the area, including Brown, White, and Carl Eric Lindin. White started his own colony, "The Maverick," across town that drew a more literary crowd than either Byrdcliffe or Woodstock.²³

Harrison had his own ideas concerning the Arts-and-Crafts Movement. Having come to artistic maturity under Aestheticism, Harrison found great joy in the contemplation and creation of beauty. However, he did not ascribe to the "art for art's sake" ideal. He shared with the reformers of the Arts-and-Crafts Movement the belief that art and beauty should be incorporated into everyday life.

He believed that the beauty of a well-designed product could also enrich and enhance one's life.²⁴

When he proposed the establishment of a Municipal Museum in New York City, many years after leaving Byrdcliffe, Harrison specifically called for a plan that would include "every form of art known to humanity,"²⁵ including architectural drawings, photography, jewelry, silverware, bookbinding, textiles and furniture. He hoped that educating the public to appreciate the beauty to be found in common objects would eventually result in a higher standard of living. In this context, Harrison's interest in the Arts-and-Crafts Movement can be seen as part of his commitment to attaining a role for art in the cultural life of American society. His one condition for the direction that this project should take was that "there is only one path by which an individual or a nation can hope to attain to eminence in art, or even in the 'arts and crafts' - and that path always leads direct to nature."²⁶

Nineteen hundred and four, the year that Harrison assumed leadership of the art department, was the colony's most productive year. The motifs for the surface decoration found on several pieces of Byrdcliffe furniture, designed by the Canadian Dawson Dawson Watson,²⁷ are derived from local flora and fauna. These stylized designs, carved in low relief with a sparing use of color, were the work of Zulma Steele and Edna Walker, who had both studied at the Pratt Institute with Arthur Wesley Dow.²⁸

In his "Plea for Manual Work," written at the same time that Byrdcliffe was opening for its first summer of instruction, Ralph Whitehead planned that, in addition to furniture, the colony would also sustain itself by producing colored

woodblock prints, which he viewed as “a truly democratic art.”²⁹ A woodblock Christmas card from Byrdcliffe (fig. 8.2), which may illustrate another instance of Dow’s influence in the colony in terms of its design, shows a local winter landscape, executed in masses of white, light blues, purples and mauves, and dominated by Overlook Mountain, one of the major topographical features of the area. The words “Christmas Greetings from Byrdcliffe” are printed across the bottom. According to Bertha Thompson, one of the students at the colony, the prints were done with the help of Vivian Bevans, who was a pupil of John Duncan and Olson Nordfelt at Byrdcliffe.³⁰ In place of the large areas of unmodulated, colored ink traditionally used by the Japanese, an experimental mixture of pastel mixed with rice paste was used. Although Byrdcliffe scholars, such as Alf Evers and Tom Wolf, are divided over Harrison’s role in the production of such prints, another recently discovered woodblock print colored in pastel, and signed by Harrison, indicates his interest in exploring the expressive potential of this medium.³¹

Harrison resigned his position at Byrdcliffe after only one summer and was replaced by another Tonalist painter, Leonard Ochtman of Mianus, Connecticut.³² Although the colony continued to produce both pottery and textiles of excellent design, and to have an influence on the Woodstock area, which is known even today for its arts and crafts products, it never again achieved the same level of production that it reached in 1904.

Several reasons have been proposed for the colony’s decline. Some former students attributed it to the cultural changes brought about by the catastrophic

events of World War I.³³ In truth, however, the colony was in disarray almost from its inception. Byrdcliffe was never an art colony in the broadest sense. Rather, it was dedicated to a single ideology and under the leadership of a single individual.³⁴ Although the colony's existence was due largely to Whitehead's generosity, he never fully understood the artist's need for freedom of expression. In his zeal to create a utopian community based on Arts-and-Crafts ideals, his control over the colony's activities and direction alienated many of the artists. As a result, he was unable to maintain the talented teachers who were the colony's strongest asset.

After his resignation from Brydcliffe, Harrison remained in the area and built a home in nearby Bearsville. He also remained on friendly terms with the Whiteheads and continued to offer Jane McCall Whitehead advice on her painting.³⁵ Harrison's ties to the area placed him in a favorable position to take advantage of an unexpected opportunity to continue his interest in teaching. In the winter of 1905, the Art Students League of New York reached the decision to move their summer school away from Old Lyme, Connecticut. The town was becoming overcrowded with artists, whose presence was driving the cost of room and board beyond the reach of the average student. John F. Carlson, who had been a scholarship student at Brydcliffe under Birge Harrison, was a member of the League's "Board of Control" and strongly recommended relocating the school to Woodstock, New York.³⁶ Harrison, who had resigned from Byrdcliffe the previous fall, was offered the position as instructor and director of the school and signed a contract with the League in March 1906. The school term was from June

15th to September 15th. By 1909, the term was extended to June 1st to October 16th.³⁷

The school opened that summer in a barn in the center of town near the Tannery Brook Bridge. Although the barn had been used as a livery stable, it had good northern exposure that was advantageous for classroom instruction. The upstairs was remodeled to accommodate a classroom with benches and easels. A store, operated by Carlson and J. Paul Burnham in lieu of paying tuition, sold art materials at cost to the students.³⁸ The school's location was moved each year for the next two years, until it acquired a permanent home on Tinker Street in the Christian Science Church.³⁹

In May 1906, *The American Student of Art*, a journal by the Art Students League of New York, published a two-page article, with five illustrations of Harrison's paintings, detailing Harrison's own work and his theory on art and art education. The article noted Harrison's conviction that the important unsolved problems in modern art could only be addressed in landscape painting. It also indicated that in addition to the direct observation of nature, Harrison believed that the artist had to train his memory in order to visualize on canvas nature's fleeting effects. Finally, and most importantly, it also stated Harrison's belief in the necessity of encouraging the art student to develop his own personal interpretation of nature.⁴⁰

When the school opened its doors on June 15, 1906, there was only one student. A week later, four more had arrived. By the end of the summer the number had grown to twenty-nine.⁴¹ Six years later, under Harrison's leadership,

the school had grown to one hundred and eighty-four students (fig. 8.3). While the school was in operation, the majority of students were women.⁴²

Students usually arrived by train from New York City. Stopping at West Hurley, a few miles from Woodstock, they made the remainder of the trip by horse-drawn stagecoach. Those students who could afford the \$6.00 weekly fee, boarded with a local family. Those who could not, slept in the woods or fields or rented a corner in a barn for thirty-five cents a week.⁴³

As he had at Byrdcliffe, Harrison befriended many of the students, inviting them to his home for dinner. Through the force of his kind and generous nature, as much as through his expertise, he provided the guidance necessary for the development of one of the country's most famous summer schools. Unlike Whitehead's "benevolent despotism"⁴⁴ at Byrdcliffe, which tolerated little dissent, Harrison's genial personality and genuine regard for the individuality of his students resulted in a free and open atmosphere that approximated the gaiety and comradeship that he himself had experienced in the artists colonies of France. Frequently turning a blind-eye to the exuberance of his young charges, he was nevertheless able to smooth over the differences that inevitably arose among the local population with such large number of students in their midst. Although the local farmers were initially reluctant to accept the enthusiastic students and their Bohemian life style, as the number of painter's umbrellas in town and in the field increased, they eventually became supporters of the artists.⁴⁵

It was only with the establishment of the Art Student League's Summer School that Woodstock can rightly be said to have become an art colony. Its effect has been felt long after it closed its doors in 1922.

From the beginning, it was clear that the school, under Harrison's direction, would be dedicated solely to the instruction of plein-air landscape painting with a focus on dealing "greatly with color and the problems of light and air."⁴⁶ Harrison frequently noted that the Woodstock School was the only one of its kind in the country, if not the world, dedicated solely to landscape painting.⁴⁷

The League shared Harrison's philosophy that art students learn more from one another than from any amount of instruction or criticism from an instructor, and the curriculum was developed to accommodate this ideal. Most days found the students painting out of doors in town or in the surrounding fields. On rainy days, the students worked on their paintings in the large studio built for the school, completing their canvases from memory.⁴⁸

Harrison took a hands-off approach in his teaching. Each year, a small group of students would ask him to demonstrate for them the correct manner of capturing a specific effect on canvas. His reply was always the same. It is instructive to quote it at length as it summarizes his art theory and his approach to art education:

Not on your life. I will tell you all that I know of the fundamental principles which underlie all good art... but I will never do you the unkind service of putting you in the way to imitate a technique, which serviceable to me personally, could no more fit your aesthetic needs than would an old coat of mine fit your bodies. Remember that art is nature *as the artist sees it*, and it is no more possible for two human beings to see nature in the same

way as for the same two people to have exactly similar features.⁴⁹

Harrison expanded on these concepts in his criticism of the student's work, which took place three times a week, twice in the field and once every Saturday in the studio.⁵⁰ The previous week's work was hung along the wall with the larger canvases, those of the more accomplished students, in the middle and the other canvases arranged around them. One former student characterized Harrison's criticism as relevant and constructive. Because going from painting to painting could be monotonous, Harrison avoided boredom by interjecting witty remarks or making his point by recalling an event from his own student days. Although his voice was usually strained at the end of the session, he patiently gave each student's work his attention. As one pupil stated, "his pupils loved him and would later discuss all the points that he brought out."⁵¹

In the second summer session, the enrollment increased from twenty-nine students to seventy-four, surpassing the highest figure of student enrollment at the Old Lyme school.⁵² Although most of the students still came from New York City, the school's reputation was spreading and by the second summer session, students were arriving from as far away as Texas, Utah, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. John Carlson was appointed as Harrison's assistant.⁵³

An annual competition of the student's work from the summer was held every winter in the galleries of the building of the Art Students League in New York. Harrison frequently called on old friends, such as Ben Foster, J. Alden Weir, Childe Hassam, Bruce Crane, Albert Groll and J. Francis Murphy, to serve as jurors. In Harrison's opinion, the variety and quality of the works shown at

these events demonstrated the “strong personality”⁵⁴ of the student exhibitors, and frequently rivaled the annual exhibitions held at the National Academy of Design.

The best-known incident that exemplifies Harrison’s commitment to fostering the individual expression of his students was the formation of the “Sunflower Club” in 1908, by Andrew Dasburg, Daniel Putnam Brinley and James Wardwell.⁵⁵ Dasburg, born in Paris in 1887, immigrated to the United States in 1892. In 1902, he began studying at the Art Students League in New York and in 1906, was awarded a scholarship that allowed him to be among the first group of students to attend the Woodstock summer school.⁵⁶

After two years under Harrison’s direction, Dasburg was anxious to develop his own style. Writing to his future wife, the sculptor Grace Mott Johnson, whom he had met in Harrison’s class the previous summer, Dasburg indicated his desire to move away from Harrison’s Tonalist aesthetic and to paint landscapes in the bright colors of full sunlight.⁵⁷ This new direction in his art was encouraged by Brinley, who had just returned from Paris where Fauvism was popular. Dasburg and Brinley were joined by James Wardwell in organizing an informal group of Woodstock students known as “The Sunflower Club,” who experimented with motifs painted in bright colors under full sunlight as opposed to Harrison’s pearly toned landscapes. Rather than censoring his students, Harrison expressed pleasure that they were learning to use color.⁵⁸ Following his own individual expression, Dasburg went on to become one of the country’s first modernist painters.

During the spring of 1909, while convalescing from an attack of the “grip” and unable to paint, Harrison began to write down some of the talks that he gave to his students during his weekly criticism sessions.⁵⁹ He initially submitted a manuscript to Charles Scribner’s and Sons publishing firm in May.⁶⁰ He continued to work on the manuscript throughout the summer, making several revisions, and numerous title changes, until its publication as *Landscape Painting* in October.⁶¹

Although Harrison accepted many of the publisher’s suggestions, he insisted on obtaining the highest quality reproductions of twenty-four French, Dutch and American landscape paintings that illustrated his various points. The works illustrated represent European artists who remain well known from the Barbizon School, the Hague School, and the French Impressionists such as Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, Anton Mauve and Claude Monet. Among the American artists, American Impressionism and American Tonalism were represented by both well-known artists, Childe Hassam for example, and those who have been almost totally forgotten today, such as Henry G. Dearth.⁶²

The book was an instant success. By December, the publisher was already planning for a second printing.⁶³ It quickly received endorsements from museum directors as well as leading artists such as J. Alden Weir who opined that it was “the healthiest art book I have ever read,” and Leonard Ochtman who stated flatly that it was “The best book on landscape painting that I know.”⁶⁴ A lengthy article in the *New York Times* commented on the “breath of view with which Mr. Harrison has approached his subject.”⁶⁵

Representing his beliefs and convictions Harrison intended his book to be both a “psychological”⁶⁶ study of landscape painting and a tool to facilitate the mastery of technical competence for the next generation of artist.⁶⁷ The format of the book remained the same throughout the various revisions. The first chapter is an introduction to the history of landscape painting that posits a progressive development of the genre including the radical breakthrough of plein-air painting made by John Constable and the English artists and subsequent contributions by the Impressionists.

The remaining chapters can be divided into two parts. The first deals with the technical aspects of painting, explaining the secrets of the genre, such as refraction and vibration. More practical subjects, such as pigment quality and the use of varnish are also explained. The second, and more extensive section, develops Harrison’s aesthetic theory. Harrison published several articles on these various subjects in a number of art journals.

Briefly summarized, Harrison believed that art was the individual expression of the artist’s experience of the beauty found in nature. Landscape painting was the most direct method of communicating this ideal and therefore the most promising direction for future art. He maintained that the visualization of beauty, which he equated with the harmony found in nature, was the fundamental principle of art. An artist’s interpretation of his experience of nature was shaped to some extent by individual temperament or personality, as well as the cultural character of the age in which he lives.

Harrison maintained that the artist's individual expression, his message to humanity, could only be successfully conveyed to the viewer after the student had mastered the elements of technique. However, he also recognized that technique, as a means to an end, could only take the student so far, and that in the end, the true artist was born with "artistic vision," an innate sense of beauty that allowed him the "power to see the soul of the thing and to grasp its *essential* beauty."⁶⁸ In order to convey this to the viewer, he advised his students to rely on the suggestive power of art.

The publication of Harrison's book had an immediate impact on the enrollment at the Woodstock Summer School. The summer following its publication, the number of students attending the school increased substantially. In addition, for the first time, the number of male students, among them, Henry Lee McFee and Frank Chase, outnumbered females.⁶⁹ Even after Harrison's retirement, *Landscape Painting* continued to draw students to the colony. One of these, Carl W. Peters from Fairport, New York, came to Woodstock after reading it and attending an exhibition of paintings by Harrison at the Memorial Art Gallery in Rochester in February, 1914. Although he studied under John Carlson, Peters left a heavily annotated copy of the book that indicates his agreement with many of Harrison's ideas. Of particular interest was Harrison's advice to keep a single motif in the painting and not to "say two things on one canvas," a rule that Peters followed throughout his career as a noted American scene painter.⁷⁰

Landscape Painting became one of the standard texts on the subject and continues to be cited today in studies of the period. During the first two decades of

the twentieth century, in his painting, teaching and writing, Birge Harrison championed American landscape painting. While these efforts are one measure of his contribution to American art, another is his students, many of whom achieved success as artists, teachers, and writers, and participated in various capacities in the direction of art in America.

¹ Birge Harrison, "Painting at Woodstock," *Arts and Decoration* 2 (May 1912): 246.

² Charles Louis Borgmeyer, "Birge Harrison Poet-Painter," *Fine Arts Journal* 29 (October 1913): 605.

³ Birge Harrison, *Landscape Painting* (1909; reprint New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911), 222.

⁴ William H. Gerdts, "The Teaching of Painting Out-Of-Doors in America in the Late Nineteenth Century," in *In Nature's Ways: American Landscape Painting of the Late Nineteenth Century* (exh. cat., West Palm Beach, Florida: The Norton Gallery of Art, 1987), 26.

⁵ *Ibid.* 32.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 31-36.

⁷ Karal Ann Marling, *Woodstock: An American Art Colony, 1902-1977* (exh. cat., Poughkeepsie, New York: Vassar College Art Gallery, 1977), 16.

⁸ Alf Evers, *Woodstock: History of an American Town* (Woodstock, New York: Overlook Press, 1987), 513.

⁹ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 222.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Marling, 16.

¹² Letter from Jane Mc Call-Whitehead to her mother, Mrs. Peter Mc Call, dated February 1895, The Byrdcliffe Collection, Archives of the Winterthur Museum Research Library.

¹³ Clinton Adams, *Crayonstone, The Life and Work of Bolton Brown* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 53.

¹⁴ Evers, 410.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 414.

¹⁶ Birge Harrison, "The Woodstock School of Landscape Painting," *Art and Progress* 1 (Sept. 1912): 318.

¹⁷ Wendy Kaplan et al., "The Art that is Life" *The Arts and Crafts Movement in America 1875-1920* (exh. cat., Boston: The Museum of Fine Arts, 1987), 223.

¹⁸ Robert Edwards, "Byrdcliffe, Life by Design," in *The Byrdcliffe Arts and Crafts Colony* (exh. cat., Wilmington: Delaware Art Museum, 1985), n.p.

¹⁹ Prospectus for the 1907 season at Brydcliffe, Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead Papers, Byrdcliffe Collection .

²⁰ Adams, 58.

²¹ Evers, 425.

²² The polychrome panels are marked with a stylized lily, insignia of Hermann Dudley Murphy (Robert Edwards, "The Utopias of Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead," *Antiques Magazine* 127 (January 1985): 262 & 266).

²³ Evers, 455.

²⁴ Birge Harrison, "The Artist...By One of Them...Namely...Birge Harrison," *The Plowshare* 6 (February 1917): n.p.

²⁵ Birge Harrison, "The New Art in America," *Scribner's Magazine* 57 (March 1915): 393.

²⁶ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 143.

²⁷ Kaplan, 313.

²⁸ Evers, 428.

²⁹ Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead, "A Plea for Manual Work," *Handicraft* 2 (June 1903): 70. Also cited in Evers, 417.

³⁰ Bertha Thompson, "The Craftsmen of Byrdcliffe," *Publication of the Woodstock Historical Society* (hereafter *PWHS*) 10 (July 1933): 10.

³¹ This print, in a private collection in Woodstock, shows a twilight river scene with a small boat tied to the marshy shore. Next to it stands a single tree, outlined against the darkening sky. The print is almost entirely drawn over with pastels. The color scheme of blues turning to mauves is characteristic of Harrison's landscapes. Harrison's signature appears in the lower left. I would like to thank Patricia Phagan at the Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College for bring this print to my attention.

³² Tom Wolf, *Woodstock's Art Heritage: The Permanent Collection of the Woodstock Artists Association* (exh. cat., Woodstock, New York, 1987), 19.

³³ Anita M. Smith, *Woodstock, History and Hearsay* (Saugerties, New York: Catskill Mountain Publishers, 1959), 48.

³⁴ Allen Stanley, "Byrdcliffe and the Maverick: A Discussion in the Arts and Crafts," (M. A. Thesis, Yale University, May 1960), 40.

³⁵ Calendar of Jane McCall-Whitehead, entries dated July 8 and August 12, 1905, The Byrdcliffe Collection.

³⁶ John F. Carlson, "The Art Students League of New York in Woodstock," *Publication of the Woodstock Historical Society* 9 (September 1932): 12.

³⁷ Employment contract signed by Birge Harrison and Arthur Fuller dated March 31, 1906. The following November, Harrison signed a two year contract for the summer sessions of 1907 and 1908. He was paid two-thirds of the net receipts of the class. (Archives of the Art Students League, New York City {hereafter *ASL*}). I am grateful to Stephanie Cassidy, Archivist at the League, for locating these heretofore lost documents and making them available to me. As a letter in these archives from John F. Carlson to Mrs. J.P. Calder of Toledo, Ohio dated August 3, 1906, indicates there was interest in extending the school year to October. Harrison may have taken on private students from September through October ("Book of Woodstock Correspondence," Archives of *ASL*).

³⁸ Carlson, 12.

³⁹ Polly Kline, *The Art Students League in Woodstock: A Short History for the Woodstock School of Art* (Publication of the Woodstock School of Art Inc., 1987), n.p.

⁴⁰ "Mr. Birge Harrison's Views in Regard to Studying Landscape Painting," *The American Student of Art* 1 (May 1906): 123.

⁴¹ Carlson, 13.

⁴² *Ledger for the Summer School of the Art Students League of New York*, n.p. (arranged chronologically by year), Archives of *ASL*. It should be noted that by 1907, the League was also running The City Summer School at the American Fine Arts Building, under the direction of Edward Dufner, which consisted of classes in Drawing, Painting, Illustration and Composition. See, *The Art Students League of New York, 1907-08*, information brochure published by the Art Students League (20), Archives of the *ASL*.

⁴³ Kline, n.p.

⁴⁴ Poultney Bigelow, "The Byrdcliffe Colony of Arts and Crafts, *American Homes and Gardens* 6 (October 1909): 393.

⁴⁵ Richard Le Gallienne, *Woodstock: An Essay* (Woodstock: Woodstock Art Assoc., 1923), 14.

⁴⁶ Letter from John Carlson to Henrietta A. Duer, no date, "Book of Woodstock Correspondence," 1907, Archives of *ASL*.

⁴⁷ Birge Harrison, "The Woodstock School of Landscape Painting," *Art and Progress* 1 (September 1910): 317.

⁴⁸ Letter from John F. Carlson to Edward Eisenhohr, dated June 14, 1907, "Book of Woodstock Correspondence," 1907, Archives of *ASL*.

⁴⁹ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 224.

⁵⁰ Letter from John Carlson to Florence H. Stevenson, "Book of Woodstock Correspondence," 1907, Archives of *ASL*. Harrison conducted the Tuesday criticism in the field and the Saturday criticism in the school's large studio. Carlson conducted the

Thursday criticism in the field. See, letter from Carlson to Earl A. Warner, June 6, 1907, "Book of Woodstock Correspondence," 1907, Archives of the ASL.

⁵¹ I.K., "The Saturday Morning Criticism," unidentified newspaper clipping dated July 6, 1925, Birge Harrison Folder, Artists Files, Boston Public Library.

⁵² *Ledger for the Summer School of the Art Students League of New York*, Archives of the ASL.

⁵³ John Carlson, "The Art Students League of New York in Woodstock," 13.

⁵⁴ Harrison, "Painting at Woodstock," 247.

⁵⁵ Evers, 441.

⁵⁶ Van Deren Coke, *Andrew Dasburg* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1979), 132.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁵⁸ Richard H. Love, *Carl W. Peters, American Scene Painter from Rochester to Rockport* (Rochester, New York: University of Rochester Press, 1999), 216.

⁵⁹ Letter from Birge Harrison to John Trask, dated July 22, 1909, Secretary Files, Archives of PAFA.

⁶⁰ Letter from Birge Harrison to *Scribner's Magazine*, dated May 20, 1909, Scribner Archives, Author Files, Harrison Folder, Box 73, at The Dept. of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey.

⁶¹ Letter from Birge Harrison to *Scribner's Magazine* dated April 28, 1910. Scribner Archives. Harrison proposed a series of titles, "Studio Talks" (letter to Harrison from Scribner's dated July 2, 1909): "The Saturday Criticism" (letter dated July 3, 1909 from Harrison); "Talks on Landscape Painting" (letter dated July 18, 1909 from Harrison); "The Landscapist," "Landscape Art" and "Landscape" (letter dated August 12, 1909, from Harrison); "Concerning Landscape Painting" was rejected and abbreviated to "Landscape Painting" by Scribner's (letter to Harrison from Scribner's August 17, 1909) Although Harrison added several chapters to his original manuscript, the only chapter that he deleted was titled "On Writing a Book" (letter to Harrison from Scribner's dated Augusts 12, 1909).

⁶² Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, xiii-xv. The illustrated works are: *Landscape*, J. B. C. Corot; *The Sheperdess*, J. F. Millet; *A Flock of Sheep*, Anton Mauve; *The Bridge at Argenteuil*, Claude Monet; *The Fog Warning*, Winslow Homer; *Twilight, Autumn*, D. W. Tryon; *The North Atlantic*, Charles H. Woodbury; *Landscape*, H. W. Ranger; *Land and Sea*, Paul Dougherty; *The Red Barn*, E. W. Redfield; *La Crepuscle*, Alexander Harrison; *Brooklyn Bridge*, Childe Hassam; *Summer Moonlight*, W. L. Metcalf; *Winter in Picardy*, W. Elmer Schofield; *Wood Interior*, Leonard Ochtman; *November Hills*, Bruce Crane; *Early Moonrise*, Ben Foster; *New England Factory Village*, J. Alden Weir; *Moonrise*, Henry G. Dearth; *Landscape*, Emil Carlsen; *Woodstock Meadows in Winter*, Birge

Harrison; *At Dusk*, W. L. Lathrop; *October Evening* Charles Melville Dewey; and *Autumn Oaks*, George Inness.

