

Animal Pursuits: Hunting and the Visual Arts in Nineteenth-Century America

Corey Piper
Richmond, Virginia

B.A., University of South Carolina, 2004
M.A., Virginia Commonwealth University, 2006

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ANIMAL PURSUITS: HUNTING AND THE VISUAL ARTS IN
NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICA

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ABSTRACT

Hunting and its aftermath formed a major theme in nineteenth-century American art, appearing in natural history illustrations, grand paintings of human-animal combat, popular prints, and other visual media. Considered as both a subject matter for art and a material aid in its creation, hunting offers a means by which to trace how a specific form of human intervention in the environment shaped the nation's attitudes toward nature, national identity formation, and the naturalization of social hierarchies throughout the long nineteenth century. Focusing on the work of five artists—Charles Willson Peale, John James Audubon, George Catlin, Thomas Eakins and Winslow Homer—this project offers new insights into the role that art played in mediating the relationship between nineteenth-century Americans and nature by turning attention to images that pictured the destruction of animals. Rather than an expansive survey of hunting in American art, this dissertation examines hunting imagery through three main frameworks that constitute the central chapters: natural history, western expansion, and elite forms of hunting. The ideal of a shared ownership of nature formed a central facet of American national identity throughout the century. Images of hunting, which were characterized by direct and often violent intervention in nature, represent the utmost expression of this ideal. Indeed, a critical appraisal of images that picture the despoliation of nature is essential to fully understanding Americans' historical relationship to the natural world and its important role in American culture and history. Artworks that pictured the nation's natural bounty with awe or reverence (particularly landscape painting) have dominated the discussion of nineteenth-century American art. However, a closer analysis of hunting imagery demonstrates how artists and their publics readily employed representations of environmental and ecological destruction in order to promote a shared ownership of nature, justify the nation's expansionist impulses, and naturalize divisions within American society.

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INTRODUCTION

From natural history illustrations to scenes of epic struggle between hunter and prey, the art of the hunt was a major theme of nineteenth-century American art. This dissertation draws together representations of hunting in the long nineteenth century in order to demonstrate how such images were intimately bound up with—and ultimately shaped and governed—attitudes toward nature, national identity formation, and the naturalization of social hierarchies. Focusing on the work of five artists—Charles Willson Peale, John James Audubon, George Catlin, Thomas Eakins and Winslow Homer—and stretching over a century, the dissertation takes a synthetic approach to the subject of hunting and its aftermath in art, identifying common themes and concerns across a variety of artists and artworks. This project offers new insights into the role that art played in mediating the relationship between nineteenth-century Americans and nature by turning attention to images that emphasized the domination of nature and destruction of animals. The persistence and pervasiveness of hunting imagery throughout nineteenth-century American art speaks to the subject's enduring utility in expressing a range of values about the natural world, human society, and the relationship between them. The ideal of a shared ownership of nature formed a central facet of American national identity throughout the century. Images of hunting, which were characterized by direct intervention and depredation of nature, represent the utmost expression of this ideal. Indeed, a critical appraisal of images that picture the despoliation of nature is essential to fully understanding Americans' historical relationship to the natural world and its important role in American culture and history. While artworks that pictured the nation's natural bounty with awe or reverence (particularly landscape painting) have dominated the discussion of nineteenth-century American art, a closer analysis of destructive and violent hunting imagery demonstrates that nineteenth-century concepts of nature were never

fixed but instead were constantly renegotiated in support of shifting ideologies as the nation expanded and moved to fully exploit its natural endowments.

Hunting, considered as both a subject matter for art and a material aid in its creation, offers a means by which to trace how a specific form of human intervention in the environment shaped the nation's attitudes toward nature throughout the century. Through the killing and representation of animals, artists constructed a hierarchical model of the natural world in which humans were positioned above all other species, a worldview that justified and encouraged geographic expansion and the exploitation of natural resources. Artists subsequently expanded upon this ideological position, employing hunting imagery to justify and manage the complexities of western expansion, naturalize class and geographic divisions, and model forms of behavior among elite audiences. The art of the hunt framed Americans' relationship to the natural world (a central aspect of the nation's collective identity) by positioning nature as an endless bounty to be rightfully exploited by humans. These images are imbued with traits that became emblematic of American virtues such as physical strength, rugged individualism, and self-reliance. The visual representation of hunting contributed greatly to the nation's growing sense of entitlement to the American continent's vast natural bounty and artists engaged with hunting as a vital means to probe the structures of the natural world.

This dissertation tracks the ways in which the representation of American hunting shifted and transformed through time in correspondence with dominant scientific, political, and social ideologies. The ardent republicanism that characterized the new nation at the outset of the century coincided with a rejection of older European visual traditions of hunting that carried deep associations with the landed gentry and aristocratic leisure. Instead hunting was refashioned as a scientific tool of discovery and incorporated into the nationalist impulse to survey the

continent's environmental bounty. Early American representations of hunted animals created by artist-scientists Charles Willson Peale and John James Audubon conveyed new scientific discoveries about the continent's vast fauna and also worked to establish and reinforce Americans' paternalistic approach to nature through the construction of natural hierarchies. Subsequently George Catlin's western hunting scenes built upon an artistic mandate for exploration, employing hunting imagery as a means of visualizing the unfamiliar West and also eliding the political and economic conflict that arose from white expansion. Western hunting imagery also fostered an image of American masculinity that was contingent upon participation in rugged outdoor pursuits. During the final decades of the century Thomas Eakins and Winslow Homer's representations of recreational forms of hunting took up the mantle of rugged masculinity first proposed in western hunting imagery and engaged representations of elite hunting rituals as a means to reinforce distinctions between races and social classes as well as rural and urban environments. By the century's end, hunting, a practice which had once been considered by many Americans as a symptom of social idleness or a civilization's lack of development, had been elevated through the visual arts to a marker of elite social status.¹

Rather than an expansive survey of hunting in American art, this dissertation examines hunting imagery through three main frameworks that constitute the central chapters: natural history, western expansion, and elite forms of hunting. Organized as case studies, each chapter focuses closely on the work of one or two artists in order to examine their approach to the subject of hunting and human-animal relations, thereby demonstrating the important ways in which hunting imagery structured humans' relationship to the natural world. This targeted approach

¹ The social stigma attached to hunting early in the nineteenth century appears as a topic of discussion later in Chapters 1 & 3. See Michael A. Bellesiles, *Arming America: The Origins of a National Gun Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 106-108 and Daniel Herman *Hunting and the American Imagination* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 40-42.

allows for a deeper consideration of the ways in which hunting art intersected with specific and discrete aspects of nineteenth-century political and social life. Focusing intently on the work of a select group of artists necessarily means that many artists who produced hunting works have been omitted from discussion. Major practitioners of the art of the hunt such as Arthur Fitzwilliam Tait, whose *A Tight Fix—Bear Hunting, Early Winter* is perhaps the most epic and thrilling example of American hunting art, appear only briefly in the pages of this dissertation. (Figure 0.1) This strategy is not meant to minimize the importance of omitted artists' contributions to the story of American art or the history of hunting in America. Rather, the five artists who structure the chapters have been deliberately spotlighted for their potential to reveal deeper insights into ways in which the depiction of hunting in art functioned across a broad spectrum of disciplines and currents of nineteenth-century American life.

Defining an American Art of the Hunt

Hunting is a cultural ritual in which humans pursue or lay in wait for prey animals in order to kill them. A hunt is not the simple act of killing animals (slaughtered livestock are not hunted for example), but depends upon several conventions, formed over many centuries of human cultural development, in order to distinguish particular types of animal killing. The anthropologist Matt Cartmill has proposed a concise definition of hunting which serves as a foundation for this dissertation. He states that hunting is “the deliberate, direct, violent killing of unrestrained wild animals; and we define wild animals in this context as those that shun or attack human beings. The hunt is thus by definition an armed confrontation between humanness and wildness, between culture and nature.”² This definition excludes other related types of animal

² Matt Cartmill, *A View to a Death in the Morning: Hunting and Nature through History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 30.

killing like trapping and fishing and this dissertation similarly sets this category of imagery aside.³ In American art history these other types of imagery have frequently been connected with hunting art but this association overlooks fundamental distinctions in the purpose, function and cultural work performed by representations of the various pursuits. Although animals are vital participants in the hunt, they are rarely offered any opportunity to express agency in the proceedings, other than to escape or in rare instances fight off attack. The visual representations of hunting that this dissertation examines also similarly discount animals' intentions and capacity for suffering, privileging a humanistic point of view. While post-modern critical discourses in the field of animal studies have attempted to recover a broader ecological perspective which takes into account the rights and dignity of non-human animals, in the nineteenth-century visions of hunting mostly took for granted that the hunt expressed meaning only for its human participants.

The art of the hunt, or hunting art, is visual art which represents the act of hunting and its associated practices or engages hunting as a means of probing the natural world.⁴ In nineteenth-century America, hunting art functioned to establish, expand, and spread the meaning of the ritual practice of hunting for audiences which consisted of both hunters and non-hunters. During this period the significance and forms of hunting were often contested and art served as a crucial venue for negotiating competing claims to the practice's meaning. Because of its contentious

³ Cartmill argues, that trapping does not qualify because the violence is mediated, carried out indirectly by the snare rather than the human. Fishing does not meet the standard of premeditation because the angler awaits the fish who may or may not come and must choose to take the lure or bait, unlike hunting which "entails a period of chasing, stalking, or lying in ambush" 29-30.

⁴ The category "sporting art" has been frequently employed in art history to denote art that concerns a range of sports and pastimes including, hunting (traditionally foxhunting), shooting, coursing, racing, coaching, boxing, and other pursuits. This terminology has been most readily applied to a sub-category of British art, as a means of isolating and in some cases belittling a particular set of art and artists. My analysis of American hunting art does not propose such imagery as similar category of "American sporting art," but rather groups hunting imagery into its own distinct sub-genre.

nature and utility in expressing a range of ideals, hunting art comprised a wide variety of imagery and pictorial forms that appeared across different artistic genres and media. In staking out the terms of American hunting art, this dissertation unites taxidermy museum specimens, natural history illustrations, paintings of buffalo hunts, watercolors depicting professional hunting guides, and other objects under a unified heading. Despite the diversity of such objects, all of the materials discussed herein are linked by their fundamental connection to the ritual act of hunting, whether in their production or reception. Such objects served a wide range of purposes beyond merely recording the exploits of hunters—from asserting ownership of nature to upholding distinctions between classes. The chapters of this dissertation sort out and unpack the various ways that the broad category of hunting art expressed targeted and tightly focused meaning for nineteenth-century artists and their publics.

This dissertation advances the argument that American hunting art possessed certain characteristics that distinguished the genre from other national representations of hunting.⁵ Such distinctions cannot be simply parsed out by artists' citizenship or primary place of residence. For example Audubon was born outside the United States, and other artists like Catlin spent considerable time working abroad. Instead, American hunting art as considered in this dissertation is set apart through its distinct visual characteristics, thematic emphasis on natural bounty, and its uncommon sources of patronage. American hunting imagery departed quite drastically from its most direct visual and historical antecedents found in eighteenth and early nineteenth-century British sporting art. British artists like John Wootton, George Stubbs, and the Sartorius family of artists privileged the ritual and ceremonial aspects of sport, focusing mainly

⁵ This approach also separates out the work of white, Euro-American artists from that of Native American artists who also depicted hunting in various ways during the nineteenth century. Such material would furnish ample discussion for many scholarly studies, but these fall outside the bounds of the present dissertation.

on large scale foxhunts and horse racing. (Figure 0.2) In eighteenth-century Britain these sports were the preserve of the wealthy landed classes and their depiction in art expressed a sporting ideal which affirmed the social privileges of landowners and the political power of the landed classes.⁶ Sports rooted in the aristocracy like foxhunting and racing existed in early America, but lacked the well-entrenched social order necessary to support their widespread popularity or representation in art.⁷ Some vestiges of British sporting art filtered into American artistic circles through artists who had more direct contact with the genre, such as Ralph Earl who produced a number of portraits that incorporated sporting themes while in Britain. (Figure 0.3) The Swiss-born artist Edward Troye made a living producing equine portraits mainly for southern planters during the antebellum period that hewed closely to the conventions of British sporting imagery, perhaps in accordance with the aristocratic aspirations of those who commissioned them. (Figure 0.4) However, such imagery failed to gain a significant foothold in America, no doubt in large part due to the discordance between the aristocratic social values inherent in such imagery and the republican principles of the young nation.

Instead of picturing sport as a privileged realm, American hunting art tended to emphasize the abundance of nature as a collective bounty bestowed upon the continent for the use of its Euro-American inhabitants. Some of the earliest images of North America fixated upon the continent's vast wealth of game such as Theodore De Bry's illustration from the grand multi-volume *Americae* depicting European colonists laying waste to scores of animals in Virginia. (Figure 0.5) Unlike British sporting paintings which portrayed hunts as a means of organizing

⁶ See Stephen Deuchar, *Sporting Art in Eighteenth-Century England: A Social and Political History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 39-49

⁷ See Kenneth Cohen, "Well Calculated for the Farmer: Thoroughbreds in the Early National Chesapeake, 1790-1850," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 115, no. 3 (2007), 370-411 A few specialist artists such as Alvan Fisher and Edward Troye did produce images in the mold of British sporting art, but their sporting works were largely exceptions to the main currents of American art.

the landscape according to social hierarchies, American hunting images instead pictured hunting as a means of accessing the natural gifts bestowed upon American citizens. This assurance of America's rightful ownership of the vast spoils of nature motivated artist-naturalists like Peale and Audubon who engaged hunting as a means of probing the natural world and revealing its organizing structures. Hunting thereby became a means of expressing values that corresponded with Americans' paternal relationship with the natural world such as dominance, ruggedness, and self-assurance. Artists like Catlin who pictured hunting as an integral aspect of western expansion also engaged such ideals to express the inevitability and rightfulness of eastern Americans' expansion throughout the territories west of the Mississippi River. Artists who pictured gentleman-sportsmen like Eakins and Homer perhaps came closest to reviving the values of class distinction that defined British sporting imagery. However, these artists established a sporting ideal predicated less on individual land ownership and aristocratic privilege, and more on a model of refined masculinity expressed through an abiding sense of patrimony over the environment. Ultimately, the unified sense of an "American" hunting imagery that unfolds across the chapters of this dissertation is expressed not through the types of sport depicted, or the precise geographic location of the scene, but through the emphasis of values of abundance and Americans' rightful ownership of nature.

A final factor that distinguished American hunting art was the diverse sources of patronage that fueled such imagery in the absence of an elite class of patrons (as in the case of British sporting art) who subscribed to a unified vision of hunting and sport. Rather than stunting the development of American hunting art, the lack of unified sources of patronage facilitated hunting imagery's widespread proliferation across several different genres of art and areas of American life. The field of American natural history, which came to rely upon hunting as an

important means of discovery and dissemination of knowledge, supported artists through institutions like Charles Willson Peale's Philadelphia Museum and Philadelphia's Academy of Natural Sciences. Since Peale needed to attract subscribers and visitors to his innovative museum of natural history and human manufacture from among the Philadelphia citizenry, his vision of hunting, which was implicit in the museum's displays of taxidermied animals, had to resonate with a broad American public. Audubon meanwhile attempted to secure subscribers for his scientific and artistic endeavor, *Birds of America*, directly from the extensive fraternity of well-to-do intellectuals spread across the Atlantic world. Audubon's choice of a printed volume in which to catalogue the hundreds of birds he had assiduously killed and represented was in part shaped by the transportability of the medium and his need to spread his imagery to far-flung sources of patronage. Catlin continually sought to secure patronage for his images of Native Americans and their hunting exploits through the United States government, but when the support failed to materialize he was forced to explore other avenues of exhibition and printmaking to support himself. Hunting imagery played an increasingly important role in his oeuvre as he broadened his approach, relying more upon stereotypes rather than first hand observations in order to appeal to disparate audience expectations. Homer and Eakins participated more directly in the firmly established and professionalized fine art market where their hunting works competed for purchasers alongside a broad range of artists, styles, and subjects. The variety in hunting imagery examined in this dissertation should be seen as reflective of the many avenues of support that artists pursued in representing the practice of hunting. American hunting art was exceptional in that its imagery did not exclusively address hunters and specialists predisposed to sporting pursuits, but engaged with a broad and diverse public of hunters and non-hunters alike.

Methodology and Relationship to the Literature

In order to establish the enduring significance of hunting as a subject in American art, my analysis isolates hunting imagery across a large span of time and several diverse areas of artistic production, including taxidermy specimens, printed volumes, and easel paintings. This approach largely sidesteps limits of genre that structured early American art scholarship, and instead forges thematic connections across a broad spectrum of visual material.⁸ Accordingly, the subject of hunting is also defined more broadly throughout this dissertation than in previous studies which engaged with hunting art.⁹ While many of the works discussed herein, such as Thomas Eakins's *Pushing for Rail* depict the sport of hunting directly, others like Audubon's *Great Northern Diver or Loon* belie the essential role that hunting played in their formulation and creation. (Figure 3.2, 1.28) Unlike the case of British sporting art, which possesses a longer historiography and has established critical consensus on the boundaries that defined the genre, there has been little scholarly consensus on what precisely defines an American hunting art.¹⁰ The artists themselves offer little aid in demarcating the bounds. Peale presented himself first and foremost as a learned museum keeper, offering visitors to his Philadelphia Museum scant

⁸ Foundational studies which centered on questions of genre include Elizabeth Johns, *American Genre Painting: The Politics of Everyday Life*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991) and Barbara Novak, *Nature and Culture: American Landscape Painting, 1825-1875* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980). Studies of hunting imagery often hewed closely to this genre-bound approach, such as See Alfred V. Frankenstein, *After the Hunt: William Harnett and Other American Still Life Painters, 1870-1900*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1953) or Kenneth Ames, *Death in the Dining Room and Other Tales of Victorian Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992). My approach in this dissertation follows more closely the model of works which connect imagery across genres such as Sarah Burns, *Painting the Dark Side: Art and the Gothic Imagination in Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004) and William H. Truettner, Nancy K. Anderson, and et al., *The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier, 1820-1920* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991).

⁹ Other studies of American hunting and sporting art have been organized according to sport or the type of hunt depicted. For example F. Turner Reuter, *Afield in America: 400 years of Animal and Sporting Art* (Middleburg: National Sporting Library and Museum, 2011).

¹⁰ For a discussion of the historiography of the categorization of British sporting art see Deuchar, *Sporting Art in Eighteenth-Century England*, 7-9.

indication of the important role hunting played in his artistic practice and overall vision of nature. On the other hand Homer instructed his dealer to market his hunting pictures directly toward sportsmen. However, he also he cast his vision widely throughout his career and hunting constituted only a part of his many varied subjects. Rather than a hindrance, the lack of scholarly consensus on how to define the parameters of American hunting art has allowed this dissertation substantial leeway to consider a wider range of material than might at first seem directly pertinent to the study of hunting in art.¹¹ Lacking a well-established disciplinary model, I have taken as my criteria for inclusion in this study works in which a deeper critical analysis of the role that hunting played in either their creation or reception increase our understanding of the object's function and meaning. In some cases the result has been to make plain the ways in which the representation of various forms of hunting expressed meaning for audiences, while in others it has been to recover the significant role that hunting played in the formulation of works of art. Indeed one of the primary tasks of this project is to propose a framework for how scholars might consider a broad field of images and objects under a unified heading of American hunting art.

This dissertation builds upon American art scholarship which engages the social history of art to argue that the depiction and experience of nature in nineteenth-century America was intricately connected to American social and political movements, through issues of geographic expansion, scientific exploration, tourism, land ownership, and the establishment of regional identities rooted in landscape.¹² My dissertation expands these lines of inquiry by submitting a

¹¹ In his introduction to the catalogue *Wild Spaces, Open Seasons: Hunting and Fishing in American Art*, Stephen J. Bodio also remarks upon the lack of a clear definition of what type of imagery and subjects constitute "sporting art." Stephen J. Bodio, *Wild Spaces, Open Seasons: Hunting and Fishing in American Art*, Kevin Sharp, ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016)

¹² See for example, Angela Miller, *The Empire of the Eye: Landscape Representation and American Cultural Politics, 1825-1875* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993); Alan Wallach, "Making a Picture of the View from Mount Holyoke," in David C. Miller ed, *American Iconology: New Approaches to Nineteenth-Century Art and*

largely overlooked category of imagery—the art of the hunt—to the same sustained analysis.

While scholars of American art and history have long considered nature and wilderness as key features of American cultural formation and identity, hunting has less frequently appeared as part of this analysis. Such a gap has perhaps more to do with modern attitudes toward hunting, as many nineteenth-century Americans considered hunting to be an essential aspect of wilderness experience. This dissertation fills an important lacuna in the scholarly literature which addresses the intertwined relationship between American art and nature by focusing attention on a category of art which pictured, and, indeed, celebrated the destruction of nature as an American ideal.

Within the field of American art history, hunting imagery has not been ignored but has largely been considered as either the domain of a handful of specialist artists such as William Ranney and Arthur Fitzwilliam Tait, or as a subcategory of an artist's overall production as in the case of Winslow Homer. More recently scholars have expanded this approach, undertaking a deeper critical analysis of the ways in which environmental history also shaped the manner in which artists like Titian Ramsay Peale, Thomas Eakins, and Albert Bierstadt conceived of and pictured destructive human interactions with nature.¹³ This dissertation asks similar questions but focuses them more specifically on the art of the hunt and seeks to forge connections between artists in order to uncover a deeper understanding of how hunting's representation shaped ideologies of environmental patrimony and destruction. The recent exhibition and catalogue, *Wild Spaces, Open Seasons: Hunting and Fishing in American Art*, offers a timely new direction

Literature (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); Eleanor Jones Harvey, *The Civil War and American Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

¹³ Alan C Braddock, "Poaching Pictures: Yellowstone, Buffalo, and the Art of Wildlife Conservation." *American Art* 23 (Fall, 2009), 36-59; Alan C Braddock, "Bodies of Water: Thomas Eakins, Racial Ecology, and the Limits of Civic Realism." In Alan C. Braddock and Christoph Irmscher, eds. *A Keener Perception: Ecocritical Studies in American Art History*. (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2009). Kenneth Haltman, *Looking Close and Seeing Far: Samuel Seymour, Titian Ramsay Peale, and the art of the Long Expedition, 1818-1823*. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008).

in scholarship that presents a more widespread and sustained critical view of hunting imagery in America.¹⁴ The catalogue authors assemble and classify a wide range of hunting imagery throughout the history of pre-1945 American art, clearly demonstrating the subject's persistence and relevance throughout American history. Such scholarship serves as an important foundation for this dissertation by mapping out the visual and thematic connections between images of American hunting and presenting a unified approach to the art of the hunt. However, in this project I move beyond issues of definition and instead question the ways in which hunting imagery exerted influence upon key ideological arenas—natural history, western expansion, and elite refinement—which governed nineteenth-century life.