⁶³ Letter from Scribner's to Harrison dated Dec. 2, 1909, Scribner Archives. Of the original 1200 copies printed, 900 had been sold by this date.

⁶⁴ "Landscape Painting with 24 reproductions of representative pictures," unidentified newspaper clipping, Birge Harrison Folder, Artists Files, Boston Public Library.

⁶⁵ "Art at Home and Abroad, An Interesting Account of the Relation of Color to Music. Many other Subjects Treated in Convincing Style," *The New York Times*, November 14, 1909, 13.

⁶⁶ Letter from Birge Harrison to John Trask, dated September 12 1909, Secretary Files, Archives of *PAFA*.

⁶⁷ Letter from Birge Harrison to Ehrick Rossiter, December 20, 1913, The Ehrick Rossiter Papers, Archives of American Art, roll D33.

⁶⁸ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 156.

⁶⁹ *Ledger for the Summer School of the Art Students League*, Archives of *ASL*.

⁷⁰ Love, 197.

Chapter Nine

Birge Harrison's Students at Woodstock

The contribution to the development of American art made by Harrison's former students is one of his most important legacies. Many of these students remained closely associated with Woodstock, adding to the diversity of styles represented in the colony and to its continued success as one of the most important art colonies in America. While several of this next generation of artists retained a commitment to landscape painting, others chose to explore other styles of expression that were emerging in American art during the early years of the twentieth century. Many enjoyed successful careers as artists. Like their mentor, several also wrote treatises similar to Harrison's and assumed the responsibility of teaching a new generation of artists in various schools across the United States.

Of all of his students, John F. Carlson (1874-1945) was perhaps the most directly influenced by Harrison in terms of his own art, teaching and writing. Born in Sweden, Carlson immigrated with his family to the United States in 1884, settling in Buffalo, New York.¹ In 1902, he studied at the Art Students League in New York, and 1904, was awarded a scholarship by Ralph Whitehead to study at Byrdcliffe under Birge Harrison.² He left the following year and settled in nearby Rock City, along with a number of other students who had also left Whitehead's colony.³

A lover of nature, Carlson was drawn to plein-air landscape painting and pursued a Tonalist style similar to Harrison's poetic interpretations of nature.

Many of his landscapes are winter scenes from the Woodstock area, although he also painted in New Hampshire, Vermont, and Gloucester, Massachusetts.⁴ A recognized artist, he exhibited extensively and won several medals at international exhibitions. His works can be found in museums across the country.

Instrumental in moving the location of the Art Students League's summer school to Woodstock, he studied under Harrison during the first session in 1906. Correspondence between Carlson and prospective students indicates that he also acted as Harrison's assistant, a position he obtained officially the following summer. In 1911, when Harrison resigned in order to conserve his energy for his own painting,⁵ Carlson was named as his replacement. He continued to lead the school with the assistance of Frank Swift Chase and Walter Goltz.

Although Carlson resigned his position at Woodstock in 1918,⁶ he continued his distinguished teaching career. He was one of the first instructors at the Broadmoor Art Academy, a summer landscape school in Colorado Springs, Colorado in 1920.⁷ In 1922, he founded the John F. Carlson School of Landscape Painting in Woodstock.⁸ After Harrison's death in 1929, Carlson took his place in the esteem of Woodstock's artists.⁹

In 1929, Carlson published *Elementary Principles of Landscape Painting*. Like his teacher, Carlson intended the book to serve as an aid to beginning students as well as toward fostering an "appreciation of the technical difficulties involved in its [art] creation."¹⁰ His book reveals the extent of Harrison's influence over Carlson's art theory and teaching practice. Like Harrison, he maintained that beauty is the fundamental principle of art and that an artist is born with an

“inherent” sensibility to beauty.¹¹ He also encouraged his students to develop their individual expression. Carlson advocated out-of doors landscape painting and memory work and stressed the importance of nature’s moods, and its manner of unifying color and light. He was sensitive to the emotional equivalences of color and believed that a sense of color was reflective of individual temperament. As a teacher, he stressed the importance of a unified tonality and its modulation and refraction. Carlson’s book went through several printings and was widely distributed, influencing yet another generation of landscape artists.

Harry Leith-Ross (1886-1973), a former student and life long friend to Harrison and his wife Jenny, also taught and wrote a book on landscape painting. Leith-Ross was born in the British colony of Mauritius in 1886. He immigrated with his family to New Mexico when he was seventeen years old. After spending three years in Denver, Colorado working as a printer and engraver, he left to study in Paris under Delecruse and Jean Paul Laurens.¹² Upon returning to the United States, he worked as a commercial artist. Shortly afterward, he gave up this career and enrolled in the Woodstock Summer School in 1913.¹³ He boarded at the Harrison home with a fellow student, John Folinsbee. In 1914 or 1916,¹⁴ he visited the art colony at New Hope, Pennsylvania but did not move there permanently until 1935. He died there in 1973.¹⁵

Leith-Ross was a successful artist, who won several prizes in exhibitions at the Salmagundi Club, the National Academy of Design, where he was made an Academician in 1936, the American Watercolor Society and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. He was also a successful teacher in Woodstock, New Hope,

Rockport and Gloucester.¹⁶ The structure of his classes stressed painting out of doors. Instruction was given in both oil and watercolor.¹⁷

In much the same manner as his mentor, Leith-Ross used his teaching experience as the framework for his book, *The Landscape Painter's Manual*, published in 1956. The book is a more practical approach to teaching landscape painting than Harrison's and includes several diagrams demonstrating the proper use of materials. It also contains several points that demonstrate the influence of Harrison's teaching. Leith-Ross outlined the development of modern, that is plein-air, landscape painting from Constable but also acknowledges Turner's contribution. Like his mentor, he stressed developing a uniquely personal expression, working from memory and the importance of mood in landscape painting.¹⁸

John Folinsbee (1892-1972) was another young artist who came to Woodstock after reading Harrison's *Landscape Painting*. He had been given a copy of the book by his future wife, Ruth Baldwin who had read it while studying at Smith College, where it was recommended by one of her professors as "an excellent example of good style and clearly written exposition."¹⁹

Born in 1892, Folinsbee, who was paralyzed and confined to a wheelchair after a severe case of polio at age 13,²⁰ lived with the Harrisons when he arrived in Woodstock in 1912.²¹ He returned during the winters of 1913 and 1914 to study privately with Harrison.²²

Following Harrison's advice, Folinsbee moved to the art colony of New Hope, Pennsylvania in 1916, where he became "one of the most significant

members of the late Pennsylvania School.”²³ Folinsbee developed a vigorous, expressionistic style uniquely his own.²⁴ Harrison’s influence on Folinsbee’s art is demonstrated in the “solid and dynamic structure and an equally solid basis in values,” as well as in the “energy, credibility and mood in his work at every stage of his career.”²⁵ Throughout his career, Folinsbee believed that the function of art was to communicate, and he was concerned with conveying his own impression of nature to the viewer. Working from memory in his studio, his paintings are marked by the careful study of light and values that indicate his commitment to the mastery of the technical aspects of painting.²⁶

Another of Harrison’s students who played an important role in the development of regional art in America was Alfred Hatty. He arrived at Woodstock for the 1908 summer session.²⁷ Born in Michigan, Hatty was studying at the St. Louis School of Fine Arts when he saw an exhibition of Harrison’s paintings.²⁸ Although Hatty registered for only one summer session, he was a lifelong resident and active member in the Woodstock Artists Association. During his early years in the colony, he was associated with “The Blue Dome Group,”²⁹ founded in nearby Rock City by two women artists in the area, Dewing Woodward and Louise Johnson.³⁰

Although he was an accomplished painter, Hatty is best known today as an engraver. In his article, “Old Charleston as Pictured by Alfred Hatty,” Harrison praised Hatty’s gift for line and design.³¹ He also noted that this talent was uniquely suited to picturing the “quaint old house, charming old gateways,

doorways and vistas” of Charleston.³² Hutton was one of the main architects of the cultural renewal of Charleston during the second decade of the twentieth century.

At least three of Harrison’s students found their path of individual expression led them toward modernism. The most prominent of these during the 1930’s was Eugene Speicher. Born in Buffalo, New York, Speicher studied at the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy in 1902, and at the Art Students League in 1907 and 1908³³ (fig. 9.1). Although he is best known as a portrait painter and generally associated with the Ash-Can School painters Robert Henri and George Bellows, Speicher came to Woodstock as a student in the summer of 1909.³⁴

Like many of Harrison’s former pupils, Speicher understood the necessity of mastering the craft of painting stating, “I believe in skill properly used, and know of no master who is not a master craftsman.”³⁵ His style is marked by “a sense of structure and organization conceived in mass and relative values.”³⁶ Like Harrison, Speicher was a skillful colorist. His approach to technique, similar to Harrison’s, was to “weave”³⁷ a limited number of colors into a single, harmonious color mass that relied on the relationship of one color to each of the others as well as to the whole.

After Speicher’s marriage to Elsie Wilson, in 1910, the couple traveled to Europe looking at old master paintings as well as visiting Leo Stein’s studio in Paris, where he examined the work of both Cézanne and Matisse. A “touch of modernism”³⁸ characterizes his vigorous handling of paint.

While the majority of his paintings are portraits, he did several landscapes, including nocturnes of the Woodstock area. Speicher maintained a residence and

studio in Woodstock throughout his career. A popular figure in the art colony, in his latter years “he filled a position similar to that held by Birge Harrison in the early days of the colony.”³⁹

Two of Harrison’s other students also pursued a form of American modernism. The first of these was Andrew Dasburg, whose “Sunflower Club” was among the earliest expressions of the Fauve aesthetic in the Woodstock Colony. Although Harrison did not encourage this direction, neither did he discourage it. Characteristically, he was open-minded concerning Henri Matisse and Fauvism. Writing of the movement and its place in the present and future direction of art in *Landscape Painting*, he posed the question:

Whether Matisse and his followers in France today are the true prophets crying the wilderness the future alone can demonstrate. If this group finally makes good it will be because they have discovered something fundamentally true and human, something which is sincerely (if blindly) desired by the race at large.⁴⁰

In 1909, Dasburg followed his friend, Charles Morgan Russell, later a founder of Synchronism, with whom he had lived the previous year in Rock City, to Paris. While in Paris he introduced Dasburg to Leo and Gertrude Stein and through them met many of the French avant-garde artists, including Matisse and Pablo Picasso.⁴¹

Dasburg returned to Woodstock in 1912, where he worked on three paintings and a sculpture that were exhibited at the 1913 Armory Show.⁴² As indicated by these works, “Matisse and Fauvism provided a way station for a more structured aesthetic based primarily on Cézanne.”⁴³ That same year, Dasburg began a long friendship with Mabel Dodge, a supporter of early American

modernism and one of the fund-raisers for the Armory Show, and his paintings, including three portraits of Dodge done over the next three years, evidence a greater degree of Cubist abstraction.⁴⁴ In later years, he became a regular presence at Dodge's home in Taos, New Mexico.⁴⁵

Dasburg gained widespread recognition as one of the earliest modern American painters. He also remained an important figure in the Woodstock community until the early 1930's. Although his teaching career was limited, he taught a sketching class with his friend Henry Mc Fee at Woodstock in the summer of 1917,⁴⁶ and also held classes for two summers in 1920-21. In 1923, he published an important article, "Cubism—Its Rise and Influence," in which he addressed the adaptation of certain aspects of the Cubist aesthetic in modern American art.⁴⁷

Among those American artists who were influenced by Cubism and whom Dasburg listed in his article was his friend and fellow Harrison pupil, Henry L. McFee who is best known today as a still life painter. Born in St. Louis, Missouri, McFee began his art training around 1907, at the School of Fine Arts in St. Louis, and later enrolled in the Stevenson Art School of Pittsburgh.⁴⁸ He studied under Harrison in the summer summers of 1909-1910.⁴⁹ Described as "the less spectacular of the two friends," McFee was known for his "keen and sensitive mind" and his interest in the psychology of art.⁵⁰ McFee soon became one of Harrison's prize pupils. An illustration of his painting, *Winter*, which strongly resembles Harrison's own *Woodstock Meadows in Winter*, appeared in Harrison's article "The Woodstock School of Landscape Painting."⁵¹

By late 1910, McFee began to move away from painting in the manner of Harrison's Tonalist landscape painting in order to explore other avenues that would allow for more substantial forms in his art.⁵² His search was initiated by Bernard Berenson's *The Florentine Painters of the Renaissance*, and his study of the work of the early Renaissance artist Giotto,⁵³ shortly after he met Dasburg who had just returned from Europe and his introduction to Cubism. Dasburg, McFee, and the German artist, Konrad Cramer, who had also just arrived in Woodstock,⁵⁴ formed the most modernist element among the many styles practiced at Woodstock during the first decade of the twentieth century. The three exhibited several abstract paintings that reflected the influences of both Cubism and Synchronism, in the Forum Exhibition of Modern American Painters in 1916.⁵⁵ By 1923, McFee began to modify his earlier cubist style, which evolved in his still lifes into a "generalized realism."⁵⁶

Like other former Harrison students, McFee also taught art. In 1937, he was appointed director of the Museum School of Art and the Witte Museum in San Antonio, Texas. In 1940, he taught at the Chouinard Art Institute in Los Angeles, and in 1942, he taught at the graduate school of Scripps College in Claremont, California, a position that he held for the remainder of his life.⁵⁷

By the time of Harrison's death in 1929, Woodstock had become a colony that included a great diversity of artistic styles. Artists living in the colony and who were members of the selection committee for exhibitions held in the 1920's by the Artists Association included not only Harrison and his former students Carlson, Frank Chase and Leith-Ross but also George Bellows, a member of Henri's circle

of Ash Can artists, as well as Cramer, Dasburg and McFee who pursued more avant-garde styles.⁵⁸ Harrison was held in the highest regard among the diverse factions of artists as well as by the local population of Woodstock. Representatives of all of these factions came together for the annual celebration of his birthday, which had become an important event in the town.⁵⁹ It was largely through Harrison's stature in the community as well as his tolerance and personal warmth, that the Woodstock Artists Association was able to function as an exhibition space for all of the various groups of artists and students in the colony. Only two years after his death, the Association splintered, and Carlson along with other conservative painters withdrew, causing a breach that lasted for years. Without Harrison's mediating influence, bickering over questions of style added an unnecessary factor in the decline of the colony as it entered the Depression.⁶⁰

That the colony itself retained an "unaffected camaraderie of all manner of men and women, races, nationalities and occupation in the various arts of life"⁶¹ as long as it did is part of Harrison's personal legacy. It was in his role as a teacher, however, that Harrison made his most significant contribution to the development of American art. His pupils, following his conviction that each must find his own personal form of expression, chose a variety of paths that presented themselves to American artists during the first decade of the twentieth century. Their exploration of these alternatives enriched the development of American art. Furthermore, in their careers not only as artists, but also as teachers, writers, and leaders of various regional centers of American art, they exercised a significant impact on the history of American art.

¹“R.E.C.,” *John F. Carlson, N.A., 1874-1945*, (exh. cat., Boston: The Vose Galleries, 1978), n.p. As this catalogue indicates, the date of Carlson’s birth given in most biographies on the artist is May 4, 1875, however, recent scholarship has discovered his original birth certificate giving the date as May 5, 1874.

² John F. Carlson, “The Art Students League of New York in Woodstock,” *Publication of the Woodstock Historical Society* 9 (September 1932): 11.

³ Alf Evers, *Woodstock: A History of an American Town* (Woodstock: Overlook Press, 1987), 432.

⁴ “R.E.C.,” n.p.

⁵ Carlson, 17.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Gerdt, *Art Across America: Two Centuries of Regional Painting, 1710-1929* (New York: 1990), 3: 126.

⁸ Ibid., 1: 171.

⁹ Evers, 511.

¹⁰ John F. Carlson, *Elementary Principles of Landscape Painting* (New York: National Publishing Society, 1929), 1.

¹¹ Ibid., 2-13.

¹² Harry Leith-Ross File, Bucks County Artists Database, James A. Michener Museum of Art, Doylestown, Pennsylvania.

¹³ *Ledger for the Summer School of the Art Students League*, n.p., Archives of the Art Students League, New York (hereafter *ASL*).

¹⁴ The dates of Leith-Ross’s first visit to the colony are given as 1914 by his wife, Emily Leith-Ross. He maintained a studio on top of the Hibernia Fire House in Lambertville, “Emily Leith-Ross writes of Depression years in Bucks,” *New Hope Gazette*, April 7, 1994, np. in the Harry Leith-Ross File Bucks County Artists Database. It is given as 1916, by Lauren Rabb, *The Pennsylvania Impressionist: Painters of the New Hope School*, (exh. cat., New York: Taggart & Jorgensen Gallery, 1990), 7.

¹⁵ Harry Leith-Ross File, Buck’s County Artists Database.

¹⁶ Harry Leith-Ross File, Archives of the Woodstock Historical Society, Woodstock, New York.

¹⁷ Harry Leith-Ross File, Buck’s County Artists Database.

¹⁸ Harry Leith-Ross, *The Landscape Painter's Manual* (New York: Watson-Guption Publications, 1956), 55-64.

¹⁹ Peter Cook, *John Folinsbee* (New York: Kubaba Books), 44.

²⁰ Thomas Charles Folk, "The Pennsylvania School of Landscape Painting" (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 1987), 161.

²¹ *Ledger for the Summer School of the Art Students League*, Archives of ASL. See also, Anita M. Smith, *Woodstock, History and Hearsay* (Saugerties, New York: Catskill Mountain Publishers, 1959), 47.

²² Folk, 162.

²³ *Ibid.*, 161.

²⁴ Sam Hunter, *American Impressionism: The New Hope Circle* (exh. cat., Fort Lauderdale, Florida: The Museum of Art, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, 1984-85), 38.

²⁵ Cook, 45.

²⁶ "John Folinsbee Paints a Landscape," unidentified article in the John Folinsbee File, Bucks County Artist's Database, James A. Michener Museum of Art.

²⁷ *Ledger for the Summer School of the Art Students League*, Archives of ASL. Most biographies of Hutty give this date as 1907, however, the only listing of Hutty in the ledger is for 1908.

²⁸ Boyd Saunders and Ann Mc Aden, *Alfred Hutty and the Charleston Renaissance* (Orangeburg, S.C.: Sandlapper Publishers, 1990), 14. The authors do not state to which exhibition they are referring. Harrison stated that Hutty came to Woodstock after "he saw an exhibition at the municipal museum of some hundred canvases" by Harrison ("Old Charleston as Pictured by Alfred Hutty," *The American Magazine of Art*, 13 (November 1922), 480). Harrison won a silver medal at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, 1904, but did not show "hundreds of canvases" there. The year previous to Hutty's arrival at Woodstock, in February 1907, Harrison had a one-man exhibition of 43 paintings (*Exhibition of Paintings by Birge Harrison / Saint Louis Museum of Fine Arts Special Mid-Winter Exhibitions, 1907*, Archives of the Reference Library of the City Art Museum, St Louis, Missouri).

²⁹ Evers, 451.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Birge Harrison, "Old Charleston as Pictured by Alfred Hutty," *The American Magazine of Art* 13 (November 1922): 481.

³² *Ibid.*, 483.

³³ Frank Jewett Mather, Jr., *Eugene Speicher* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1931), 13.

³⁴ Evers, 513.

³⁵ Ivan Narodny, "Eugene Speicher," in *American Artists* (New York: Roerich Museum Press, 1929), 100.

³⁶ Mather Jr., 10.

³⁷ Narodny, 107.

³⁸ Tom Wolf et al, *Woodstock's Art Heritage: The Permanent Collection of the Woodstock Artists Association* (exh. cat., Woodstock: Woodstock Art Association, 1987), 133.

³⁹ Evers, 513.

⁴⁰ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 204.

⁴¹ Van Deren Coke, *Andrew Dasburg* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1979), 132.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 133.

⁴³ William H. Gerdts, *The Color of Modernism: The American Fauves* (exh. cat., New York: Hollis Taggart Galleries, 1997), 39.

⁴⁴ Coke, 133.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 134.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* For a summary of Dasburg's article "Cubism-Its Rise and Influence," *Arts* 4 (November 1923), 278-83, see, Abraham A. Davidson, *Early Modernist Painting 1910-1935* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 273-74.

⁴⁸ John Baker, *Henry Lee Mc Fee and Formalist Realism in American Still Life, 1923-36* (exh. cat., Bucknell University: The Center Gallery, 1987), 20

⁴⁹ *Ledger for the Summer School of the Art Students League*, n.p.

⁵⁰ Smith, 74.

⁵¹ Harrison, "The Woodstock School of Landscape Painting," 319. Other paintings by students that were illustrated were *The Woods* by Allan Cochrane and *Summer Sky* by John Carlson.

⁵² Baker, 21.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Evers, 442.

⁵⁵ Abraham A. Davidson, *Early American Modernist Painting 1910-1935* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 172. See also, Wolf, 20.

⁵⁶ Wolf, 26.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 118.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 22.

⁵⁹ Evers, 511.

⁶⁰ Karal Ann Marling, *Woodstock: An American Art Colony* (exh. cat., Poughkeepsie, New York, Vassar College Art Gallery, 1977), 16.

⁶¹ Richard Le Gallienne, *Woodstock: An Essay* (Woodstock Art Association, 1923), 19.

“Art is nature as the artist sees it.”
Birge Harrison, 1909¹

Chapter Ten

Birge Harrison and Robert Henri

Birge Harrison’s critical writings appeared from 1908 to 1918, a time of transition and unrest in American life and art. The variety of approaches in the visual language used by artists during the period indicates that they were exploring new ways of perceiving the increasingly complex reality of modernization. The nineteenth-century balance between tradition and temperament² was shifting toward more innovative forms of expression that allowed for greater subjectivity and abandoning the idealized realism of the academic approach to the natural world. Originality of expression and experimentation began to replace concerns with the mastery of academic training. Increasingly artists began to explore the nonmaterial world of sensation and the evocation of feelings as subject for their work.³ As art continued to progress toward greater abstraction, “a new conception developed that art was a form of expression relying less on familiar appearances than on an artist’s singular vision.”⁴ In his writings, Harrison addressed several of the important areas of concern among artists and critics, including the importance of the individual expression of the artist’s experience of nature and the roles that originality and tradition played in this expression.

American artists and critics became aware that the art world was experiencing a period of upheaval in which “old no longer rules; it is the new that lures.”⁵ The debate that ensued produced new writings that redefined American art theory and criticism.⁶ Some critics concluded that the “genuine creative spirit seemed to have gone to seed,”⁷

and could only be regained by a renewed commitment to originality and sincerity. Other more traditionally oriented critics expressed concern that the shift toward subjectivity would result in a “singularly isolated position of the modern artist” that would evolve towards an “individualism wholly self-sufficing and anarchical.”⁸

As early as the late nineteenth century, writers were beginning to realize that critical approaches based on description and/or stylistic analysis, as well as matters of taste, no longer served to address the challenges being presented.⁹ During this period, theory and criticism were not distinct disciplines,¹⁰ and many critics, including Harrison, relied on aesthetic theory when expressing their opinions. They used theoretical concepts and language that included such terms as “individuality” and “spirituality,” already in common usage to address the issues raised by the new art.¹¹

This critical terminology was part of the shared cosmopolitan experience of this generation of artists and critics. It remained effective until the degree of individuality or spirituality expressed in art began to separate from the natural world and to become not an expression of experience of that world, but an expression of the individual or spiritualism itself.

Harrison wrote within the context of the debate of the period. Like most critics of the time, he believed that a unique form of American art was soon to emerge. The exact character that this new visual form would, or should, take demanded that critics address not only questions of subject and style but also the more fundamental questions about the nature of art itself. Although today he is considered a traditionalist, Harrison writings indicate that he thought of himself as a modern artist. Moreover, a review of his theory

reveals that he shared ideas about individuality and subjective expression with critics we now identify as modern.