Organization of Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into three chapters which each examine hunting art through a unified thematic framework. Chapter one focuses on the work of Charles Willson Peale and John James Audubon and examines the central role that hunting played in scientific discovery during the early nineteenth century, arguing that the practice also served as a foundation for scientific ideologies that structured Americans' paternalistic attitude toward nature. Artists and scientists killed, collected, and represented animal specimens as a form of scientific inquiry, using images to disseminate knowledge about the natural world and also to reinforce scientific ideologies that proposed visual comparison of physical traits between organisms as a vital means of ordering nature. Peale in his Philadelphia Museum and Audubon in his print volume *The Birds of America*, used images and sculptural animal bodies to naturalize hierarchies within the animal

¹⁴ Kevin Sharp, ed. *Wild Spaces, Open Seasons: Hunting and Fishing in American Art* (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 2016).

kingdom, giving license to the nation's impulse toward expansion and the rampant consumption of natural resources.

The second chapter examines how the art of the hunt figured prominently in the mythology of national expansion westward during the antebellum period, as an important metaphor for the economic, political, and environmental ambitions expressed through Manifest Destiny. Focusing on George Catlin's Indian Gallery, and the lesser studied print album *The North American Indian Portfolio*, the chapter traces how hunting became evermore essential to the artist's visualization of Native American life in the West. This analysis reveals deeper insights into the vital role art played in positioning the practice of hunting as a means of culturally distinguishing white settlers and Native Americans and thereby justifying the latter's displacement. Ultimately Catlin's depictions of western hunting, which initially sought to record a vanishing western reality, gave rise to a mythic vision of the West as a place of unsettled violence and disorder.

Late in the nineteenth century as the United States became more urban, artists such as Winslow Homer and Thomas Eakins pictured an increasingly popular form of hunting practiced by wealthy city-dwellers. Chapter three considers how depictions of such pursuits found in these artists' paintings and watercolors facilitated an elite cultural performance that modeled ideal forms of masculinity at a time when urban anxieties over shifting gender expectations led many wealthy men to define "manhood" through a deep connection with nature. Such images also reinforced social distinctions between rural and urban environments by emphasizing a rigid code of behavior governing hunting that emphasized fairness and the pursuit of game as a form of healthful recreation rather than a necessity. Encompassing a time span of more than a century and incorporating a variety of visual media, the analysis employed across these chapters shows

that hunting was not only a pervasive concern for many nineteenth century artists, but that hunting imagery was deeply connected to ideologies that governed pivotal aspects of nineteenth-century life.

CHAPTER 1: ALMOST PERFECT FORMS: HUNTING AND THE REPRESENTATION OF NATURAL HISTORY

“All animals are naturally wild, and in many instances it requires considerable art to catch them.”¹⁵ –Royal College of Surgeons, London, 1835

During the nineteenth century, American artists and scientists killed, collected, and represented animal specimens as a form of scientific inquiry, using images to disseminate knowledge about the natural world and reinforce scientific ideologies that proposed visual comparison of physical traits between organisms as a vital means of ordering nature. This hierarchical vision of nature served to establish and legitimize humans’ dominance over their environment and all the other species that shared the American continent. Many European settlers of the New World were motivated by a belief in the continent’s status as a new Eden. The sixteenth-century English poet Michael Drayton described Virginia as, “Earth’s onely paradise,” an untouched landscape in which the endless natural bounty signaled its redemptive potential.¹⁶ Throughout the colonial period, a pervasive faith in the anointed status of the new land steadily extended man’s providence to encompass all of the continent’s natural resources, and such ideals would prove foundational to the young American nation’s collective identity. Early America’s scientific and political leaders pointed to the country’s many natural gifts as evidence of the righteousness of their political cause and extolled their common ownership of nature as a source of cultural unity. In hunting and collecting other animals, humans unequivocally demonstrated their superiority over those species, and simultaneously asserted

¹⁵ Royal College of Surgeons in London, Museum, *Directions for collecting and preserving animals; : addressed by the Board of Curators of the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons in London to professional, scientific and other individuals, with an invitation for contributions to the Museum of animal and vegetable productions, fossil remains, anatomical preparations, casts, models, paintings, drawings, or engravings, which may conduce to the illustration of the animal economy in its healthy and morbid conditions.* (London: Richard Taylor, 1835), 7.

¹⁶ Michael Drayton, *Ode to the Virginia Voyage* 1606 in John Buxton ed., *Poems of Michael Drayton*, Volume 1 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd, 1953), 123.

their right to interpret and intercede in the natural order. The burgeoning field of natural history played a critical role in enshrining the conviction that man held dominion over nature within early Americans' conception of their nation. Aided by the production of imagery that directly communicated information about the natural world, the natural sciences exerted a profound influence on American attitudes toward nature.¹⁷

This chapter focuses on two artist-naturalists—Charles Willson Peale and John James Audubon—who fully integrated the pursuit and destruction of animals into their artistic and scientific methodologies. For both men, hunting was not merely part of their working process, but was essential to the production of their art. Though Peale and Audubon ultimately developed different strategies for representing nature, both relied upon hunting as a means of probing the natural world for deeper insights into its underlying structure. Moreover, hunting contributed greatly to the development of the material processes by which each artist obtained models and depicted animals. Prior to the nineteenth century, hunting was not necessarily considered a prerequisite for the pursuit of natural history. This chapter considers why practitioners like Peale and Audubon adopted the practice so enthusiastically and how it contributed to the course of their art as well as their overall conception of the natural world. Hunting played an essential role in this process, not only in the production of art, but in the construction of a model of the world which positioned humans above all other species—an ideology that justified and encouraged geographic expansion and the exploitation of natural resources.

¹⁷ The literature on the history of science and natural history in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is vast. For an excellent overview of the historiography of the field see Nicholas Jardine and Emma Spary "The Natures of Cultural History" in *Cultures of Natural History* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 3-17. This chapter is particularly indebted to other historic and historiographic texts including John R.R. Christie "Ideology and Representation in Eighteenth-Century Natural History" *Oxford Art Journal* 13 no. 1 (1990) 3-10; Amy Meyers ed, *Art and Science in America: Issues of Representation* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1998); Gavin Bridson, *The History of Natural History: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1994).

Numerous authors have established that Early Americans' pervasive conviction that they enjoyed a special covenant with nature played a pivotal role in the formation of ideals of nationhood.¹⁸ The Puritan belief that the land and natural abundance of the New World represented a new Israel and covenant between God and man endured throughout the colonial period in various forms. The Quaker naturalist William Bartram echoed such sentiments when he wrote in his *Travels Through North & South Carolina, Georgia, East & West Florida*, "my chief happiness consisted in tracing and admiring the infinite power, majesty, and perfection of the great Almighty Creator and in the contemplation, that through divine aid and permission, I might be instrumental in discovering and introducing into my native country, some original production of nature, which might become useful to society."¹⁹ Bartram conflates the natural gifts bestowed upon the American continent by the Creator with the political and cultural success of the new nation, seeing the two as linked and self-supporting. Bartram, like many scientists and political leaders of the Revolutionary generation saw the natural wealth of the American land as a divine gift which consecrated Americans' status as a chosen people. In his *Notes on the State of Virginia* Thomas Jefferson extolled the American land's capacity to provide comfortably for its inhabitants. Praising the easy manner with which wheat was grown in Virginia he exclaimed, "Besides clothing the earth with herbage, and preserving its fertility, it feeds the laborers plentifully, requires from them only a moderate toil, except in the season of harvest, raises great numbers of animals for food and service, and diffuses plenty and happiness among the whole."²⁰ Such allusions to America as a new Eden and a land of harmonious plenty were reinforced by the

¹⁸ The literature on this topic is expansive. Most important to my analysis are: Perry Miller *Nature's Nation* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1967), Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), James D. Drake, *The Nation's Nature: How Continental Presumptions Gave Rise to the United States of America* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), and Theodore Steinberg, *Down to Earth: Nature's Role in American History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

¹⁹ William Bartram, *Travels Through North & South Carolina, Georgia, East & West Florida* (1791), 71.

²⁰ Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1787) (Richmond VA: J.W. Randolph, 1853), 179.

vision of nature later codified by Peale in which all the beasts and fruits of the land existed in order to provide for humans prosperity.

While this chapter focuses mainly on the production of natural history imagery in early America, it is important to note that the reception of such images was never an unmediated or singular experience. As Ann Shelby Blum has shown, early American audiences accessed natural history representations through well-established pictorial frameworks, rooted in a visual culture of European science that had developed over the course of several centuries.²¹ The field of natural history (a branch of applied science, under the more broadly theoretical field usually called natural philosophy) emerged from many sources, and its reliance upon visual examination as a foundation of inquiry was largely based upon the work of the English philosopher Francis Bacon. In his *Great Instauration* Bacon proposed a new natural philosophy based on a study of empirical, rather than eternal truths. He asserted, “And all depends on keeping the eye steadily fixed upon the facts of nature and so receiving their images simply as they are.” The philosopher’s ideas served as the foundation for the field of natural history and established the primacy of vision as its main investigative tool.²² Writing in the twentieth century, the historian of science Michel Foucault distilled the ocular character of natural history even further stating, “Natural history is nothing more than the nomination of the visible.”²³ While visual examination clearly served as the essence of the practice of natural history, such notions overlook (or oversimplify) an important prerequisite: the acquisition of the specimens which served as the object of study. Representations of “Curiosity Cabinets” full of natural history specimens such as

²¹ Ann Shelby Blum, *Picturing Nature: American Nineteenth-Century Zoological Illustration* (Princeton University Press, 1993), 3-19.

²² Francis Bacon, *The Great Instauration* (1620) in James Spedding ed. *The Works of Francis Bacon* vol. 8 (Boston: Taggard and Thompson, 1864), 53.

²³ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), 132.

the well-known print depicting Ole Worm Museum in Copenhagen as well as natural history illustrations which present animals as unmarred specimens as in the plates from the French naturalist Georges Cuvier's *Le règne animal*, belie what was in fact an intensive and laborious process of collection and preparation of animal bodies. (Figures 1.1-1.2) These material processes were sometimes acknowledged in more specialist publications such Pierre Boitard's taxidermy manual *Nouveau manuel complet du naturaliste préparateur : ou L'art d'empailler les animaux*, but the activities and identity of the hunter who acquired such specimens are completely absent. (Figure 1.3) For Peale and Audubon, the process of specimen acquisition that was essential to their scientific and artistic work, required that they hunt animals. In this chapter I shift attention to the step that occurred prior to the intense visual scrutiny that is most commonly associated with the visual culture of nineteenth-century natural history. In order to fully understand the images we must also take into account the process by which the animals were procured, prepared, and finally presented for observation.

Even though natural history had long relied upon the first-hand examination of animal specimens, hunting was not a prominent part of the process prior to the late eighteenth century. During this period natural history was largely carried out under the auspices of aristocratic patronage. Early naturalists relied upon a range of strategies for collecting specimens but rarely ventured into the field to personally capture them. One of the first large scale treatises on natural history of North America, Mark Catesby's *The Natural History of Carolina, Florida and the Bahama Islands* grew out of this model of patronage and specimen collection. Dedicated to the Princess of Wales, the two volumes consisting of 220 etchings, resulted from two expeditions that lasted more than ten years, during which Catesby travelled extensively, recording the flora and fauna of North America and the Caribbean. (Figure 1.4) According to his own accounts

Catesby hunted regularly on his excursions for sustenance, but claimed that he seldom drew from dead specimens. In the preface to the 1771 edition of *Natural History* (published posthumously) Catesby clarified, “the Birds, I painted while alive (except a very few).”²⁴ Indeed Catesby took great care to differentiate those plates which were based on dead specimens such as *The Yellow-rump* which is shown dangling lifelessly upside down by a string attached to its foot. (Figure 1.5) Catesby admitted that his work sometimes lacked in artistic refinement, but argued that a simple, flat style with little embellishment offered the most accurate depiction of specimens. Nevertheless, Catesby portrayed some animals such as *The Goat-sucker* in animated poses, giving some credence to his claim of only working from his observations of living creatures. (Figure 1.6)

Later artists Peale and Audubon were deeply indebted to European science and natural philosophy, but both were engaged in forging a distinctively American natural history that rivalled the work produced in the Old World. The study of nature in the early republic was often hailed as a patriotic endeavor that not only increased knowledge of America’s inherent natural riches but established the new nation as a site of free dialogue and advanced learning. Eager to assert intellectual independence from Europe, scores of new institutions devoted to scientific learning emerged in America’s early years and natural history in particular was often singled out as an arena in which the young country might surpass its forebears.²⁵ While the United States lacked the long-established universities and libraries of Europe, it possessed seemingly endless natural resources and material for study. A great admirer of the natural treasures of the Americas,

²⁴ Mark Catesby, *The natural history of Carolina, Florida and the Bahama islands: containing the figures of birds, beasts, fishes, serpents, insects, and plants: ... Together with their descriptions in English and French. ... To the whole, is prefixed [sic] a new and correct map of the countries treated of* (London: Benjamin White, 1771), vi.

²⁵ See Simon Baatz “Philadelphia Patronage: The Institutional Structure of Nature History in the New Republic, 1800-33” *Journal of the Early Republic* 8 no. 2 (Summer, 1988) and Joyce Chaplin, “Nature and Nation: Natural History in Context” in Sue Ann Prince ed. *Stuffing Birds, Pressing Plants, Shaping Knowledge: Natural History in North America, 1730-1860* (Philadelphia, American Philosophical Society, 2003), 75-95.

the European nobleman-naturalist Alexander von Humboldt exclaimed in a letter to Thomas Jefferson that “mankind may look forward to great improvements which can be expected from the new order of things to be found here.”²⁶ The idea that the United States contained an inexhaustible bounty of natural treasures to be collected, catalogued, and studied energized and enlightened the field both in America and Europe. While Peale and Audubon cultivated extensive networks of European contacts, both continually asserted their identity as Americans and trumpeted the fruits of their work as examples of the merits of American science.

Peale and Audubon were two members of a much larger cohort of American naturalists working in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The chronology of Peale and Audubon’s careers as artist-naturalists spanned a long period from several years after the ratification of the United States constitution until just a decade before the start of the Civil War. Rather than considering the entire field of natural history during this era, I have narrowed my discussion to these two artist-naturalists for several reasons. Firstly, both Peale and Audubon devoted the bulk of their careers to expansive natural history projects that covered many years and occupied nearly all of their attention during that time. Peale devoted his energies to running his museum of natural history which he hoped to develop into a vast repository of natural specimens and a leading institution of learning; and Audubon spent his time working on the *Birds of America*—an exhaustive collection of prints depicting every species of bird known to reside in America. Both artists hunted extensively in pursuit of their large-scale projects and this practice played a sustained, pivotal role in their artistic and scientific endeavors. Finally, both artists exerted a profound cultural influence upon their eras that exceeded the normal bounds of

²⁶ Alexander von Humboldt, Letter to Thomas Jefferson (June 27, 1804) in Helmut de Terra, “Alexander von Humboldt’s Correspondence with Jefferson, Madison and Gallatin” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 103, no. 6 (December, 1959), 789.

both scientific and artistic fields. Peale and Audubon each ascended to the level of international celebrity, and their art fundamentally shaped the way that Americans conceived of and interacted with nature. Peale's Museum offered a model that secured Americans' sense of divinely ordained ownership of nature. Several decades later Audubon's work presented a vision of nature that was not permanently fixed, but rather shifting and relational. Rather than upsetting the natural balance, such a model allowed later Americans the means to which to understand the rapidly changing ways in which their nation interceded within the natural order, through geographic expansion and ecological intervention.

Peale's emphasis on taxonomy also resonated loudly with a nation that was struggling to form social and political cohesion necessary to thrive as an independent country. Christopher Looby has proposed that the taxonomic character of natural history provided a critical model for early American thinkers and leaders such as Peale and Thomas Jefferson to seek social organization for America's heterogeneous society.²⁷ In the face of the many crises that faced the young nation, born out of the fractious nature of its political and social union, it is easy to understand the appeal of Peale's rigidly ordered system. The museum's hierarchical organization of specimens implied a constancy of nature. However, whether he consciously recognized it, the static hierarchical system inherent within many of the animal exhibits was already undermined by the museum's principle attraction, the giant American Mastodon skeleton. The discovery of an animal long since extinct signaled that species could change over time. The natural order could shift and once dominant species could be decimated—a potentially volatile notion if extended to the social sphere. While Audubon's dynamic system on display in *Birds of America* was still taxonomical in nature, his taxonomies were more relational than inherent. Rather than

²⁷ Christopher Looby, "The Constitution of Nature: Taxonomy as Politics in Jefferson, Peale, and Bartram" *Early American Literature* 22 no. 3 (1987), 252-73.

preordained, Audubon's hierarchies were based on direct contact with other organisms. In the age of Jacksonian democracy, in which social registers were being thoroughly reshuffled for the first time since the colonial period, Audubon's taxonomical structure seemed to offer a more workable model for the body politic. With the expansion of the electorate and the growth of the nation's mercantile economy, many additional levels of the social order were being formed which necessitated ever more nuanced codes of social behavior. A system of nature in which species shifted from dominant to subordinate depending upon their counterpart reflected the increasingly complex social order well.

During the same period spanning the early decades of the nineteenth century, one can also trace a subtle but determined shift in the nation's stance toward its natural resources and the role that nature played in defining nationhood. As the country grew in myriad ways (demographically, economically, geographically, culturally) nature increasingly served as the fuel for progress—a divine windfall to be enthusiastically consumed rather than reverently cultivated and treasured. As settlers moved westward from the coasts massive amounts of land came under private ownership, then were cleared and put to productive use. Rivers and streams were harnessed for power and animals were hunted on an increasingly large scale, whether for sustenance, fur, or to eliminate pests. Massive infrastructure projects, such as the Erie Canal, completed in 1825, reshaped the landscape physically and altered human networks of travel, communication, and commerce.²⁸ By the 1820s when Audubon was most spiritedly engaged in *The Birds of America*, man's overwhelming intervention in (and in many cases destruction of) the environment was apparent throughout the United States. While nature's gifts had almost

²⁸ See Carol Sheriff, *The Artificial River: The Erie Canal and the Paradox of Progress, 1817-1862* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996). Sheriff argues that the Canal project the first large-scale endeavor in Early America that solidified the ideal that nature was subservient to progress.

always been considered to be placed on the American continent for humans' use, the interventionist impulse that characterized the early Republican period represented a decided shift in approach toward nature.

The underlying philosophy of the nation's new mode of address toward its natural bounty is perhaps most clearly epitomized by the philosophy Ralph Waldo Emerson proposed in his text *Nature*.²⁹ On the one hand, Emerson deplored what he saw as the destructive impulse of commercial and geographic expansion and urged a more spiritual appreciation of nature. However, Emerson coupled his ebullient love of nature with a philosophy that was rooted in the notion that the subjective observer operates as a "transparent eye," or a vessel through which one absorbs the entirety of creation through its visual apparatus. As the literary historian John Gatta explains, such a philosophy makes an important intervention in man's approach to nature because it "dissolves the cognitive distance between personal subjectivity and material objectivity."³⁰ In *Nature* Emerson dispatches the old order of the Great Chain of Being philosophy which places man over and above nature. Rather, Emerson's man is fully integrated within nature, albeit in a uniquely privileged position to both appreciate and exploit its favors. The hunter-observer occupies a similar subjective position within Audubon's *Birds of America*. The animals bound within the pages negotiate their own hierarchies with their companions, and other non-human animals, while the human viewer occupies a unique vantage point from which to record and interpret the larger structure of nature. Audubon's animals forge relationships through direct contact with other animals; humans alone possess the capacity to comprehend the entirety of the natural order and are therefore also free to intervene as they see fit. While both

²⁹ Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature* (Boston: James Munroe and Co., 1836).

³⁰ John Gatta, *Making Nature Sacred: Literature, Religion, and Environment in America from the Puritans to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 89.

Emerson's philosophy and Audubon's art express an appreciation for the exquisite beauty and subtle design of nature, they are underlined by a pronounced anthropocentrism which asserts the fundamental role that human perception plays in shaping nature.

Perhaps the most profound consequence of the nation's evolving stance toward its natural patrimony during the course of Peale and Audubon's careers was the massive movement of people and transformation of land and resources that accompanied Westward expansion. With the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, the United States vastly increased its geographic footprint and truly became a continental nation. The geographic and political ambitions of the Louisiana Purchase and other territorial expansions also spurred a scientific mandate to survey, collect, and study the country's natural treasures. The discovery of a horde of Mastodon bones in the frontier region of Kentucky in 1739 propelled decades of ensuing interest in the massive creature such that when news broke of a similar find in Newburgh, New York in 1801, Peale immediately rushed to the site to excavate the bones which would become the centerpiece of his Philadelphia Museum. The certainty that the West held many more equivalent jewels of natural history motivated exploratory expeditions like that undertaken by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark at the behest of President Thomas Jefferson. Peale engaged enthusiastically with such efforts to explore the nation's newly acquired territories, and his participation in such endeavors both enhanced his own museum's collection and burnished the new nation's standing as a country of esteemed higher learning and exceptional natural gifts. Audubon was also thoroughly connected with the nation's Western trajectory as both commercial and scientific interests drove him to travel and settle in frontier areas of Kentucky, Missouri, and Florida. Throughout his life he cultivated an image of a Western frontiersman, someone more comfortable in the wilderness than in Eastern cities.