Agreement on a definition of the term “modern” has proved elusive for art historians. The term is used to convey several levels of meaning. In the broadest sense, “modern” was used to “denote what were felt to be more profound changes in culture and society.”¹² Using the term in this general sense, following the nineteenth-century French writer Charles Baudelaire, it refers to art’s “engagement with preoccupations and spectacles specific to the age.”¹³ Both the French Impressionists and the American Ash Can School offer examples in which the term was often applied in this sense. Other early twentieth century writers, such as Arthur Wesley Dow, took a broader perspective. Dow defined modernism as an inclusive term that “applied to the many forms of rebellion against the accepted and traditional.”¹⁴ Over time, the term developed more specific and distinctive connotations. The public “tended to see modernism as a single trend.”¹⁵ Eventually American critics would apply the term to the steady progression of movements, the long list of “isms,” generally based on the innovations of Post-Impressionist artists Paul Cézanne, Vincent Van Gogh, and Paul Gauguin.¹⁶

In his criticism, as in his art and teaching, Harrison consistently championed his belief that American landscape painting held the key to the form that the new visual language would take. Harrison, following his own understanding of the development of contemporary art, defined “modern” within the specific art historical framework of landscape painting. He believed that the breakthrough to “modern” painting occurred in the first decade of the nineteenth century in England when John Constable and other English landscapists “went out into the fields and brought back pictures which were the

first true impressions of out-door nature ever placed upon canvas.”¹⁷ According to Harrison, it was their “truly great discovery” that studio light, with its warm shadows and cool lights... is reversed in the open air” that “made possible the new art movement of modern times.”¹⁸

As we have already discovered in his art and teaching, Harrison stressed the importance of the beauty found in nature and in the natural order, in which man and nature exist in harmony. From this basic premise, Harrison extrapolated several key concepts that he visualized in his art, encouraged in his teaching, and articulated in his writing. However, he did not apply these concepts narrowly and his criticism is distinguished by the same “catholic habit of mind”¹⁹ found in his teaching. He addressed issues of aesthetic theory rather than expressing his likes and dislikes. When these references do appear, they are used as examples of the theoretical or practical issue under discussion rather than as a question of judgment.

Within this broad framework, he posited few “laws.” Those he did articulate remained consistent. His succinct definition that “Art is Nature as the artist sees it,” contains his well thought-out response to the changing conditions of the art world at the turn of the last century and first two decades of the twentieth century.

In order to understand how Harrison arrived at this definition after years of painting, teaching and writing, and how his theory and criticism relate to his time, it is necessary to look at the influences that shaped his thoughts about art. Harrison’s training at the École des Beaux-Arts and the world of the artist colonies were formative experiences. This was true, not only for Harrison, but also for most of the artists who studied in Europe during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Several of these

artists would later emerge as important participants in the debate over the emerging modern art of the early twentieth century.

Because “theories explaining American modern art had yet to take on a clear focus,”²⁰ most art critics drew on similar sources for their art theory and criticism. Of singular importance to the development of art theory in the late-nineteenth century were the teachings of Hippolyte-Adolphe Taine. A philosopher and historian, Taine is known today for his lectures at the École des Beaux-Arts on art, and the books that resulted from them. Although Taine had left his position of professor of aesthetics at the École by 1870, his influence continued into the next century. Despite this, Taine has not received a great deal of scholarly attention from American art historians. Although a detailed analysis of his theories is beyond the scope of this inquiry, a look at the application by artists and critics of even his general concepts indicates broad areas of agreement among critics at the time, as well as how they influenced the art theory of individual artists and writers representing the diverse art movements emerging during the period.

In addition to his studies at the École, there are three other possible sources for Harrison’s exposure to Taine’s aesthetics. The first was through Thomas Eakins, his first art teacher. Eakins had studied at the École during the period of Taine’s tenure there and his own aesthetics bear the stamp of Taine’s thoughts. In addition, Taine’s lectures from the mid-1860’s were translated and published and available for study by the general public.

Taine’s theories were known through the work of William Morris Hunt, who was important in introducing the emotional appeal of the Barbizon school to American artists. Hunt’s book *Talks on Art*, published in 1875, which developed from his lectures to his

students, was well known in the United States. In it, Hunt, like Harrison after him, provided not only practical advice to his students but also posited his theory of art that reflects Taine's influence.²¹

That same year John Durand published his newly re-translated volume of two of Taine's important discourses, *The Philosophy of Art* and *The Ideal of Art*. In the preface, Durand noted that these lectures, as "a system of Aesthetics, consist of an application of the experimental method to art, in the same manner as it is applied to the sciences."²² Taine's theories entered the mainstream of nineteenth-century thought about art and remained influential during the first decades of the twentieth century, because they accommodated evolutionary modes of thinking and were presented with "clarity and simplicity and because it seemed to carry the authority of science."²³

Critics used his ideas concerning the impact of the environment on artistic production to fashion a new approach to art criticism.²⁴ By the turn of the century, it was recognized that a "fundamental and widespread transformation"²⁵ of the intellectual, cultural and social structures was taking place. The assumption by most critics that a new art form was about to emerge during the first decades of the twentieth century was based on Taine's theory that the art of any period reflects the culture that produces it.

The idea that a new visual language would soon emerge and reflect these societal changes was widespread. Although the exact nature of the new language was debated, all sides agreed with Taine's basic premise that the new age called for a new art. Historically, the debate has been cast in terms of traditional versus avant-garde views. However as indicated by the adoption of much of Taine's basic premises by both groups, the issue is more complex than this either/or approach would suggest. Even within

groups little unanimity of thought existed.²⁶ To place Harrison's theory in the context of this debate, it is instructive to take an inclusive approach.

Taine's influence on Harrison is immediately recognizable in *Landscape Painting*. The first sentence of the book states Harrison's belief that because the peoples of Northern and Western Europe have historically been forced to confront the hardships presented by the topography and climate of this region to such an extent that it has "become woven into the fabric of the race. . . landscape art in its best expression is and ever has been confined within the narrow geographical limits"²⁷ of this area. This basic premise, which informs much of Harrison's theory of landscape painting, reflects Taine's concept of "racial" evolution, that is, the artist's retention of "racial memories, attitudes and instincts from his ancestors."²⁸

Harrison believed that, based on our history, the land held special meaning for Americans and was instrumental in shaping those characteristics that were generally associated with the American character.²⁹ He saw the American engagement with the land as continuing past the closure of the frontier as evidenced by American's devotion to the "open" as exemplified in the modern pursuits of out-of-doors pleasures and sports. He also believed that nature's beauty, her mysterious and ever changing moods, was particularly appealing to Americans.³⁰ He concluded that this was "our best achievement; and our artists in this are, therefore, simply keeping step with the march of modern civilization."³¹

Harrison accepted the validity of Taine's argument of the importance of racial memory and that art reflects the culture in which it was created, even after considering the importance of artistic temperament in the art process. He concluded that "racial

individuality in art is a fact, and furthermore, that in our modern schools of painting, this racial character is so strong as quite to dominate and submerge the individual note."³² His observations raise the issue of the concept of the "native school" in American art criticism.

It was Harrison's opinion that an American School of painting already existed. It was both "native," an art that reflected American characteristics and culture; and "national," an art produced by the synthesis of foreign influences.³³ He noted that French critics had long identified "L'École Americaine" as a distinct school³⁴ and as early as 1885 singled out several expatriate American artists, his brother Alexander among them, as representative of it. As evidence of this, Harrison cited his conversation with a French artist who indicated that the very weakness of our lack of an art tradition in America was not the disadvantage that Americans perceived it to be; rather it was a unique advantage that enabled American artists to "look straight at nature out of your own eyes, while our vision is clouded and obscured by the inheritance of a thousand years."³⁵ The distinguishing characteristic of this school was its "unusual directness and clarity of vision, coupled with a corresponding simplicity of statement."³⁶ He believed that as a result of the material prosperity and energy of the American people during the first decade of the last century, the time was ripe for the emergence of a great American art movement.

As Harrison noted the United States, already among the world's leading economic leaders, was coming of age in cultural terms as well. The first decades of the twentieth century witnessed a resurgence in nationalism. Many of the artists in revolt against the

traditionalist point of view sought to create an art that was less cosmopolitan and more self-referential.

From its inception, American art criticism attempted to deal with the issue of whether or not American art sustained an identity separate from the European tradition upon which it relied so heavily. After the cosmopolitan experience of American artists abroad during in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the issue of European influence and its impact on the development of an identifiably “American School” of painting was addressed extensively. The issue of nationalism peaked at the Paris Exposition of 1900, where the American Fine Arts Department made a “self-conscious and politically motivated” effort to install paintings that “exuded American character.”³⁷

Harrison was one of the major figures of American Tonalism, a mix of both international and national influences, and which was the “favorite tendency among American officials and critics.”³⁸ Tonalism continued to gain favor among critics of the period and was cited as an example of the “American School” in reviews of the 1900 Paris Exposition and in reviews of exhibitions that followed. The 1901 Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York, for example, featured many of the works by American and South American artists that had been shown in Paris. As late as the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco, artists associated with Tonalism were praised as representing the national character.³⁹

Tonalism’s choice of subject, the civilized landscape “associated with local color, regional authenticity and the reintegration of man with his native soil,”⁴⁰ secured its place in the American landscape tradition. This was recognized in histories of American art written during the period by Charles H. Caffin in *American Masters of Painting*, 1902

and by Sadakichi Hartmann in *A History of American Art*, 1902. The American experience of the land, for instance, was viewed as resulting in a “genuine love of nature and understanding of all her rare moods [that] is speedily ranking our landscape men among the greatest the world has seen.”⁴¹ When comparing Tonalism to Impressionism, the other dominate style of landscape popular during the period, Tonalism was seen as more representative of an American school of landscape art.⁴²

A comparison between Harrison’s art theory and that of the other two major movements emerging during the period, the Ash Can School and American modernism, helps to clarify Harrison’s position within the context of the debate that engulfed the art world at this time. It has frequently been asserted that the realism of painters in the group “The Eight,” which gathered around Robert Henri, represented a new approach to the emerging art of the new age that was in direct opposition to the “genteel tradition” of Tonalism’s poetic landscapes of which Harrison was a recognized spokesman. A review of the two men’s ideas on art reveals however, that these two leading figures of contemporary art movements, shared several areas of agreement. They shared, for example, a belief in the individual, a dislike of organized institutions of art, which imposed academic restrictions on the free expression of artistic temperament, and both artists crusaded for an “independent, indigenous American art.”⁴³

Like Harrison, Henri studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and in Paris at the École des Beaux-Arts. As his letters back home indicate, it was during this period that Henri formed the “germ of much of the advice he gave in *The Art Spirit*.”⁴⁴

That the two men shared this common formative learning experience is evident in the similarity of several aspects of their theory and teaching, particularly their embrace of the major concepts underlying Taine's theoretical approach.

Although Thomas Eakins had already departed from the Academy of Fine Arts before Henri's arrival, his ideas continued to exert a strong influence on the curriculum, and Henri, like Harrison before him, would have become familiar with Taine's art theory while studying there. His familiarity with Taine's ideas on art would have grown as part of his course of study while attending the Academy Julian in Paris from 1888 to 1891. Henri was also familiar with Taine's ideas through William Morris Hunt's, *Talks on Art*. One of the books that "were gospel to Henri"⁴⁵ years later when he became a teacher, Hunt's book advised aspiring artists to "Read Taine!"⁴⁶ Several of Henri's ideas about art indicate his absorption of Taine's theory. As his book, *The Art Spirit* indicates, Henri later quoted from Taine when addressing his own students.⁴⁷ Just as Harrison's ideas on landscape painting reveal Taine's concepts of race, milieu and time, they also inform Henri's.

Taine's theoretical ideas inform both men's approach to the issue of the development of a national art in America in which the ideas of "individualism, American values, and contemporary life were inextricably intertwined."⁴⁸ In January 1909, Henri wrote an article for *The Craftsman* that articulated his ideas on this topic. Titled, "Progress in our National Art Must Spring from the Development of Individuality of Ideas and Freedom of Expression: A Suggestion for a New Art School," it indicates the manner in which these ideas are interwoven and summarizes Henri's belief that if American artists remained faithful to their own temperament and to Taine's idea of being

contemporary in their own time a distinctly American art form would emerge naturally.⁴⁹

Henri elaborated on this and other issues in his book *The Art Spirit*.

Originally published in 1923, *The Art Spirit*, like Harrison's *Landscape Painting*, was a compilation of Henri's teaching and thought. Also like Harrison's book, its success was due to its appeal on the practical level of art instruction as well as to its exposition of a philosophy of art. For Henri, the development of a national art was not tied to the subject depicted nor a specific technique but would flow naturally from the individual artist's temperament, which unconsciously "expresses his own attitude toward life in whatsoever he creates, and his picture or stature or sonnet will testify to his nationality."⁵⁰

As demonstrated in his ideas concerning a national art, the key to Henri's artistic thought is the concept of individuality. Whether as an outgrowth of our democratic ideals or our confrontation with the land, especially in the West, individualism has consistently been viewed as a defining American trait. Faith in the individual, either as the center of morality or economic security, has shaped our institutions and society. By the turn of the century, this faith was being shaken by the impact of the growing complexity of modern life that dictated a redefinition of the self in terms of social interdependence.⁵¹

Interestingly, at the moment that American society was coming to this realization and beginning to make adjustments in its social fabric, the art-world conversely began to emphasize the individual and his sensations. Henri's insistence on individualism shares this historical moment. The concepts of temperament and personal expression in art

developed as part of the academic tradition and Taine's theories, and most artists of the period subscribed to them.

Many critics cited the distinctly American character of Henri's and his followers' selection of subject matter, particularly in their scenes of New York City. Their choices reflected Taine's concern that the artist be contemporary in his own time. But it was not on the basis of subject matter alone that a national art would emerge. Henri also stated that he believed that national character was also expressed in the individual.⁵² Rather than locating it in terms of stored racial memories, as Taine did, or in the "individual personality within racial limits,"⁵³ as Harrison did, Henri focused his art on expressing the vitality of life found in individuals, and in his writing and teaching, on freeing artists from institutional restraints so that they could not only express their own individuality but also receive recognition for doing so.

Harrison and Henri addressed the artistic process of selection in the same terms as Taine, who advised artists to modify the relationships of the parts to the whole in "such a way as to make apparent the *essential character* of the object . . . what the philosophers call the *essence* of things."⁵⁴ Similar to what Howard Risatti has identified as the modernism's "search for fundamentals in abstraction,"⁵⁵ this was, as it had always been understood to be, the aim of the artistic process. It is the visual language of art that changes and this change is predicated on many factors.

In *The Art Spirit*, Henri warned his students that "the painter should be interested not in the incident but in the essence of his subject."⁵⁶ An examination of this and similar statements have prompted a re-examination of the literalness of Henri's realism. As Judith Zilzcer suggests, "subjective naturalism," shaped by the interest in conveying the

energy of contemporary life might be a more appropriate term.⁵⁷ Henri advised his students to start their work by determining what specifically about their subject interested them.⁵⁸ His American subject was, as he said, not so much the “actual place or immediate environment” as it was the essence of the American character: that we are a distinctly “energetic people” with “tremendous ideas to express.”⁵⁹

Like Henri, in his own art and in his advice to his students, Harrison also focused on capturing the essence of the object. In his work, he searched for the essential beauty of nature, in order to visualize not only its physical being but its soul as well. He encouraged his students to do likewise by developing a vision that would allow them to strip away “all vulgarities and inessentials,” in order “to see the soul of the thing.”⁶⁰ The process of this selectivity was fundamental to Harrison’s definition of art.

While Harrison and Henri agreed with each other in terms of the necessity of capturing the essence of their subject, the manner in which they chose to visualize it indicates one of the major differences between the two artists and by extension the two movements for which they were spokesmen. “At the turn of the century, a preoccupation with ‘beauty’ dominated much of the discourse of art criticism.”⁶¹ During the nineteenth century, the term was used in association with the academic concept of the “ideal,” and in the Romantic tradition, it was synonymous with “truth.”⁶² By the first decades of the twentieth century these terms conveyed several levels of meaning. Definitions of “beauty” were recognized as fluid and subjective. For both Harrison and Henri, “beauty” has to do with visualizing the essence of the subject. In terms of subject, however, the two artists disagreed.

For Harrison, “beauty” and its external manifestations were based on nature, specifically the moods of nature that revealed its essence, its soul, and its spirituality. This concept was visualized in the artistic strategies adopted by the Tonalist landscape school. Harrison’s definition that “Art is natural beauty interpreted through the human temperament,”⁶³ and his statement that “the fundamental law which governs all art is that it first of all be beautiful”⁶⁴ summarizes his Tonalist aesthetic. While nature was not always beautiful, he believed that an ugly subject could never awaken in the viewer the same sensation of joy that comes from the contemplation of beauty.⁶⁵

Henri’s ideas about art are more concerned with the relationship of art and life. Rejecting a formulaic approach to art, a disparagement increasingly leveled at Tonalist landscapes by critics at the time, Henri advised his students that it was a “mistake to think that spirituality is seen only through a mist.”⁶⁶ The subject, he stated could “be as it may, beautiful or ugly.”⁶⁷ Regardless of the subject, what mattered to Henri was conveying the vitality of life in the work of art. Unlike Harrison, Henri also believed that the process of artistic creation, as recorded by the gesture, was a participation in the vitality of life. While Harrison stated that the artist’s duty was to create a beautiful work of art, Henri believed that “the beauty of a work of art is in the work itself.”⁶⁸

Despite these differences, both men championed individualism and encouraged their students to pursue the development of their own personal expressions. As recorded in their books, both men were committed to communicating an approach to art and its fundamentals but not to imitation. For both artists, technique was never an end in itself but the means to an end. Their instructions to their students illustrate their familiarity with late-nineteenth century critical notions that associated technique with “individual

creative difference” which implied the human values of “sincerity,” “truth,” and “originality” in “self-expression.”⁶⁹

For this reason, Henri cautioned his students: “Don’t belong to any school. Don’t tie up to any technique.”⁷⁰ In his view, the problem with schools, in the sense of identifying with a specific artistic tendency or movement, was that they limited the expressive potential of the individual artist. Henri argued that the artist should master technique in order to call on various styles as his individual expression determined was necessary.

In *Landscape Painting*, Harrison also cautioned his students to avoid following the technique of one master at the expense of his own expression. He did not accept the validity of “schools” of art insisting that “an artist is born with the three essentials- temperament, character and sincerity- it is *impossible* to destroy the personal note in him.”⁷¹

Henri’s admonition to his students reveals his faith in the capabilities of the individual, as well as perhaps his “fear of institutions.”⁷² It may also reflect his understanding that the rush toward the increasing specificity of labor and organizing of professional institutions, especially those in the field of art, while providing a place to share common interests, frequently functioned as a way to limit access to those seeking to join the ranks of established professionals. This concern prompted his attack on the process of juried exhibitions and the National Academy of Design. Henri’s review of the New York Exhibition of Independent Artists in 1910 is one of his clearest statements on the need for non-juried exhibitions. Such shows, he contended, were the only means for

the artist to maintain the necessary “freedom to think and to show what you are thinking about.”⁷³

His viewpoint may have been formed during his first hand experience of the conflicts that arose when the selection process was dominated by the special interests of a group of artists. As a young student in Paris, Henri was almost immediately thrust into the controversies surrounding the process of jury selection in exhibitions. Arriving in Paris less than a year before the opening of the 1889 Universal Exposition in Paris, he was no doubt aware of the controversy that developed concerning the jury.

Henri met fellow Philadelphian, Alexander Harrison, shortly after the close of the Exposition. He wrote to his parents that he had met Alexander whom he described as, “one of the foremost artists of the Americans” and he felt “certain there is much to learn under his influence.”⁷⁴ Henri and his friend James Fisher accepted Harrison’s invitation to spend the summer in Concarneau. They took a studio in the same building as Alexander, who also offered free criticism of their work,⁷⁵ and struck up a long friendship. It was with the help of Alexander that Henri was able to mount a one-man show at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art in the fall of 1897.⁷⁶

The challenge to the jury system around which the controversy revolved, and the role that Alexander Harrison played in the ensuing conflict have already been discussed. As evidenced by his response to these events in his article, “The New Departure in Parisian Art, 1889,” Birge Harrison formed an opinion of juried exhibitions and their tendency to strangle the creativity of aspiring artists⁷⁷ early in his career. His views were similar to those that prompted Henri and his circle of friends to challenge the National Academy 1908.

Like most members of their generation who matured as artists under the pervasive influence of Aestheticism, both Harrison and Henri believed in the culturally transformative power of art. By the end of his life, Harrison saw signs that such a transformation was already taking shape as “our people are beginning to awaken from their long slumber; to claim for themselves some of the joy and beauty of life” by demanding higher standards in the art, “in a word demanding their rightful heritage.”⁷⁸

Sharing a commitment to the importance of individual expression in the arts by securing exhibition space free from the process of jury selection, as well as a belief in the role of art in society, Harrison and Henri worked together to establish a “Great Exhibition Gallery” in New York City that would provide a forum for exhibitions open to the public.

Harrison expounded on the need for greater patronage in order for American art to be successful in developing into a truly national art in two of his articles for *Scribner's Magazine*. In “Subjects for the Painter in American Landscape” in 1912, he stated that while America had been blessed by nature with an almost infinite variety of compelling motifs, and with a talented pool of professionally trained artists to visualize them, the country still lacked the patronage necessary for artists to sustain a livelihood. However, he sensed that the situation was changing, and that the new institutions of art sprouting up throughout the country indicated that the American public was becoming interested in the role that art might play in society.⁷⁹

In “The New Art in America,” written three years later in 1915, Harrison noted that it was curious that “the rising star of American art is seen less clearly at home than it is abroad.”⁸⁰ He called for an increase in national and municipal patronage of the arts as the most viable means of overcoming the lingering sense of inferiority to European art

that plagued American art. In Harrison's view New York City, as the cultural capital of the country, should take the lead in this matter. He argued forcefully for a municipal museum that would include "every form of art known to humanity . . . each treated fairly,"⁸¹ and which would have widespread appeal and whose accessibility to artists and their public would essentially raise the level of art awareness and secure a role for the arts in American society.

An exchange of letters between Henri and Harrison over an eighteen-month period from 1914 to 1915 outlines their joint commitment to this project,⁸² which grew out of John White Alexander's plans for the relocation of the National Academy of Design. In a letter to the editor of the *New York Times*, Harrison agreed with the proposal that envisioned a "monumental art palace" that would serve as the home for the "National Academy as well as the Architectural League, the Society of Mural Painters, the National Sculpture Society, the Art Commission of the City of New York, and all cognate bodies."⁸³ Harrison suggested that such a building would establish New York as one of the leading art centers in the world and confirm America's position as a cultural leader. He proposed that the two blocks opposite the New York City Library be designated as the site of the building.

After several years, during which time this proposal was put aside, Harrison contacted Robert Henri who had earlier proposed a similar scheme for a Municipal Art Gallery, with a somewhat altered plan for the project. Although the location for the building changed several times, the exchange of letters between the two demonstrates their commitment to the idea that the new building provide an "open forum for the exhibition of art and thereby induce freedom of individual expression."⁸⁴ Both Harrison

and Henri later withdrew their support for the plan, which eventually failed when the municipal authorities demanded granting a majority of the seats of the governing committee to representatives of the very art institutions whose authority the plan was designed to challenge.

Although art historians have focused on the differences between the two groups of artists that Henri and Harrison represent, this brief examination of their careers indicates that the differences may not be as divisive as once thought. Birge Harrison and Robert Henri were members of a generation of American artists whose art ideals were formed during their student years abroad. As students, they were exposed to the same cosmopolitan experiences, and acquired a sense the importance of the role of art and the artist in society, although they would later assimilated these ideas into their own individual approaches to art. As demonstrated in their careers as teachers and their pursuit of an art gallery devoted to the ideal of an open forum of art, they also shared a belief in fostering individual expression. With other artists of their generation, they worked toward the common goal of establishing a role for art in American society.

Many of the points in Henri's book, *The Art Spirit*, and Harrison's *Landscape Painting* demonstrate that just as American artists absorbed the variety of styles to which they were exposed during their training abroad, they also synthesized European theoretical ideas with their own concerns about art. This facility to assimilate various currents of thought was recognized at the time as a talent native to Americans.⁸⁵ Recently art historians have begun to focus on this aspect of American art and the manner in which it has traditionally shaped American art theory.⁸⁶ The strategy of simultaneously synthesizing various influences and through this very activity,

challenging them, led to a critical voice that addressed concerns unique to the American experience. As they struggled to develop a language that could explain the new tendencies found in American art, this strategy was used by various groups of writers during the early twentieth century. As a review of some of the major theoretical concerns of Harrison and Henri indicates, there existed a good deal of common ground between the various critical stances during the period when Harrison wrote most of his art criticism.

In terms of the debate that characterizes the criticism of the period, Henri and Harrison can be placed among the “expressionist”⁸⁷ art critics. As defined by Virginia Mecklenburg, this group, which included such important figures in the art world as Royal Cortissoz and Leila Mechlin, saw themselves as practicing a more contemporary approach to art criticism than their traditionalist colleagues such as Kenyon Cox. Like this more conservative group, expressionists critics rejected imitation and praised the artistic search for the expression of the essence of a subject. Unlike the traditionalists’ “more intellectual orientation,” however, the expressionists “focused on the artist’s emotional or perceptual interpretation of nature” and believed that contemporary life should be represented in “the individual viewpoint of the artist and that it reflect nativist American values.”⁸⁸ Furthermore, Harrison and Henri worked together to secure an open forum where these viewpoints could be exhibited.

The other major group of critics to emerge during this period of unrest in American art and criticism were the “vanguard theorists,”⁸⁹ many of whom were associated with Alfred Stieglitz and his galleries at 291 Fifth Avenue in New York City. Just as this brief examination of the relationship between Birge Harrison and Robert

Henri has suggested various points of commonality between the seemingly antithetical approaches of these two artists, a brief investigation into the relationship between Harrison's thoughts on art and those of the critics associated with the emergence of modernism indicates a similar commonality of approach to art criticism and further serves to place Harrison's thoughts on art in the context of the period.

¹ Birge Harrison, "The True Impressionism in Art," *Scribner's Magazine* 46 (October 1909): 495.

² The term "temperament" conveyed several meanings during this period. In general, it referred to "the individual's physiological or psychological state," his personality. "Temperament like nature was generally regarded as preexisting givens." "Emotion" or "impression" were temporary states and are inseparable. "Sensation" signifies both emotion and impression (Richard Shiff, *Cézanne and the End of Impressionism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 20). In general Harrison used these terms in following this generally accepted standard. However, he saw a clearer link between temperament and psychology. He defines the artistic temperament as "a peculiarly sensitive sub-conscious organization—one that is at once keenly alive to beauty, and capable of that rapid and intuitive coordination of impressions" (Birge Harrison, *Landscape Painting* 1909; reprint New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911), 189.

³ H. Wayne Morgan, *New Muses: Art in American Culture 1865-1920* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1978), 146.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 150.

⁵ Arthur Hoeber, "The Carnegie Exhibition," *The International Studio* 43 (June 1911): lxxix.

⁶ Virginia Mecklenburg, "American Aesthetic Theory, 1908-1917, Issues in Conservative and Avant-Garde Thought" (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, 1983), 1.

⁷ "A Greater Sincerity Necessary for the True Development of American Art: By the Editor," *The Craftsman* 16 (April 1909): 57.

⁸ Frank Jewett Mather, Jr., "The Present State of Art," *The Nation* 93 (December 14, 1911): 585.

⁹ Norman Hapgood, "American Art Criticism," *The Bookman* 6 (September 1897): 45.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹¹ Mecklenburg, 16.

¹² Howard Anthony Risatti, "American Critical Reaction to European Modernism, 1908 to 1917" (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1978), 4.

¹³ Charles Harrison, "Modernism," in *Critical Terms for Art History*, Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff, eds., (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 143.

¹⁴ Arthur Wesley Dow, "Modernism in Art," *American Magazine of Art* 8 (December 1916): 113.

¹⁵ Because several of these levels of meaning were developed after the period under discussion they are not applicable to the issues being addressed. For a concise discussion of the development of this term see, Charles Harrison, 142-155.

¹⁶ Risatti, 5.

¹⁷ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 5.

¹⁸ Harrison, "The Woodstock School of Landscape Painting," *Art and Progress* 1 (September 1910): 316.

¹⁹ John E.D. Trask, "Birge Harrison," *Scribner's Magazine* 42 (November 1907): 578.

²⁰ Mecklenburg, 111.

²¹ Sally Webster, *William Morris Hunt 1834-1879* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 121.

²² John Durand, "Preface to the first edition," in Hippolyte -AdolpheTaine, *The Philosophy of Art*, (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1971, reprint of the 1875 edition by Henry Hoit and Company, New York), n.p.

²³ Mecklenburg, 69.

²⁴ Mary Logan, "The New Art Criticism," *The Atlantic Monthly* 76 (August 1895): 269.

²⁵ John Weiss, *The Origins of Modern Consciousness* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1965), 11.

²⁶ Mecklenburg, 27. Mecklenburg notes that both the conservative and avant-garde factions adopted ideas from the writings of Taine and Spencer that they applied in different ways and that "the similarities in many of their arguments only fueled the antagonism between them."

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 47.

²⁹ Birge Harrison, "The Artist...By One of Them...Namely...Birge Harrison," *The Plowshare* 6 (February 1917): n.p.

³⁰ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 227.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 254.

³² *Ibid.*, 239.

³³ Linda Jo Docherty, "A Search for Identity: American Art Criticism and the Concept of the 'Native School' 1876-1893" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1985), 18.

³⁴ Birge Harrison, "The Future of American Art," *North American Review* 109 (July 1909): 27.

³⁵ Docherty, 18.

³⁶ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 241.

³⁷ Diane P. Fischer, "Constructing the 'American School' of 1900," in *Paris 1900 "The American School" at the Universal Exhibition* (exh. cat., New Jersey: The Montclair Art Museum, 2000), 1.

³⁸ Ibid., 94.

³⁹ Gail Stravitsky, "The Legacy of the 'American School' 1901-1938" in *Paris 1900 "The American School at the Universal Exhibition*, 186.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 192.

⁴¹ Giles Edgerton, "American Art Scores a Triumph at the International Exhibition of Painting in Pittsburgh," *The Craftsman* 14 (August 1908): 464.

⁴² William H. Gerds, "American Tonalism: An Artistic Overview," in *Tonalism: An American Experience* (exh. cat., New York: Grand Central Art Galleries, 1982), 25.

⁴³ William Innes Homer, "The Exhibition of 'The Eight': Its History and Significance," *The American Art Journal* 1 (Spring 1969): 53.

⁴⁴ William Innes Homer, *Robert Henri and His Circle* (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1988), 60.

⁴⁵ John Loughery, *John Sloan, Painter and Rebel* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1995), 35.

⁴⁶ William Morris Hunt, *On Painting and Drawing* (1896: reprint New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1976), 73.

⁴⁷ Robert Henri, *The Art Spirit* (1923, reprint; Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, Icon Paperback Edition, 1984), 86.

⁴⁸ Mecklenburg, 83.

⁴⁹ Homer, *Robert Henri and His Circle*, 141.

⁵⁰ Robert Henri, "Progress in Our National Art Must Spring from the Development of Individuality of Ideas and Freedom of Expression: A Suggestion for a New Art School: By Robert Henri," *The Craftsman* 15 (January 1909): 387.

⁵¹ T. J. Jackson Lear, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), 34.

⁵² Valerie Ann Leeds, *My People The Portraits of Robert Henri* (exh. cat., Orlando, Florida: Orlando Museum of Art 1994), 13.

⁵³ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 201.

⁵⁴ Taine, *The Philosophy of Art*, 64.

⁵⁵ Risatti, 301.

⁵⁶ Robert Henri, *The Art Spirit* (1923; reprint Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, Icon Paperback Edition, 1984), 265.

⁵⁷ Judith K. Zilczer, "Anti-Realism in the Ashcan School," *Art Forum* 17 (March 1979): 48.

⁵⁸ Henri, *The Art Spirit*, 20.

⁵⁹ Henri, "Progress in our National Art," 391.

⁶⁰ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 155.

⁶¹ Bailey Van Hook, *Angels of Art: Women and Art in American Society 1876-1914* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1996), 159.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 201.

⁶⁴ Birge Harrison, "Recent Developments in Marine Painting," *Scribner's Magazine* 49 (April 1911), 471.

⁶⁵ Birge Harrison, "The 'Mood' in Modern Painting," *Art and Progress* 4 (July 1913): 1018.

⁶⁶ Henri, *The Art Spirit*, 198.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 166.

⁶⁹ Shiff, xiv.

⁷⁰ Henri, *The Art Spirit*, 93.

⁷¹ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 134. Harrison defined "character" as "the ability to work when it would be easier to play" (*id.* 191); and "sincerity" as honesty, that is, the refusal to "appropriate unto oneself the artistic discoveries of other painters, to incorporate them into one's own painting, and to pass those pictures off as original upon a half-educated public" (Harrison, "The Art...By One of Them..." n.p.).

⁷² Leeds, 13.

⁷³ Robert Henri, "The New York Exhibition of Independent Artists," *The Craftsman* 18 (1910): 160.

⁷⁴ Letter from Robert Henri, to "Dear folks at home," dated June 9, 1889, The Robert Henri Papers, The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut.

⁷⁵ Homer, *Robert Henri and His Circle*, 47.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 88.

⁷⁷ Birge Harrison, "The New Departure in Parisian Art," *Atlantic Monthly* 66 (December 1890): 753-764.

⁷⁸ Harrison, "The Artist...By ...One of Them..." n.p.

⁷⁹ Birge Harrison, "Subjects for the Painter in American Landscape," *Scribner's Magazine* 52 (December 1912): 768.

⁸⁰ Birge Harrison, "The New Art in America," *Scribner's Magazine* 57 (March 1915): 391.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 394.

⁸² Correspondence Folders no.162 (N.Y. Department of Parks/1915) and nos.107 and108, (Birge Harrison, 1914 and 1915), The Robert Henri Papers. I am grateful to Valerie Leeds for bring this material to my attention.

⁸³ Birge Harrison, "Mr. Alexander's Plan," *New York Times*, March 7, 1909, 7.

⁸⁴ Letter from Robert Henri to Birge Harrison, dated July 17,1915, The Robert Henri Papers.

⁸⁵ Stravitsky, 186.

⁸⁶ See, Necia Gelker, *Transcendental Modernism, 1908-1917: America's Tradition of the New and the Revolt against the Hobgoblin of Little Minds* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Southern California, 1996). Gelker's thesis is that the strategy of synthesizing various ideas from both the past and the present used in the formation of Emersonian Transcendentalism provided a paradigm for the development of an American aesthetics that addressed the conditions of the democracy found only in America.

⁸⁷ Mecklenburg, 82.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 112.

Chapter Eleven

Harrison and the Modernist Critics

Within each of the broad categories of critical approaches to art theory and criticism found in the first decade of the twentieth century, divergent opinions existed.¹ As already noted, Birge Harrison's art criticism falls within the expressionist approach as outlined by Virginia Mecklenburg. In general, Harrison agreed with the American critic Royal Cortissoz, perhaps the best-known advocate of the expressionist approach, who believed in "fidelity to nature expressed in understandable individualism that provoked unifying thought"² and in the idea of innovation within tradition. Like other artists and critics associated with the expressionist group, Harrison accepted this balance between idealism and realism and viewed the art of the past as a source upon which the artist's mind could feed.³ The expressionist approach therefore placed greater importance on the interpretive functions of the individual artist in the development of American art than on tradition. Nevertheless, the expressionists were equally committed to avoiding individual eccentricity that could lead to a division between the artist and the public, thereby nullifying their shared belief that "art forms functioned within the history and life of a people."⁴

These concerns were intertwined with other emerging critical concepts of what constituted "modern" art. By the beginning of the twentieth century almost all American critics had moved away from the mid-nineteenth-century support of both the narrative and the mimetic function of art. Suggestion, or as Harrison

stated, leaving “something to the imagination of the beholder,”⁵ was seen by the expressionist critics as a primary prerequisite for modern art. Similarly, the modernist concern for the “emotive value of line, color and form”⁶ was a key concern.

As a major spokesman of Tonalism, Harrison shared with the emerging new art concerns with poetic evocation, an “intimate view of nature,” painterly style, and investigations of the visualization of light in atmosphere, all of which have been seen as preparing “for a comprehension of the work of Cézanne and subsequent innovation.”⁷ Because the Tonalist aesthetic incorporated these concerns it found supporters among expressionist critics, who also included such writers as Sadakichi Hartmann and Charles H. Caffin, today considered among the early advocates of American modernism. Their writings, particularly those found in what is perhaps the best-known voice for modernism in American art during the period, *Camera Work*, demonstrate that, later rhetoric aside, in terms of art theory and criticism, they shared with Harrison several important theoretical concerns about the nature and function of art.⁸

Alfred Stieglitz’s, *Camera Work*, remains one of the most important documents chronicling the growing understanding of European modernism by both Stieglitz and the circle of artists and critics associated with him. First printed in January 1903, *Camera Work* carried on where Stieglitz’s other journal dedicated to photography, *Camera Notes*, left off. Like the earlier periodical, it illustrates Stieglitz’s campaign to reform photography, as well as his commitment to individual artistic expression in all media.

An early supporter of pictorial photography,⁹ Stieglitz encouraged photographers to study the fundamentals of art and to adhere to traditional conventions¹⁰ if they hoped to raise photography to the level of a fine art. The pictorialist photographs illustrated in the periodical, were distinguished, not by the descriptiveness with which the medium was generally associated, but by their suggestiveness. As Sadakichi Hartmann demonstrated in *Landscape and Figure Composition*, in 1910,¹¹ using pictorial strategies similar to Tonalist landscape paintings, their poetical rather than imitative quality was the result of easily identifiable subject matter, simplified compositions and “soft-focus effects.”¹² In fact, “for Stieglitz, the ideal pictorialist was one who had trained first as a painter and had then picked up the camera.”¹³

Edward J. Steichen, who would serve as one of Stieglitz’s main allies in the development of modern photography in America, fulfills this ideal and serves as an example of the association between contemporaneous movements of pictorial photography, Tonalism, Symbolism and modernism. During the early years of a long career, Steichen had pursued both painting and photography. Like other painters and photographers during the period, he was particularly influenced by James McNeill Whistler, who influenced both painters and photographers.¹⁴ He pursued his “quietistic vision of nature”¹⁵ following a Tonalist style, which he applied to both his paintings and his photographs. As his mural, *In Exaltation of Flowers*, indicates, after living in Voulangis, France, beginning in 1908, Steichen moved away from the Tonalism of his earlier paintings.¹⁶

Nevertheless, in Stieglitz's *Camera Notes* and *Camera Work*, Whistler's style and theory continued to be frequently cited as an influence on the development of pictorialist photography.¹⁷ Roland Rood's article, "The Origin of the Poetical Feeling in Landscape," for example, makes the argument that specific objects found in the natural landscape, such as trees and flowers, have, from almost time immemorial, held associative values or "psychological laws" that render the suggestion of "poetical or personal"¹⁸ emotional responses to these objects an inherent quality of the landscape genre itself, and which could be explored to equal effectiveness in both painting and photography.

Like Whistler, Steichen developed personal ties within the Symbolist movement. He was influenced by the Belgian Symbolist Maurice Maeterlinck, himself influenced by Emerson, whom he found a "source of consolation and encouragement."¹⁹ French Symbolism was originally a literary movement that emphasized subjectivity, intimacy and the imagination. Developing contemporaneously with Tonalism, the Symbolist goal, to reach beyond material reality in order to represent its spiritual dimension, or inner state, was shared to varying degrees with Tonalist artists. Both movements also required the viewer's participation in order to re-experience to some extent the artist's feelings.

As Steichen's early paintings and pictorialist photographs indicate, the two movements shared similar concerns and visual strategies, many of which resulted from Whistler's innovative tonal approach as exemplified in his nocturnal landscapes. These paintings emphasized suggestion over delineation through the use of a reductive, decorative composition, limited palette, value range of

harmoniously modulated colors, and atmospheric effect that relied on refraction. Whistler's nocturnes in particular were viewed by both Symbolist and Tonalist artists as visual models upon which to build an enduring artistic tradition that visualized the emotional response and inner spirit of the artist.

Using these techniques, both Tonalists and Symbolists sought a visual language in which the concrete, objective world was veiled to allow for the exploration of one aspect of the modern condition. Although it had been identified in the proto-symbolist concerns of Jules Bastien-Lepage's introspective figures and the dreamy landscapes of Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, the psychological, the non-tangible emotional and/or spiritual aspects of man and nature had not yet been fully explored in the visual arts.

Aside from similar visual strategies, it is not known how familiar individual American Tonalist artists were with the artistic theory of the French Symbolists. Those studying in France during the last fifteen years of the nineteenth century were very likely aware of Symbolist literature. As indicated by "French Symbolism," a lengthy review of the movement written for *Scribner's* in 1893 by Aline Gorren, Symbolism and its aims were also understood in America by this time. In his article, Gorren identifies many of the leading figures of the movement, as well as their interest in psychology and metaphysics, and their underlying belief that "All visibilities are symbols. Our business is to find out what these symbols mean."²⁰ Most American artists were no doubt also aware of the close connection between Whistler and the Symbolists, especially Stéphane Mallarmé, who saw in

Whistler's art a model for evoking, rather than describing, the inner spirit of his subjects.²¹

Although both Symbolism and Tonalism looked forward to the coming of a more spiritual period, American Tonalism "shared nothing of the sometimes arcane and occult, often sensual, predilection of European Symbolism."²² Based on the rejection of material reality, Symbolism demanded an attitude of artistic detachment that, by combining elements of objective reality, sought to evoke a highly subjective reality.²³ Rather than exploring a world of individual, private, idiosyncratic sensations, Tonalist artists such as Harrison never detached themselves from material reality, pursuing instead what Hippolyte Taine termed "hallucination vraie"-that is, sensation subject to verification of others."²⁴ They sought to suggest a "world of universals lying behind the world of appearances."²⁵ Furthermore, Tonalism sought to explore the immaterial aspects of life, and translate this into their art through direct observation and plein-air techniques rather than those built upon tradition. As Harrison indicates, in so doing, they attempted to explore areas that reflected their own times, with its "present devotion to the more obtrusive problems of psychology, our fearless search for the mysterious source of life, of spirit, of force."²⁶

As Charles Eldredge has noted, in their explorations of the non-material and imaginative, several modern American artists adapted a similarly tempered approach to that of the Symbolists, developing an "introspective American aesthetic"²⁷ that shared, to varying degrees, concerns similar to those of European Symbolism. Much of the art exhibited by American artists associated with

Stieglitz's galleries, such as Mardsen Hartley, Georgia O'Keefe, and Arthur Dove, demonstrated that these artists successfully pursued what Eldredge terms Abstract Symbolism, "a union of effect and image through the use of color."²⁸ Their early abstract images reflected the American adaptation of an introspective aesthetic of which Tonalism was an earlier manifestation. Similarly, the critical essays of two of the most consistent contributors to *Camera Work*, Sadakichi Hartmann and Charles H. Caffin, reflect the same tempered adaptation of various aspects of this aesthetic.

Only a few articles directly addressed developments in painting and sculpture during the early years of the publication of *Camera Work*, from 1903-1907. It was with the groundbreaking exhibition of Auguste Rodin's drawings the galleries of 219, in 1908, that the periodical devoted more articles to contemporary fine arts and criticism.²⁹ The series of exhibitions at the galleries from 1908 to 1917, and the reviews of these exhibitions, which appeared in *Camera Work*, indicate the growing acceptance of the concepts of European modernism within the American art world and their corresponding adoption by American artists and critics.³⁰ These reviews also reveal that despite this acceptance, the underlying principle of Stieglitz's thoughts on art, which is reflected in the *Camera Work*, remained the late-nineteenth-century view of art as a spiritual expression.³¹ While this is most clearly exemplified by the reproduction of excerpts from Henri Bergson's book *Creative Evolution* in 1911, and Wassily Kandinsky's *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* in 1912, it is also reflected in articles writing by Hartmann and Caffin.

By January 1903, when the first issue of *Camera Work* appeared, Sadakichi Hartmann, one of the journals most prolific writers, was a well-known figure in the art world. Having previously published his own art periodicals as well as numerous articles in *Camera Notes*, by the time he began writing for *Camera Work*, Hartmann had assumed the “position of resident wise-man,”³² and his influence over Stieglitz’s aesthetic theory has until recently, been underestimated.³³

Like other critics of the period, art theory informs Hartmann’s approach to art criticism. Hartmann never articulated a fully conceived critical stance.³⁴ Rather, his art theory emerges in his writings, which included eleven books on contemporary art, most notably his *History of American Art*, published in 1902, and numerous articles in many of the most prominent art journals of the period.

In her dissertation, *Sadakichi Hartmann: Herald of Modernism*, Jane Weaver identified some of the characteristics of modernism, not all of which he approved, that Hartmann saw as emerging during the period. These included several that have already been identified in Harrison’s writings, among them:

the return to the commonplace in order to suggest the universal; the modernists preoccupation with ‘originality’; the growing interest in psychological investigations and in the unconscious as a means to unseat traditional aesthetics.³⁵

Hartmann was sympathetic to the Symbolist aesthetic from the beginning of his career. His sympathy, however, for this and other contemporary movements did not extend to disregarding the important role that tradition played in the artistic process. In his 1904 article for *Camera Work*, “On the Lack of Culture,” he recognized that many contemporary artists considered the inner world more

important than the outer world. However, consistent with the expressionist conviction that art maintain “some direct, visual connection to nature,”³⁶ he insisted on the need for artists to combine elements from both the natural world and the world of the spirit.³⁷ He also aligns himself with the expressionist critics by acknowledging that art is not an entirely intuitive process and that tradition and craftsmanship must continue to play an important role in the artistic process.³⁸ He urged contemporary artists to devote their lives to the study the masters of art such as Giotto, Holbein, Velasquez, Delacroix, Ingres, Daumier or Hokusai.³⁹ For Hartmann, the creative process was “determined by imagination, emotion and memory. And the latter is nothing but culture, knowledge, and accumulated experience.”⁴⁰

Hartmann was suspicious of the avant-garde demand for “originality” as a criteria of modern art. Advocating individual artistic expression, he disparaged the modernist’s definition of the term as the “commencement of something without precedence [and] the demolition of old standards of taste.”⁴¹ Instead, he defined the term as signifying the personality of the artist. Like Harrison, he viewed the artist’s personality in terms of the “unconscious element of nature” reflecting individual memory, and echoing Hippolyte Taine, the “result of breed, ancestry and hereditary traits”⁴² as well as the accumulated knowledge gained from study and experience. He cautioned artists against accepting the modernist definition of originality, which he believed could only lead the artist to lose touch with reality and fall into a reliance only on his own idiosyncrasies as subject matter for his art.

As his article “The Flat-Iron Building- An Esthetical Dissertation,” published in *Camera Work* in 1903 indicates, Hartmann accepted Taine’s concept of art as the reflection of the life of its time.⁴³ Rather than considering the famous building as an “eyesore,” Hartmann saw in its simple and bold design an architectural expression of the spirit of modern America.⁴⁴

In later articles for *Camera Work*, he addressed issues that related specifically to the development of art in the United States. Like Harrison, Hartmann believed that American society, and therefore art, still remained constricted by the influence of Puritan thought. Unable to appreciate beauty in any artistic form, its lingering influence made it difficult for Americans to fully enjoy art and literature.⁴⁵ As a result, American culture lacked the necessary appreciation of beauty to provide a meaningful role for art in American society.

In order to remedy this, Hartmann pursued a life-long commitment, first articulated in the *Art Critic*, to campaign for federal support for American art. In “An Appeal to All Art Lovers,” he identified the need for America to develop her own art, in an effort to “beautify our own lives” and “to cultivate a taste for art”⁴⁶ that would enhance our daily existence. In a second article, “How An American Art Could Be Developed,” he outlined his plan for the implementation of this idea, calling for the creation of an art guild and the establishment of three institutions of art, a National Art Gallery, an Academy of Fine Arts and a National Museum of Fine Arts.⁴⁷

Hartmann’s nationalistic concerns were common among many American artists and critics of the period and his sentiments are remarkably similar to

Harrison's own ideas of the possible role of art in America, including the Harrison and Henri project for the establishment of a museum to educate the populace in matters of art. This commitment to establish a role for the arts in American society illustrates an example of the degree to which divergent groups shared similar beliefs about the direction of art and its role in society during this period of unrest in American art.

Hartmann reiterated and developed his ideas on American art in his articles for *Camera Work*. While not calling for American artists to specifically choose American subjects, Hartmann, citing Whistler as a prototype in his article "White Chrysanthemums," maintained, as did Harrison, that all objects, even the most commonplace, were beautiful when seen "under certain conditions, at certain favored moments."⁴⁸ He also noted the importance of color in Whistler's conception of beauty and its visualization as his primary aesthetic concern.

Hartmann's admiration for Whistler's art demonstrates his understanding of the visual strategies used by Tonalist artists and pictorialist photographers to suggest more than they describe and in so doing to touch upon the inner, intangible world of sensation and emotion. Hartmann's *The Whistler Book*, published in 1910, expands on several of the ideas presented in his articles for *Camera Work*. Although he did not use Harrison's term "refraction" in his article "The Technique of Mystery and Blurred Effects," Hartmann stressed the manner in which Whistler's use of blurred edges, atmosphere effects and the manipulation of color gradations produced a sense of nature's mystery.⁴⁹ In his article "Repetition, with Slight Variation" for the first issue of *Camera Work*, Hartmann also discerned the

adaption of the visual strategies for expressive purposes in the art of Puvis de Chavannes and Dwight Tryon, whom he saw as successfully incorporating the Japanese artist's use of repetition of line and shape to produce a pictorial art that was capable of expressing various sentiments, and was also "decorative and yet true to life."⁵⁰

In these articles, Hartmann used a musical analogy when referring to Whistler's art.⁵¹ Popularized by Whistler, the use of synesthetic comparisons of the visual arts and music was a widely used critical device during the first two decades of the twentieth century and Harrison too used it frequently in his writings.⁵² Musical analogies allowed critics to move beyond description toward formal analysis and thus to respond to the demands of the developments in the arts during the period.⁵³ Prior to the Armory Show, the literary use of this technique "emerged as a central theme in progressive American criticism"⁵⁴ and was used extensively by writers in *Camera Work*. This analogous comparison, based on the popular concept of music as the art most capable of giving full expression to emotions, provided critics with an opportunity to investigate the areas in which art and music intersected and a means for moving beyond description and formal analysis in addressing issues pertinent to contemporary art.⁵⁵

Whereas Hartmann generally applied this literary device in order to refer to the mystery and suggestiveness found particularly in color harmonies,⁵⁶ Charles H. Caffin, another supporter of modernism, expanded its application. Because Caffin defined art broadly in terms of the artist's ability to abstractly interpret reality, his

musical analogies refer to more abstract pictorial relationships based not only on color harmonies but also on the relationship of forms within the composition.