The hunt was essential to the formulation of both Peale and Audubon's overall conception of nature, but they represented the organizational structure of nature differently. While Peale saw nature as a divinely ordered hierarchy, Audubon pictured a nature in flux in which relationships constantly shifted based on the point of view of the human observer. My analysis posits that the manner in which each artist pictured the overall structure of nature was emblematic of the different ways nineteenth-century audiences came to position themselves in relation to the natural world. In the following chapter I first examine each artist individually to reveal how they incorporated hunting activity into their artistic and scientific practices, and how this process fundamentally shaped their differing conceptions of the natural order. My discussion of Peale focuses first on his development of an innovative technique to preserve the animals he killed in order to replicate the forms and structure of nature within the physical confines of the museum. I then consider how this material process shaped larger ideals about the hierarchy of nature and humans' role therein. The second half of the chapter examines how Audubon's experiences as a hunter shaped his representational strategies, leading to a development of a style of natural history illustration that equally prized mimetic accuracy and a romantic affinity for narrative. In *Birds of America* Audubon offers a more relational view of nature, in which hierarchies are constantly being negotiated between individual animals, rather than ordained by a creator. Finally I conclude by placing Peale and Audubon in relationship to each other and considering the larger implications of their divergent visions of nature and art.

Charles Willson Peale

When Charles Willson Peale announced to Philadelphia society that he was leaving behind portrait painting in order to devote himself fully to managing his growing museum, he declared, "It is his fixed determination to encrease the subjects of the Museum with all his

powers, whilst life and health will admit of it.”³¹ Establishing the museum as a major center of science and useful learning in the young nation required a broad array of “powers” on Peale’s part including amassing and presenting the collection, navigating political and institutional structures in Philadelphia and beyond, cultivating a large scholarly network of like-minded scientists, and engaging the public who visited the museum.³² All of these activities seem perfectly suited to the life of a public intellectual and civic organizer, roles that Peale increasingly exemplified as he transformed himself from a mere painter to a museum keeper, naturalist, and scholar. Such functions conform neatly to the self-image that Peale presented later in life in his grand statement portrait *The Artist in his Museum* but also more intimate and restrained portraits such as Peale’s 1824 *Self Portrait* in which he confidently engages the viewer while resting his hand upon the giant mastodon bone that formed the centerpiece of his life’s work in the museum. (Figures 1.7, 1.8)

However, less than a year before announcing the conclusion of his career as a portraitist, Peale recorded in his diary a vastly different image of the type of work that he was undertaking in service of his museum project. On a month-long specimen collecting trip through Delaware, Peale recorded accounts of long days spent pursuing, shooting, and skinning birds. An entry from September 10th, 1793 captures the ardor of such work:

After doing something to make Mr. Bordleys Gun shoot better (for she had a crook to the left) I went out with her, and shot at a White Crain which had cost me some labour to come within gunshot, this I mist, afterwards, I went round a large savanna, and crawled

³¹ Dunlap and Claypoole’s *American Daily Advertiser*, April 24, 1794, 2.

³² The scholarly literature on Peale and his Museum is extensive, transcending the fields of art history, history, and literary studies. Charles Coleman Sellers’ *Charles Willson Peale* (New York: Scribner, 1947) remains the foundational biography, and Sellers’ *Mr. Peale’s Museum: Charles Willson Peale and the First Popular Museum of Science and Art* (New York: Norton, 1980) is an indispensable history of the museum. More recently David R. Brigham’s *Public Culture in the Early Republic: Peale’s Museum and Its Audience* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), and David C. Ward “Democratic Culture: The Peale Museums, 1784-1850” in *The Peale Family: Creation of a Legacy* Lillian B. Miller ed. (Washington D.C.: National Portrait Gallery, 1996), 260-76 examine the larger social context of Peale’s museum.

on my hands & knees in a corn field where I found considerable quantities of sand-burs, the first I observed of them was by putting my hand on a bunch, when pricked severely, attempting to pull them off they stick fast into my fingers and it was some minutes before I could disengage myself from them and at expence of leaving some of the points in my hand that had rested on them, afterward I was so careful as to pull up those that I could not avoid without shewing myself, for about 150 yards I moved in this manner, but I secured my bird.³³

The next day Peale set about mounting the elusive crane, as well as another specimen shot by his son Titian.³⁴ During the course of their expedition Peale shot scores of birds belonging to more than a dozen different species, most of which he preserved and mounted in the field for transport and eventual display in his museum. This journey was not an unusual occurrence as Peale made numerous hunting trips throughout the United States in order to acquire new and comparative specimens. Eventually he amassed a staggering collection of nearly 3,000 animal specimens through both his own efforts as a hunter and donations from others.³⁵ The time spent crawling on his hands and knees after animals was not an anomaly or a rare inconvenience, but rather a central foundation of his life's work.

Evaluating Peale's creative output as a naturalist and museum keeper presents a challenge to the modern historian for several reasons. Firstly, although Peale's method of preservation was able to withstand the ravages of time, few of his mounted specimens are still extant. Following Peale's death and several years under the stewardship of Titian and Rembrandt Peale, the bulk of

³³ Charles Willson Peale, "Diary of a Collecting Trip to Cape Henlopen, Delaware. August 21-September 19, 1793." Reprinted in Lillian B. Miller, Sidney Hart, David C. Ward eds. *The Selected Papers of Charles Willson Peale and His Family*. Vol 2. Part 1. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 60.

³⁴ Peale's son Titian Ramsay Peale (1780-1798) was his principal assistant in the field and in the establishment of the museum. After his premature death this role was eventually taken over by another son also named Titian Ramsay Peale (1799-1885)

³⁵ See Charles Coleman Sellers, *Charles Willson Peale* (New York: Scribner's, 1969), 346. Based on the dispersal catalogue of the collection, as well as museum accession records, Sellers accounts for the following: 1,824 birds, 250 quadrupeds, 135 reptiles, 650 fishes, as well as other categories such as shells, books, and Native American collection items. Numerous authors have addressed Peale's role as a museum keeper, but the most sustained discussion of his hunting and preserving of animals is found in David R. Brigham, "Ask the Beasts and They Shall Teach Thee: The Human Lessons of Charles Willson Peale's Natural History Displays," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 59 no. 2/3 (1996), 182-206, which serves as starting point for many of my analyses in this chapter.

the Philadelphia Museum's collection was eventually sold to P.T. Barnum and his associate Moses Kimball around 1849.³⁶ While some specimens eventually made it to permanent homes in museum collections such as Harvard's Museum of Comparative Zoology, the vast majority of these are now lost. Moreover, the expansion of the museum into outposts in Baltimore and New York City run by Peale's sons, also complicates the picture of Peale's career, making it at times difficult to separate his work from that of his sons. Finally, the museums operated over the course of more than six decades, during which Peale's (and later his sons') viewpoints shifted considerably. Nevertheless, a coherent view of Peale's scientific and creative work and the pivotal role that hunting played in formulating his conception and presentation of nature can be formed through his prolific writings on the subject, as well as numerous visual representations of the museum and Peale's place within it. Through the course of this chapter I draw upon all of these sources at different measure in order to recover a more intelligible picture of the pivotal role that hunting played in the vast enterprise that made up Peale's work as an artist-naturalist.

Although Peale's own hunting exploits provided the bulk of his museum collection, he also enthusiastically pursued specimens from a wide variety of sources. In a 1790 broadside Peale indicated the importance of such gifts declaring, "With sentiments of gratitude, Mr. Peale thanks the friends to the Museum, who have beneficially added to his collection a number of precious curiosities, from many parts of the world.... He respectfully asks a continuance of their favors."³⁷ Among these curiosities, Peale was particularly desirous of obtaining animal specimens. He appealed directly to hunters for assistance in acquiring specimens, taking out an advertisement in the *Pennsylvania Packet and Daily Advertiser* which read: "Mr. Peale's

³⁶ See Sellers, 1980, 307-335.

³⁷ Charles Willson Peale, "To the Citizens of the United States of America, Mr. Peale respectfully informs the Public," Broadside. February 1, 1790. American Philosophical Society.

respectful compliments to the gentlemen sportsmen of Philadelphia and will be obliged to them for such Birds and Beasts as are not yet in Mr. Peale's Museum."³⁸ Peale also solicited donations through his extensive international network of fellow scientists and learned amateurs. One way Peale encouraged such donations was by offering free subscription to the museum in exchange for sought after artifacts or specimens. Donors were also recognized on the display labels associated with their gifts (a novel practice that persists through to the present day), which offered a public acknowledgment of the individual's benevolence, but also presented an opportunity for the museum and donor to mutually benefit from such associations.³⁹ The museum quickly became well known as a repository for natural history items among the nation's prominent citizens, including even George Washington who donated a pair of pheasants that were given to the President from King Louis XVI of France by way of the Marquis de Lafayette.⁴⁰ (Figure 1.9) Ever the opportunist, Peale had written to Washington immediately upon learning of the birds' existence, to ask if, in the event the birds perished, they could be packed and sent to the museum in Philadelphia to be mounted.⁴¹

While donations added to the collection, Peale could not count on these alone to sustain his vision for the museum, particularly in the areas of natural history, and took it upon himself to obtain additional specimens by hunting in the field. As he explained in a letter to the French naturalist Étienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, "By constantly shooting ourselves, we are able to obtain many birds which [are] not to be had otherwise, at the same time we gain a knowledge of

³⁸ *Pennsylvania Packet and Daily Advertiser* (September 11, 1787), 3.

³⁹ See David Brigham, *Public Culture in the Early Republic: Peale's Museum and Its Audience* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995) for a thorough accounting of the Museum's subscribers, and pp. 84-86 for a general discussion of donations. Though chapters 6 and 7 primarily discuss donations of minerals and human artifacts, these give the most complete picture of the relationship between the museum and its donating public.

⁴⁰ Walter Faxon, "Relics of Peale's Museum," *Bulletin of the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard College* 59 No. 3 (July 1915), 119-148. (p.127)

⁴¹ Charles Willson Peale to George Washington, December 31, 1786. Reprinted in Miller et al., 1988, Vol. 1, 464. Fortuitously for Peale, though not for the birds, they died within the next six weeks.

their manners.”⁴² Peale began hunting birds in the 1780s while travelling the mid-Atlantic region as a portraitist, but devoted himself in earnest to the pursuit following his “retirement” from portrait painting.⁴³ During the 1790s Peale undertook extensive hunting trips through Delaware, Maryland, and New Jersey, which lasted from several weeks to up to two months. Such trips regularly resulted in considerable hauls in animal specimens. On a month long journey in 1793 to Cape Henlopen, Delaware, located across the Delaware Bay from Cape May, New Jersey, Peale and his party shot dozens of birds belonging to many different species. Of the many birds the party killed, 33 were eventually mounted and deemed worthy for inclusion in the museum.⁴⁴

Peale displayed considerable acumen as a hunter, to a degree not particularly common during the late eighteenth century among American men of a similar social standing. Very early in the nation’s history, hunting was not viewed as an American virtue, but rather was seen as a symptom of a people’s lack of civilization. A correspondent in *The American Museum* explained, “hunting wild beasts is the first and most indolent life of any new country.”⁴⁵ The anonymous writer was paraphrasing the four stages theory of societal development, which posited that hunting societies were the most basic state of human social organization, and that in order to reach the fullest extent of civilization, societies must progress through the pastoral stage, to the agricultural, and finally commercial stages. Based upon the philosophy of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, and further developed by Adam Smith and other continental philosophers, many prominent Americans subscribed to this theory including Philadelphia physician Benjamin Rush

⁴² Charles Willson Peale to Étienne Goeffroy Saint-Hilaire, Philadelphia April 30, 1797. Reprinted in Miller et al., 1988, Vol. 2 Part 1, 199.

⁴³ Though he devoted himself more fully to his museum, Peale continued to paint portraits on a more limited basis.

⁴⁴ Charles Willson Peale, Diary August 21-September 19, 1793. Reprinted in Miller et al., 1988, Vol. 2, Part 1, 50-68.

⁴⁵ “Some Conjectures Respecting the First Peopling of America,” *The American Museum or Universal Magazine* 10 No. 6 (December 1791), 262. Peale was a subscriber to the magazine in 1787, see “List of Subscribers” *The American Museum*, 2 No. 1 (July 1787), 10.

and Thomas Jefferson.⁴⁶ Such views presented hunting as incompatible with the republican ideals of the new nation which emphasized an agrarian-commercial socio-economic model. As such, hunting came to be variously associated with laziness, barbarity, and crudeness during the late eighteenth century.

Although it is not entirely clear when or where Peale learned to hunt, his diaries from hunting trips during the 1790s reveal him to be a skilled huntsman. Certainly Peale would have gained experience with firearms during his service with the Pennsylvania Militia where he regularly drilled, paraded, and participated in combat actions.⁴⁷ However his proficiency with guns extended beyond mere utilitarian familiarity. On his trip to Cape Henlopen for example, Peale reported that he spent a morning “assisting the Gunsmith in repairing Mr. Bordleys Gun which he had lent me,” and several days later fixed the gun on his own in order to make it shoot more true.⁴⁸ Although Peale likely possessed above average virtuosity in many types of artistry, his talent at manipulating and repairing firearms is remarkable because of the dearth of highly trained gunsmiths working in the United States from whom Peale might have learned this craft.⁴⁹

Beyond his knowledge of gun technology, Peale exhibited great expertise at pursuing birds in the field. While he was frequently accompanied by others on hunting trips including his sons, hired assistants, and his African American slave Moses, Peale usually maintained a direct involvement with the day’s pursuit by indicating areas to cover or species to pursue. On the excursion to Cape Henlopen, Peale regularly set off to hunt on his own, traversing over rugged

⁴⁶ See Daniel Herman, *Hunting and the American Imagination* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 41-46.

⁴⁷ See Peale’s wartime journal reprinted in Horace Wells Sellers, “Charles Willson Peale, Artist-Soldier,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 38 no. 3 (1914) 257-286.

⁴⁸ Charles Willson Peale, Diary August 21-September 19, 1793. Reprinted in Reprinted in Miller et al., 1988, Vol. 2, Part 1, 59-60.

⁴⁹ See Michael A. Bellesiles, *Arming America: The Origins of a National Gun Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 106-108.

terrain to hunt, often bagging multiple birds in a single day. At this time hunting required considerable skills not only at shooting but also in stalking, as rifles were generally only accurate at a very short distance. Moreover, hunting for the purposes of natural history required further considerations, particularly for birds, since if the prey was too badly damaged it would be unsuitable for display in the museum. In a published specimen collecting guide, Titian Ramsay Peale advised would be naturalists to be sure to use the smallest shot possible and to carry dried clay in order to soak up any blood to avoid staining the feathers. Affirming that the bird's appearance as a specimen was the utmost concern, Titian instructed that in the event the hunter should wound, but not kill the bird, he should "take them up by the bill, and by placing your thumb and finger on opposite sides under the wings, with a little pressure in a few moments you will kill them, without injuring the plumage."⁵⁰

It is nearly impossible to make a full account of the number of birds Peale shot on his hunting trips, since many of those killed were never mounted for the museum, and only casually mentioned in his writings. However, in his entries for the month-long hunting journey through the Delaware River estuary, Peale hints at the high expectations he had for the overall haul, declaring that the mere fifty birds they have killed and preserved, indicate that the journey "has not been blessed with tolerable success."⁵¹ Peale's pessimistic assessment of their group's many spoils seems all the more astonishing when considering that they were not only pursuing and shooting the birds, but also skinning, preserving, and in some cases mounting the animals each day. This represented no small amount of labor, and was usually carried out in the evenings after

⁵⁰ Titian Ramsay Peale, *Circular of the Philadelphia Museum: Containing Directions for the Preparation and Preservation of Objects of Natural History* (Philadelphia: James Kay, Jun. and Co, 1834), 14-15.

⁵¹ Charles Willson Peale, Diary August 21-September 19, 1793. Reprinted in Reprinted in Miller et al., 1988, Vol. 2, Part 1, 63.

returning to their lodgings. In his “Directions for Preserving Birds &C.” Peale gives an idea of the type of work involved:

Those birds which are large may be skinned in the following manner, Vizt. Open with a sharp pen knife from the Vent [anus] to the breast and seperating the skin on each side until the thighs may be drawn through the skin and cut off at the Joint of the leggs, do the same with Wings to the pinion part of the Wing draw out all the flesh you can get out with the hooked Wire herewith sent, then draw the neck through the Skin until you can cut of the neck close to the skull, and cuting of the Body at the Tail, having thus the Skin seperated from the Body hook out all the Brains through the Back part [of] the Skull where the neck was cut off.⁵²

This was visceral, bloody, and even gruesome work that was not carried out at a rifle shot’s distance from the animal, but in direct physical contact. For Peale though, this intimate knowledge of the animal’s anatomy would become essential to the process of re-embodying and presenting it in the museum context.

Following the skinning, and dressing of the animal, Peale would set about preserving the skin and other organic material such as beaks, skulls, and legs, usually as soon as possible after the animal’s death, before putrefaction set in. The problem of how to properly protect animal specimens from decay and insect damage had plagued practitioners of natural history since at least the Renaissance.⁵³ While immersing specimens in spirits was perhaps the most effective preservative method widely used prior to Peale’s time, this technique left much to be desired from a display stand point, since animals submerged in liquid must be viewed through glass canisters and could hardly be presented in any lifelike manner. After much experimentation, including an unsuccessful attempt to preserve Benjamin Franklin’s recently deceased cat, Peale announced to the public in 1792 that he had finally devised a solution to what he saw as the

⁵² Charles Willson Peale, “Directions for Preserving Birds &c.” Reprinted in Miller et al., 1988, Vol. 1, 488.

⁵³ For a history of early preservation methods see Robert McCracken Peck, “Preserving Nature for Study and Display” in *Stuffing Birds, Pressing Plants, Shaping Knowledge*, Sue Ann Prince, ed. (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2003), 11-26.

fundamental challenge to natural history. Peale declared that his process not only protected animal matter from insects and decay, but also “has a very favourable appearance in practice, and far surpasses all others that have come to his knowledge.”⁵⁴

The key to Peale’s method was his use of arsenic, which he dissolved in hot water. He then immersed the animal skins in this solution, and let them fully dry. Peale described his process in a letter to Thomas Jefferson, who had written for advice on how to preserve his furs:

When I have a number of large Animals to do, I make use of large vessels and put 2 or 3 ℥s. of arsenic into hot water, and completely wet all the furs & skins—but for a few or smaller subjects, I have a large Earthen Crock into which I put a half ℥, more or less, of Arsenic, and then a Tea kettle of boiling water may be sufficient to wet a considerable number of small subjects—this may be done with a Mop, if the articles are too large to be dipped into the water. Hot water not only obtains a greater proportion of the arsenic, but also will penetrate the natural greases of Skins fur or feathers.⁵⁵

A highly toxic poison, arsenic prevented insect infestation as well as the growth of organisms such as molds and bacteria which facilitated decay. Many previous natural historians had attempted methods of preserving solutions and Peale consulted numerous treatises written by European scientists on the matter.⁵⁶ Although several 18th-century naturalists including the French apothecary Jean Baptiste Bécœur and the German naturalist Johann Reinhold Forster had also developed arsenic treatments, Peale most likely arrived at his solution through his own calculations and rigorous experimentation. Certainly Peale was the first to achieve widespread success with the arsenic method of preservation and became its most vocal proponent. Aside from his public declarations of his successes, Peale wrote to many fellow naturalists and intellectuals in America and Europe to share the intricacies of his method, with the aim of

⁵⁴ Charles Willson Peale, “To the Citizens of the United States of America,” *Dunlap’s American Daily Advertiser* (January 13, 1792) Reprinted in Miller et al., 1988, Vol. 2, Part 1, 9.

⁵⁵ Charles Willson Peale to Thomas Jefferson, January 30, 1806. Reprinted in Miller et al., 1988, Vol. 2, Part 2, 929.

⁵⁶ For a full accounting of various 18th century methods of taxidermy see Paul Lawrence Farber, “The Development of Taxidermy and the History of Ornithology,” *Isis* 68 no. 4 (December 1977), 550-566

instigating a vast worldwide repository of preserved specimens. Peale believed so strongly in the merits of his technique that he hoped it could be employed to preserve human bodies, and even attempted to procure the corpse of a child who had died in New York for such purposes.⁵⁷

The preservation of lifelike animal specimens through taxidermy was not merely a practical problem for Peale, but the method he devised was essential to his vision for the representation of nature. As he explained in a broadside, “I have however the fullest confidence that I know the means of preserving them in their almost perfect forms....The giving the proper attitudes (as well as the form) in order to shew their manners and dispositions, I consider as essential to give a tolerable knowledge of the animal. Mere stuffed skins are but a poor resemblance.”⁵⁸ The arsenic treatment did little to dull or diminish the appearance of the skins, fur, or feathers, allowing the surface of his specimens to be as close as possible to the animal’s appearance in nature. Equally importantly, the skins remained extremely pliable, allowing Peale to form them in the manner or pose of his choosing. Whereas previous practitioners of natural history employed simple wooden frames or stuffing such as straw to give shape to their animal specimens, Peale devised an innovative and complex wooden structure for his specimens, allowing him to achieve an even greater degree of verisimilitude. In an unpublished manuscript “A Walk through the Philadelphia Museum,” which was intended as a narrative guide to the premises, Peale boasted of his success at creating lifelike specimens: “The Proprietor has invented a mode of mounting them which I believe was never practiced before....The limbs of these have been carved in wood; closely immitating the form after the skins had been taken off;

⁵⁷ In prevailing upon the church where the child was interred Peale wrote: “The preservation of human bodies has for many years engaged the thoughts of some of my leisure hours, & I have devised various means to effect it, some more perfectly than others as well as more or less expensive” Charles Willson Peale to Rufus King, Moses Rogers, and Anthony L. Bleecker, March 13, 1806. Reprinted in Miller et al., 1988, Vol. 2, Part 2, 946.

⁵⁸ Charles Willson Peale, Broadside, “My design in forming this Museum,” 1792. Reprinted in Miller et al., 1988 Vol 2 Part 1, 15.

giving a will to the mussels proportionate to their action; so that in fact they are statues of the animals with real skin to cover them—a stupendous labour!”⁵⁹ In addition to a guide to the museum, Peale also produced an admission ticket for those who purchased entry. (Figure 1.10) The inscription promised that the visitor would be dazzled by “the Wonderful works of NATURE and Curious works of ART.” However, as Peale makes clear in the museum guide, there was often little distinction between the two categories, as nature was enlivened by artifice and art sought to faithfully recreate a vision of nature.

Peale’s extensive efforts to kill, mount, and present animals in a highly lifelike manner, were all undertaken in service of his vision to recreate a “world in miniature.”⁶⁰ Peale’s encyclopedic ambitions for his museum aligned him closely with Enlightenment ideals of classification and order which governed the natural sciences. In his “Design in forming this museum” a broadside published to encourage support from prominent patrons, Peale laid out the broad organizational structure of the natural history museum, which was divided into the following classes: humans (primates), quadrupeds, birds, amphibians, fishes, insects, and worms.⁶¹ Peale’s classifications were derived from those worked out by the Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus earlier in the eighteenth century. This system of organization reached its fullest expression after Peale moved the museum into the Pennsylvania Statehouse in 1802. (Figure 1.11) There the collection was divided into seven separate rooms, a lobby, quadruped room, marine room, mammoth room, model room, antique room and the long room. Two years after the museum opened in its new location, Peale published a “Guide to the Philadelphia Museum,” which offered readers a detailed account of the museum’s contents, but also reveals the depth of

⁵⁹ Charles Willson Peale, “A Walk through the Philadelphia Museum” unpublished manuscript, 1805. *Collected Papers of Charles Willson Peale and Family*. Series II-D.

⁶⁰ See Brigham, *Public Culture and the Early Republic*, 171, n. 1.

⁶¹ Charles Willson Peale, Broadside, “my design in forming this Museum,” 1792.

the organizational structures at work therein. Of the quadruped room, the Peale reported there were 190 specimens “placed in their natural attitudes.” He goes on to describe in some detail the classification structure of these specimens:

Those of the larger kinds, with their names in gilt frames, are placed on pedestals behind wire-netting, the smaller quadrupeds are in glass cases on the opposite side of the room, with numbers which refer to corresponding ones in frames over them, stating the *genera* to which they belong, and their specific names in Latin, English, and French. The Linnaean classification is generally adopted throughout the animal department.⁶²

Charles Willson Peale and Titian Ramsay Peale’s watercolor drawing of *The Long Room* depicts a similar degree of organization and hierarchy employed in the museum’s display of bird specimens and human portraits. (Figure 1.12) The collection of portraits of notable persons included political leaders, scientists, and other notables, each painted by Peale or his son Rembrandt. Placed around the top of the gallery, these visages represent the primacy of humans (and more specifically elite white males) in the natural order. Below these, the topmost register of glass cases contains raptors and birds of prey, signaling their advantageous position among feathered species. The rows of cases, containing upwards of 760 birds, continued downward according to the animals’ purported position in the natural order, with waterfowl occupying the lowest levels.

Both humans and animals were incorporated into the same hierarchical scheme but the medium of representation remained fundamentally different. While human likenesses were rendered in two dimensional oil portraits, animals’ actual bodies were presented to the public. Though Peale did seek to preserve human bodies for display, these were never incorporated into the museum, perhaps in part due to squeamishness about subverting funerary traditions. However the eagerness with which Peale pursued portraits of dignitaries for the museum indicates that oil-

⁶² Charles Willson Peale, “Guide to the Philadelphia Museum,” 1804. Reprinted in Miller et al., Vol 2 Part 2, 761.

portraiture remained the preferred means of conveying the character of human sitters. For animal subjects however, Peale insisted that a study of the real thing was essential to understanding the essence of the creature. As the museum admission ticket (Figure 1.10) promised the visitor “The Birds & Beasts will teach thee,” (referencing a passage from the Book of Job), meaning quite literally in this case that the animal matter would reveal natural truths. Peale argued that viewing animal specimens directed visitors to “contemplations on the subjects themselves, and to induce a taste for more minute investigation: But it is from this investigation only that they will be enabled to reap the advantages of the science, and such advantages as books alone do not always bestow.”⁶³ Though not always readily apparent in the visible structures of the museum, the acquisition of specimens by hunting was nevertheless deeply ingrained in its entire conception through Peale’s emphasis on studying the actual bodies of animals.

Like many Enlightenment scientists, Peale’s natural worldview conformed to a theologically derived model, eventually known as the Great Chain of Being, which proposed that all of natural creation coexisted in a divinely ordered state.⁶⁴ With roots in Greek philosophy as well as Renaissance humanism, this concept had gained widespread acceptance by the eighteenth century and dominated scientific discourse. Although recent scholars have argued that some scientists such as the Philadelphia naturalist William Bartram challenged the tenets of the Great Chain of Being, it remained the period’s dominant theory of scientific order and the one to which Peale turned to in forming his museum.⁶⁵ In one of his lectures on natural history Peale declared, “But it is only by order and system that a general view may be had of so extensive a subject [as

⁶³ Charles Willson Peale “Lecture on Natural History” May 17, 1823. Reprinted in Miller et al, Vol. 4, 257.

⁶⁴ See Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936).

⁶⁵ See for example Laurel Ode-Schneider “The Dignity of Human Nature: William Bartram and the Great Chain of Being” in *William Bartram: The Search for Nature’s Design* Thomas Hallock and Nancy E. Hoffmann eds. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, , 2010), 340-346.

nature], and that the great book of nature may be opened and studied, leaf by leaf, and a knowledge gained of the character which the great Creator has stamped on each being—without this, our desire would very soon be arrested by confusion and perplexity.”⁶⁶ Accordingly the museum served as a kind of text through which the careful student might learn the structure established through divine creation. Peale’s statements are echoed by the rigid hierarchy of exhibits seen in the watercolor drawing of *The Long Room*, but were also inherent to the very act of forming the museum itself. In his role as museum-keeper Peale occupied a privileged, omnipotent position in which he was ordained with the task of collecting and presenting the physical matter of nature, in order to reveal the hidden hand of the creator embedded therein.

In addition to his work in the museum, Peale also explored similar themes of divine creation in painting, notably in his copy of *Noah and His Ark* after the British-born painter Charles Catton, Jr. (Figure 1.13) Peale created the replica for display in his museum in 1819, and although it is a copy after an original, it still reveals a great deal about Peale’s theological and scientific perspectives. Peale greatly admired Catton’s painting, and spent seven weeks diligently working on his copy. In asking permission to copy the painting, Peale called the work, “a museum in itself” and indeed each animal is rendered in a highly naturalistic and accurate manner, appropriate to Peale’s exacting scientific standards.⁶⁷ In the composition, Noah appears surrounded by the animals he has carefully compiled, and bathed in the light of God emanating from the heavens. As art historian David Brigham has identified, a similar light radiates from the book of nature in the museum’s admissions ticket, equating the light of God with the divine truths of nature. Similar allusions to Peale’s connections to Noah can be seen in the way Peale

⁶⁶ Charles Willson Peale “Introduction to a Course of Lectures on Natural History Delivered in the University of Pennsylvania, November 16, 1799” Reprinted in Miller et al., Vol. 2 Part 1, 268.

⁶⁷ Charles Willson Peale to Col. George Bomford May 1, 1819. Reprinted in Miller et al., Vol. 3, 716.

rendered Noah's family members depicted in the background who assist in the task of gathering the animals, much as Peale's own sons participated in the work of the museum.⁶⁸

While Peale clearly associated his own museum project with Noah's divinely inspired mission, Noah's benevolence in gathering the animals contrasted sharply with Peale's own collecting, which required killing wild animals on a vast scale. As evident in the Peales' depiction of *The Long Room*, the rigid structure and scientific objectivity achieved through the hierarchical ordering of specimens did much to efface the violence inherent to Peale's museum processes. Frozen in lifelike poses, Peale's specimens very closely resembled living animals. However, they appear excised of their wildness, displayed as willing captives subsumed by the museum's taxonomic system. Although it appeared benign, the system of display actually propelled further violence, as any missing species in the museum called attention to animals' free existence outside the neatly ordered world contained therein. Such an orderly system demanded a complete record of natural creation, fueling Peale's insatiable appetite for specimens. Late in life in his autobiography, written in the third person, Peale described an experience of stumbling upon an unspoiled forest during a hunting trip which caused him to "reflect on the wast he had made of the feathered tribe, in order to furnish his Museum. However he frequently spared those he believed he did not want to preserve and mount. Yet he has found it absolutely necessary to kill what appeared doubtfull, by which measure he has frequently got those that were before intirely new to him."⁶⁹ According to Peale the collecting mandate of his scientific enterprise not only absolved him of any guilt for killing other creatures, but indeed bestowed upon him the power to determine which animals should live or die.

⁶⁸ Brigham 1995, 44.

⁶⁹ Charles Willson Peale, *The Autobiography of Charles Willson Peale* Reprinted in Miller et al., Vol. 5, 245-6.

Although Peale purported to simply present nature and its inherent order as evidence of the comprehensiveness of divine creation, his method of presentation relied upon many layers artistic and creative intervention on the part of the naturalist. *The Long Room* depicts several of Peale's innovations in museum design and presentation including gallery seating and gas lighting. Most importantly though, the glass cases nearest to the foreground reveal the means by which Peale enlivened his displays by placing the animals in microhabitats consisting of painted backgrounds as well as earth, stones, and foliage appropriate to the animal's natural environment. This practice differed drastically from traditional European natural history cabinets, in which animals were usually presented with no environmental context. Through the use of dramatic poses and objects from the animals' wild habitats, Peale was able to construct more complex narratives about animal behavior and character that could not be conveyed solely through observation of the animals' lifeless bodies. Peale's activities as a hunter were essential to this aspect of the museum display since his exploits in the field afforded him an opportunity to observe the animals in the wild and gain a deeper understanding of their movements and habits. While scant record of the individual cases exists, the overall organization of the museum suggests narratives of association among similar species, and predators' domination over lesser species. This hierarchical narrative encouraged visitors to place themselves at the pinnacle of natural creation, thereby reinforcing a worldview in which nature existed under the dominion of man.

The experience of observing animals through hunting also corresponded with Peale's work as an artist, a vocation which required the creative translation of close, natural observation into plastic representation through abstract forms. In his *Discourses* Joshua Reynolds declared that the master artist "examin[es] the Art itself by the standard of Nature, he corrects what is

erroneous, supplies what is scanty, and adds by his own observation what the industry of his predecessors may have yet left wanting to perfection.”⁷⁰ Peale’s work as a taxidermist epitomized Reynold’s ideal, offering a simulacrum of nature in which the artist enhanced the animal subjects through their posed mount as well as the hierarchical organization, in order to reveal larger embedded truths about nature. Although the overall organization of the museum exhibits proposed a distinction between objects of nature, and works of human manufacture, the animal specimens displayed there were not purely fruits of nature, but rather a synthesis of natural matter and artistic creation. Peale himself seemed to recognize the complex interplay of art and nature at work in the museum declaring, “The mussels of ... many of these quadrupeds are so well [presented] that Painters might take them for models.”⁷¹

The juxtaposition of natural and artistic creation forms a major theme of Peale’s grandiose self-portrait, *The Artist in his Museum* (Figure 1.7).⁷² Situated in the Long Room of the museum, Peale confronts the viewer with the fruits of his life’s work, asserting his singular role in realizing such an ambitious scientific and artistic vision. The museum exhibits which recede into the background—including the array of portraits, the glass bird cases, and the imposing mastodon skeleton—attest to his many accomplishments over a long career. That Peale only reveals a glimpse of these indicates that these exhibits were so well-known and famously associated with him that he need only visually hint at their presence. In the foreground however, Peale has surrounded himself with several distinct objects which serve as emblems of the

⁷⁰ Joshua Reynolds *Discourses on Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 27.

⁷¹ Charles Willson Peale, “A Walk through the Philadelphia Museum”

⁷² One of the most commented upon paintings in the history of American art, my discussion of this work is most engaged with Roger B. Stein, “Charles Willson Peale’s Expressive Design: The Artist in His Museum,” *New Perspectives on Charles Willson Peale*, Lillian Miller, ed. (University of Pittsburg Press, 1990); Laura Rigal “Peale’s Mammoth,” *American Iconology*, David C. Miller ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 18-38.; and David R. Brigham, “Ask the Beasts and They Shall Teach Thee: The Human Lessons of Charles Willson Peale’s Natural History Displays.”

primary roles he played throughout his career as artist and naturalist. To the right a loaded palette and brush serve as an unmistakable symbol of Peale's work as a painter. These are joined by a group of mastodon bones, signaling Peale's commitment to the exploration and representation of natural truth and the lengths he undertook in its pursuit. In her analysis of the painting Laura Rigal highlights visual pun between the leg bone of the mastodon in the foreground and Peale's own thigh, alluding to his own foundational role in the study of natural sciences, and arguing that Peale thus presents himself as the museum's premiere specimen, the ideal man.⁷³ While not discounting this argument, the leg bone of the mastodon also can be seen occupying a position as surrogate leg for the table on which the palette rests, in which case the visual joke relates more to the way in which a thorough understanding of nature supports the arts.

In addition to the palette and mastodon bones, a limp turkey and taxidermy tools, appear prominently alongside Peale in the foreground. The painting's composition focuses attention on the bird by situating it at the forefront of a vast expanse of space, which recedes according to the painting's extreme perspectival system, accentuated by the grid of the exhibit cases. The wilting pose of the lifeless turkey (likely a specimen Titian had brought back from the Long Expedition in 1819) contrasts markedly with the robust animals displayed in the cases, which have been reanimated by Peale. The juxtaposition highlights Peale's skill as a taxidermist, but also ascribes even higher, divine powers to the artist. As Roger Stein has argued, the turkey and instruments present a traditional still life subject, but one which Peale promises to reinvigorate through his innovative method of preservation and presentation. The power of the artist to overcome inert matter through skillful representation, was a well-established trope during Peale's day, and well into the nineteenth century, perhaps best epitomized by George Washington's infamous

⁷³ Rigal, 1993, 34.

encounter with Peale's trompe l'oeil *Staircase Group* (*Portrait of Raphaelle Peale and Titian Ramsay Peale I*) in which the president was said to have tipped his hat to the painted images of Peale's sons.⁷⁴ (Figure 1.14) In attempting to animate nature itself, Peale blurred the lines between artist and creator. As the Philadelphia author Charles Christopher Reiche declared in a 1791 treatise on natural history, God is "the only painter of all the innumerable, and highly finished pictures in nature."⁷⁵ Peale however presented himself if not as a painter, certainly as a sculptor of animals, on par with the skill of the divine creator. Moreover, his unrivaled authority within the setting of the museum echoes that of the divine creator, as both could claim responsibility for shaping the material of nature, though Peale lacked the ability to breathe life into his creations. While the omnipotent God created life and established the structures of nature, it is Peale who uncovers nature's meaning and recreated its outward appearances for the edification of mankind.

The dead turkey offers the painting's only allusion to Peale's considerable activities as a hunter. Peale did not depict any guns or hunting equipment that might point to his work in the field to kill and collect the many specimens on display. From a scientific standpoint it seems puzzling that Peale might not record and even celebrate the means by which he accumulated his vast collection. However, such an omission makes considerably more sense in the context of Peale's artistic objectives. Peale's acumen in transforming the raw material of the dead turkey into a highly lifelike double, arrested forever in his museum seemed an almost impossible feat. However, the thrill of such an illusion would be tempered by calling attention to the fact that Peale had not created life, but instead transformed living beasts, first to inert matter, and then

⁷⁴ See Wendy Bellion, "Illusion and Allusion: Charles Willson Peale's 'Staircase Group' at the Columbianum Exhibition," *American Art* vol. 17, no. 2 (Summer, 2003), 18-39

⁷⁵ Charles Christopher Reiche, *Fifteen Discourses on the Marvellous Works in Nature Delivered by a Father to his Children*. (Philadelphia: James and Johnson, 1791), 91.

into a highly convincing forgery of the original. For all Peale's divine aspirations, his "almost perfect forms" could never achieve the innate beauty and organizational complexity of natural creation. So while the act of hunting is downplayed in Peale's most monumental depiction of his museum, it nevertheless serves as the key foundation for all the ambitions and accomplishments represented therein.

While *The Artist in His Museum* is often rightly considered to be Peale's ultimate statement on his natural philosophy and achievements in the field of natural history, in one of his final *Lectures on Natural History* Peale captured a humbler vision of the life of a naturalist:

If we should ask ourselves this question, *?for what purpose have we been placed here?—* The Naturalist would answer, to fulfill every duty to our associates, exercising all our powers to promote *love* and *harmony* with those, to whom we are connected in domestic life; to sustain the salutary measures of civil government, designed to protect our lives, liberty and property.—to use the *creatures* permitted for our service, with a *tender regard to their comforts* consistent with humanity; and to consider them, as the whole creation is, a manifestation of the *wisdom and goodness made by the being to whom adoration is our first duty*.⁷⁶

While the fact that Peale took to hunting so enthusiastically as part of his scientific and artistic practice might be considered unusual for a man of his position during this period, it is unsurprising how seamlessly he integrated the pursuit into his work as a museum keeper. As he formulated his scientific vision late in the eighteenth-century, fidelity to nature increasingly became his utmost concern. That he should turn to the nature itself as his primary medium was an innovative approach and one which required him to adapt and invent methods of preservation and presentation to suit these goals. Hunting then served as both a prerequisite and catalyst for his method of exhibiting nature, providing the raw materials for its display and refining his conception of the natural world.

⁷⁶ Charles Willson Peale, "Lecture on Natural History" May 17, 1823. Reprinted in Miller et al., 1988. 270-1.

Peale's Museum and the multilayered elaboration of the natural order contained therein were not created within a vacuum of scientific objectivity, but rather flourished among the physical and intellectual environment of late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Philadelphia. As such Peale's museum both reflected and actively participated in the nation's efforts to establish and mature the new republic. Many leading Enlightenment thinkers held that the sciences operated outside the realm of political machinery, and that the "republic of letters"—a broad international fraternity of scholars—offered a purer model for social and political organization based on rational inquiry and free exchange of ideas.⁷⁷ Beyond the natural sciences' potential to provide institutional models of political formation, natural history also suggested natural structures along which society might be organized and Peale particularly adhered to belief that the hierarchies established within his re-creation of the animal kingdom had important ramifications for human society. The most visible manifestation of this belief could be seen in the display of human portraits that ringed the upper register of the specimen exhibits in the Long Room. (Figure 1.12) By incorporating human luminaries—exclusively white, male, and for the most part wealthy individuals—at the top of the natural order, Peale naturalized the political ascendancy of those individuals and their class to the top of the social order of the new republic. Other humans, including Native Americans and indigenous people from throughout the world, were represented in the museum not in oil paintings, but as wax figures (representing types rather than individuals) and through artifacts and objects of manufacture, in a manner that today might be considered vaguely anthropological. As a unified whole, the "natural" order that Peale carefully reconstructed within the confines of his museum (based first and foremost upon his penultimate position as the hunter who collected the

⁷⁷ See Looby, "The Constitution of Nature: Taxonomy as Politics in Jefferson, Peale and Bartram," 1987, 260-1.

specimens and the artist who reanimated them) placed himself and men of his ilk at the top of the political structure. Peale's natural-social order formed an aristocracy of intellect and virtue, in which men of suitable standing rightly assumed political leadership of the republic, just as predatory animals dominated the lower registers of creatures.

Peale's museum was a new form of democratic education and amusement, uniquely suited to the ideals of the young nation and the promise of Philadelphia, its center of higher learning. Open to the public with the purchase of an admission ticket, the collections were not spirited away and closely guarded like European, aristocratic collectors' cabinets.⁷⁸ Peale continually professed a belief in the democratic value of widespread education, proclaiming in his "Memorial to the Pennsylvania Legislature": "In a country whose institutions all depend upon the virtue of the people, which in turn is secure only as they are well informed, the promotion of knowledge is the first of duties."⁷⁹ While Peale's commitment to universal knowledge motivated the establishment of his museum and its public orientation, the egalitarianism of such gestures did not extend to the vision of nature presented within. In his embrace of divinely rooted natural philosophies like the Great Chain of Being, Peale presented his exhibits not as an individual's interpretation of nature, but as markers of universal truths, governing not only the animals he killed and collected, but ultimately the humans who came to look upon them. This conceptual transformation, by which Peale sought to elucidate divinely ordained laws of nature in order to both serve as a model for the new American society and naturalize the political ascendancy of a particular class, is perhaps the museum's most important

⁷⁸ As David C. Ward and others have noted, though the museum was a public institution, the admission price meant that it was inaccessible to many including the lower classes and enslaved people. Ward, "Democratic Culture: The Peale Museums, 1784-1850," 267-8.

⁷⁹ Charles Willson Peale, "Memorial to the Pennsylvania Legislature" December 26, 1795. Reprinted in Miller et al., Vol. 2 part 1, 1988, 137.

legacy, fostering within the nation's citizens a sense of propriety over nature (as well as other humans) that allowed for both movement westward and the ever greater exploitation of the nation's natural resources.

John James Audubon

After several months spent in Great Britain working to secure subscribers and arrange engravers for his monumental publication *The Birds of America*, John James Audubon faced a crisis of representation of a highly personal nature. He had spent the fall and winter of 1826-27 successfully infiltrating Edinburgh's scientific establishment and high society, and in March 1827 he prepared to travel to London in order to pursue new contacts and subscribers. However before departing he received a note from his close friend and patron Captain Basil Hall, imploring Audubon to cut his unusually long hair in order to make a better impression on London society. The request might have surprised Audubon as his rugged appearance and unconventional fashion had to that point served him quite well by attracting the curious attention of well-placed friends and seemingly confirming his credentials as an authentic hunter-naturalist. Indeed it was this persona that Audubon played up four months earlier when he sat for a portrait at the home of the Scottish painter John Syme. (Figure 1.15) On the advice of his friend the Scottish engraver William Home Lizars, Audubon donned his signature wolf-skin coat for the portrait and was pictured with a hunting rifle held closely across his chest.⁸⁰ His untamed locks and keen expression contribute to the impression of refined wildness that had ingratiated him so well into Scottish society. Despite Audubon's careful cultivation of his identity as a rugged dilettante he reluctantly agreed to have his hair shorn, recording the incident with typical flourish

⁸⁰ John James Audubon, Journal November 27, 1826. Maria R. Audubon, ed. *Audubon and his Journals* Vol. 1 (New York: Scribner and Sons, 1897), 165.

in his diary: “This day my hair was sacrificed, and the will of God usurped by the wishes of man.”⁸¹

Although this episode might at first seem merely a minor example of the artist’s vanity, Audubon worked continuously to craft an identity based on his prowess as a hunter and familiarity with the wilds of North America. Unlike Peale who downplayed his role as a hunter and portrayed himself as a republican gentleman of science, Audubon usually appeared in portraits with rifle in hand, looking more like a frontiersman than an urban dweller. Audubon also emphasized his hunting skills and direct knowledge of nature in his writings and lectures and others’ accounts of his work frequently featured details of his wild exploits and rugged qualifications. This self-image conveyed an artistic and scientific authority on Audubon, which in turn helped to reinforce his art’s claims upon a true representation of nature. By accentuating his work as a hunter, the artist substantiated his first-hand knowledge of his subjects gained through direct observation, the primary investigative tool of early nineteenth-century science. However, Audubon’s presentation of himself as a hunter was not merely empty posturing but a reflection of many years’ experience pursuing animals throughout the American wilderness. Unlike Peale who embodied the Revolutionary generation’s ideal of a republican gentleman, Audubon was born outside the United States and had to more self-consciously shape his identity. Audubon turned to backwoods hunting as a means of connecting with a pursuit and persona that was becoming increasingly singled out in the early decades of the nineteenth century as distinctly American. Moreover, hunting had become an integral part of his art-making process and essential to his overall formulation of the natural world as it appeared in *The Birds of America*. Rather than trying to recreate a world in miniature, in which nature was defined by species’ fixed

⁸¹ John James Audubon, Journal March 19, 1827. M. R. Audubon, 221.

roles, the vision of the natural world that Audubon presented in his work was relational and dynamic. Audubon's art offered not a static replication of divinely ordered nature, but rather an index of a natural system in which the hunter-artist occupied the privileged position of observer, recorder and revelator.