One of the most prolific art critics of the period, Caffin studied at Oxford University at the same time that John Ruskin was a professor. Caffin became an early advocate in Steiglitz's campaign for the inclusion of photography in the arts. Along with Hartmann, he was one of the most consistent contributors to *Camera Notes* and *Camera Work*, writing more than fifty articles for the periodical from 1903-1917.⁵⁷ Caffin's personal relationship to Stieglitz and his participation in Stieglitz's periodicals and the 291 Gallery reveal his sympathy for modernism. At the same time however, the art theory developed in his articles for these periodicals aligns him with the more moderate circle of expressionist critics.⁵⁸

Caffin supported Stieglitz's campaign for the inclusion of photography in the fine arts and it was probably one of his early articles on this subject that brought him to Stieglitz's attention.⁵⁹ In Caffin's view, photography's most important contribution to the development of art is that by relieving the other arts of their traditional mimetic function, it paved the way for the exploration of issues and concerns that were relevant to the experiences of the modern age.

Caffin makes this point repeatedly in his reviews of the exhibitions of photography in the Little Galleries of the Succession and the "291" Gallery. Freed from the depiction of the facts of objective reality⁶⁰ art could explore more expressive techniques that would reflect the era's anti-materialistic concerns, which he identifies in terms similar to Harrison's, as the spirit that "permeates all matter ...and the Universal and the Eternal."⁶¹ Taking a formalist approach to his critical

inquiries, Caffin advocated that in terms of technique this could be accomplished by “simplification and expression, both of form and color,”⁶² and found that these elements were used by Steichen in his Tonalist paintings and photographs.⁶³

Writing on Steichen’s work several times for *Camera Work*, Caffin found the artist’s finest expression of the “presence of the Spirit” in his photographs of Rodin’s *Balzac*, which were exhibited at 291 in 1909.⁶⁴

Although Caffin was also committed to Stieglitz’s project of introducing European modernism, his view of the role of art and the art critic was at odds with Stieglitz’s concerns. As critics, Harrison, Hartmann and Caffin held the conviction that because art and life were inseparable, the critic had a duty to communicate with the public on matters of art.⁶⁵ Caffin was a champion for utilization visual art to accomplish social reform.⁶⁶ Furthermore, he chastised those who either ignored or misused this responsibility, including Steiglitz, whose elitist attitude Caffin satirized in his article, “As Others See Us.”⁶⁷ Like Hartmann and Harrison, Caffin believed that art could play an important role in society by enriching the lives of ordinary people.

The important themes in Caffin’s art theory, which he articulated throughout his career, have been summarized by Sandra Underwood in her dissertation, *Charles H. Caffin, A Voice for Modernism 1897-1918* as: “Progressivism, the imperative of evolution, Nationalism, Arts and Crafts theory” and “Art for life’s sake, mural painting, opposition to the academy, love of nature, photography, Symbolism, Formalism, Tonalism, Primitivism, and Orientalism.”⁶⁸ All of these themes, which Underwood has identified as “associated with

modernism,"⁶⁹ have as their foundation four basic concepts: first, a commitment to Taine's concept that art reflects the culture in which it was created; second, his belief in the union of art and life; third, his belief in tradition in art as part of an on-going evolutionary rather than revolutionary process; and fourth, a broad definition of art as an "abstract interpretation of the actual thing."⁷⁰ He pursued these themes in his essays for *Camera Work* and a review of the most important ones reveals several areas of intersection with the more moderate circle of expressionist critics, including Birge Harrison.

Caffin's three-part essay, "Verities and Illusions," presents the most complete accounting of his art theory published in *Camera Work*. He viewed the tradition of Western art as "perpetual readjustment of the claims of the material and the spiritual."⁷¹ By relying on a technique that is evocative and suggestive of Universal and Ultimate themes found in Oriental art, Caffin found in Whistler's synthesis of Japanese art and Western art, both shaped by racial imperatives, perhaps the most important step toward formulating an art that could accommodate both of these aspects of reality. Furthermore, he saw landscape as having the greatest potential for achieving this synthesis.

Beginning with his evolutionary view of art, in the second part of his essay, Caffin called for a revitalization of Western art in order to reflect the concerns of the modern age. Because he saw the art of the Italian Primitives Cimabue and Giotto as part of the Byzantine tradition, and therefore more concerned with the spiritual than the material, he suggested that their art might serve as a source of this revitalizing agent.⁷² However, he also emphasized individual expression as a

means of linking tradition to the conditions of modern life and believed that abstract expression was the best possible direction for the development of art.

In the final essay in this series, subtitled “Self Expression,” Caffin again asserted the importance of individual artistic expression but cautioned the artist against becoming overly focused on personal sensations to such an extent that they become the sole subject of their art.⁷³ For Caffin, nature should be viewed as more than a reflection of private sensations, it should also suggest the “Universal and Abstract.”⁷⁴

Like Hartmann, Caffin saw Asian art, particularly Japanese art steeped in the Buddhist teaching that “reality is Spirit or Soul, [and] matter an illusion,”⁷⁵ as providing several promising techniques that could be adapted by modern Western artists in their quest to visualize, or at least suggest, the invisible. Although some art historians have viewed him as a Symbolist, as Underwood points out, Caffin, like other expressionist critics, valued personal expression and supported suggestion in art but also maintained that nature was the source for art.⁷⁶

Also like Hartmann, Caffin saw Whistler as the most important translator and innovative adaptor of the Japanese aesthetic to the Western tradition of art.⁷⁷ While Caffin considered Whistler to be the “seminal artist for the modern tradition”⁷⁸ and admired his attempts to move away from Western art’s “obsession of form,”⁷⁹ he notes his attempts to do so by relying on color ultimately had limited success. Nevertheless, he saw landscape, particularly examples painted in the Tonalist aesthetic, as the most promising of the genres in the movement of art in this direction. He found in these poetical and suggestive landscapes, especially

those of George Inness, a projection of the sense of a union with unseen forces beyond oneself that could lead to good art.⁸⁰

Many of Hartmann and Caffin's ideas correspond to the Tonalist aesthetic. However, neither critic subscribed to Tonalism unequivocally. While Hartmann viewed Whistler as one of the greatest artists of the period, and frequently cited the accomplishments of other Tonalists, particularly their ability to imbue their paintings with the power of suggestion, he saw Tonalism as a variant of the Barbizon School. He was less enthusiastic in his response to the other major figure of the movement, George Inness. Caffin was wary of any overt sentimentality that could result when Tonalist strategies were misunderstood or misapplied.⁸¹ Like other expressionist critics, he cautioned the artist against allowing his own private feelings to become the sole subject of his work. When this occurs, the result is artistic egoism that deserved the same amount of derision as the biting parody in which this particular article was written.

However, as their writing indicates, Hartmann and Caffin did not view Tonalism as representative of the "out-moded, lifeless culture" of "The Genteel Tradition."⁸² Rather, they recognized that this movement shared several concerns with modernism and pointed to it as a viable visual expression that privileged individual expression and stressed the compositional relationships of simplified forms and evocative colors in order to suggest the spiritual and universal in an age of materialism.

In their essays for *Camera Work*, particularly those after 1908, both Hartmann and Caffin, expanded beyond Tonalist concerns and addressed several of

the issues that were important to European Modernism and the younger group of American artists in the Stieglitz circle. In doing so, they incorporated modified aspects of “intuitive expressionism,” defined by Virginia Mecklenburg as “the means by which the artist apprehended nature’s unseen forces,”⁸³ and formalism, critical strategies used by more avant-garde critics into their writings.

Writers for *Camera Work* who employed intuitive expressionism as a critical strategy, such as Max Weber, were influenced by the writings of Henri Bergson and Wassily Kandinsky. They “proposed that paintings reflected the artist’s personal intuition and expressed his emotional or metaphysical experiences.”⁸⁴ Formalists critics for the journal, such as Marius de Zayas, “proposed that the relationships among the formal elements in a painting- its line, colors, shapes, rhythms, volumes” and the forms themselves were “primary factors in arousing aesthetic emotion.”⁸⁵

These two approaches were used in varying degrees by many of the art critics of the period. Harrison frequently used them in his writing and teaching, especially when discussing color relationships. However, the use of intuitive expressionism as a justification for the disengagement of art from the natural world was, as we have seen, contrary to the expressionist’s belief, and certainly Harrison’s, that art must maintain a connection with nature. Likewise, the use of formalism to defend the distortion of natural form, particularly the human body, for expressive purposes, was a point on which the avant-garde theorist and more traditionally minded critics disagreed. Similarly, the degree of distortion itself separated avant-garde theorists from the more moderate expressionists.

Distortion of the form to such an extent that it lacked all reference to natural forms, implied an abandonment of nature as the source of art, that only the most avant-garde critics and artists in Stieglitz's circle accepted, and many of those for only a relatively short time during their careers. Such distortion also challenged the conventional view of beauty as based on harmony. The traditional position with regard to such distortion is exemplified by Arthur Hoeber's 1914 statement in reply to the question posed by *Camera Work*, "What 291 Means to Me," in which he states, "their utter disregard of form, or beauty as I understand it, their stupidity in the arrangement of compositional lines are all things my art notions rebel at, recoil from in disgust."⁸⁶ More moderate approaches taken by critics such as Harrison, Hartmann and Caffin, also found that the distortion of form challenged their understanding of beauty, and each accepted it to varying degrees.

Hartmann and Caffin, like Harrison defined art in broad terms. This resulted in a tolerance for a wide range of artistic styles. Because all three writers were influenced in their formative years by Aestheticism, in which the artistic focus was the formal relationships within the composition rather than on associations derived from the subject itself,⁸⁷ they were disposed to a certain degree toward the possibility of a future nonrepresentational style of art.

Both Caffin and Hartmann identified Henri Matisse and Paul Cézanne as the major European influences on the new art. Although American artists studying in France were already aware of his work, Matisse was first introduced to American audiences at the exhibition "Drawings, Lithographs, Watercolors and Etchings" held at the 291 Gallery in April 1908. His work would be shown at the Gallery

again in 1910 and 1912.⁸⁸ As William H. Gerds has noted in *The Color of Modernism*, although few American artists were totally committed to Fauvism, it had a greater influence of American modernism than has previously been recognized.⁸⁹

Writing on the sculptures and drawings by Matisse at the 291 Gallery in 1912, Sadakichi Hartmann asked what the artist's influence would be on the development of future American art. Noting the unrest in art at the period and the quickening pace with which "one ideal follows closely upon another,"⁹⁰ he stated that the essence of Matisse's work was its projection of a sense of "strength,"⁹¹ through simplification. It was this aspect of his work, rather than his innovations in color that Hartmann saw as an evolutionary advance from impressionism, and which he predicted would have a lasting influence.⁹²

Hartmann did not devote an essay specifically to Cézanne's work in his articles for *Camera Work*. In his article on Matisse, however, Hartmann stated that in terms of form, Paul Cézanne and Pablo Picasso's revolutionary art was bolder than Matisse's, but he was wary of predicting the direction that this would take. His articles on the exhibitions of artists in the Stieglitz circle, suggest his views on the subject. For example, in "On Structural Units," Hartmann reviewed the art of Max Weber, whom he saw as a true "visionary."⁹³ Combining formal and expressionistic approaches, he indicated that he could see the merit in the abstraction of form, as the organizing compositional principle and as a means of expression, in so far as it represented the "extractions, typifications, symbolizations of general laws."⁹⁴ Characteristically, Hartmann linked Weber's

“architectonic forms” to the concept of art as the creation of beauty, finding Weber’s “ambition to generate some rare composite type of beauty,” in the tradition of Jean-François Millet, Puvis de Chavannes, Auguste Rodin and Cézanne.⁹⁵

Because his criticism was more involved with defining the “mystical element of art that appeals to the emotions rather than the intellect,”⁹⁶ Hartmann’s articles dealt less with the question of the distortion of form for expressive purposes than with color. In his review of the exhibition of “The Younger American Painters,” for example, he noted that the new movement in art, under the influence of Matisse and Cézanne, revolved around the “vital principles of color, motion and form,” but he elaborated on the use of color and its expression of “virility”⁹⁷ as representative of the movement. As these articles indicate, Hartmann came very close to accepting a non-representational art form. That he did not was due to his belief in nature as the source of art, and because his ideas concerning the nature of beauty were tied Aestheticism.”⁹⁸

In several of his articles and reviews of exhibitions at the 291 Gallery, Caffin investigated the distortion of form for expressive purposes. Although Matisse’s innovations in visual language were an important step in the development of the new art for the new age, Caffin accepted Cézanne’s art as the most promising alternative to the vague, tonal suggestions of landscape painting as a mean of expressing the spiritual.⁹⁹ Cézanne’s works were first shown at the 291 Gallery in 1910, in a joint exhibition of lithographs by Cézanne, Edouard Manet, Auguste Renoir and Henri De Toulouse-Lautrec. A solo exhibition of his watercolors was

shown in 1911.¹⁰⁰ Caffin wrote two articles addressed to his art. In the first, "The New Thought Which is Old," he traced the development of an art capable of suggesting the spiritual, from Giotto, the Japanese, Whistler and the principles of design as found in El Greco. He stated that it was Cézanne's art, with its simplification and abstraction of form and approach to color, which "turned from rendering the effects of light to the expression of color as it is affected by light,"¹⁰¹ that should be seen as the most important influence on modern art. In his second article a year later, Caffin reaffirmed his previous observations of Cézanne's work and stated that artist's position as the leader of modernism rested on his response to the modern condition by applying a "scientific attitude of mind," thereby achieving a new "intimacy between science and nature."¹⁰² Caffin's conclusion is similar to those of other advocates of modernist abstraction who believed that the visualization of the nature's "inner spirit" should be subjected to an "intellectual process," which made use of either intuition or scientific principles, thereby aligning art with "the spirit of the times."¹⁰³

Like Hartmann, Caffin also detected the influence of Matisse and Cézanne on American artists. In his review of the joint exhibition of the works of Alfred Maurer and John Marin, held at the 291 Gallery in March-April 1909,¹⁰⁴ he discerned Matisse's influence in Maurer's "visions of color, evoked from actual facts, by the play off his imagination."¹⁰⁵ He saw both Maurer and Marin's privileging of color harmonies over natural forms as an attempt to "substitute interpretation for representation."¹⁰⁶ In a later review of Marin's work in 1913, Caffin noted that in his New York paintings, Marin had finally succeeded in

achieving the proper color and tonal relationships between his colors that unified the composition into a “unusually beautiful” and suggestive scene.¹⁰⁷

In his admiration for Whistler’s art, Hartmann indicated that he agreed with Whistler’s speculation that at some future point, the artist “could dispense with the representation of objects and figures, with all pictorial actualities, and be satisfied solely with the music of color.”¹⁰⁸ However, although Hartmann came close to accepting pure abstraction, he never fully disengaged from “naturalistic representation.”¹⁰⁹ Caffin’s broad definition of art did allow for this possibility and his criticism indicates his tolerance for this direction in art as long as it did not evolve into a “private language”¹¹⁰ that failed to express universal themes.

While Harrison questioned how far the “average cultivated person will follow the artist into the region of pure symbolism,” he nevertheless speculated along Whistlerian lines of “an art in which abstract beauty alone shall rule. In this new art values may very possibly be unnecessary, all will be stated in terms of beautiful color.”¹¹¹ It should be noted that the term “abstraction” had not been clearly defined at this time. In its most general application, it referred to “the antithesis of realism” but was also used to indicate “pure form and color,” or it could be used to “evoke human emotions or associations with the natural world.”¹¹²

Although it can be inferred from Harrison’s statement, and in his understanding that “a picture is a convention- an illusion,”¹¹³ that he theoretically accepted the possibility of nonrepresentational art, he did not believe that such an art reflected the spirit of the current materialistic age.¹¹⁴ He did not apply this speculation, in his writings nor in his art, to the abstraction or distortion of forms so

that they ceased to represent the direct observation of an objective reality. As we have seen, he sought a balance of representation and the suggestion of the universal. Nor is there any indication that his understanding of art as a visualization of the artist's impressions, although they suggest the non-material and universal, could or should be based on anything other than the artist's emotional response to nature.

While he embraced the notion that as part of the modern human condition, science, particularly psychology, must play a role in art, he did not analyze and reconstruct form itself in order to suggest the "inner reality of nature."¹¹⁵ For Harrison, science and art had separate functions, "each ministering to one of the two great needs of humanity, the physical and the spiritual."¹¹⁶ Unlike the European modernists, such as Cézanne, and their American followers, both artists and critics,¹¹⁷ Harrison did not experience either nature or art as an intellectual process. As his comments on Emerson indicate, Harrison also rejected the intellectualization of art because such an approach impeded the joyful realization of beauty in both its natural and artistic forms.

Similarly, although he tolerated Matisse's distortions, his concept of beauty was shaped by the legacy of nineteenth century Aestheticism that informs the theories of both Hartmann and Caffin. Harrison's conviction of art as the creation of beauty was also shared with both of these critics. Acknowledging the importance of a well conceived and expertly executed composition, he stressed the relationships of natural forms and especially colors as a means of evoking universal harmony, the underlying meaning that informs all of Harrison's work. For

Harrison, it was in nature that the artist found beauty. Because he saw art as the creation of beauty, it was necessary that any future nonrepresentational art must express beauty. In several of his writings, Harrison emphasized that whether or not the European modernists such as Matisse and his followers had succeeded in creating “something fundamentally true and human,” and enduring rather than mere abnormalities depended on whether or not they reflected the human spirit, which he viewed as essentially “sane and wholesome.”¹¹⁸

Like Hartmann and Caffin, who was recognized as an advocate of art as an agent for social change,¹¹⁹ Harrison’s vision of the socializing role of art and the artist, dictated that not only must the artist create beauty, but he must also convey its significance, universal harmony, to the viewer. In Harrison’s theory, it was only when the viewer understands that universal meaning of beauty that the artist has fulfilled his true function. In his thinking, such an appreciation should not be limited to an elite few but must be assimilated by the public so that art continues to have an impact on society. Any art, therefore, that is so intellectual in its approach that it fails to convey the universal meaning of beauty, was unsustainable.

To summarize, Caffin, Hartmann and Harrison were among a group of moderate art critics who shared similar views of the development of American art. Many aspects of their views were associated with modernism, including: an evolutionary view of the development of art in which tradition played a role, but one that had to be tempered by individual artistic expression and the idea that art must reflect the culture of its own place and time; artistic expression itself, however, should also be tempered in order to avoid egoism and an idiosyncratic art

that became, at least for the present, detached from nature as the source of art and that hindered the conveyance of the universal meanings of the work; an attention to the formal elements of compositional design and their application for expressive purposes; a belief in the power of suggestion to evoke the spiritual and universal meanings; a role for the arts in society; and a commitment to a national art.

Within these broad areas of agreement, Harrison relied on the manipulation of color for expressive purposes but did not address the distortion of form for this purpose as did Hartmann and Caffin, although he did not deny the possibility. Unlike Hartmann and Caffin, Harrison did not address the issue of primitivism in contemporary art presumably because the adaptation of primitive forms ran counter to his view that art must reflect the concerns of the era and culture in which it was created.

It has not been the purpose of this investigation into the art theory of Sadakichi Hartmann and Charles Caffin as found primarily in their articles for *Camera Work* to suggest that pictorial abstraction was not central to Alfred Steiglitz's art theory nor that the periodical did not play a vital role in the introduction European modernism to American art. In addition to articles by Hartmann and Caffin, by the second decade of the twentieth century, the journal also carried articles by other artists and critics that pointed to a new direction for American art, including Maurice de Zayas's many articles for the periodical beginning in 1910, especially those on primitivism; Max Weber's "The Fourth Dimension from a Plastic Point of View" in 1910; and Benjamin de Casseres's "The Unconscious in Art," in 1911. These articles indicate the simultaneous development

of different approaches to criticism that emerged as critics sought to understand, articulate and convey to the public the direction that art was taking during a period of unrest and uncertainty in the art world.

In addition to *Camera Work*, Stieglitz's support and encouragement of younger American artists in the exhibitions held at his 291 Gallery resulted in individual and original work that was generally predicated upon a high degree of abstraction. Several of these artists wrote about their art. Both Mardsen Hartley and Max Weber contributed essays to *Camera Work*. However, as Abraham Davidson has noted, in the writings of the six major painters in Stieglitz circle, Hartley, Weber, Arthur Dove, Charles Demuth, John Marin and Alfred Maurer, there is no "dramatic denouncement" of tradition as found in European avant-garde theory.¹²⁰ Rather, it is expressions of individualism that provided a link among them.

Interestingly, in adapting a format that reprinted reviews of the exhibitions of this work as they appeared in various American newspapers and art journals,¹²¹ Stieglitz engaged in a strategy that highlighted the difference in the visual language that these artists employed and frequently obscured the theoretical ideals and goals that they shared with moderate critics. A fairer estimate of the critical reception of their art indicates that "specific works were seen as meritorious or not."¹²² The landscapes of Dove and Marin for example, were generally received positively, indicating the traditional acceptance of landscape as a genre of suggestion, while Weber's distortion of the human body in the cubist manner threatened "the sanctity of the human form" and were labeled as "grotesque."¹²³

As *Camera Work* documents, the issues involved in the development of modernism in America were taking shape almost a decade before the 1913 Armory Show brought avant-garde art to the attention of the public. As result of the glare of publicity on this development, walls were built where previously lines had separated the various theoretical positions of the artists and critics concerned. Although Harrison published some original articles after the middle of the decade, he articulated most of his art theory and criticism before that time.

With beginning of World War I, and the return home of American artists and the arrival of exiled European artists to America, the rhetoric on all sides of the debate over temperament and tradition became more vitriolic for those who chose to be engaged in it.¹²⁴ Harrison did not. Several art historians have noted that by the time of “The Forum Exhibition of Modern American Artists” in 1916, positions among the various sides had hardened. The result of this trend in the writings of the period has been to obscure some of the common concerns among the various sides in the debate between tradition and temperament. This situation is changing due to the research of Judith Zilczer, Howard Risatti, and Virginia Mecklenburg, among others.

It has been the intention of this discussion to demonstrate the place occupied by Harrison’s Tonalist aesthetic in the prevailing debate concerning the direction of American art at the turn of the last century. In several important respects, his art theories shared common concerns with both the Ash Can school and modernism, which emerged during the period, and which have historically been seen as supplanting the Tonalist aesthetic that Harrison espoused. When the

writings of two of the widely recognized voices of these movements are reviewed and compared to Harrison's, the divisions between art critics in the debate concerning the balance between tradition and temperament that characterizes the critical writing of this period were, as Mecklenburg has suggested, more fluid in terms of art theory than they were in terms of "opposing visual preferences."¹²⁵ As American critics attempted to adjust to the new realities of the art world and to develop a new language with which to communicate the changes taking place to the public, they did so in a critical environment in which the boundaries separating diverging points of views were complex, and nuanced, indicating the richness of American art of the period.

¹ Virginia Mecklenburg, "American Aesthetic Theory, 1908-1917: Issues in Conservative and Avant-Garde Thought" (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, 1983), 9.

² H. Wayne Morgan, *Keepers of the Culture: The Art-Thought of Kenyon Cox, Royal Cortissoz, and Frank Jewett Mather, Jr.* (Ohio, Kent State University Press, 1989), 83.

³ Birge Harrison, *Landscape Painting* (1909; reprint New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911), 132.

⁴ Lois Marie Fink, "The Innovation of Tradition in late Nineteenth-Century American Art," *The American Art Journal* 10 (November 1978): 63.

⁵ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 74.

⁶ Judith K. Zilczer, "The Aesthetic Struggle in America, 1913-1918: Abstract Art and Theory in the Stieglitz Circle" (Ph.D. diss., University of Delaware, 1975), 225.