According to Audubon and his many biographers, hunting was a constant facet of his life from an early age. Accounts of his childhood adapted the biographical trope of precocious artistic talent into a youthful curiosity about the natural world and accompanying skill at acquiring specimens. In her biography based on her husband's journals, Lucy Bakewell Audubon described a liberal education which "allowed him [time] for indulging in nest-hunting propensities."⁸² Although these early hunting trips were made without a rifle, Audubon still managed to collect an array of specimens including "birds' nests, birds' eggs, specimens of moss, curious stones, and other objects attractive to his eye."⁸³ As a young man overseeing his father's estate, Mill Grove, outside Philadelphia Audubon continued to pursue hunting as an amateur and man of leisure, writing that "hunting, fishing, drawing, and music occupied my every moment."⁸⁴ It was there that Audubon became acquainted with William Bakewell, whose daughter Lucy he later married, through their mutual interest in shooting. When Audubon set out on a series of business ventures throughout the frontier regions of Kentucky hunting occupied a great deal of his time. According to Lucy Audubon these pursuits offered an abundant source of sustenance for the Audubons: "Wild turkeys, deer, and bears supplied constant wants, after a fashion that suited the hunter well."⁸⁵

⁸² Lucy Bakewell Audubon, ed. *The Life of John James Audubon, The Naturalist* (New York: G.P. Putnam and Sons, 1873) Reprint, 1993, 14.

⁸³ Lucy Bakewell Audubon, ed. *The Life of John James Audubon, The Naturalist*, 14.

⁸⁴ Maria R. Audubon, ed. *Audubon and his Journals* Vol. 1, 17.

⁸⁵ ⁸⁵ Lucy Bakewell Audubon, ed., 59.

While much of his early life was spent hunting recreationally or for sustenance, Audubon always asserted that these exploits were driven by a deep interest in the study of natural history and the representation of animal subjects. Although it is often difficult to separate fact, embellishment, and fiction in Audubon's accounts of his early life (and the subsequent biographies which draw closely upon them), the degree to which he emphasizes his constant affinity and aptitude as a hunter from an early age indicates the central role that these activities played in the formulation of his identity. Audubon explained that his utmost motivation was "an innate desire to acquire a thorough knowledge of the birds of [America]."⁸⁶ His activities as a hunter proceeded as a natural outgrowth of this deeply ingrained compulsion to explore, interrogate, and represent the natural world. However, Audubon's assertion of his hunting experience and prowess also offered a means of bolstering his authority as a naturalist in a field which was becoming increasingly disciplined and regulated.

Audubon's earliest efforts at natural history illustration grew out of his early experiences of direct observation of subjects through hunting and wilderness excursions.⁸⁷ Only a single drawing executed prior to Audubon's 1803 departure to America is known to exist, which depicts a European Goldfinch rendered in graphite and pastel against a large white sheet. (Figure 1.16) The bird displays Audubon's characteristic interest in naturalistic detail, with individual feathers precisely delineated and the colors vibrantly recorded. Audubon later explained that his early drawings captured birds "*strickly ornithologically*, which means neither more or less than in Stiff unmeaning profiles, such as are found in all works published since the begaining of the

⁸⁶ John James Audubon, "Account of the Method of Drawing Birds Employed by J.J. Audubon, Esq. F.R.S.E, In a Letter to a Friend" [1828] in *John James Audubon Writings and Drawings*, Christoph Irmscher ed., (New York: The Library of America, 1999), 753.

⁸⁷ For an overview of Audubon's early work see Richard Rhodes, *Audubon: Early Drawings* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008) and Roberta J.M. Olson "Audubon's Innovations and the Traditions of Ornithological Illustration" in *Audubon's Aviary: The Original Watercolors for The Birds of America* (New York: New York Historical Society and Skira Rizzoli, 2012)

present century.”⁸⁸ Despite the formal simplicity of the drawing, Audubon managed to establish the goldfinch’s presence in space as well as a sense of habitat through the depiction of a section of branch which recedes away from the picture plane, providing a plausible perch for the bird. Audubon bolstered his own first-hand observations by referencing the most established ornithological authorities of the day, the French naturalist Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte du Buffon and the English ornithologist Francis Willughby, in the drawing’s inscriptions.

While in most of his early drawings Audubon rendered the animals as if still alive, he also produced several studies in which the birds are shown clearly dead, hanging by a string. (Figure 1.17) These works, which often captured the lifeless birds with wings splayed as in *Yellow-billed Cuckoo*, allowed Audubon to explore in greater detail the birds’ anatomies by showing off aspects of their physiology and plumage that would be obscured in a standard format profile view. (Figure 1.18) These drawings also reveal Audubon’s familiarity with well-worn still life traditions in European art, engaging a common motif that appeared in the works of a wide range of artists since the Renaissance. (Figures 1.19, 1.20) Throughout his life Audubon claimed to have studied under Jacques Louis David and although this was almost certainly an exaggeration, his wide ranging education included a close study of European masters. Despite their high art connotations, Audubon quickly became dissatisfied with this style of depicting specimens, writing later “in this Manner I made some pretty fair sign Boards for Poulterers!”⁸⁹ The abject lifelessness of these birds was wholly unsuited to Audubon’s fledgling artistic vision which grew out of the artist’s strong interest in direct observation of live specimens in the field.

⁸⁸ John James Audubon, “My Style of Drawing Birds” in *John James Audubon Writings and Drawings*, Christoph Irmscher ed., (New York: The Library of America, 1999), 759.

⁸⁹ Audubon, “My Style of Drawing Birds” in *John James Audubon Writings and Drawings*, 759.

Audubon finally arrived at a major breakthrough in his methods while managing his father's estate at Mill Grove. He had explored a variety of techniques for his models such as wood cork mannequins and birds suspended in natural attitudes with string, but each of these resulted in drawings that appeared too "dead" for the artist's liking.⁹⁰ After many such frustrations, inspiration struck Audubon suddenly upon waking early one morning. Energized by his potential discovery, the artist rode frantically into the nearby village of Norristown, where he acquired a set of thick wires of varying sizes. After purchasing the wire, his frenzied excursion continued:

Off to the Creek and down with the first Kings Fisher I met! I picked up the bird and carried it home by the bill, I sent for the Miller and made him fetch me a piece of soft board,—when he returned he found me filing into Sharp points pieces of my Wire, and proud to Show him the substance of my discovery... I pierced the body of the Fishing bird and fixed it on the board—another Wire passed above his upper Mandible was made to hold the head in a pretty fair attitude, Smaller Skewers fixed the feet according to my notions, and even common pins came to my assistance in placing the legs and feet—the last Wire proved a delightful elevator to the Bird's tail and at Last there Stood before me the real Mankin of a Kings Fisher!⁹¹

Audubon's novel method of modelling his specimens allowed him to take fresh animal corpses and animate them into lifelike poses. Presented against a flat, neutral background, these specimens finally achieved the balance of exact detail necessary for scientific comparison and expressive naturalism which had eluded Audubon. In Audubon's recounting, his spark of artistic discovery is presented as a moment of inspired genius. Rather than a vision of miraculous creation however, the method he devised was predicated upon first pursuing and killing a living bird. Although he further refined his technique, this basic method served as the foundation for Audubon's art for the rest of his career, including each of the plates in *The Birds of America*.

⁹⁰ Audubon, "My Style of Drawing Birds" in *John James Audubon Writings and Drawings*, 760.

⁹¹ Audubon, "My Style of Drawing Birds" in *John James Audubon Writings and Drawings*, 761.

Since freshly killed specimens were essential to this process, hunting henceforth became inextricably tied to Audubon's art.

Audubon's method of mounting models allowed him a great deal of flexibility in the manner and attitude of his subjects. On the one hand drawings like his *Wood Thrush*, executed in 1806 after a specimen shot around Mill Grove, follow many of the established conventions of natural history illustration. (Figure 1.21) The bird is shown in stark profile, accentuating its shape and pattern of the plumage and allowing for easy comparison between other individuals and species. In addition to using his "position board" to which he affixed specimens, Audubon employed the well-established practice of squaring his drawings, allowing for a simple and direct transfer of his subject to paper.⁹² Rather than depicting the bird as a posed, dead specimen, it is shown convincingly perched with one leg almost fully extended and the other tucked into the body and barely visible. In the fully developed plate for *The Birds of America* Audubon accentuates this initial pose by depicting the male with its wing slightly more splayed and head tilted back as if making a call. (Figure 1.22) This combination of strict biological accuracy and a romantic sense of the animal's innate being, already evident in these early drawings, would become the basis for nearly all of Audubon's work that followed.

In other drawings such as *Le Commandeur—Red Winged Starling* Audubon more fully exploited the unique attributes of his method to capture birds in more animated poses. (Figure 1.23) The artist still adheres closely to some of the conventions of natural history illustration with the bird occupying a single plane of space, parallel to the picture plane, allowing a clear identification of the species. However, Audubon's method of posing the animal through wires allows for a more sophisticated and sympathetic expression of the bird's character and

⁹² See Marjorie Shelley "Drawing Birds: Audubon's Artistic Practices" in *Audubon's Aviary*, 109-131 for a detailed explanation of Audubon's processes.

mannerisms. In the drawing created for *The Birds of America* Audubon creates an even more complex composition through the juxtaposition of several birds in a variety of poses. (Figure 1.24) The male Red-Winged Starling from the original drawing reappears in nearly the exact same pose, but shown in flight rather than perched on a branch. This drawing and the resultant plate in *Birds of America* is closely related to Alexander Wilson's rendition of the same species in *American Ornithology*. (Figure 1.25) Audubon may have intended his version of the mature male as a critique of the flatness and woodenness of Wilson's depiction.⁹³

Audubon gained a thorough understanding of the habits and appearance of his Red-winged Starling (now identified as a Red-winged Blackbird) in the same manner as nearly all of his subjects—through hunting and killing the animal in the wild. In the entry from the *Ornithological Biography*, the expansive text Audubon published to accompany *The Birds of America*, the naturalist describes in great detail the Starling's diet, habitat, mating habits, and calls. Near the conclusion of the entry he adds: "I have heard that upwards of fifty have been killed at a shot, and am the more inclined to believe such accounts that I have myself shot hundreds in the course of an afternoon, killing from ten to fifteen at every discharge."⁹⁴ The sheer abundance of wild animals was a common theme in Audubon's writing. His frequent references to vast populations of birds and other animals reflected his and many others' belief in the endless bounty of America's natural resources. The casual and matter-of-fact way in which Audubon refers to the slaughter of a multitude of birds also gives a clear picture of the forceful manner in which the artist intervened in nature and took advantage of this bounty in order to

⁹³ Olson, 76.

⁹⁴ John James Audubon, *Ornithological biography, or An account of the habits of the birds of the United States of America : accompanied by descriptions of the objects represented in the work entitled The birds of America, and interspersed with delineations of American scenery and manners*, Vol. 1. (Philadelphia, PA: Judah Dobson, 1831-1849), 350.

further the study of his subject. His experiences and qualifications as a hunter serve to reinforce the authority of the many scientific and taxonomic observations included in the text description found in the *Ornithological Biography* by equating his activities as a hunter with that of a naturalist-explorer.

Beyond supplying the raw material for his models, Audubon's exploits in the field also enhanced the authority of his visual representation of his subjects by asserting his one-on-one encounters with the animals. Like many early American scientists and intellectuals Audubon placed a great degree of faith in the superiority of first hand-observation as a discursive tool. Theories of empiricism, derived most importantly from the philosophy of John Locke, privileged sensory experience of the world as the primary means of understanding its structures. In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke considered the role of vision in conceiving the world: "The greatest assurance I can possibly have and to which my faculties can attain, is the testimony of my eyes, which are the proper and sole judges of this thing, whose testimony I have reason to rely on as so certain, that I can no more doubt, whilst I write this, that I see white and black, and that something really exists that causes that sensation in me."⁹⁵ This insistence on the primacy of vision as an investigative faculty served as one of the foundational principles of Enlightenment science, and held sway through the nineteenth century.

This cult of the visual also gave rise to a European print culture that proposed to communicate information about the physical world through the reproduction of its visual appearances.⁹⁶ Works like Ephraim Chambers *Cyclopaedia, or an Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences*, published in 1732, sought to both catalogue and disseminate all recordable

⁹⁵ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* 1690 (Edinburgh: Mundell & Son, 1801), 123.

⁹⁶ See Sam Smiles, *Eye Witness: Artists and Visual Documentation in Britain, 1770-1830* (London: Ashgate, 2000), particularly 1-46 and William Ivins, *Prints and Visual Communication* 1953 (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992).

knowledge through the combination of text and printed images.⁹⁷ (Figure 1.26) Throughout the eighteenth century, prints based upon direct visual study of objects gained increasing currency as factual records with ample claims to scientific authority. Despite the proliferation of images during the early decades of the nineteenth century, first-hand observation remained the critical component of formal learning and scientific inquiry. Audubon repeatedly expressed his belief in the importance of studying nature directly, writing in the *Ornithological Biography* entry describing the roosting habits of the Ivory-Billed Woodpecker, “Nothing short of ocular demonstration can impress any adequate idea of them.”⁹⁸ (Figure 1.27) That Audubon would point to his first hand observations in the field as a means of bolstering his scientific credibility is unsurprising since it closely aligned him with the standards of the scientific discipline. However, Audubon was unparalleled among naturalists in the degree to which he valued pursuing and killing animals in their own habitat as the most advantageous method of carrying out such observations.

As Audubon dedicated himself more seriously to *The Birds of America*, he began to hunt in a more systematic and dedicated manner. In 1820 he undertook an extensive journey along the Mississippi River spending several months shooting and drawing birds. Like Peale before him, Audubon was a highly capable hunter. In the very first day of his journal from the trip he recorded that his party had killed: “Thirty Partidges—1 Wood Cock—27 Grey Squirrels—a Barn Owl—a Young Turkey Buzard and an Autumnal Warbler.”⁹⁹ Audubon further reported that he drew an example of each of the species and even dissected the Warbler, noting that its stomach was filled with “the remains of Small Winged Insects and 3 Seeds of Some Berries, the Name of

⁹⁷ Chambers had ample seventeenth century models such as the work of William Dugdale and Wenceslaus Hollar, but his *Cyclopaedia* was distinguished by its aims at comprehensiveness.

⁹⁸ John James Audubon, *Ornithological Biography*, Vol. 4, 342.

⁹⁹ John James Audubon, “Mississippi River Journal” (October 12, 1820) in Irmscher, 1999, 3.

Which I Could not determine.”¹⁰⁰ Travelling with a young assistant, Joseph R. Mason, with whom he had become acquainted in Cincinnati, Audubon spent nearly every day of the expedition engaged in a similar routine of hunting, drawing, and scientific exploration.

While the drawings he produced were invaluable to his artistic project, the experience of observing, pursuing, and shooting animals added substantially to his knowledge of his subjects, which greatly enhanced the scientific value of the endeavor. For example on November 12, 1820 Audubon declared: “The *Imber Diver* was Shot Dead ... for Some time before I procured one of them; they Were Called *Northern Divers*, the Moment I saw this, the Size and Coloring Made Me Sure if it being an *Imber Diver*.”¹⁰¹ (Figure 1.28) In order to make such crucial observations and distinguish species from one another, Audubon insisted on the need to kill the birds and examine them up close.

Audubon’s preferred method of inquiry—killing birds—was not simply a matter of stepping out of doors with a gun, but rather required a set of skills perhaps more commonly associated with sportsmen than artists or scientists. In the text devoted to The Great Northern Diver in *The Ornithological Biography* Audubon described an exceedingly complex method by which a hunter might dispatch an individual of that species:

On seeing a Loon on the water, at whatever distance, the sportsman immediately places himself under the nearest cover on the shore, and remains there as carefully concealed as possible. A few minutes are allowed to pass, to give the wary and sharp-sighted bird all due confidence... The gunner then takes his cap or pocket-handkerchief, which if brightly colored so much the better, and raising it in one hand, waves it three or four times, and then suddenly conceals it. The bird commonly detects the signal at once, and, probably imagining the object thus exhibited to be one of its own species, gradually advances, emitting its love-notes, which resembles a coarse laugh... The sportsman imitates these notes, making them loud and somewhat mellow, waving his cap or kerchief at the same time, and this he continues to do at intervals.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ John James Audubon, “Mississippi River Journal” (October 12, 1820) in Irmscher, 1999, 3

¹⁰¹ John James Audubon, “Mississippi River Journal” (October 12, 1820) in Irmscher, 1999, 16. Despite Audubon’s distinction, *The Birds of America* includes only an entry for The Great Northern Diver.

¹⁰² John James Audubon, *Ornithological biography*, Vol. 4, 50.

According to Audubon this complicated ritual continued for some time, with the Northern Diver (commonly referred to as a Loon) inching closer through the water until it was finally lured near enough for the hunter to shoot and kill it. Such highly specialized knowledge and skills solidified Audubon's status as an expert huntsman.

The large numbers of birds that Audubon describes killing in his journals and other writings often seems staggering. His quest to kill evermore animals was driven by his insistence on working from recently killed models. Despite the strides Charles Willson Peale had made in the process of taxidermy, Audubon maintained that stuffed models were unacceptably inferior to his own method of pinning and positioning recently killed specimens. Audubon steadfastly proclaimed "I have *never* drawn from a stuffed specimen."¹⁰³ According to Audubon, the experience of observing the animal in the wild as well as up close after killing it, provided invaluable first-hand knowledge that could not be replicated through the study of mounted specimens. Although he sometimes captured animals to observe while still alive, Audubon preferred to collect these himself. He complained of one dealer who had sold him a Grey Snipe, "the Stupid Ass who sold me one knew Nothing; Not even where *he* had killed them."¹⁰⁴ Without any understanding of the animal's context within the wild, the specimen was practically useless to Audubon.

Audubon frequently criticized his chief rival Alexander Wilson for working from stuffed models, pointing out where this had led Wilson to make mistakes, such as in the case of the Anhinga, or Black-bellied Darter: (Figure 1.29) "Wilson, who, it is acknowledged, made his

¹⁰³ John James Audubon, "Account of the Method of Drawing Birds Employed by J.J. Audubon, Esq. F.R.S.E, In a Letter to a Friend" [1828], in Irmscher, 1999, 756. Like many of Audubon's statements this is likely not absolutely true, and Audubon himself was even employed as a taxidermist for a brief period at Cincinnati College.

¹⁰⁴ John James Audubon, February 5, 1821. In Irmscher, 1999, 80.

figures from stuffed specimens in the Philadelphia Museum, had no positive proof that the bird which he took for a female was one, for he had not seen the Anhinga alive or recently killed.”¹⁰⁵ Audubon however was able to confirm the sex of his models through dissection, and therefore arrive at a more accurate depiction of the species. In addition to scientific accuracy, working with freshly killed (and thus more pliable) models allowed Audubon to experiment with a variety of poses and configurations in his composition, which would have been impossible with a taxidermy specimen fixed in a single position. Additionally, as art historian Jennifer Roberts has argued, Audubon’s reliance upon freshly killed models also reflected the practical reality of his working conditions in areas of the United States that still existed largely in a frontier state.¹⁰⁶ While Peale could relatively easily transport stuffed specimens throughout the Mid-Atlantic region decades earlier, in the regions of Kentucky and Ohio where Audubon refined his method transportation and communication networks were much less established.

Audubon understood the limitations of his recently killed models quite well, frequently complaining of the gruesome nature of his specimens. For example, in his Mississippi River Journal he remarked “Drawing nearly all day I finished the Carrion Crow, it stunk so intolerably, and Looked so disgusting that I was very glad when I through it over Board.”¹⁰⁷ Although Audubon’s models began to putrefy and lose their brilliance rather quickly (often within hours) a steady stream of prey allowed him to work rapidly and continuously to produce images that could be easily transported and dispersed as he moved and continued to build his repository of birds and other animals. The resultant drawings were more easily carried along rugged roads and

¹⁰⁵ John James Audubon, *Ornithological biography*, Vol. 4, 154. Wilson frequently studied specimens from Peale’s Museum. He benefited from deep connections with Philadelphia’s scientific community which Audubon lacked.

¹⁰⁶ See Jennifer Roberts, “Audubon’s Burden: Materiality and Transmission in *The Birds of America*,” in *Transporting Visions: The Movement of Images in Early America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014) 69-115.

¹⁰⁷ John James Audubon, Mississippi River Journal, December 21, 1820 in Irmscher, 1999, 55.

river byways, allowing him to build his repository of birds in a more economical and effective manner. Acquiring specimens at such a feverish pace was a methodological necessity for Audubon and critical to the production of *Birds of America*.