⁷ Sandra Lee Underwood, *Charles H. Caffin, A Voice for Modernism 1897-1918* (Studies in the Fine Arts, Criticism No. 15, University of Michigan Research Press, 1983), 178.

⁸ Mecklenburg, 168.

⁹ Although Birge Harrison did not specifically address pictorial photography, his views on the subject of photography in general followed the 19th century argument that differentiated between the two. He based his argument on his conviction that the photographic lens "gives scientific facts... Art has to do... with things as they appear to be, with the visual, not the actual, with impressions, not with realities" (*Landscape Painting*, 211).

¹⁰ Christian A. Peterson, *Alfred Stieglitz's Camera Notes* (exh. cat., Minneapolis: Minneapolis Institute of Art, 1993), 21.

¹¹ Sadakichi Hartmann, *Landscape and Figure Composition* (New York: The Baker and Taylor Co., 1910), 37 ff.

¹² Peterson, 20.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁴ William Innes Homer, "Eduard J. Steichen as Painter and Photographer, 1897-1908," *The American Art Journal* 6 (November 1974):46

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Mary Anne Goley, *From Tonalism to Modernism: The Paintings of Eduard J. Steichen* (exh. cat., Washington D.C.: The Federal Reserve Board, 1988), 32.

¹⁷ Richard Dormant and Margaret F. Mac Donald, *James McNeill Whistler* (exh. cat., Washington D.C.: The National Gallery of Art, 1995), 38.

¹⁸ Roland Rood, "The Origin of the Poetical Feeling in Landscape," *Camera Work* no.11 (July 1905): 24.

¹⁹ W.D. Halls, *Maurice Maeterlinck: A Study of His Life and Thought* (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1960), 42.

²⁰ Aline Gorren, "The French Symbolists," *Scribner's Magazine* 13 (March 1893): 338. Among the leading French Symbolists addressed in Gorren's article are: Paul Verlaine, Maurice Barres, Paul Adam, and Stéphen Mallarmé.

²¹ Dormant, 264.

²² William H. Gerds, "American Tonalism: An Artistic Overview," in *Tonalism: An American Experience* (exh. cat., New York: Grand Central Art Galleries, 1982), 26.

²³ Edward Lucie-Smith, *Symbolist Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1972), 55.

²⁴ Richard Shiff, *Cézanne and the End of Impressionism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 4.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Harrison, "The 'Mood' in Modern Painting," *Art and Progress* 4 (July 1913): 1020.

²⁷ Charles Eldredge, *American Imagination and Symbolists Painting* (exh. cat., New York: The Grey Art Gallery, 1979), 37.

²⁸ Ibid., 120.

²⁹ William Innes Homer, *Alfred Stieglitz and the Photo-Secession* (Boston: New York Graphics Society, 1983), 36.

³⁰ Sarah Greenough et al, *Modern Art and America: Alfred Stieglitz and His New York Galleries* (New York: Bullfinch Press, National Gallery of Art, 2001), 340.

³¹ Ibid., 46.

³² Jane Ann C. Weaver, *Sadakichi Hartmann: Herald of Modernism in American Art* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1986), 166.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., 168.

³⁵ Ibid., 14.

³⁶ Mecklenburg, 87.

³⁷ Sadakichi Hartmann, "On the Lack of Culture," *Camera Work* no.6 (April 1904): 20.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., 21.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 22.

⁴¹ Sadakichi Hartmann, "On Originality," *Camera Work* no. 37 (January 1912): 21.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Sadakichi Hartmann, "The 'Flat-Iron' Building- An Esthetical Dissertation," *Camera Work* no.4 (October 1903): 37.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 40.

⁴⁵ "S. H.," (Sadakichi Hartmann), "Puritanism, Its Grandeur and Shame," *Camera Work* no.32 (October 1910): 17.

⁴⁶ Sadakichi Hartmann, "An Appeal to All Art Lovers," *The Art Critic* (November 1893), reprinted in Weaver, 57-58.

⁴⁷ Weaver, 57-59.

⁴⁸ Sadakichi Hartmann, "White Chrysanthemums," *Camera Work* no. 5 (January 1904): 19.

⁴⁹ "Sidney Allan" (Sadakichi Hartmann), "The Technique of Mystery and Blurred Effects," *Camera Work* no.7 (July 1904): 24. As Weaver notes, "Sidney Allan" was a *nom de plume* adopted by Hartmann. For a discussion see Weaver, 171-172.

⁵⁰ "Sidney Allan," "Repetition with Slight Variation," *Camera Work*, No.1 (January 1903): 30.

⁵¹ See for example, Sadakichi Hartmann, "Broken Melodies," *Camera Work* no. 38 (April 1912): 33-35, in which Hartmann moves from a discussion of his meeting with the French composer Debussy to a discussion of Whistler's paintings, using unconventional word placement and spacing, similar to that found in sheet music.

⁵² For a discussion of the application of this term in American art criticism of the period, see, Howard Risatti, "American Critical Reaction to European Modernism, 1908-1917" (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1978), 82-90.

⁵³ Zilzcer, 52.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 53.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ See for example, Sadakichi Hartmann, "Broken Melodies," *Camera Work* nos. 37- 40 (April 1912): 33-35.

⁵⁷ Underwood, 207-209.

⁵⁸ Mecklenburg, 95.

⁵⁹ Underwood, 133.

⁶⁰ Charles H. Caffin, "The New Thought Which is Old," *Camera Work* no.31 (July 1910): 21.

⁶¹ Charles H. Caffin, "Prints by Eduard J. Steichen of Rodin's 'Balzac,'" *Camera Work* no.28 (October 1909): 25

⁶² Caffin, "Prints by Eduard J. Steichen of Rodin's 'Balzac,'" 23.

⁶³ Charles H. Caffin, "Eduard J. Steichen's Work- An Appreciation," *Camera Work* no.2 (April 1903): 21. Caffin reiterated his opinion in three other articles on Steichen's work. See, "The Camera Point of View in Painting and Photography," *Camera Work* no.24 (October 1908): 23-26; "Prints by Eduard J. Steichen- of Rodin's 'Balzac,'" *Camera Work* no.28 (October 1909): 23-25; and "The Art of Eduard J. Steichen," *Camera Work* no.30 (April 1910): 33-36.

⁶⁴ Charles H. Caffin, "Prints by Eduard J. Steichen of Rodin's 'Balzac,'" 25.

⁶⁵ Underwood, 160.

⁶⁶ Mecklenburg, 95.

⁶⁷ Charles H. Caffin, "As Others See Us," *Camera Work* no.10 (April 1905): 25-27.

⁶⁸ Underwood, 172.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Charles H. Caffin, "Of Verities and Illusions," *Camera Work* no.12 (October 1905): 25.

⁷² Charles H. Caffin, "Of Verities and Illusions-Part II," *Camera Work* no.13 (January 1906): 42.

⁷³ Charles H. Caffin, "Of Verities and Illusions-Part III. Self Expression," *Camera Work* no.14 (April 1906): 27.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Caffin, "Of Verities and Illusions," 25.

⁷⁶ Underwood, 133.

⁷⁷ Caffin, "Of Verities and Illusions," 25.

⁷⁸ Underwood, 20.

⁷⁹ Caffin, "Of Verities and Illusions," 25.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 27.

⁸¹ Charles H. Caffin, "Emotional Art," *Camera Work* no.19 (July 1907): 33.

⁸² Risatti, 337.

⁸³ Mecklenburg, 126.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 113.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 112.

⁸⁶ Arthur Hoeber, "What 291 Means to Me," *Camera Work* no.47 (July 1914): 294.

⁸⁷ John P. O'Neill, ed., *In Pursuit of Beauty. Americans and the Aesthetic Movement* (exh. cat., New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1986), 38.

⁸⁸ Zilczer, 240-261.

⁸⁹ William H. Gerdts, *The Color of Modernism: The American Fauves* (exh. cat., New York: Hollis Taggart Galleries, 1997), 23.

⁹⁰ Sadakichi Hartmann, "Once More Matisse," *Camera Work* no.39 (July 1912): 22.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Sadakichi Hartmann, "Structural Units," *Camera Work* no. 36 (October 1911): 20.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 20.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 19.

⁹⁶ Weaver, 246.

⁹⁷ Sadakichi Hartmann, "The Younger American Painters' and the Press," *Camera Work* no.31 (July 1910): 48.

⁹⁸ Weaver, 186.

⁹⁹ Underwood, 153.

¹⁰⁰ Zilczer, 240-261.

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- ¹⁰¹ Caffin, "The New Thought Which is Old," 22.
- ¹⁰² Charles H. Caffin, "A Note on Paul Cezanne," *Camera Work* nos. 34-35 (April-July 1911): 50.
- ¹⁰³ Risatti, 147.
- ¹⁰⁴ Zilczer, 243.
- ¹⁰⁵ Charles H. Caffin, "The Maurers and Marins in the Photo-Secession Gallery," *Camera Work* no. 27 (July 1909): 41.
- ¹⁰⁶ Caffin, "The Maurers and Marins in the Photo Secession Gallery," 41.
- ¹⁰⁷ Charles H. Caffin, "Charles H. Caffin in the 'N.Y. American,'" *Camera Work* nos. 42-43 (April-July 1913): 42.
- ¹⁰⁸ Sadakichi Hartmann, "White Chrysanthemums," 20.
- ¹⁰⁹ Weaver, 185.
- ¹¹⁰ Underwood, 89.
- ¹¹¹ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 77.
- ¹¹² Zilczer, 169.
- ¹¹³ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 123.
- ¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 77.
- ¹¹⁵ Risatti, 337.
- ¹¹⁶ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 215.
- ¹¹⁷ Risatti, 147.
- ¹¹⁸ Harrison, *Landscape Painting*, 205.
- ¹¹⁹ Mecklenburg, 95.
- ¹²⁰ Abraham A. Davidson, "Some Early American Cubist, Futurists, and Surrealists: Their Paintings, Their Writings and Their Critics" (Ph. D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1965), 149.
- ¹²¹ "The Younger American Painters' and the Press," *Camera Work* no. 31 (July 1910): 43-51.
- ¹²² Davidson, 181.

¹²³ Ibid., 186.

¹²⁴ Gerdts, *The Color of Modernism*, 121.

¹²⁵ Mecklenburg, 168.

Conclusion

The period spanned by Birge Harrison's life, the last quarter of the nineteenth and first quarter of the twentieth centuries, was a time of tremendous change in the United States. America was transformed from an agrarian economy and society to a modern, industrial and political force among the leading nations of the world. This transformation deeply affected the intellectual and cultural life of the nation. As it took place, cultural leaders in particular were anxious to secure a meaningful role for the arts in American society and to place the nation's achievements in this area on a par with those of other Western societies. As are most periods of transition, in which competing tensions are working toward a resolution, this era is gradually being recognized as a complex and rich period in our history. As a consequence, the art and artists of the period are also being rediscovered. Birge Harrison's life and art intersected the major cultural events and trends developing in America in these years. An understanding of his life, art, teaching and criticism adds one more significant piece to the puzzle of this multifaceted transformation.

Beginning with the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial, a generation of American artists, including Harrison, left to study in the cultural capitals of Europe. More than any other city, Paris became an art mecca for these young students. While the training that they received from the various art masters attached to the École des Beaux-Arts was of singular importance in their drive to be accepted on the same level as European artists, their experience of the art world of Paris played an

equally important role. In the various artist colonies throughout France, American artists synthesized contemporary influences, most importantly the plein-air aesthetic, with its concomitant academic training. Among the colonies that had the greatest impact on the development of American art, Birge Harrison participated in four: Grez-sur-Loing, Pont-Aven, Concarneau, and later, Etaples. The success of this synthesizing process can be judged by the increasing acceptance of American artists at the Paris Salons. Harrison, who first became known as a figure painter, was among the first Americans to have his work purchased by the French Government, leading the way for other Americans to follow.

At the peak of this early success, poor health intervened, derailing his early career. With his first wife by his side, Harrison sought to regain his health and his capacity to work. During the next fifteen years, Harrison pursued his art, always incorporating new ideas and influences. Contrary to popular perception, he continued to hone his craft, exhibiting his works in the United States and abroad, including Australia. He participated and won honors at the important International Expositions of the period, where an American School of painting was emerging that was capable of competing with other Western countries. Simultaneously, he launched a successful career as a writer and illustrator, during the “golden age” of magazine illustration.

Returning to the United States, Harrison completed the redirection of his art from figure painting toward a new, poetic style of landscape painting. Adopting the Tonalist aesthetic, Harrison continued to express in his landscapes the same theme as found in his figure paintings: the harmonious unity of man and nature.

His work in both genres is marked by a balance between realism and individual artistic expression.

Continuing to pursue the unsolved problems of plein-air painting, Harrison applied his Tonalist aesthetic and desire to capture the feeling and effects of nature to a variety of subject matter, including marines, scenes of the countryside, and urban views of New York City. It was as a master of snow effects for which he received greatest recognition.

After suffering the devastating personal tragedy of his wife and infant son's deaths, Harrison relocated to the Eastern United States in 1896, and while continuing to receive recognition as one of the country's foremost landscape artists, took up the challenge of contributing to the fulfillment of this generation's cultural goal of securing a role for art in American society. Moving to Woodstock, New York, he took up the responsibility, which many of the artists of his generation had also assumed after having experienced its benefits during their student days in Paris, of teaching, sharing his knowledge with a new generation. As his students' successes, and contributions to the development of American art indicate, this was Harrison's most enduring contribution to American art.

Not only did Harrison establish a successful school of landscape painting, perhaps unique at the time in the United States, but by the force of his personality, he also shaped an art colony that drew artists from all sectors of the art world and remains even today a center for the arts. At the same time, his participation in the life of other regional art centers, such as New Hope, Pennsylvania and Charleston,

South Carolina, indicate Harrison's influence was felt beyond the New England area.

Harrison's career as a successful and influential teacher, as well as his commitment to awakening the public to the beneficial effects of incorporating art into American culture and society, encouraged him to begin addressing a broader audience through his writing. His book *Landscape Painting*, derived from his lectures to his students, received widespread recognition and was used as a primary text for the landscape genre. Believing that the artist's function was the creation of beauty, Harrison developed the main theme of his work: that nature is the source of inspiration for the artist, who must seek to find his own individual expression of his experiences of its mysteries.

During a period of unrest and uncertainty in the art world, Harrison took the same balanced approach to the continuing debate between tradition and temperament that found expression in his work. His art theory is marked by the same tolerance that characterized his teaching. Like many critics at the turn of the century, he believed that a unique form of American art was soon to emerge.

He championed the creation of a uniquely American art, and shared with other artists and critics of the period, such as Robert Henri, Sadakichi Hartmann and Charles H. Caffin, a belief in art as an instrument of social change, and shared with Henri and Hartmann the goal of establishing government support of the arts. A leading spokesman for Tonalism, he believed that the future direction of American art was in landscape painting. However, his broad definition of art,

limited only by his conviction that art was the creation of beauty, allowed him to tolerate a wide range of artistic expression.

His theoretical stance, which he steadfastly maintained, that art is nature seen through the individual artist's temperament, aligned him with the other important expressionist critics of period, who shared his view that the artist should not only express, but also successfully convey, to the viewer his emotional response to nature and through this expression suggest the spiritual dimension of life. His theory shared much in common with the concerns of modernism, which was emerging in the United States at this time. His moderate position reveals many of the common concerns of artists and critics in the era's debate between tradition and temperament.

Although he has been relegated to little more than a footnote in American art history, in his life, art, teaching and criticism, Birge Harrison made a significant contribution to the realization of the cultural goal of establishing a meaningful role for art in American life. Having documented his contribution, it remains to turn the page and discover other similarly neglected American artists of his generation and in the process to arrive at a fuller appreciation of this diverse and rich period in the development of American art.

Appendix I

Writings by Birge Harrison

Books:

Landscape Painting. 1909. Reprint. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911.

Articles and Unpublished Manuscripts:

Address Delivered to The Fellowship of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, delivered February 4, 1919. Unpublished manuscript. Secretary's Files, Archives of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.

"The All Southern Exhibition." *The American Magazine of Art* 12 (May 1921): 166-169.

"The American Temperament." Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Letters of the National Institute of Arts and Letters 5 (1912): 52-59.

"The Appeal of the Winter Landscape." *Fine Arts Journal* 30 (May 1914): 191-196.

"Art and the European War." *The American Magazine of Art* 7 (1916): 270-272.

"The Artist...By One of Them...Namely...Birge Harrison." *The Plowshare* 6 (February 1917): n. p.

"The Case of the Pastel." *Art and Progress* 6 (March 1915): 154-157.

"Espanola and Its Environs." *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 70 (May 1885): 825-835.

"The Exhibition Picture." *Art and Progress* 6 (November 1914): 16-19.

"The Future of American Art." *North American Review* 109 (July 1909): 26-34.

"The Habitant in Winter." *Scribner's Magazine* 4 (March 1908): 283-290.

Birge L. Harrison (*sic*). "In Search of Paradise with Camera and Palette." *Outing Magazine* 21 (January 1893): 310-316.

"A Kangaroo Hunt." *Scribner's Magazine* 9 (April 1891): 419-429.

"The 'Mood' in Modern Painting." *Art and Progress* 4 (July 1913): 1015-1020.

"Mr. Alexander's Plan." *New York Times*, March 7, 1909, 7.

"Napoleon's Deportation to Elba." *The Century* 46 (May 1893): 639.

"The New Art in America." *Scribner's Magazine* 57 (March 1915): 391-394.

"The New Departure in Parisian Art." *Atlantic Monthly* 66 (December 1890): 753-764.

"Old Charleston as Pictured by Alfred Hutton." *The American Magazine of Art* 13 (November 1922): 479-483.

"Painting at Woodstock: The Work of a Group of American Landscape Painters." *Arts and Decoration* 2 (May 1912): 245-248.

"Personality in Architecture." *The American Magazine of Art* 8 (October 1917): 490-492.

Birge L. Harrison (*sic*). "Quaint Arts Haunts in Brittany, Pont Aven and Concarneau." *Outing Magazine* 24 (April 1894): 25-32.

"Refraction in Landscape Painting." *Palette and Bench* 1 (April 1909): 247-248.

"Recent Tendencies in Marine Painting." *Scribner's Magazine* 49 (April 1911): 469-477.

"Subjects for the Painter in American Landscape." *Scribner's Magazine* 52 (December 1912): 765-768.

"Three Beautiful Cities." *Art and Progress* 3 (June 1913): 603-610.

"Thro' the Land of the Marseillaise." *Outing Magazine* three parts: 29 (January 1897): 370-375; 29 (February 1897): 430-437; and 29 (March 1897): 555-565.

"The True Impressionism in Art." *Scribner's Magazine* 46 (October 1909): 491-495.

"Vibration in Landscape Painting." *Palette and Bench* two parts: 1 (September 1909): 269-271 and 2 (October 1909): 12-13.

"The War and Art." *The American Magazine of Art* 8 (May 1917): 286.

"What is a Good Picture." *Photo Era* 37 (November 1916): 212.

"With Stevenson at Grez." *The Century* 93 (December 1916): 306-314.

"The Woodstock School of Landscape Painting." *Art and Progress* 1 (September 1910): 316-322.

Appendix II

Paintings in the Will of Birge Harrison (1929)

SIZE (inches)	TITLE
24 x 30	The Stream
20 x 30	Winter Afternoon
24 x 31	Sunrise on the Hill
24 x 30	Hillcrest Farm
24 x 20	Early Lamplight
19 1/2 x 24	Snow Road to Kingston
17 x 24	Twilight off Santa Barbara
17 x 22	The Trout Poole in Autumn
31 x 22	Sunset near Plymouth, Mass.
23 x 30	Winter Sunset near Loscot
25 x 30	Moonrise in the Tropics
23 x 25	Midnight Moon
20 x 24	The Auriole
19 x 24	The Maplewood
23 x 24	Moonrise in France
22 x 28	Winter Moonrise
23 x 30	Winter Twilight
24 x 24	Night Scene in Quebec
25 x 28 1/2	The After-glow
22 x 30	The Lumber Mill at Quebec
22 x 30	Sunset near Plymouth, Mass.
19 x 30	Red Moonlight
25 x 30	Twilight in Quebec
25 x 30	Quebec from the St. Charles
25 x 30	October in Catskills
22 x 31	Ancient House near Quebec
22 x 30	Woodstock in Haze
31 x 24	Old Ferry House at Night
24 x 23	Homeward Bound
16 x 20	The Lovers
35 1/2 x 57	View in Provence
13 x 20	Haytime
21 1/2 x 26	Frozen Snow
9 1/2 x 12	The Bathers (wood)
22 x 26	Foothills of the Catskills, Winter
32 x 40	Golden Haze, Bayonne
15 x 22 1/2	"Tar-weed in Bloom"
18 x 23	Canadian Lumberjacks
17 x 23	Sunrise on the Desert, Arizona

24 x 30	Sunset Reflections
17 1/2 x 22	Sunrise in California
19 1/2 x 22	Autumn near Woodstock
25 x 20	Golden Moon-rise
22 1/4 x 17 1/4	Sunset in the Catskills
23 x 17 1/2	Historic House in Kingston, New York
24 x 19 1/4	Frosty Morning near New Hope, Pa.
16 1/4 x 20	The Shad Fishers
18 x 14	The First Snowfall
21 3/4 x 26 3/4	Summer Moonrise
23 x 17 1/4	Moonlight
25 x 30	Hauling Firewood
19 x 24	The Ice Harvest
25 1/2 x 30	The Toboggan Slide
24 x 30	Cathedral Close, Quebec
27 x 25	Winter Moonrise
25 x 30	Sunburst
28 x 40	The Fishing Fleet
30 x 23	Sunset on the Neponset
30 x 23 1/2	Passing Showers
50 x 40	The Hilltop
15 1/2 x 30	Moonrise on the Sound
23 x 17	Hopatcong
25 x 30	Moonlight at Woodstock
23 1/2 x 30	Farmstead at Woodstock
20 x 27	Sunset near Kingston, New York
20 x 23	Hidden Sun
19 1/2 x 24	Winter Sunset near Kingston, N.Y.
24 x 19	The Trout Stream
23 x 30	Woodstock
19 x 25	Winter Sunset
22 x 27	Homeward Bound
18 x 22 1/2	Moonlight at Woodstock
17 x 23	Misty Day at Santa Barbara
24 x 30	Moonlight at Sea
24 x 30	Night
24 x 30	Mid-Ocean
27 1/2 x 32	Spring Plowing
30 x 20	March of the Sea Fog
19 1/4 x 24 1/4	Winter Moonlight
21 x 16	The Lobster Men
23 x 17	After the Eclipse
24 x 19	The Front Pool
30 x 24	23rd Street Morning
30 x 23	Frozen Brooks
25 x 30	Lower Town, Quebec

30 x 26	Sunrise from Quebec
32 x 24	Plymouth Hills
25 x 36	Mid-winter Morning
30 1/2 x 25	Evening Star
32 x 24	Boston Commons in the Morning
24 x 31 1/2	Drifting Snow
30 x 25	Evening Lights
20 1/2 x 22	Late Moonrise
24 x 30	The Pool
24 x 16	Over the Downs
25 x 30	Moonrise in the Tropics
30 x 18	Lights of Quebec
23 x 32	New Year's Eve in Canada
25 x 30	Sunset from Quebec
20 x 31	Boys Bathing
25 x 30	House on the Marsh
24 x 30	Down the St. Lawrence
31 x 22	Winter Evening
24 x 30	Red Forge
25 x 30	Moonlight on Charleston Harbor
30 x 24	Day of Forest Fires
23 1/2 x 30	Misty Moonlight
25 x 30	Flatiron in a Blizzard
19 1/2 x 22	The Night Watch
24 x 32	Sunrise on the Hill
29 1/2 x 27	Moonlight on the St. Lawrence
27 x 36	New York City from the River
19 1/2 x 17 1/2	The Night Watch (Pastel)
30 x 23	Sunrise on the Harbor
34 x 29	Red Mill at Cox Cot (sic Cos Cob)
40 x 30	The Church at New Hope, Pa.
40 x 30	The Shipyard
23 x 30	The Sawmill
40 x 30	Evening in Philadelphia
30 x 40	A Tow on the Lake
24 x 30	Twilight off Charleston
31 x 40	On the Delaware
30 x 40	Midnight Moon
40 x 30	The Ferry House
40 x 28	Hazen Moonlight
20 x 40	Sunrise at Plymouth
30 x 40	Plymouth Harbor in Winter
30 x 40	Before the Blizzard
43 x 28	After the Storm
40 x 30	Moonrise off Santa Barbara
55 x 32	Twilight on the Seine

54 1/2 x 32
8 x 9 ft.
8 x 10 ft.
23 1/2 x 25
9 1/4 x 12

Mid-Winter Moonlight
Forest of Compiègne, The Surprise
Return of the Mayflower
The Ski Slide near Kingston, N.Y.
Moonrise off Charleston

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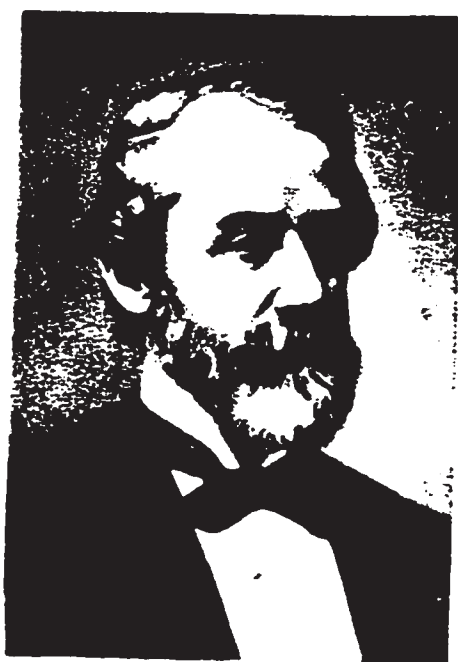
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These consist of pages:

Pages 361-445



1.1. Photograph of Birge Harrison. c. 1891-96. Collection of The Santa Barbara Historical Society.



A. W. HARRISON
(*Secretary*) 1861-1886;
(*Treasurer*) 1874-1886

1.2 Apollos Wolcott Harrison. Reproduction from James Boyd, *The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society*, 1929.