Audubon went to great lengths to accentuate his personal identity as a hunter as a means of establishing credibility and marketing his work. He sought to craft this persona in the extensive accounts of his hunting exploits included in his voluminous writings but also through the image he presented of himself in portraits. John Syme's 1826 portrait of Audubon established a model that many later images followed, of the ruggedly handsome artist holding his rifle while staring stoically into the distance. While this image came to define the artist-naturalist, Audubon invested considerable effort in honing his public appearance. Indeed, the rugged woodsman seems a far cry from the refined figure Audubon portrayed in an 1822-23 self-portrait. (Figure 1.30) Executed while Audubon was living in Louisiana and partially supporting himself by working as an itinerant portraitist, Audubon appears here as a respectable and dignified gentleman. His refined but straightforward attire echoes that of Alexander Wilson's in an 1809-13 portrait likely executed by Thomas Sully.¹⁰⁸ (Figure 1.31) Both men's sober attire conformed to the increasingly respectable norms of modern science which sought to present itself as a dignified and serious discipline, as seen in the portrait of an anonymous *Man of Science* pictured solemnly dressed and seated among the tools of his profession. (Figure 1.32)

Audubon's self-image underwent a profound transformation upon travelling to Britain where he sought to drum up interest in the *Birds of America*. Perhaps to distinguish himself and his work in well-established and entrenched scientific circles, Audubon began to play upon certain stereotypes of "Americanness" by adopting distinctive manners and modes of dress,

¹⁰⁸ Though Wilson would also be pictured with rifle-in-hand most notably in the frontispiece to *American Ornithology*.

commonly associated with frontiersman and Native Americans, selectively understood in Britain through a combination of popular literature, fine art and prints, and travelling exhibitions of people and artifacts.¹⁰⁹ Audubon acknowledged some element of performance in his self-styling, commenting that his image in the Syme portrait presented “a strange looking figure, with gun, strap and buckles, and eyes that to me are more those of an enraged eagle than mine.”¹¹⁰

However, Audubon quickly came to fully embrace his persona as the rugged American backwoodsman. During the late eighteenth century when Peale was most active as a hunter, the practice was considered somewhat unsavory for men of refinement. By the 1820s hunting had shed some of its immoral connotations, but Audubon seemed largely unconcerned with any lingering social stigma, and instead seemed to bridge social worlds, embodying both the ideals of a learned gentleman and the prowess of a rough-hewn woodsman. In 1826 he sketched for an English subscriber a quite different self-portrait than that produced several years earlier. (Figure 1.33) Clad in a fur cap, leather hunting shirt and breeches, Audubon appears striding forward through the woods with his long rifle in his hand, tomahawk in his belt, and freshly killed game across his back. This vision of Audubon was less the “Man of Science” and more akin to a character from the novels of James Fenimore Cooper. Audubon was a great admirer of the author, and this self-portrait sketch bears a passing resemblance Hawkeye, the antagonist of Cooper’s *Last of the Mohicans*, a sensationally popular novel published that same year:

He wore a hunting shirt of forest-green, fringed with faded yellow, and a summer cap of skins which had been shorn of their fur. He also bore a knife in a girdle of wampum, like that which confined the scanty garments of the Indian, but no tomahawk. His moccasins

¹⁰⁹ Audubon was certainly not the first American artist to adopt such an approach. Benjamin West played up his associations with Native American culture in order to cultivate a sense of exoticism and authenticity. See Emily Ballev Neff, “At the Wood’s Edge: Benjamin West’s “The Death of General Wolfe” and the Middle Ground,” in *American Adversaries: West and Copley in a Transatlantic World* (Museum of Fine Arts Houston, 2013), 86-98. This strategy perhaps reached its apotheosis as employed by George Catlin in the 1830s and 40s as he toured his *Indian Gallery* around Europe and often dressed the part of a Native American hunter.

¹¹⁰ John James Audubon letter to Mrs. William Rathbone III (November 29, 1826) in Alice Ford *The 1826 Journal of John James Audubon* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967), 375.

were ornamented after the gay fashion of the natives, while the only part of his under dress which appeared below the hunting-frock was a pair of buckskin leggings, that laced at the sides, and which were gartered above the knees, with the sinews of a deer. A pouch and horn completed his personal accouterments, though a rifle of great length, which the theory of the more ingenious whites had taught them was the most dangerous of all firearms, leaned against a neighboring sapling.¹¹¹

In Britain and the rest of Europe, Audubon's striking style of dress and flair for thrilling tales of his hunting exploits conferred a level of celebrity upon him that was quite unusual for men of science. At times Audubon pushed back against efforts to play up his swashbuckling persona for fear that his credibility might be damaged. Ultimately however, such images proved successful in marketing his work, and solidifying his status as one of the world's most prominent naturalists.

Indeed well into his life, after the publication of *Birds of America* had won Audubon the prestige and acceptance that had eluded him earlier in his career, he continued to be pictured as a hunter first and foremost. In 1838, the year that saw the completion of the publication of *Birds of America*, Audubon sat for a young American painter in London, George P.A. Healy. (Figure 1.34) According to Healy, Audubon appeared in the clothing that he wore while hunting birds, which Healy called "a sort of backwoodsman's dress."¹¹² Audubon is seated in the contemplative pose of a scholar, but is surrounded by plants rather than books and letters. His signature attribute, a hunting rifle, rests idly across his lap. In his description of their encounter Healy conflated the artist-naturalist and his subjects claiming Audubon possessed "the most piercing eyes I ever saw—real eagle eyes."¹¹³ In even later portraits executed by his son John Woodhouse Audubon, Audubon appears equally at ease in the role of elder man of the woods. (Figure 1.35) Audubon's steadfast connection throughout his life to an identity rooted in his status as a hunter

¹¹¹ James Fenimore Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans* Vol 1. (Philadelphia: H.C. Carey and I. Lea, 1826), 31.

¹¹² George P.A. Healy, *Reminiscences of a Portrait Painter* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg and Company, 1894), 205.

¹¹³ Healy, *Reminiscences of a Portrait Painter* 204.

attests to the important role that the practice played not only in marketing and fashioning his work, but in his overall conception of his life's work.

Despite Audubon's strong personal identification as a hunter, no images of human hunters appear in the final printed plates for *Birds of America*. However, a single hunter does appear in one of the final full-scale watercolors that Audubon produced, which served as the model for the plates produced by his publisher Robert Havell. The watercolor proof version of *Golden Eagle (Aquila chrysaetos)* depicts the sizable bird of prey soaring upward above a rocky landscape with a dead hare ensnared in its talons. (Figures 1.36, 1.37) In the background, Audubon included a curious detail: a hunter scrambling across a log abridging a rocky precipice. The miniscule hunter, dressed similarly to Audubon's 1826 self-portrait sketch, has often been referred to as a portrait of Audubon himself.¹¹⁴ Unlike grandiose studio portraits, this representation captures Audubon fully engaged in the most adventurous and dangerous aspects of his work, risking life and limb in pursuit of his quarry. While Audubon portrays himself as the daring hunter (with two birds already strapped to his back), the figure also strikes a comic note, fumbling across the crude bridge, while the majestic bird soars powerfully and majestically through the landscape.

Although Audubon surely faced dangerous situations during his hunting exploits, this diminutive portrait seems even more peculiar in light of Audubon's account in the *Ornithological Biography* of how he came to acquire his Golden Eagle specimen. Audubon first purchased the eagle live from a museum-keeper in Boston. He originally considered freeing the bird, but after observing it for a day decided that he wished to draw the animal and therefore

¹¹⁴ See Gregory Nobles, "John James Audubon, the American 'Hunter-Naturalist'" *Common-Place* 12 no. 2 (January 2012) <http://www.common-place.org/vol-12/no-02/nobles> and Christoph Irmscher *The Poetics of Natural History: From John Bartram to William James* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1999), 225-30.

endeavored to kill it. Over the course of two days Audubon attempted to suffocate the eagle through burning of charcoal and Sulphur (almost killing himself in the process) both of which fail to dispatch it. After discovering the eagle had survived this cruel ordeal, Audubon employed a more pragmatic method: “His fierce demeanour precluded all internal application, and at last I was compelled to resort to a method always used as the last expedient, and a most effectual one. I thrust a long pointed piece of steel through his heart, when my proud prisoner instantly fell dead, without even ruffling a feather.”¹¹⁵ The striking discord between the portrayal of the hunter in the watercolor and the actual manner in which the bird was killed did not seem to trouble Audubon greatly, as he readily included the account in the *Ornithological Biography*. Nevertheless the detail of the figure traversing the log was excised by Havell from the final version of the print, leaving the image of the human hunter implied but never pictured throughout *Birds of America*. (Figure 1.38)

Perhaps because of Audubon’s larger than life persona and the vast scale of *Birds of America*, discussions of his personal artistic and scientific achievements sometimes overwhelm consideration of his relationship to the larger field of natural history.¹¹⁶ In fact Audubon continually sought acceptance from the scientific community and worked tirelessly to integrate his own substantial findings into the established field of ornithology. Writing to his wife Lucy from Edinburgh, for example, Audubon boasted that he had secured patronage from the University of Edinburgh, had his work announced in the leading scientific journals, and was sure to soon gain membership into all of the scientific societies in England.¹¹⁷ Despite the frosty

¹¹⁵ John James Audubon, *Ornithological Biography*

¹¹⁶ For example the psycho-analytic approach of Richard Rhodes, “The Sources of Audubon’s Art,” *Audubon Early Drawings* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), xv-xxii or the literary-historical approach of Alexander Nemerov, “A World Too Much: Democracy and Natural History in Goodman and Audubon” in Amy Meyers, ed., *Known Nature: Art and Science in Philadelphia, 1740-1840* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 356-373.

¹¹⁷ John James Audubon, Letter to Lucy Audubon, December 10, 1826, in Ford, 1967, 345-50.

reception he received from Philadelphia's scientific circles, (owing to a longstanding grievance among many of the city's leading men of science that Audubon both lacked the proper training or social background and had transgressed on the territory of local favorite Alexander Wilson) Audubon did not pursue his work outside the bounds of the scientific establishment, but rather in dialogue with it. He relied upon the work of numerous other natural historians, such as Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte De Buffon, Charles Lucien Bonaparte, Marthurin Jacques Brisson, and many others, including even Alexander Wilson.¹¹⁸ As such, Audubon was not engaged in an isolated undertaking, but rather participating in the broader goal of the discipline of natural history to forge a unified understanding of the structures of the natural world.

Accordingly, the 435 plates in *Birds of America* present a highly dynamic and exciting view of nature's structure. The birds pictured on the expansive sheets actively engage in searching for food, mating, rearing young, fighting off predators, and many other mannerisms that Audubon had observed in the wild. (Figures 1.39, 1.40) Rather than the mostly static version of the natural order presented in Peale's Museum, in which species were rigidly contained within their own individual cases (reflecting their fixed position in the wild), Audubon's birds inhabit complex and fully animated ecosystems. While each avian species remains separated onto an individual plate, within these compositions, animals interact with other animals such as predators and prey, and are pictured among the flora and landscape of their natural habitat. Collected together in massive volumes, the animals are also placed into relationships with each other, as individual specimens within the collective "Birds of America."

This conception of the natural world as a vast network of interrelated systems was not the sole invention of Audubon, but rather reflected a shift in scientific thinking that would carry

¹¹⁸ See Linda Dugan Partridge, "By the Book: Audubon and the Tradition of Ornithological Illustration," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 59, no. 2/3 (1996), 269-301.

through the nineteenth-century. While the seismic transformation following Darwin's theories of natural selection were still decades from being fully developed, during Audubon's lifetime many leading scientists had already begun to consider the structure of nature in terms of dynamic relationships among species and their habitats, rather than that of a divinely ordained and immovable framework.¹¹⁹ One proponent of this line of thinking was the English natural history writer Edward Jesse who emphasized the movable interrelationships of nature, rather than fealty to an organizational system: "Every created being is formed in the best possible manner, with reference to its peculiar habits, either for self-preservation, or for procuring its food; and that nothing is given to it but what is intended to answer some good and useful purpose, however unable we may be to account for what may appear to us ill-contrived or unnecessary."¹²⁰ Throughout *Birds of America* Audubon revels in uncovering such "peculiar habits" through the animated representation of his models but also the active role they play in structuring their own ecology.

While the scenes depicted within *Birds of America* present an active and constantly moving vision of the natural world, there was also a sense of dynamism inherent to his methodology that helped to reinforce Audubon's natural worldview. If nature was not entirely fixed as Peale had envisioned it within his museum, then for Audubon the role of the hunter-artist shifted from that of creator-collector to privileged observer. The massive elephant folio of *Birds of America* functioned as an index of nature from which the human observer might contemplate and understand the dynamic natural world from a fixed position. The reproductive

¹¹⁹ See Paul L. Farber, *The Emergence of Ornithology as a Scientific Discipline, 1760-1850* (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel, 1982). Buffon among others had posited that species had the capacity to change over time. Farber, 124.

¹²⁰ Edward Jesse, *Gleanings in Natural History: With Local Recollections: to Which are Added Maxims and Hints for an Angler*. (London: J. Murray, 1832), 5. A gentleman-naturalist, Jesse served as deputy surveyor of parks and palaces from 1821-1851.

nature of the printed medium was ideally suited to such a task. Rather than relying upon the raw material of nature itself, the artist was able to continually reproduce nature by articulating the fruits of the imagination through human manufacture. As a hunter, Audubon occupied a privileged viewpoint throughout *Birds of America*, but killing prey was not a uniquely human trait. Violence is a common theme throughout the plates which depict many avian species also engaged in the hunt. (Figure 1.41) Accordingly, the order of nature was constantly shifting in terms of relationships with animals moving between the roles of predator and prey.

This vision of nature in flux would become established scientific doctrine by the end of the century, but at this moment Audubon and others were still grappling with the ramifications of such a revolutionary worldview. Rather than collectively giving pause to Americans who were surely becoming well-accustomed to the ever expanding geographic and economic march of the United States, such a vision of nature as a turbulent and often violent place, offered a fitting model for the political and mercantile ambitions of the Antebellum nation. Following his death in 1851 Audubon was eulogized by the Kentucky adventurer Charles Wilkins Webber, who reminisced of his encounter with Audubon who was travelling back from western hunting grounds and “returning with the trophies of science gathered on his toilsome and dangerous journeyings!”¹²¹ Wilkins’s enthusiastic portrait of Audubon was written in the wake of the United States’ victory over Mexico in the Mexican-American War which had secured for the nation its own territorial trophies from the West. With his pioneer ethos and indefatigable pursuit of nature’s treasures, Audubon the individual perfectly embodied the spirit of expansion and imperialism that fueled the nation’s antebellum growth. More importantly though, the structure of nature laid out within *The Birds of America* offered a fitting model for a new political and

¹²¹ Charles Wilkins Webber, *The Hunter-naturalist: Romance of Sporting; Or, Wild Scenes and Wild Hunters* (J.W. Bradley, 1851), 94.

social order, well-suited to America's expansionist attitude. In Audubon's work, rather than occupying a fixed rung within nature's hierarchy, individual species were free to negotiate their own relationships. Well before notions of "survival of the fittest" became scientific (and social) doctrine, Audubon's vision naturalized the idea that dominant species were free to intercede at will within the natural order. As such, his scientific ideas gave further rise to the United States sense of propriety over nature, but more importantly helped to reinforce the certitude of the nation's right to expand and intervene in the affairs of other lands and people.

Conclusion

It is clear that hunting played a crucial role in the production of both Peale and Audubon's art and was fundamental to their formulation of a coherent systematic theory of nature. Despite their mutual adoption of hunting as a pivotal aspect of their artistic process, throughout Peale and Audubon's works, one can trace sharply divergent visions of nature's overall organization. While Peale proposed a nature with a rigid hierarchical structure, laid out by divine prerogative, Audubon presented a model in which relationships were constantly negotiated between individuals. Importantly, humans also occupied differing roles within each artist's scheme. For Peale humans were placed at the top of the hierarchy by the divine creator and enjoyed dominion over all other nature. On the other hand, in Audubon's formulation, humans' primacy in the natural order was derived from their status as knowing observers, uniquely qualified to unlock the deeper truths of natural creation. While both worldviews suggest man's dominion over nature, this subtle but distinct difference between the two artist's conceptions of the natural order had important implications for Americans' evolving relationship toward their nation's natural bounties.

In addition to parsing the particulars of their natural worldviews, another way to better understand the significance of the differences between Peale and Audubon's projects is in the context of the longstanding aesthetic debate over the superiority of painting versus sculpture, known as the *paragone*. Rooted in Renaissance courtly culture, the rivalry between the arts gave rise to many spirited arguments taking the form of both written treatises and statement artworks, drawing in such accomplished partisans as Leonardo da Vinci, Leon Battista Alberti, and Giambologna. At issue was the capacity of each medium to depict, and indeed improve upon, the appearance of nature. Such a debate helps frame the divergence between Peale and Audubon who both sought an artistic solution that rendered the objects of nature in the most convincingly lifelike manner possible.

Peale employed sculpture as his representational strategy of choice within the museum, depicting his animal subjects, whenever possible, in three dimensions. Peale often spoke of his taxidermied specimens in sculptural terms, referring to his specimens as "statues" and praising their lifelikeness and the imposing grandeur of their physical presence in space. At this time sculpture as an art form was not only valued for its aesthetic appeal, but also its didactic potential. Indeed an anonymous plea printed in the Philadelphia journal *Literary Magazine and American Register* called for an establishment of a national museum of casts of antique and old master sculpture in order to educate the populace in the arts.¹²² According to academic principles, studying from sculpture was an important early step in an artist's development. Peale also recognized the instructive value of classical sculpture and housed a small collection of antique busts within his museum. In addition to sculpture's instructive potential, three-dimensional representation also best suited Peale's vision for the natural order. In Peale's exhibit

¹²² "Plan for the Improvement and Diffusion of the Arts, Adapted to the United States," *Literary Magazine and American Register* 3 (March, 1805), 181-83.

hall the physical matter of the animal world is recomposed by man, fully on display for human consumption and edification. The historian of science Rachel Poliquin has described the kind of understanding that comes from encounters with taxidermy as “visceral knowledge,” defined as “a bodily knowing that occurs in contact with physical things, a knowing that blurs emotion with materiality.”¹²³ Unlike encounters with fine art sculpture, taxidermy specimens are composed of the same matter as nature, though rendered inert. Such an experience of the objects was ideally suited to Peale’s human-centric vision of the natural universe. Within the museum relationships between creatures (both human and non-human) were defined materially through their physical matter, but relied also upon an ineffable sense of order laid out by the divine creator.

Audubon’s chosen medium of print was similarly well-suited to the aims and ideals of his art and natural vision. From the outset of his career as a full-time artist-naturalist, Audubon was continually dedicated to producing *Birds of America* as a large-scale printed volume. This impulse was rooted in a printing tradition stretching back at least two centuries, in which artists, engravers, and intellectuals sought to compile a complete printed visual record of the known world. However the printed medium also conformed well to Audubon’s conception of a dynamic system of nature. Unlike Peale’s museum, which remained fixed in place, Audubon’s prints were portable (though large in size), meaning they could be consulted in whatever setting the viewer chose. As the print historian William Ivins has argued, prints constantly reinforced their meaning through a unique mode of direct visual communication that for most of their history far surpassed other visual media and even language.¹²⁴ As repeatable visual statements, Audubon’s prints were uniquely suited to disseminating information about the natural world, precisely

¹²³ Rachel Poliquin, *The Breathless Zoo: Taxidermy and the Cultures of Longing* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), 39.

¹²⁴ William M. Ivins, Jr., *Prints and Visual Communication* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953)

because of their indexability and movability. In opening the massive volumes of *Birds of America* the viewer inserted him or herself into nature, shifting his or her vantage point with every turning of the page. The human viewer still maintains a privileged position, but the format acknowledges the interconnectedness and permeability of the natural system. Like Emerson's transparent eye, the viewer absorbs the wonders of creation with each "journey" through the printed volume. While the mode of viewership interpolates the viewer into Audubon's conception of nature's organizing structure, it also functions as an abstraction of the experience of the hunter, who moves through the wilderness, observing the animals and choosing which to submit to the increased scrutiny enabled through killing.

Both Peale and Audubon's work experienced significant afterlives through the art and institutions they influenced during the remainder of the nineteenth century. Peale's museum and its outposts eventually closed, with many of his exhibits forming the basis for P.T. Barnum's collection of popular amusements. Taxidermy continued to be practiced by sportsmen throughout the nineteenth-century, but following the Civil War it underwent a major renaissance within burgeoning public natural history institutions such as the American Museum of Natural History in New York and the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C. Many of these new museums employed the same methods of preservation and display that Peale pioneered, such as the construction of animated poses and the placement of specimens within illusionistic dioramas. Audubon's style of marrying highly detailed, and biologically accurate animals with a romantic sense of narrative served as an important model for later artists who depicted animals such as Martin Johnson Heade and Arthur Fitzwilliam Tait. Like Audubon, Heade's paintings of hummingbirds were based on a careful study of skins and specimens he obtained traveling

throughout South America. Placed in complex compositions, his works also constructed larger narratives around the animals concerning their habitats and mating habits.

Whatever their differences in approach, both Peale and Audubon's work (and the role hunting played therein) provided an essential conceptual framework and philosophical justification for the nation's faith in its proprietorship over nature. This sense of ownership of the land and its resources contributed directly to the zeal with which the nation expanded westward. This perhaps represents the most important legacy of Peale and Audubon's animal representation—the manner in which natural history fostered an attitude of insatiable expansion. The following chapter turns toward the West to consider how the art of the hunt contributed to efforts to expand the geographic, economic, and cultural boundaries of the United States, and how images helped to shape expectations and manage conflicts that arose over Western expansion.

CHAPTER 2: GEORGE CATLIN AND THE RISE OF A WESTERN HUNTING MYTH

In 1832 George Catlin embarked on his first major expedition through the American West, travelling up the Missouri River and picturing the landscapes, people, and practices he encountered there. Through these travels the artist sought to produce a grand collection of paintings that would serve as “a fair and just monument to the memory” of Native Americans, whom he contended embodied the quintessential character of the West.¹²⁵ This chapter explores one particular aspect of Native American and western life that captured Catlin’s attention—hunting and animal scenes—and traces the ways in which the subject came to dominate the artist’s portrayal of the West. This analysis reveals how Catlin’s imaging of the hunt helped to create a mythic vision of the West as an inherently violent and unsettled region.¹²⁶ Prior to Catlin’s campaigns westward, relatively little visual record of the American West existed. However, by the end of Catlin’s career the figure of the rugged hunter and scenes of expansive buffalo hunts had become synonymous with the popular portrayal of the West that proliferated

¹²⁵ Catlin like many of his contemporaries subscribed to the theory that the Native Americans were diminishing and would eventually cease to exist as a race. George Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Conditions of the North American Indians, Written During Eight Years Travel amongst the Wildest Tribes of Indians in North America*, (1841) Reprint Vol. 1 (New York: Dover Publications, 1973), 3. Hereafter, *Letters and Notes*.

¹²⁶ Throughout this chapter I employ terms such as the “West” and “Frontier” to refer generally to areas West of the Mississippi River where white easterners settled and travelled, and many Native Americans either lived for an extended period or had been relocated from the East. The broader use of these terms is not meant to suggest a singular geographic definition or periodization of these regions or the process of settlement and expansion which was undertaken by Americans of numerous social backgrounds and over an expansive period of time. As scholars have long established, concepts of the places and types of movement which constituted the west and the frontier (as these terms are broadly understood) constantly shifted both during the nineteenth century, and within modern scholarship. Catlin himself touched on the contested nature of these terms and concepts: “Few people even know the true definition of the term ‘West’; and where its location?—phantom-like it flies before us as we travel, and on our way is continually gilded before us as we approach the setting sun.” Catlin, *Letters and Notes*, vol. 1, 62. For a sampling of the scholarly debate surrounding these terms and the multiplicity of experiences which comprised American westward expansion see John W. Caughey, “The Insignificance of the Frontier in American History or ‘Once Upon a Time There Was an American West,’” *Western Historical Quarterly* 5 no. 1 (Jan., 1974), 4-16; William H. Goetzmann and William N. Goetzmann, *The West of the Imagination* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1986); Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Myth of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000).

throughout eastern cities and beyond. This chapter interrogates how Catlin's representation of hunting (alongside the larger social, political, and economic forces of western expansion) engendered these persistent visual tropes. Through his origination of hunting scenes based on firsthand observations and subsequent elaboration of those depictions into more fictive stereotypes, Catlin transformed the imagery of the West from a region where hunting was an attribute of the lives of specific and distinct groups of Native Americans, to a mythic place in which hunting and violence broadly defined the essential character of the West.

Catlin employed hunting imagery as a means to convey what he considered essential characteristics of Native Americans. In his early paintings Catlin privileged the authenticity of on the spot observation and he stridently sought to cast his images as true reflections of Native Americans and their customs. During his first campaigns travelling in the West and picturing Native Americans, hunting appeared as one subject among many that would eventually comprise Catlin's Indian Gallery—a collection of hundreds of paintings of Native American portraits, scenes of everyday life, and western landscapes that Catlin exhibited for more than two decades. However, as the artist became further removed from his principal subjects, hunting figured evermore prominently in his overall conception of Native Americans and the West that appeared in later additions to the Indian Gallery, print portfolios, and other artistic endeavors. Hunting was one practice particular to the culture of many Native American tribes who resided west of the Mississippi, but was hardly a universal or monolithic custom, as many groups engaged in hunting to varying degrees, employing a variety of hunting methods. In addition to presenting hunting as a universal Native American attribute, Catlin's imagery entirely ignored the reality that most of the hunting he witnessed was carried out in response to and in service of trade with whites. Nevertheless, Catlin's emphasis on hunting as an inherent feature of Native American

character, rather than a particular custom practiced by distinctive groups for specific purposes, elevated hunting imagery to a singular status, representative of all Native Americans and the area they inhabited in the West.

The western regions Catlin visited were amply populated by Native Americans, and had been regularly traversed by European and American traders and explorers for decades. However, the western half of the continent remained largely a blank slate for many Americans who clustered in eastern states and lacked an established visual language with which to comprehend such distant locales. The imperative to visually record the sights and figures of the West grew in large part out of the scientific and artistic efforts of figures like Charles Willson Peale and John James Audubon whose works (as described in the previous chapter) encouraged Americans to take ownership of the continent's natural bounties. In addition, numerous political leaders beginning most notably with Thomas Jefferson urged expansion as a means of spreading republican values. Catlin was further motivated by the belief, shared by many of his contemporaries, that Native Americans were rapidly disappearing from the western landscape. Catlin believed that Native Americans lacked a history or visual record of their own, and therefore it was the responsibility of white artists and scholars to preserve a document of their appearance, customs, and manners. To that end Catlin embarked on an ambitious project to create a visual compendium of Native American life which chronicled the tribes living west of the Mississippi that encompassed portraits, landscapes, and genre scenes of religious rituals, ball sports, and hunting. First organized into the massive exhibition of paintings and artifacts that Catlin termed the Indian Gallery, this imagery reverberated for decades as it spread through other media and venues, indelibly shaping the ways in which European and eastern American audiences pictured the West

Catlin's strategy for visualizing the West—in which his imagery was rooted in a mixture of fact and stereotype that was subsequently refashioned in response to and anticipation of audience expectations—also offers a means of better understanding how visual art participated in shifts in the nation's broader social and political approach to Native Americans. Predicated broadly on “the myth of the frontier,” which art historian William H. Truettner has explained as “guarantee[ing] progress without encumbering social and environmental debt,” such images took for granted the inevitability of the movement of people from east to west and the subjugation of the land and people west of the Mississippi.¹²⁷ Since the seventeenth century Europeans and Americans had employed images as a means to racially and socially confine Native Americans into useful categories such as “savage” or “noble” to suit a range of political exigencies.¹²⁸ Despite Catlin's ample backstory and firsthand accounts, his depictions of Native American hunting ultimately fell back upon fictive, visual tropes presenting themselves as factual records. The prolonged and complicated course of American conquest, settlement, and development of the West, relied upon many such fictions to facilitate its progress. Catlin played a pivotal role in this mythologizing by shifting conceptions of hunting from a matter-of-fact aspect of life in the west to a defining feature of its essential character. Hunting, as it appeared in the work of Catlin (and subsequent artists), functioned as a particularly useful conceit which cast Native American society as uncivilized and the West as fundamentally violent. Hunting was simultaneously

¹²⁷ William H. Truettner, “Ideology and Image: Justifying Western Expansion,” *The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier, 1820-1920* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 40. See also Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Myth of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000).

¹²⁸ See also William H. Truettner, *Painting Indians and Building Empires in North America, 1710-1840* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 1-6. In this volume Truettner advances several important arguments regarding Native American identity (as defined by whites) which broadly inform this chapter. His concept of the “Republican Indian” which “assumed the image of alternate frontiersmen—tenacious, skillful, and courageous fighters, who, if lacking a civilized temperament, nevertheless transferred their positive virtues to the formation of an American character.” 16.

presented as evidence of Native American civilizations' lack of development, and as a practice so deeply ingrained in their collective identity as to leave little hope of progressing to what were considered more developed forms of agricultural or mercantile civilization. Further, Catlin's emphasis on hunting as an essential feature of life in the West cast the region as a place of continuous violence, thereby normalizing and justifying violent deeds on the part of whites as they sought to rationalize the West by bringing it under American political and economic control. Beyond its implications for visualizing the West, this visual strategy ushered in a vision of American masculinity that was expressed by participating in rugged outdoor pursuits and overcoming the adversity of the natural environment.

Catlin was not the only artist to travel westward and depict hunting during the antebellum period. His journeys west of the Mississippi in the 1830s were followed closely by Karl Bodmer, Alfred Jacob Miller, and others. Catlin's work however stands out among other artists first in the scope of his project, which far exceeded other efforts in its encyclopedic ambition to capture portraits, landscapes, and scenes of everyday life as he observed them on the spot.¹²⁹ The chronological span of Catlin's career and the breadth of his production also makes his work compelling. Catlin produced the majority of paintings that comprised the Indian Gallery in just a few short years around 1832 to 1837, but he continued to draw upon this imagery for nearly all of the work that followed during his career. After he failed to find a purchaser for the gallery, Catlin spent more than a decade forging a career as an exhibitor, author, and printmaker, avenues which led him to refine and adjust his imagery in order to have it resonate with a range of public perceptions of Native American life, both in Europe and the United States. This marked a change

¹²⁹ Another largescale undertaking for example, Thomas L. Mckenney and James Hall's three-volume *History of the Indian Tribes of North America* which appeared around the time of the first exhibitions of Catlin's Indian Gallery, consisted almost exclusively of portraits of tribal leaders, and these were largely obtained from delegations visiting the nation's capital, thereby excluding a great number of western tribes from consideration.

in Catlin's representational strategy away from the particular toward a more general conception of Native Americans and helped to generate and disseminate a more stereotypical view centered on Native American hunting practices. By tracing subtle shifts in the ways Catlin positioned hunting as a means of understanding Native Americans, we gain a deeper insight not only into the course of the artist's career but also into the ways in which rapidly changing policies and social attitudes toward Native Americans and the West shaped public expectations of their representation. As such, the structure of this chapter hews closely to the chronology of the artist's career, tracing his earliest conceptions of hunting based upon the hunts he witnessed at the frontier outpost of Fort Union, to the later iterations of hunting imagery in print portfolios and albums.

As discussed in the previous chapter, many Americans subscribed to the broad socio-historical theory that posited that civilizations progressed in stages; hunting societies represented the initial level of this progression.¹³⁰ An early proponent of western expansion, Thomas Jefferson in his *Notes on the State of Virginia* affirmed this theory, arguing that all Native American tribes had existed in the "hunter state" prior to contact with Europeans. Elsewhere Jefferson pondered comparisons between the relative levels of civilization achieved by Native Americans and those Europeans living north of the Alps prior to contact with the Romans.¹³¹ This theory was broadly accepted and appeared in both literary and visual representations. Thomas Cole's *A Wild Scene*, which depicts a group of hunters armed with bows and arrows and clad in roughhewn animal skins pursuing deer through a wild and imposing landscape, might be considered among the most direct illustrations of this concept. (Figure 2.1) Subsumed by the near-primordial landscape, Cole's huntsmen are merely scenery in an allegorical narrative rather

¹³⁰ See Herman, *Hunting and the American Imagination*, 41-46.

¹³¹ Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (Richmond: J.W. Randolph, 1853), 218, 69.

than individuals in command of their own destiny. Cole intended the canvas to mark the first phase in a planned series, *The Course of Empire*, which chronicled the evolution of a civilization from its hunter roots.¹³² Created in 1831-1832 just as Catlin was poised to undertake his first expedition deep into the western frontier regions, Cole's canvas represented an established paradigm for representing hunting societies, against which Catlin initially seemed to position himself. In works like *Buffalo Chase*, *A Single Death* Catlin sought to create a worthy record of Native American people, by portraying their appearances and customs with dignity and candor. (Figure 2.2) Modern critical reappraisals have revealed the numerous ways in which he fell short of his own goals (and indeed called into question the sincerity of his motives), but this chapter moves beyond this question to consider how Catlin's hunting imagery both shaped and responded to public perceptions and demonstrates how his vision, rather than Cole's, came to predominate the representation of hunting in the West.¹³³

In focusing closely on Catlin's production, this chapter concentrates on a particular perspective on the visualization of the West: images created by and for the consumption of whites who lived mainly in cities in the eastern United States and Europe. Hardly a uniform group, such people had varying interests in the West from scientific curiosity to economic exploitation, but they largely occupied a physical and social position far from the areas Catlin depicted and distant from the people he portrayed. The central question of this chapter addresses the role that hunting played in Catlin's strategy to create a mythic vision of the West that spoke directly to these audiences. This approach is not meant to overlook or discount the fact that the

¹³² Sona K. Johnston, *American Paintings, 1750-1900, From the Collection of the Baltimore Museum of Art* (Baltimore Museum of Art, 1983), 36.

¹³³ Among the reappraisals of Catlin, see John Hausdoerffer, *Catlin's Lament: Indians, Manifest Destiny, and the Ethics of Nature* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2009); Joshua J. Masters "Reading the Book of Nature, Inscribing the Savage Mind: George Catlin and the Textualization of the American West," *American Studies* 46 no. 2 (Summer, 2005), 63-89; Carlos Krebs, "George Catlin and South America: A Look at His 'Lost' Years and His Paintings of Northeastern Argentina," *The American Art Journal* 22 no. 4 (Winter, 1990), 4-39.

Native Americans who Catlin pictured possessed their own visual media and developed their own visual and material culture surrounding the hunt.¹³⁴ Such objects were collected and displayed by eastern whites during the nineteenth century (and were even included in Catlin's exhibitions), but their impact on the ways in which white Americans visualized the West was dwarfed by that of the images created by Catlin and others of his ilk. Catlin's Indian Gallery, and later print portfolios presented his subjects as thrillingly unfamiliar, but the imagery still circulated in traditional formats. Metropolitan audiences in particular would have been well-versed in the broad category of imagery—portraiture, hunt scenes, animal imagery—even if the precise subject matter appeared exotic. Moreover, it is not my intention in this chapter to reconcile Catlin's vision with any historical "reality" of western hunting as it existed in the first half of the nineteenth century. Instead I consider Catlin's visual approach to the West as a synthesis of his own personal experience, tempered by visual precedent and changing audience expectations, in order to more fully understand the ways in which visual fictions of the West acquired the veneer of truth and were thereby engaged in service of various expansionist ideologies.

The abundant scholarship on George Catlin thus far has approached the artist and his work from a variety of directions. Early art historical studies carried out by Harold McCracken,

¹³⁴ Numerous studies approach the subject of Native American hunting using historical or anthropological methodologies including, Jack Brink, *Imagining Head-Smashed-In : Aboriginal Buffalo Hunting on the Northern Plains* (Edmonton: Athabaska University Press, 2008); The collection of essays, Michael E. Harkin and David Rich Lewis, eds., *Native Americans and the Environment: Perspectives on the Ecological Indian* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007); James M. McClurken, ed., *Fish in the Lakes, Wild Rice, and Game in Abundance: Testimony on Behalf of Mille Lacs Ojibwe Hunting and Fishing Rights* (Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2000). Scholarship in art history has paid less attention to Native American visual and material cultures of hunting, perhaps owing to the legacy of disciplinary borders, but several recent useful studies have begun to overcome such boundaries: Jane Ewers Robinson, *Plains Indian Art: The Pioneering Work of John C. Ewers* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011), Joyce M. Szabo, *Painters, Patrons, and Identity : Essays in Native American Art to Honor J.J. Brody* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2001); Joseph D. Horse Capture and George P. Horse Capture, *Beauty, Honor, and Tradition: The Legacy of Plains Indian Shirts* (Washington D.C.: National Museum of the American Indian, 2001).

William H. Truettner, and more recently Brian W. Dippie, undertook the difficult work of sorting out the artist's biography and cataloguing his work, a task complicated by the widespread but intermittent records of his life and the vastness (and varying quality) of his output.¹³⁵ This chapter builds upon this foundational research by taking a more focused, critical approach to the specific means by which an important segment of Catlin's imagery worked to express the larger political and social ideals of his age.¹³⁶ By isolating Catlin's hunting imagery I not only propose a deeper understanding of Catlin's work and motivations, but also more firmly establish art's role in the process by which the practice of hunting became intricately associated with the collective mythology of the American West. In this endeavor my study draws upon recent scholarship which has tackled the subject of western hunting imagery through the lens of individual artists, and motifs such as buffalo imagery.¹³⁷ By focusing directly on Catlin's hunting works, which serve as a visual and conceptual foundation for the later explosion of western hunting imagery, this chapter fills an important lacuna in the scholarly record.

The chapter begins with an extended overview of the first organized forays undertaken by American artists and explorers to the West and an analysis of how these efforts shaped early

¹³⁵ Harold McCracken, *George Catlin and the Old Frontier* (New York: The Dial Press, 1959); William H. Truettner, *The Natural Man Observed: A Study of Catlin's Indian Gallery* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1979); Brian W. Dippie, *Catlin and His Contemporaries: The Politics of Patronage* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990). Another foundational source is John C. Ewers, *George Catlin, Painter of Indians and the West* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1956). Other major areas of Catlin scholarship have coalesced around the artist's prodigious writings which have spawned numerous reprints and works that take a more interdisciplinary approach, including critical appraisals of his contributions (and setbacks) to the burgeoning field of ethnography. These include Joshua J. Masters "Reading the Book of Nature, Inscribing the Savage Mind: George Catlin and the Textualization of the American West," *American Studies* 46 no. 2 (Summer, 2005), 63-89; John Hausdoerffer, *Catlin's Lament: Indians, Manifest Destiny, and the Ethics of Nature* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2009).

¹³⁶ More recent art historical scholarship has undertaken another critical revision of Catlin's work namely George Gurney and Therese Thau Heyman, eds., *George Catlin and His Indian Gallery* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian American Art Museum, 2002); William H. Truettner, *Painting Indians and Building Empires in North America, 1710-1840* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

¹³⁷ Kenneth Haltman, "Flight and Predation: The Anti-documentary Poetics of Alfred Jacob Miller," *American Art* 28 no. 1 (Spring, 2014), 33-55; Alan C. Braddock, "Poaching Pictures: Yellowstone, Buffalo, and the Art of Wildlife Conservation," *American Art* 23 no. 3 (Fall, 2009) 36-59; Rena N. Coen, "The Last of the Buffalo," *American Art Journal* 5 no. 2 (November, 1973), 83-94.

visual precedents for picturing the subject of hunting in the West. The bulk of the chapter then turns toward Catlin and begins to trace his particular approach to the subject of hunting. By untangling Catlin's earliest purported motivations for picturing Native Americans we can begin to detect the roots of the strategy by which he positioned hunting as a central cultural practice, essential to understanding Native American life. The chapter then proceeds with a close analysis of Catlin's hunting images and their place within the Indian Gallery, following these through his various exhibitions and artistic enterprises that unfolded across Europe, the United States, and eventually even South America. A comparison of Catlin's earliest hunting imagery, with its later development in print and other media reveals the ways in which hunting came to predominate in Catlin's vision of the West. This transformation shows how the positioning of hunting as an essential feature of the West in Catlin's work, was both a symptom of and gave rise to a political viewpoint embraced by many eastern Americans, that the West was a place of irrational violence, to which the forces of white settlement offered a just and inevitable remedy. Finally, I conclude by considering how Catlin's insistence on the primacy of hunting imagery laid the groundwork for a separate but related mythology of the white hunter-trapper. That figure embodied an emergent form of masculinity for white easterners which was based upon participation in hunting pursuits that were once considered the sole domain of Native Americans.

Hunting played an integral role in both the lived reality of the first expeditions of Americans westward and the subsequent visual representation of the people, landscape, and fauna they encountered there. Although the visual and literary accounts that arose from these journeys were markedly different in scope and subject matter than those produced by Catlin some decades later, they represent the beginning of a shared vocabulary of themes and imagery that Catlin and later artists would rely upon in defining "the West". Easterners had been steadily

venturing westward since before the Republic's founding, with hunter-heroes like Daniel Boone leading the way and gaining increasing prominence in the nation's visual and literary conception of the western frontier.¹³⁸ After the consummation of the Louisiana Purchase, which drastically shifted the country's western border and expanded its geographic footprint, the nation's political and scientific leaders such as Thomas Jefferson and Charles Willson Peale urged for a more systematic and official approach to western exploration. The first major expedition sponsored by the United States government led by army officers Captain Meriwether Lewis and Lieutenant William Clark carried an ambitious warrant to survey the geography of western lands, map its principal waterways and mountain ranges, communicate with native inhabitants and ascertain their willingness toward commerce, determine a suitable site for a port along the Pacific coast in order to facilitate the fur trade, and survey the natural and geologic resources of the West.¹³⁹ Scientific learning was also considered an essential aspect of the expedition's charter and both Lewis and Clark documented the many novel sights encountered along their journey in extensive logs, and through numerous field drawings.¹⁴⁰

One of the few visual records to arise directly from the Lewis and Clark expedition and gain broader circulation appeared among six plates included in a revised edition of Patrick Gass's *A Journal of the Voyages and Travels of a Corps of Discovery* printed in Philadelphia in

¹³⁸ Boone achieved some notoriety for his exploration of the frontier and military campaigns against Native Americans in the western regions of Virginia but his fame as a hunter and woodsman was launched with the publication of John Filson, *The Discovery, Settlement and Present State of Kentucke* (Wilmington: James Adams, 1784) and enshrined in many subsequent written and visual works, including William Tylee Ranney's *Boone's First View of Kentucky*, which prominently features two hunting dogs coupled together in the foreground.

¹³⁹ Thomas Jefferson to Meriwether Lewis, "Instructions to Lewis" 20 June, 1803. Reprinted in Donald Jackson ed., *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition with Related Documents, 1783-1854* Vol. 1 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 61-66.

¹⁴⁰ Unfortunately, for various reasons of institutional possessiveness and personal rancor, scant visual traces of the expedition circulated to a broader public beyond a few specialized institutional and personal collections. See Kenneth Haltman, "The Pictorial Legacy of Lewis and Clark" Amy Meyers ed. *Knowing Nature: Art and Science in Philadelphia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 332-335.

1810.¹⁴¹ First published in Pittsburgh in 1807 and edited by David McKeehan, the volume compiled Gass's extensive journal entries into a straightforward and continuous narrative of the expedition. Gass's account focused on the day-to-day experience of the trek from the point of view of the men whose labor facilitated the journey and included little account of the ethnographic and scientific exploration which motivated the expedition. Despite its quotidian orientation, Gass's account was the first (and for many years only) volume to be published from the journey and audiences both in the United States and Europe hungry for tales of the unfamiliar West eagerly consumed its contents. Within several years Gass's book was republished in London, France, and Germany and in 1810 Philadelphia publisher Matthew Carey produced a new American edition, enhanced for the first time with six engraved illustrations of episodes from the narrative.¹⁴²

Conceived and engraved by an anonymous artist, the plates illustrate vignettes keyed to passages in the book through page number references in the upper right corner. While the first three plates chronicle a range of experiences—travelling by river, meeting with Native Americans, and setting up an encampment, the final three illustrate episodes of hunting and shooting violence. (Figures 2.3-2.5) Rather than scenes of thrilling hunting exploits though, the two bear hunting scenes show first a group of men disinterestedly firing at a group of idle bear-like animals who seemed wholly unconcerned with the human threat or the comically upended and seemingly deceased member of their cohort. The second image of this group depicts an

¹⁴¹ Patrick Gass, *A journal of the voyages and travels of a corps of discovery, under the command of Capt. Lewis and Capt. Clarke of the Army of the United States, from the mouth of the River Missouri through the interior parts of North America to the Pacific Ocean, during the years 1804, 1805 and 1806. Containing an authentic relation of the most interesting transactions during the expedition,--a description of the country,--and an account of its inhabitants, soil, climate, curiosities and vegetable and animal productions. By Patrick Gass, one of the persons employed in the expedition. With geographical and explanatory notes.* (Philadelphia: Mathew Carey, 1810)

¹⁴² See Carol Lynn MacGregor ed. *The Journals of Patrick Gass, Member of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* (Missoula, Montana: Mountain Press Publishing Company, 1997), 19-20 for an outline of the differing editions.

episode described by Gass in which a member of their party was unhorsed by a bear but fortunately “had sufficient presence of mind to hit the bear on the head with his gun,” allowing him to escape up a tree where he waited out the befuddled beast.¹⁴³ The final plate was not strictly a hunting image, but rather an illustration of a heated conflict between Capt. Lewis’s party and a group of Native Americans which erupted over the perceived theft of the explorers’ rifles and resulted in Lewis killing one of the Native Americans and making away with most of their horses. The composition of this print closely resembles that of the image of Captain Clark shooting bears, with the central figure drawing a bead on distant Native American figures instead of a group bears.¹⁴⁴

Each of the prints is executed in a straightforward and rather artless style which borders on crudeness. This manner lends the subjects a sense of comic frivolity and charm which somewhat belies the serious nature of the events described in the volume.¹⁴⁵ Although lacking in naturalistic detail, the illustrations create an engaging narrative through their combination of captions and graphically simple compositions. While Jefferson and the scientific organizers of the expedition saw its value in the compiling of ethnographic detail and scientific minutiae, Carey, the publisher of Gass’s narrative, recognized that he might better inspire the interest of a readership drawn mostly from eastern towns and cities, through the construction of easy to follow and recognizable narratives, such as tales of hunting exploits. Despite their lack of formal sophistication, the illustrations to Gass’s journal of the Lewis and Clark expedition represent some of the earliest images of the West that circulated widely among American audiences and

¹⁴³ Gass, 1810, 239.