ALEXANDER HARRISON, N. 1

- 1.3. Thomas Alexander Harrison (1853-1930). Reproduction from *Exhibition of Paintings by Alexander Harrison and Birge Harrison* (exh. cat., Buffalo: Buffalo Fine Arts Academy/Albright Knox Gallery, 1913), n.p.



1.4. Margaret Alexina Harrison modeling for *The Pathetic Song*, 1881 by Thomas Eakins. Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Reproduction from James Wilmerding, ed. *Thomas Eakins* (exh. cat., Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 105.



2.1 Birge Harrison. *Shipwrecked*. 1880. Oil on canvas. 43 x 58 in. The Merrick Art Gallery. New Brighton, Pennsylvania.



2.2 Birge Harrison, *Return from the First Communion*, 1881. Oil on canvas, 72 x106 in. Unlocated. Drawing by the artist. Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art, Gift of the artist.



2.3 Birge Harrison, *November*, 1881. Oil on canvas. 52 x 97 5/8 in. Musée Municipal des Beaux Arts, Ille-et-Vilaines, Rennes.



2.4 Walter Gay, *Novembre, Etaples* c. 1885. Oil on canvas, 43 ½ x 64 ½ in.
National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.



2.5 Robert Vonnoh. *November*. 1890. Oil on canvas. 32 x 39 3/8 in. Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art, Joseph E. Temple Fund.



2.6 Undated photograph of Eleanor Ritchie Harrison. John Ritchie Family Papers.



3.1. Birge Harrison, *Indian Foot Race*. Reproduction from Birge Harrison, "Española and Its Environs." *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 70 (May 1885): 829.



3.2 Birge Harrison, *Old Mexican Chapel by Moonlight*. Reproduction from Birge Harrison, "Española and Its Environs," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 70 (May 1885): 835.



3.3 Birge Harrison. *The Departure of the Mayflower (1626)*. c. 1886-88. Oil on canvas, 126 x 64 in. Collection of Swarthmore College.



3.4 Birge Harrison, *A Kangaroo Hunt*. Reproduction from Birge Harrison, "A Kangaroo Hunt." *Scribner's Magazine* 9 (April 1891): 425.



3.5 Birge Harrison. *An Orphan*. Reproduction from Sidney Dickinson, "Station Life in Australia," *Scribner's Magazine* 11 (February 1892): 142.



3.6 Birge Harrison. *A Provencal Coopering Shop*. c. 1889. Oil on canvas (grisaille). 14 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 17 $\frac{7}{8}$ in. Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art, Gift of Mrs. R.J. Carson, Jr.



3.7 Birge Harrison. *A Street in Terrascon*. 1889. Oil on canvas (grisaille), 14 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 17 $\frac{5}{8}$ in. Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art. Gift of Mrs. R.J. Carson, Jr.



- 3.8 Tom Roberts. *"Evening, when the quiet east flushes faintly at the sun's last look."* c. 1887. Oil on canvas, 20 x 30 in. Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, W. H. Bequest Fund, 1944. Reproduction from Ron Radford, *Tom Roberts* (exh. cat., Adelaide: Art Gallery of South Australia, 1996-97), 71.



- 3.9 E. Phillip Fox, *Autumn*, 1889. Oil on canvas. 32 x 46 in. Private Owner.
Reproduction from Mary Eagle, *The Oil Paintings of E. Phillips Fox in the National Gallery of Australia* (exh. cat., Canberra: National Gallery of Australia, 1997), 18.



3.10. Birge Harrison. "The Shearing." Reproduction from Sidney Dickinson, "Station Life in Australia," *Scribner's Magazine* 2 (February 1892): 139.



- 3.11. Tom Roberts, *Shearing the Rams*, 1888-90. Oil on canvas, 48 x 72 in. National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Felton Bequest Fund, 1932. Reproduction from Jane Clark and Bridget Whitelaw, *Golden Summers: Heidelberg and Beyond* (exh. cat., Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 1985), 133.



4.1. Birge Harrison. *Le Soir*. 1893. Oil on canvas, 30 x 23 ¼ in. Private Owner.



4.2. Birge Harrison, *Evening on the Seine*, c. 1890. Pastel on paper mounted on canvas, 28 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 39 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, North Carolina. Gift of the North Carolina Art Society. Robert F. Phifer Bequest.



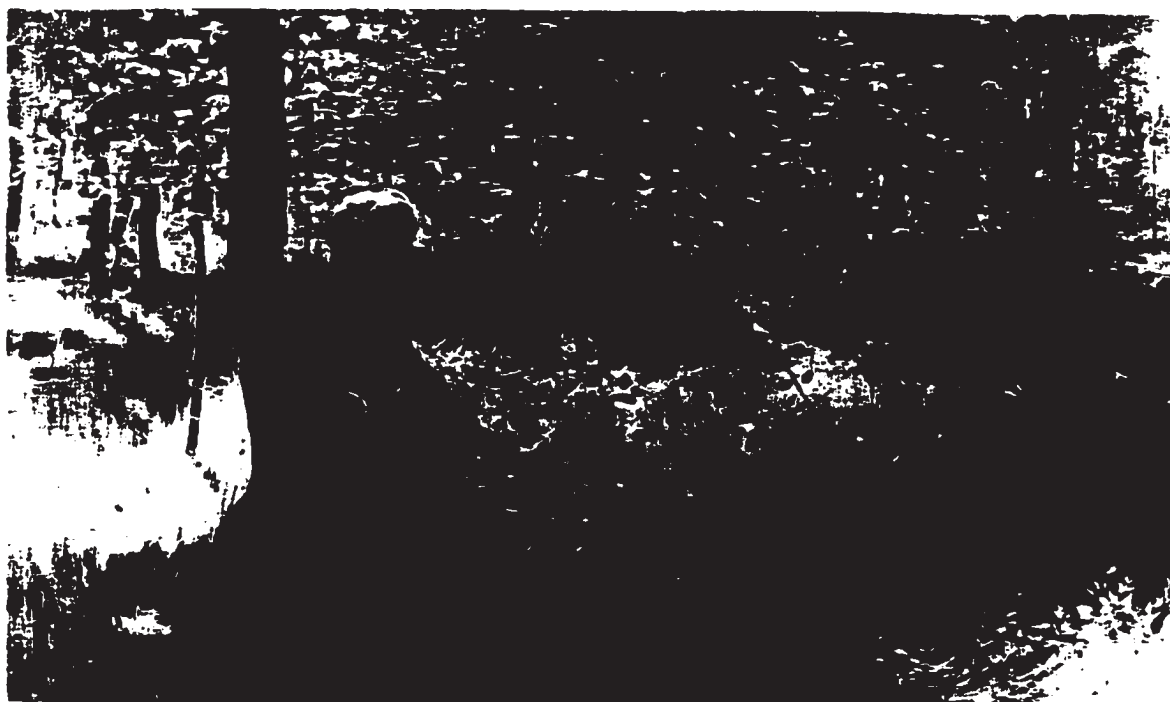
4.3. Birge Harrison. *A Glimpse of the St. Lawrence*, 1904. Oil on canvas.
24 1/16 x 30 in. Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art, Henry D.
Gilpin Fund.



4.4 Birge Harrison. *The Loggers*. c. 1904. Oil on canvas. 22 x 32 in.
Reproduction from Butterfield and Butterfield (December 8, 1998), Internet.
askart.com.



4.5. Postcard of Birge Harrison's home off Saugerties Road, east of Woodstock, New York. Collection of the Woodstock Historical Society.



5.1. Birge Harrison. *Girl in the Woods*., n.d.[1876-82]. Oil on canvas. 19 ¼ x 30 in. The Philadelphia Museum of Art. The John G. Johnson Collection.



5.2. Birge Harrison. *The Mirror*, n. d. [1876-82]. Oil on canvas, 36 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 19 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. The Haggin Museum, Stockton, California.



5.3. Birge Harrison. *Young Girl in a Meadow*. n.d. [1876-82]. Oil on canvas.
20 x 28 in. Collection of Grez-sur-Loing. Village Hall.



5.4. *Les Enfants Joints*, Grez-sur Loing, n.d. Attributed to Alexander Harrison. Unlocated. Reproduction from Internet. The Agence Photographique de le Reunion des Musees Nationaux/ 98DE16623.



5.5 Birge Harrison. *Une Chemin entre la grande route et Maison Mme. Blackburn à Grez*, n.d. [1876-82]. Oil on canvas. 13 x 15 ½ in. Collection of Grez-sur-Loing, Village Hall.



5.6. Birge Harrison. *The Appointment*. 1881. Oil on canvas. 44 x 62 ½ in.
Beaux Art Museum, Tournai, Belgium.



5.7. Photograph of the bridge at Grez-sur-Loing, 2001. Photograph by the author.



5.8. Alexander Harrison. *Les Amateurs*. 1883. Oil on canvas. 57 1/4 x 89 in.
Valparaiso University Art Museum, Indiana.



5.9. Alexander Harrison. *Graves of the Shipwrecked*. Unlocated. Reproduction from *Art Amateur* 11(June 1884): 28.



5.10. Birge Harrison. *Peasant Girl from Brittany*, 188(0?). Oil on canvas. 13 7/8 x 13 in. Courtesy of the National Park Service, Longfellow National Historic Site, Cambridge, Mass.



5.11. Birge Harrison. *The Forest of Compiègne*, c. 1885-90. Unlocated, presumed destroyed. Reproduction from *Catalogue of the Second Special Exhibition of the Art Club of Philadelphia* (exh. cat., Philadelphia: Art Club of Philadelphia, 1890), n.p.



6.1. Detail of the upper left quadrant from *The Departure of the Mayflower*.
Photograph by the author.



6.2. Birge Harrison. *Along the Road*. 1887. Oil on canvas. 18 x 22 in. Private Owner. Courtesy of The Spanierman Gallery, LLC., New York City.



6.3. Birge Harrison, *Driving the Culls to Market*. Reproduction from Sidney Dickinson. "Station Life in Australia," *Scribner's Magazine* 2 (February 1892): 136.



6.4. Birge Harrison. *Night on the Plains*. Reproduction from Sidney Dickinson, "Station Life in Australia." *Scriber's Magazine* 2 (February 1892): 144.



6.5 Frederick McCubbins. *Winter evening, Hawthorne*, 1886. Oil on canvas. 20 x 30 in. Castlemaine Art Gallery and Historical Museum. Reproduction from Jane Clark and Bridget Whitelaw, *Golden Summers Heidelberg and Beyond* (exh. cat., Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 1985), 67.



6.6 Arthur Streeton, *Golden Summer, Eaglemont*, 1889. Oil on canvas, 32 x 60 in. Private Owner. Reproduction from Jane Clark and Bridget Whitelaw, *Golden Summers, Heidelberg and Beyond* (exh. cat., Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 1985), 104.



7.1. Birge Harrison, *California Landscape*. 1895. Oil on canvas. 17 ¼ x 23 ¼ in. Private Owner.



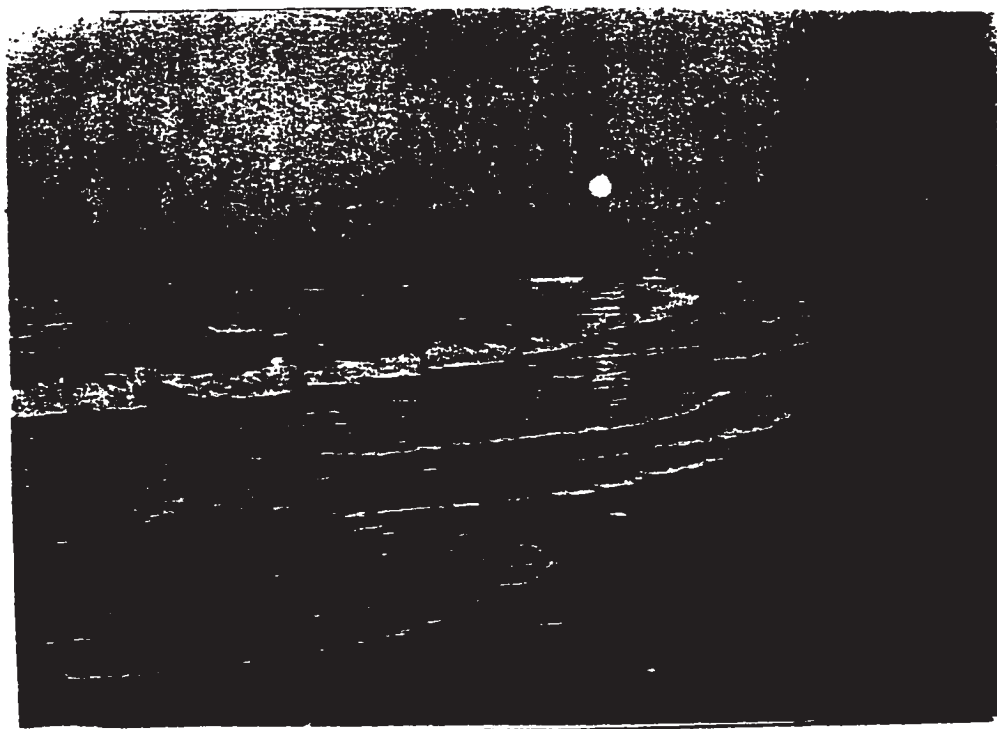
7.2. Alexander Harrison. *The Wave*, c. 1885. Oil on canvas. 39 ¼ x 118 in.
Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art.



7.3. Birge Harrison. *Night Sinks into the Sea*. 1896. Oil on canvas. 27 x 40 ½ in. North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, North Carolina. Gift of the North Carolina Art Society. Robert F. Phifer Bequest.

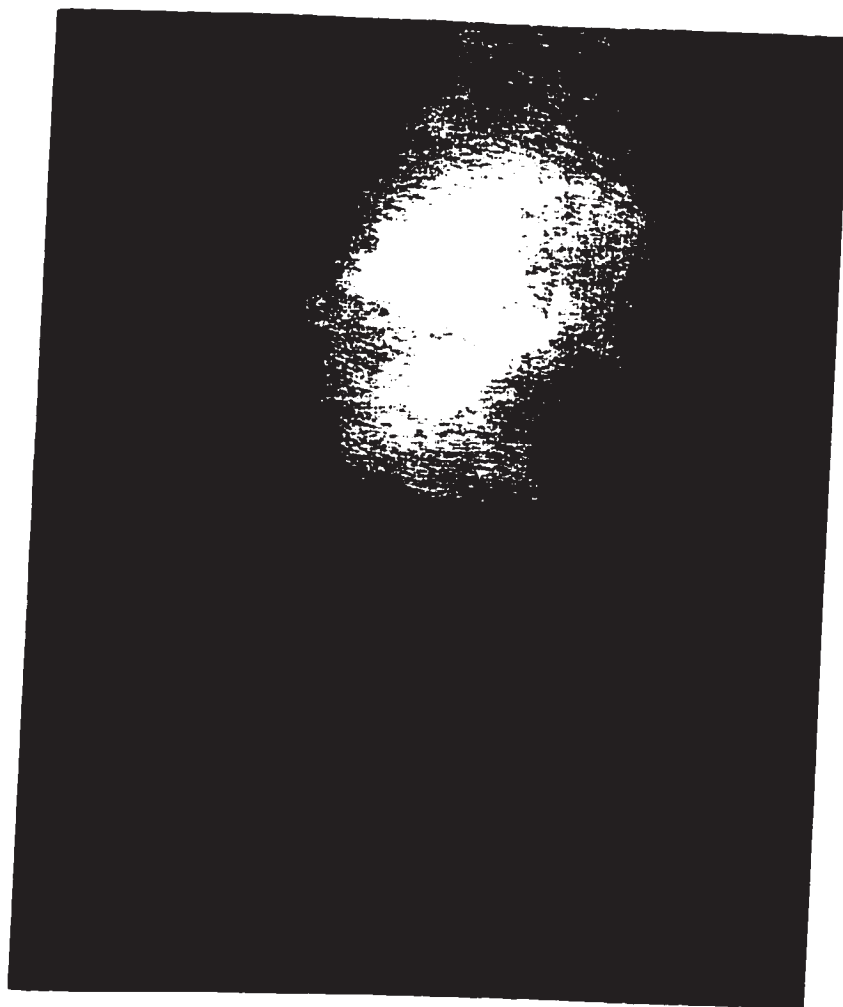


7.4. Birge Harrison, *Serenity on the Pacific*, c. 1896. Oil on canvas, 18 x 30 in.
Woodstock Artist Association. Gift of Peter Whitehead.



SUNSET—ALEXANDER HARRISON
(Property of the Quimper Museum, France)

7.5. Alexander Harrison. *Sunset*. n.d. Oil on canvas, 37 ½ x 51 in. Musée des Beaux- Arts. Quimper. Reproduction from, *Catalogue of an Exhibition of Paintings by Alexander Harrison and Birge Harrison* (exh. cat., Detroit: Detroit Museum of Art, 1914). n.p.



7.6. Birge Harrison. *The Soaring Cloud*. c. 1908. Oil on canvas, 23 ½ x 30 in.
The National Arts Club, New York City.



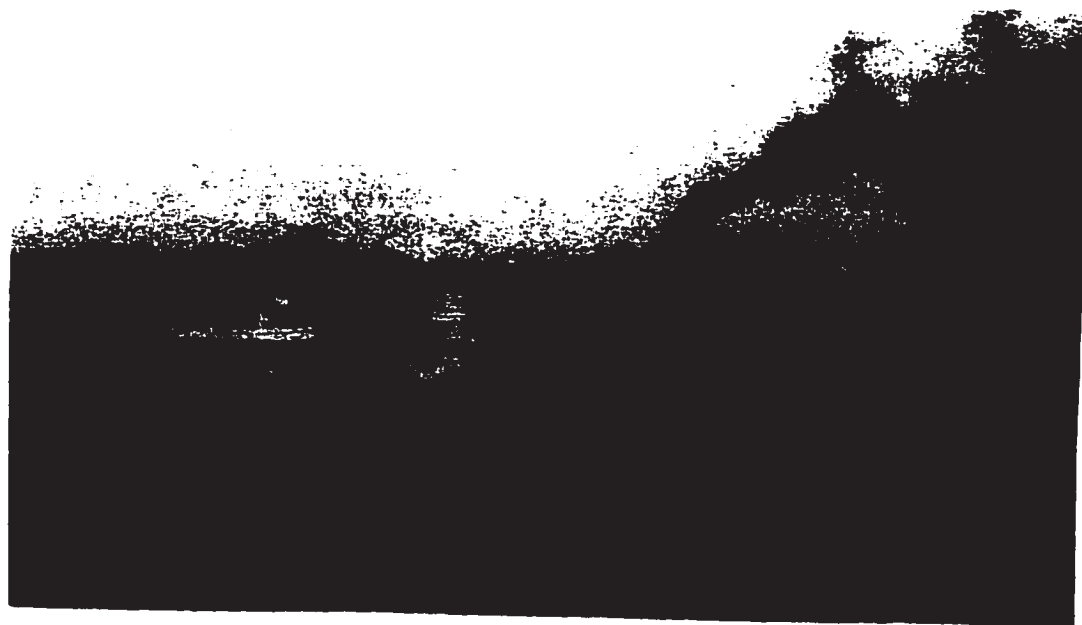
7.7. Birge Harrison. *The Hidden Moon*. c. 1907. Oil on canvas. 25 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 30 $\frac{1}{8}$ in.
The National Academy of Design. New York City.



7.8. Birge Harrison, *Moonlight off Charleston Harbor*, c. 1908. Oil on canvas.
25 x 30 in. Columbia University, New York City. Gift of the artist.



7.9. Birge Harrison. *Moonlight on Charleston Harbor*, c. 1908. Oil on canvas.
25 x 30 in. Private Owner.



7.10. Birge Harrison. *The Rosy Moon off Charleston Harbor*, c. 1908. Oil on masonite. 18 1/8 x 30 1/4 in. The Gibbs Museum/ The Carolina Art Association, Charleston, South Carolina.



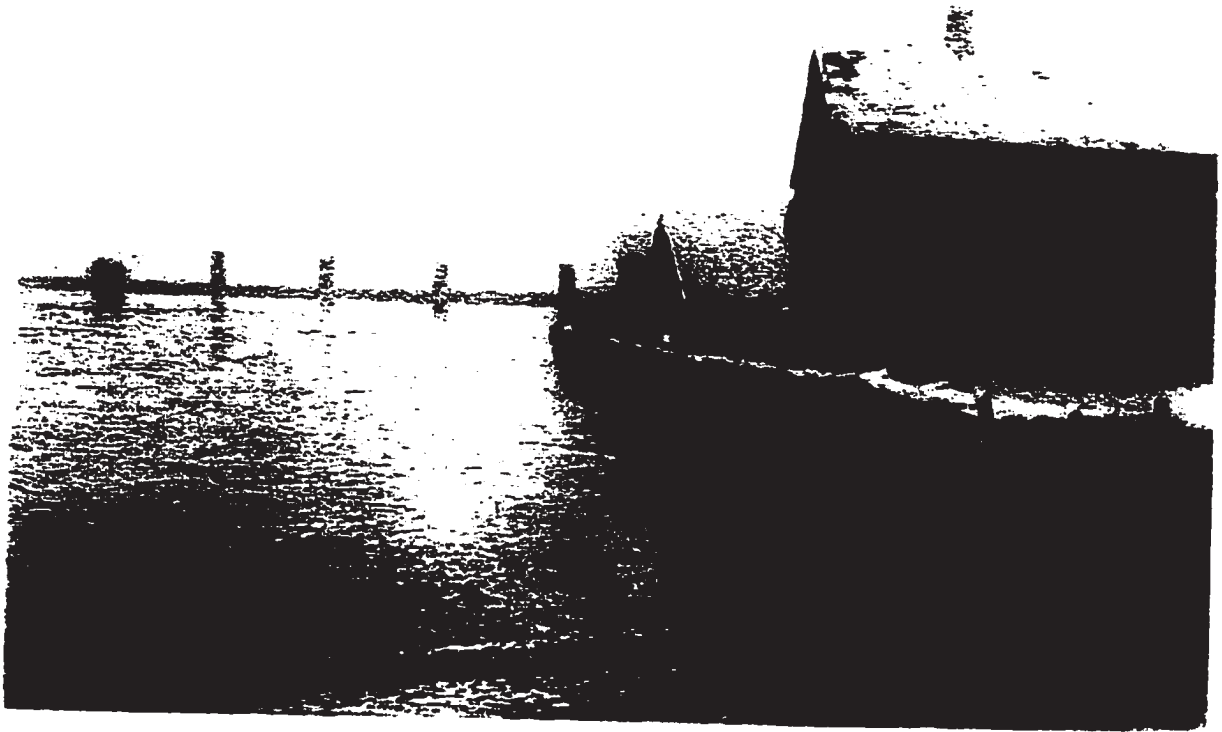
7.11. Photograph of Charleston Harbor taken from the Battery, 2001. Photograph by the author.



7.12. Birge Harrison, *St. Philip's Church by Moonlight*. n. d. [1908-19]. Oil on canvas. 30 x. 23 in. Collection of St. Philip's Church, Charleston.



7.13. Birge Harrison. *Old St. Michael's Church*. 1919. Oil on canvas, 39 ½ x 31 ½ in. The Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio.



7.14. Birge Harrison. *Bridge at Cos Cob*, c. 1912. Oil on canvas, 29 ½ x 39 ½ in. The Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio.



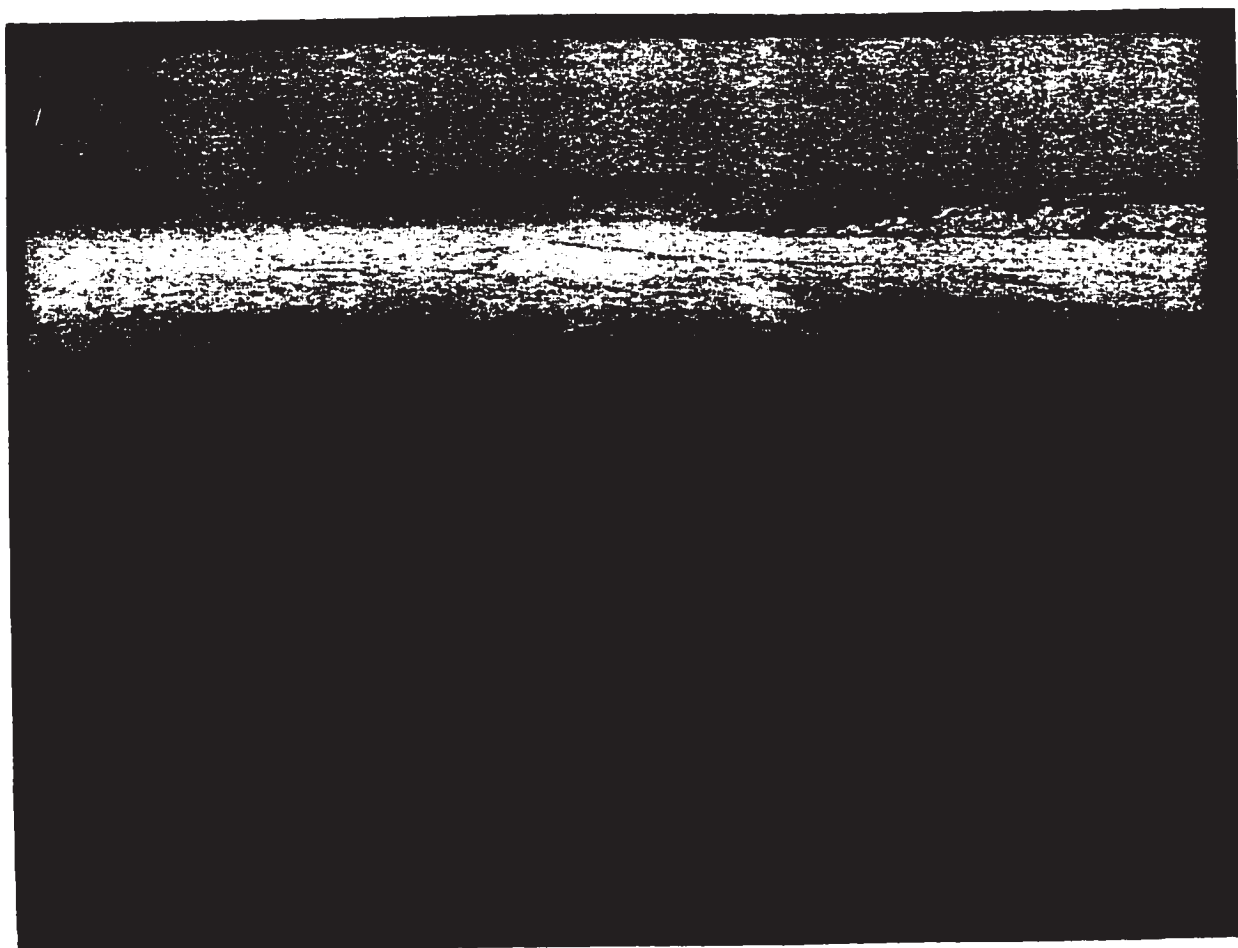
7.15. Birge Harrison, *Misty Morning*, c. 1912. Unlocated. Photograph from The Peter A. Juley and Son Collection. The Smithsonian Institution.



7.16. Birge Harrison, *Winter Landscape*, n. d. [1896-1906]. Oil on canvas, 16 x 24 in. The Davenport Museum.



7.17. Birge Harrison. *Fisherman's Cottage in Moonlight*. c. 1901. Oil on canvas. 25 x 30 in. Courtesy of The Howard Godel Gallery, New York City.



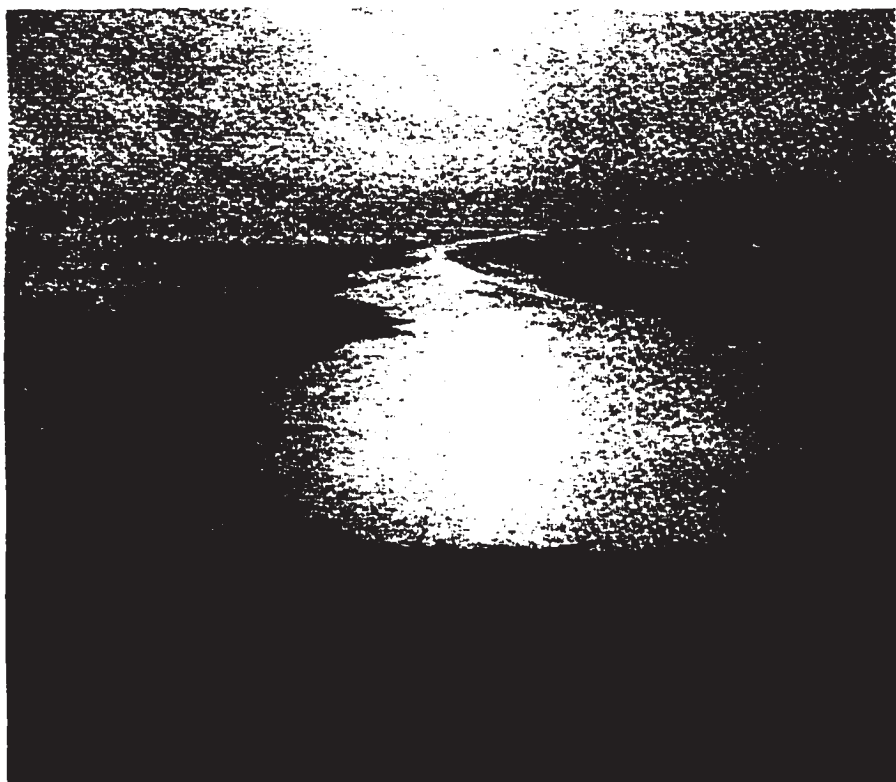
7.18. Birge Harrison. *Shadows of Quebec*, c. 1906. Oil on canvas. 30 x 40 in.
Private Owner. Courtesy of The Spanierman Gallery, LLC., New York City.



7.19. Birge Harrison, *Floating Ice*, 1910. Oil on canvas, 30 x 40 in. Private Owner.



7.20. Birge Harrison. *Early Morning, Low Tide*. c. 1910. Pastel on paper. 23 ½ x 31 ½ in. Courtesy of The Gerald Peters Gallery, New York City.



7.21. Birge Harrison. *Sunshine and Mist*, c. 1910. Oil on canvas, 24 ½ x 28 in.
The Union League Club of Chicago.



7.22. Birge Harrison. *The Lights of Levi*, 1912. Oil on canvas, 25 ¼ x 27 1/8 in.
Courtesy of The Vose Gallery, Boston.



7.23. Birge Harrison. *Woodstock Meadows in Winter*. 1909. Oil on canvas, 46 x 40 ¼ in. The Toledo Museum of Art.



7.24. Birge Harrison, *Farmstead in Winter*, c. 1911. Oil on burlap, 30 1/8 x 39 1/2 in. The University of Arizona Museum of Art, Tucson, Arizona.



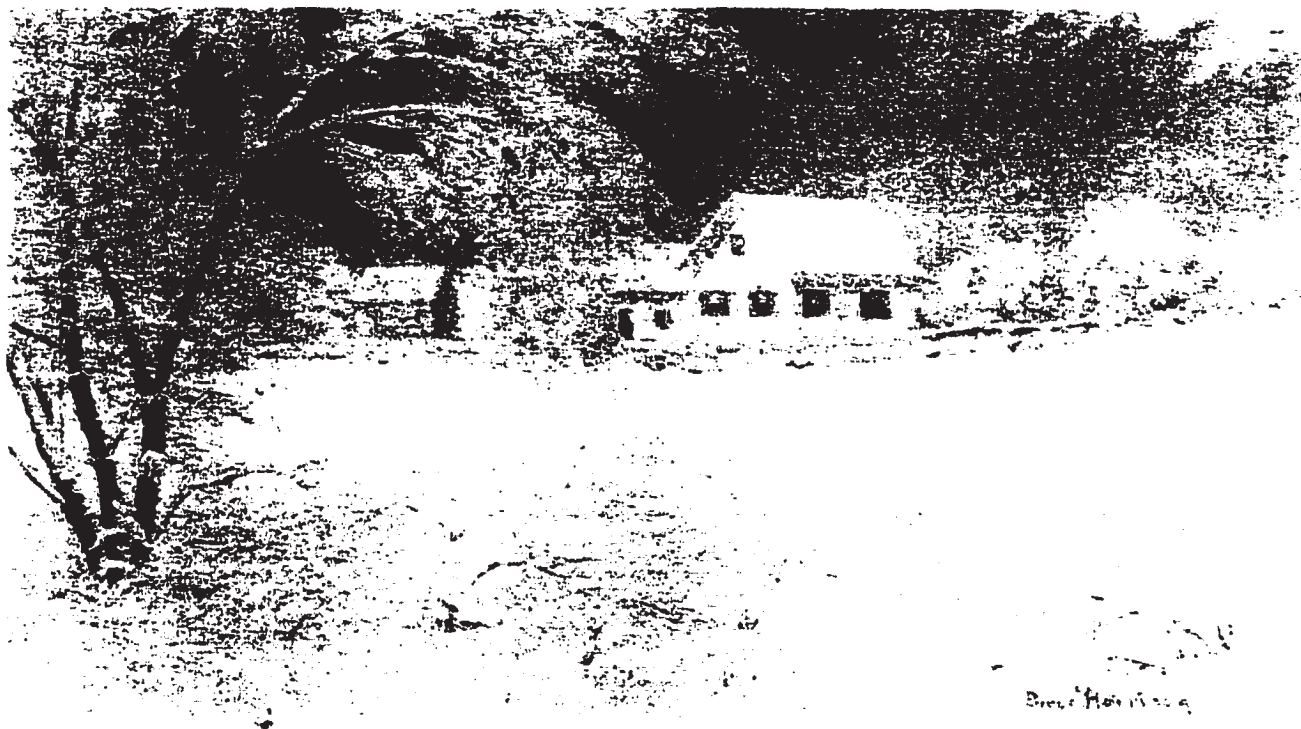
7.25. Birge Harrison. *The Old Saw Mill*, c. 1910. Oil on canvas, 30 ¼ in. x 40 in.
The Wichita Art Museum.



7.26. Birge Harrison, *The Red Barn*, c. 1908. Unlocated. Photograph from The Peter A. Juley and Son Collection. The Smithsonian Institution.



7.27. Birge Harrison. *Morning after the Snow*, n. d. [1908-10]. Oil on canvas.
25 x 30 in. Memphis Brooks Museum of Art. Gift of the James Lee Family.



7.28. Birge Harrison. *Snow Bound*, n. d. [1920-29]. Oil on canvas, 18 x 30 in.
Courtesy of Christie's East, New York City.



7.29. Birge Harrison. *Winter Landscape*. n. d. [1920-29]. Oil on canvas. 14 ½ x 21 in. Courtesy of Christie's East, New York City.



7.30. Birge Harrison. *Fifth Avenue in Winter*. c. 1903. Oil on canvas, 30 x 18 in.
Courtesy of Christie's East, New York City.



From a Photograph by E. S. Bennett.

"CHRISTMAS EVE ON WASHINGTON SQUARE," THE
JUDSON IN THE BACKGROUND BY BIRGE HARRISON.

7.31. Birge Harrison. *Christmas Eve on Washington Square*, c. 1903-08.
Unlocated. Reproduction from "The Picturesqueness of New York Streets:
Illustrated in the Paintings of Birge Harrison," *The Craftsman* 3 (January 1908):
n.p.



7.32. Birge Harrison. *Fifth Avenue at Twilight*. c. 1910. Oil on canvas, 30 x 23 in.
The Detroit Institute of Arts. City of Detroit Purchase.



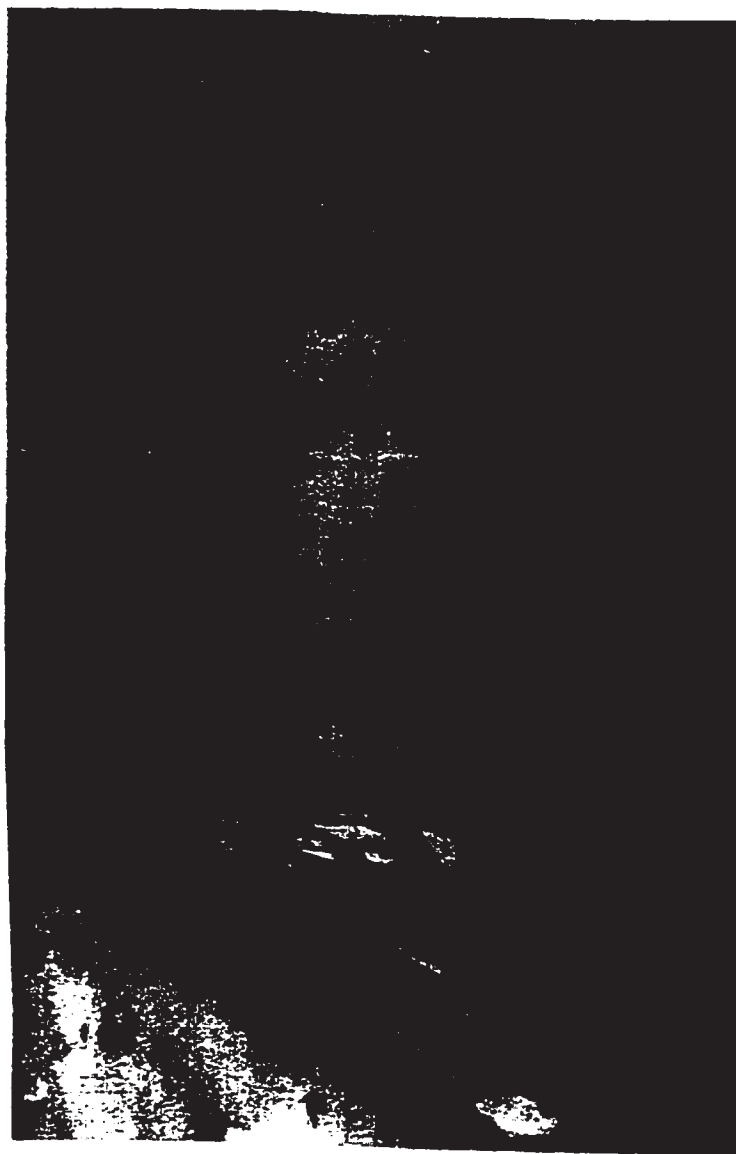
From a Photograph by E. S. Bennett.

"FIFTY-NINTH STREET, NEW YORK
IN WINTER". BY BIRGE HARRISON

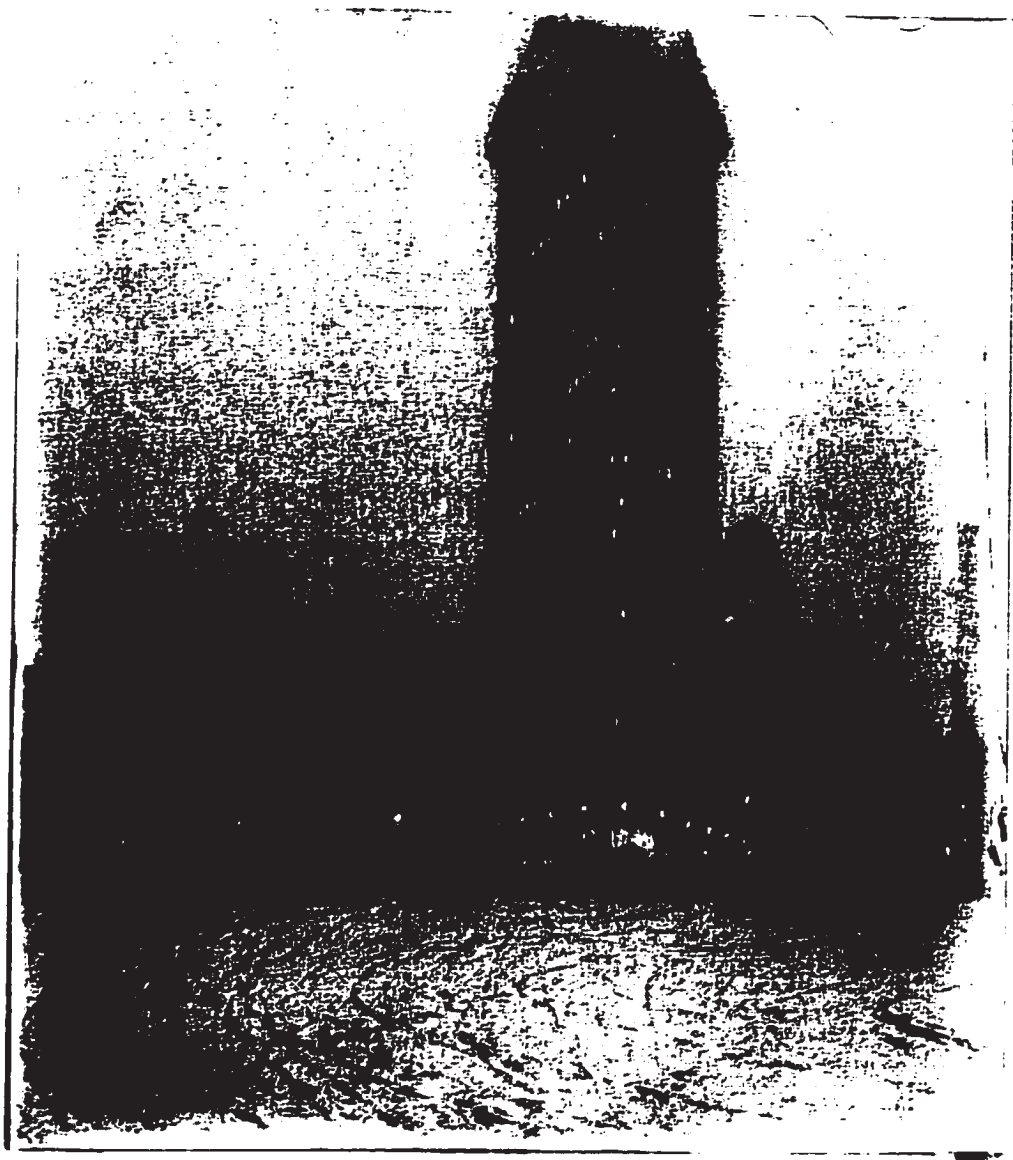
7.33. Birge Harrison. *Fifty-Ninth Street, New York Winter*. c. 1908. Unlocated. Reproduction from "The Picturesqueness of New York Streets: Illustrated in the Paintings of Birge Harrison." *The Craftsman* 3 (January 1908): n.p.



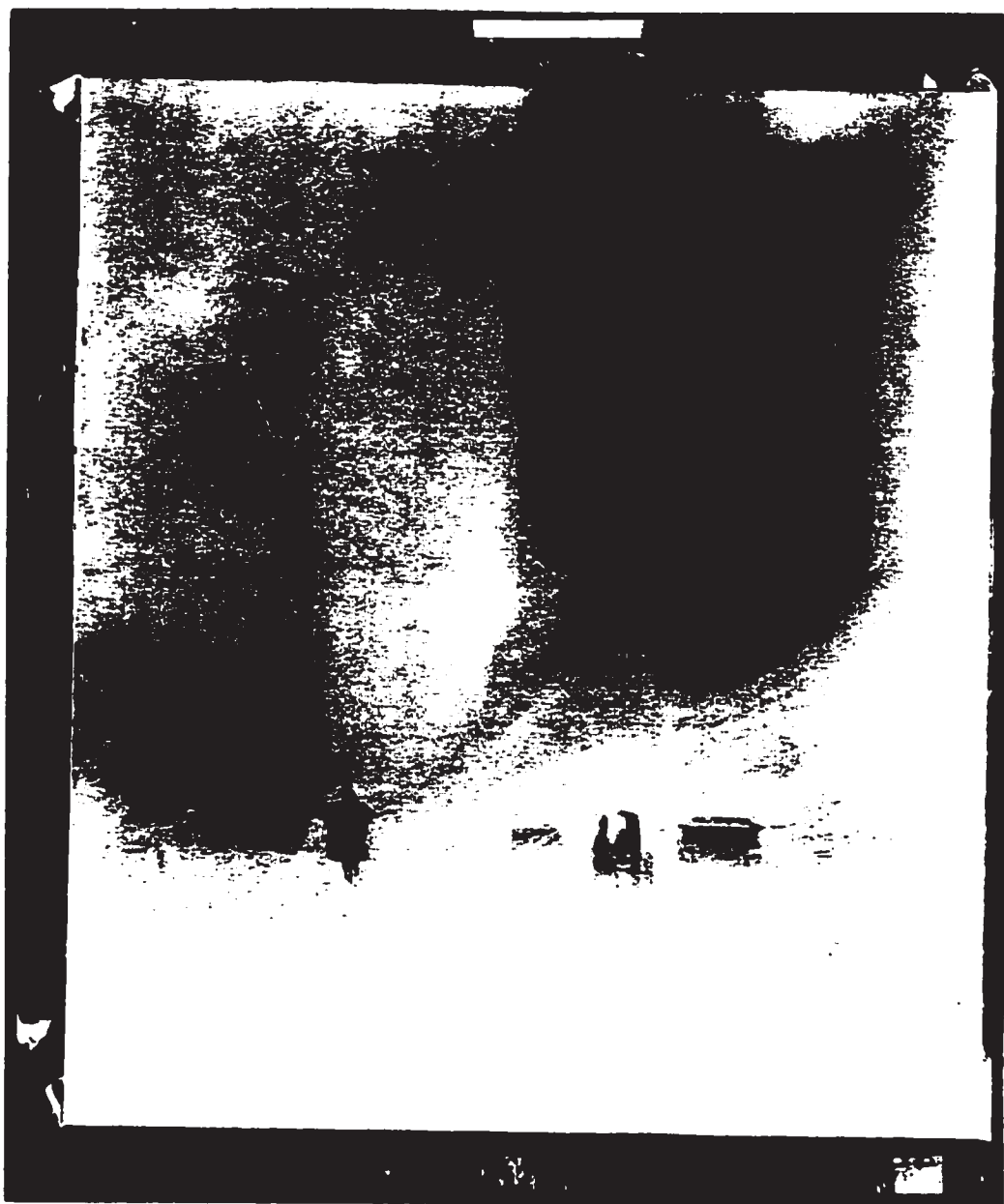
7.34. Birge Harrison. *Grand Central and the Biltmore Hotel in Hazy Twilight*, c. 1903-10. Oil on canvas. 30 x 25 1/8 in. Courtesy of Christie's, New York City.



7.35. Birge Harrison. *Twenty-Seventh Street and Madison Avenue*, n.d. [1903-10].
Pastel and line on canvas, 20 x 12 ¼ in. Museum of the City of New York,
Robert Preato Collection.



7. 36. Birge Harrison. *The Flat-Iron in Winter*, c. 1905. Unlocated. Photograph from The Peter A. Juley and Son Collection, The Smithsonian Institution.



7.37. Birge Harrison. *The Flat-Iron in a Blizzard*. c. 1905. Unlocated. Photograph from The Peter A. Juley and Son Collection. The Smithsonian Institution.



7.38. Birge Harrison. *The Flat-Iron after Rain*. c. 1905. Oil on canvas, 25 30 in.
Courtesy of Christie's, New York City.



8.1. Byrdcliffe Colony. Cabinet, c. 1904. Panels by Herman Dudley Murphy. Oak with polychrome. 27 ¼ x 38 x 14 ¾ in. Mark and Jill Wilcox. Courtesy of Robert Edwards.



8.2. Byrdcliffe Colony. Woodblock Print, c. 1904. Rice paper with pastel.
approximately 8 x 12 in. Alf Evers Collection, The Woodstock Guild.



8.3. Photograph. Birge Harrison with students from the Art Students League Summer School in Woodstock, New York, c. 1907. Archives of the Art Students League, New York City.



9.1. Photograph. Sketching out of doors with Birge Harrison's class at Woodstock. Eugene Speicher Photograph Collection. American Academy of Arts and Letters. New York City.

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