¹⁴⁴ Gass, 1810, 244-45.

¹⁴⁵ One historian of the Lewis and Clark expedition literature has described the prints as “delightfully preposterous” and the pitiable result of an artist who “employ[ed] unrestrained imagination in portraying subjects about which he knows next to nothing.” Paul Russell Cutright, *A History of the Lewis and Clark Journals* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976), 31.

thus offer an important insight into how hunting (and its associated violence) was closely linked at the outset of strategies for visualizing the people and practices of the American West.

Hunting's prominent placement within the few illustrations to Gass's journal was echoed in the wave of literary accounts of western travel and exploration that followed its publication. In 1805 Zebulon Pike undertook an expedition to locate the sources of the Mississippi River and assert American authority over British fur traders operating near the Rocky Mountains. His narrative of the expedition presents hunting as a daily facet of life in the west, describing his party's frequent animal killing in a dispassionate and reportorial manner. A short report from October 17th, 1805 serves as a representatively perfunctory example: "It continued to snow. I walked out in the morning and killed four bears, and my hunter three deers."¹⁴⁶ Though such anecdotes were brief, their frequency and brutality served to establish the unending bounty of the West and burnish the heroic masculinity of the men who explored it. Hunting stories continued to appear frequently in the narratives that followed such as Englishman John Bradbury's *Travels in the Interior of America* (1819), Christian Schultz's, *Travels on an Inland Voyage through the States of New-York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Ohio, Kentucky and Tennessee, and through the Territories of Indiana, Louisiana, Mississippi and New-Orleans* (1819) and Morris Birkbeck's, *Notes on a Journey in America from the Coast of Virginia to the Territory of Illinois* (1818).¹⁴⁷ Discussions of hunting in these volumes tended to focus on the abundant and novel animals

¹⁴⁶ Z. M. Pike, *An Account of Expeditions to the Sources of the Mississippi, and Through the Western Parts of Louisiana, to the Sources of the Arkansaw, Kans, La Platte, and Pierre Jaun, Rivers; Performed by the Order of the Government of the United States During the Years 1805, 1806, and 1807*. (Philadelphia: C. & A. Conrad & Co., 1810), 35. Every few entries Pike includes a similarly dutiful (though sometimes with more flourish of detail) recording of the animals killed that day.

¹⁴⁷ John Bradbury, *Travels in the Interior of America in the Years 1809, 1810, and 1811* (London: Sherwood, Neely, and Jones, 1819); Christian Schultz, *Travels on an Inland Voyage through the States of New-York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Ohio, Kentucky and Tennessee, and through the Territories of Indiana, Louisiana, Mississippi and New-Orleans Performed in the Years of 1807 and 1808; Including a Tour of Nearly Six Thousand Miles* (New York: Printed by Isaac Riley, 1819); Morris Birkbeck, *Notes on a Journey in America from the Coast of Virginia to the Territory of Illinois* (London: Ridgway and Sons, 1818).

encountered in the West, the exploits of their own hunting parties, and the activities of white fur traders active in the region. The hunting practices of Native Americans who lived within the regions explored by these authors on the other hand received relatively little attention.

On the one hand, it is unsurprising that hunting would figure so prominently in the earliest visual and written accounts of white Americans who travelled to the West at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Such accounts recorded the experience of expeditions which ranged over vast distances in which hunted animals offered the only viable means of sustenance. In addition, the warrant of official government expeditions to establish commercial intercourse and assert American authority over fur traders brought them into frequent contact with white commercial hunters who mainly traded in beaver and buffalo hides. These early authors and explorers' lack of interest in reporting upon Native American hunting customs and practices reflected both official policy and public sentiment within the United States which held that the path to civilization for Native Americans required abandoning practices like hunting in favor of the adaptation to an agrarian lifestyle.¹⁴⁸ Although the emphasis on hunting in reports and images that filtered back eastward accorded with the reality of western exploration, it also served to posit the West as a place of unsettledness and violence, where one's survival depended upon the ability to kill for food and provide for one's safety. Images and accounts of exciting hunting exploits offered a dramatic hook for readers, but ultimately hunting and its associated violence

¹⁴⁸ For example, in Jefferson's instructions to Lewis he did instruct the Captain to investigate Native peoples' "occupations in agriculture, fishing, hunting, war, arts" but the overwhelming thrust of the United States' official policy was more fully reflected in his admonition that "And, considering the interest which every nation has in extending & strengthening the authority of reason & justice among the people around them, it will be useful to acquire what knowledge you can of the state of morality, religion, & information among them; as it may better enable those who may endeavor to civilize & instruct them, to adapt their measures to the existing notions & practices of those on whom they are to operate." Jefferson to Lewis, June 20, 1803, in Donald Jackson ed., *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* vol. 1, 1978, 62-3.

was presented as a challenge to be overcome, that stood in opposition to the rational and civilizing forces of white expansion.

While the Lewis and Clark expedition was widely hailed as a success for its ambitious scope and abundance of new geographic and scientific discoveries, it failed to establish an authoritative or wide-ranging pictorial record of the West and its inhabitants. When the United States government set forth another major expeditionary survey of the West 1818 and 1820 (known at the time as the Yellowstone expedition) a more concerted effort was undertaken to provide visual documentation and artistic intervention. Organized at the behest of Secretary of War John C. Calhoun under the authority of President James Monroe, the expedition consisted of two parts: a military contingent of around 1,000 men which set off in 1818 with the objective of reaching villages of the Mandan tribe on the Missouri River and the mouth of the Yellowstone River, and a scientific faction led by Major Stephen Long which set out from Pittsburgh in 1819 with the goal of exploring, surveying, and recording topography, natural history, and human culture found within the vast area east of the Rocky mountains and south of the Missouri River. Educated at Dartmouth College and a well-respected instructor at West Point, Long was given wide range to organize his party and recruit its members.¹⁴⁹ His charge from Secretary Calhoun was as broad as it was deep, containing instructions such as, “you will permit nothing worthy of notice, to escape your attention.”¹⁵⁰ To that end Long conscientiously sought to ensure the

¹⁴⁹ For biography of Long and history of his expeditionary career see William H. Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire: The Explorer and the Scientist in the Winning of the American West* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), 57-64 and Howard Ensign Evans, *The Natural History of the Long Expedition to the Rocky Mountains, 1819-1820* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). Kenneth Haltman, *Looking Close and Seeing Far: Samuel Seymour, Titian Ramsay Peale and the Art of the Long Expedition, 1818-1823* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008) presents a thoroughly researched and exhaustive history of the visual culture of the Long expedition and my brief discussion here relies upon this important source.

¹⁵⁰ Edwin James, *Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains, Performed in the Years 1819 and '20, By Order of The Hon. J.C. Calhoun, Sec'y of War, Under the Command of Major Stephen H. Long. From the Notes of Major Long, Mr. T. Say, and Other Gentlemen of the Exploring Party.* (Philadelphia: H.C. Carey and I. Lea, 1823), Reprint (Ann Arbor, University Microfilms, Inc., 1966), 4.

production of both written and visual accounts of their journey and discoveries. He engaged Thomas Say, a founding member of Philadelphia's Academy of Natural Sciences to serve as the zoologist, and nineteen-year-old Titian Ramsay Peale as assistant naturalist. Although officially a subordinate as assistant naturalist, Peale's artistic acumen, honed under the tutelage of his father Charles Willson Peale as well as from close study of the many specimens available to him at the Philadelphia Museum, served as a singular asset to the expedition's scientific aims. As Long explained in his instructions to the expedition members, Peale's role was not only to collect specimens, but to take charge of "drafting and delineating them, in preserving the skins, &c of animals, and in sketching the stratification of rocks, earths, &c."¹⁵¹ Samuel Seymour, an English-born artist who had established a reputation in Philadelphia as a painter and engraver of some accomplishment, was engaged as the expedition's official artist. His charge was to capture landscapes that were "distinguished for their beauty and grandeur," as well as formal portraits of Native Americans and depictions of ceremonial gatherings and everyday life.¹⁵²

By bringing along both Peale—a naturalist with a keen visual sense of investigation—and Seymour—a professional artist with highly developed aesthetic sensibility—Long ensured that the visual legacy of the expedition would extend beyond mere notation and scientific recording of facts. Kenneth Haltman has described the visual records produced from this journey as "hybrid" images: "at once fine art and scientific illustration, rubbing up against, even transgressing, the boundaries of genre." He argues that Peale and Seymour were both engaged in a larger process of genre redefinition which ushered in a new visual mode for understanding and

¹⁵¹ Edwin James, *Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains* (1823) 1966, 3.

¹⁵² Edwin James, *Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains* (1823) 1966, 3. The exact facts of Seymour's early life, including his place of origin, are not precisely known. For biography and discussion of his work see Haltman, *Looking Close and Seeing Far*, 2008, 33-38

accessing the West.¹⁵³ This mode can be seen in Francis Kearney's engraving after Seymour, *View of the Rocky Mountains, On the Platte, 50 Miles from their Base*, which accompanied Edwin James's narrative of the expedition published in 1822. (Figure 2.6) Here the artist has drawn upon highly refined landscape conventions of the picturesque and sublime to create a grand and imposing scene, which he has populated with abundant detail on the fauna, vegetation, and geologic topography of a region wholly unfamiliar to most eastern audiences. The resulting image approached the level of detail communicated across many pages of James's narrative and far surpassed it in terms of sentimental appeal, with written passages seeming almost prosaic by comparison:

Throughout the day we were approaching the mountains obliquely, and from our encampment, at evening we supposed them to be about twenty miles distant. Clouds were hanging about all the highest parts of the mountains, which were sometimes observed to collect together, and descend in showers, circumscribed to a limited district. This state of the weather obstructed the clearness, but added greatly to the imposing grandeur of some views, which the mountain presented.¹⁵⁴

In the absence of a well-established visual schema of the West, Seymour synthesized a representation that combined unfamiliar sights with established motifs in order to not only communicate information about the world that he and his party encountered but also to aestheticize such novel views and raise them to the status of art.

A prodigious observer of all he encountered on his journey, Peale's field drawings from the Long expedition demonstrate that the artist ventured well beyond his warrant to sketch animal specimens and rock formations.¹⁵⁵ While studies of animals dominate Peale's extant field

¹⁵³ Haltman, *Looking Close and Seeing Far*, 2008, 2.

¹⁵⁴ Edwin James, *Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains* (1823) 1966, 496. Certainly James approaches more eloquent and lyrical description elsewhere in the narrative.

¹⁵⁵ Peale's sketches are mainly housed at the Yale University Art Gallery and American Philosophical Society. See Robert Cushman Murphy, "The Sketches of Titian Ramsay Peale," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 101 no. 6 (December 19, 1957), 523-31 and Kenneth Haltman, "Private Impressions and Public Views: Titian Ramsay Peale's Sketchbooks from the Long Expedition, 1819-1820" *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin* (Spring, 1989), 38-53.

sketches, he also fixated upon the hunting practices of the Native Americans he encountered, producing a large number of sketches of figures in various stages of the hunt. (Figure 2.7, 2.8) That Peale would be gripped by scenes of Native American hunting was perhaps unsurprising given the important role that hunting had played in his father's work as a museum keeper and his own burgeoning career as a naturalist. Titian Ramsay Peale's namesake (the older Peale son, also named Titian Ramsay, who died a year before his birth) was Charles Willson Peale's most avid field assistant on many of his specimen collecting hunts. After the younger Titian Ramsay's turbulent childhood, hunting and natural history served as a means for connecting with and gaining the approval of his father.¹⁵⁶ The younger Titian Ramsay Peale had cut his teeth two years earlier as a hunter and naturalist on a journey through Florida with several prominent members of Philadelphia's Academy of Natural Sciences. Peale acquitted himself admirably as both a skilled hunter and hardy adventurer travelling through the dense and marshy territory then under Spanish control, where he and his party tracked and killed deer, pelican, parakeets, and alligator among other animals.¹⁵⁷

As a member of the Long Expedition, Peale continued to enthusiastically pursue hunting on his own initiative, to the esteem and appreciative nourishment of his colleagues. Edwin James related an episode in which Peale struck out from the group's winter encampment with a small hunting party and killed a dozen bison, ensuring that the expedition remained well-fed.¹⁵⁸ Peale's pen and ink sketch *Bison Hunt* (which Haltman has posited as a self-portrait) captures the

¹⁵⁶ For a more thorough examination of the often fraught relationships between Titian Ramsay Peale [2], his father, and his family's legacy see Kenneth Haltman, "Titian Ramsay Peale's Specimen Portraiture; or, Natural History as Family History," in Lillian Miller ed. *The Peale Family: Creation of a Legacy, 1770-1870* (Washington D.C.: National Portrait Gallery, 1996), 187-201.

¹⁵⁷ Charlotte M. Porter, "Following Bartram's 'Track': Titian Ramsay Peale's Florida Journey," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 61 no. 4 (April, 1983), 431-444. Porter's article is based upon, and includes a transcription of the manuscript account of the expedition written by a later descendant of Peale held in the Library, American Museum of Natural History, New York.

¹⁵⁸ Edwin James, *Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains* (1823) 1966, 191.

triumphant, if wanton, nature of such a hunt in which a massive dead bison lays at the feet of the foreground hunter who fires into the frantic herd of animals that recedes into a uniform mass of bodies and rising dust in the distance.¹⁵⁹ (Figure 2.9) In sketches of Native American's hunting, Peale isolated details, focusing more on the dexterity, skill, and alluring thrill of mounted hunters firing arrows from horseback. (Figures 2.10, 2.11) Numerous other images meanwhile explore these hunters' prey, depicting bison in numerous attitudes, alive, dying, and dead. (Figure 2.12) Such images compile a wealth of ethnographic and scientific facts derived from first hand observation.

Peale was not the first Euro-American artist to use bison imagery as an emblem of the North American continent and its inhabitants.¹⁶⁰ For example a vignette of a bison alongside two generic Native American figures illustrated the margins of Johann Baptista Homann's 1687 map of the Mississippi River Valley while Mark Catesby included a somewhat bemused looking bison, which he called an "awful creature" as one of only a handful of mammals among the hundreds of species found in *The Natural History of Carolina, Florida and the Bahama Islands*.¹⁶¹ (Figures 2.13, 2.14) Peale's innovation, however, was in intricately connecting the buffalo as prey animal with the hunting practices of Native Americans in a visual schema that would prove remarkably persistent as artists and their audiences strove to conceptualize the West in ensuing years.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ Haltman, *Looking Close and Seeing Far*, 2008, 136.

¹⁶⁰ See Larry Barsness, *The Bison in Art: A Graphic Chronicle of the American Bison* (Forth Worth: Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, 1977), 40-47.

¹⁶¹ Mark Catesby, *The natural history of Carolina, Florida and the Bahama islands: containing the figures of birds, beasts, fishes, serpents, insects, and plants: ... Together with their descriptions in English and French. ... To the whole, is prefixed [sic] a new and correct map of the countries treated of* (London: Benjamin White, 1771), Appendix, plate 20.

¹⁶² At this point it would be useful to illuminate the differing terms bison and buffalo used throughout this chapter. The species of animal that hunters and artists encountered in the West in the nineteenth century (and which still reside there today) are correctly known as American Bison, or the scientific name *Bos bos*. The American variant of the bison acquired the popular moniker buffalo by the nineteenth century and during this period that term was much

There are several possible reasons that Peale and later artists like Catlin fixated upon the buffalo as the most emblematic prey animal featured in western hunting scenes. As Brian Dippie has noted, European hunting art traditionally illustrated hunting in exotic locales through the depiction of large, distinctive prey animals such as crocodiles, ostriches and lions. Following this well-worn strategy, the massive buffalo offered American artists an unmistakably native example of prey that would visually distinguish western hunts.¹⁶³ The abundance of the buffalo, which ranged in massive herds over hundreds of miles, also offered a clear and powerful indication of the expansiveness of America's natural dominion. Furthermore, the characteristics of the buffalo hunt, particularly as carried out by some groups of Native Americans who pursued the animals on horseback, allowed artists the opportunity to revel in the visual spectacle of the hunt with all the characteristic vigor and manliness of European aristocratic hunts.

Peale's sketch of a Native American man riding at full gallop while turned rearward to fire at an unpictured animal as well as his numerous studies of bison would serve as the basis for the more elaborate lithograph *American Buffaloe* which illustrated the second volume of the short-lived periodical *The Cabinet of Natural History and American Rural Sports* in 1832.(Figure 2.15) In both sketch and lithograph the semi-nude figure appears masterfully in control of his horse, perfectly balanced, with his bow fully taut and ready to deliver what surely must be a mortal blow. Curiously, the accompanying text entry devoted considerable space to describing a harrowing buffalo hunting incident experienced by members of the Long Expedition but paid relatively little attention to explaining the methods of hunting depicted in the print.¹⁶⁴

more commonly used. Because this is a historical rather than a scientific study, I use the terms somewhat interchangeably but endeavor whenever possible to relate my usage most closely to its historical context. For more see Desmond Morris, *Bison* (London: Reaktion Books, Ltd, 2015), 10-12.

¹⁶³ Brian W. Dippie, "'Flying Buffaloes': Artists and the Buffalo Hunt," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 51 no. 2 (Summer 2001), 5.

¹⁶⁴ "American Buffalo or Bison," *The Cabinet of Natural History and American Rural Sports with Illustrations* 2 (Philadelphia: J & T Doughty, 1832) Reprint (Barre, Mass: Imprint Society, 1973), 102-104.

Nonetheless, Peale's image presents a compelling narrative in which Native American hunters engage in a geographically particular but timeless ritual of predation. Even Peale's depictions which omit human hunters such as *Bison Attacked by Coyotes* reinforced such notions by presenting the bison as emblematic of the brutal cycle of struggle and survival which governed life in the West. (Figure 2.16) Peale's vision of Native American hunting as thrillingly exotic and unfamiliar (in the manner of the chase, choice of prey, and appearance of hunters) yet rooted in the constancy of cultural ritual and natural order would serve as an important model for many of the artists who followed him west, particularly Catlin. Ultimately Peale and Seymour's expansive visual treatment and hybrid imagery offered more than simply a visual record, but established the West, and by extension its landscape, people, and their practices, as subjects worthy of the category of art.

This outline of the artists who preceded Catlin westward serves not simply as a prologue to that artist's career, but demonstrates that when Catlin set about to paint the figures and customs of the Native Americans west of the Mississippi River, he was not only stepping into a territory thoroughly crisscrossed by white settlers and explorers, but at the same time the West had already begun to develop a nascent visual idiom in which hunting played a central role. Hunting had already risen to the forefront of western narratives, as an activity emblematic of the excitement, unpredictability, violence, and romanticism of the West. Exceeding earlier artists in his ambition for the scale of representation and synthesis of imagery, Catlin envisioned an encyclopedic treatment of all aspects of Native American life in the West that would stand as an exemplar of science and art. Although Catlin relied upon a range of visual precedents, his vision more than any other figure in the first half of the nineteenth century would come to define the appearance of the West in the imaginations of a distant public

Hunting was an early personal preoccupation for Catlin that also characterized his perception of Native Americans from an early age. Much like Audubon, Catlin's narrative of his own biography emphasized that his upbringing and education were rooted in the unmediated experience of nature rather than formal institutional learning. Writing toward the end of his life he claimed, "In my early youth I was influenced by two predominant and inveterate propensities—those for hunting and fishing. My father and mother had great difficulty in turning my attention from these to books."¹⁶⁵ Nevertheless, Catlin did receive a more formal education, following his father's professional path toward the law by enrolling at Connecticut's Litchfield Law School in 1817. Though he only remained at Litchfield a single year, he was admitted to practice law in both Connecticut and Pennsylvania. The restless Catlin persisted only a short time at the practice of law before moving to Philadelphia with the aim of devoting himself more fully to the pursuit of an artistic career. Catlin's frequent emphasis on his hunting pursuits over academic study during his early upbringing offers an important insight into the way in which he perceived his subjects and positioned his life's work.¹⁶⁶ In his autobiography, hunting served as evidence of his innate curiosity and development of a more elemental form of knowledge. Through hunting, rather than books or art, he probed nature for inherent truths about the world around him. For Catlin, hunting was a tool for learning about both nature and human culture. Catlin's accounting of his youthful preoccupations with hunting late in his life accords closely with his self-fashioning as a hardy outdoorsman, thereby affirming the authority of his vision. However, his identification with less "civilized" values also reveals the ways in which a form of

¹⁶⁵ George Catlin, *Life Amongst the Indians: A Book for Youth* (London: Sampson Low, 1861), v.

¹⁶⁶ Catlin related his youthful hunting exploits in across many publications. For example he writes, "The early part of my life was while away, apparently, somewhat in vain, with books reluctantly held in one hand, and a rifle or fishing-pole firmly and affectionately grasped in the other." Catlin, *Letters and notes* vol. 1, 2.

ruggedness exemplified by western hunters had already come to be associated with an ascendant form of masculinity.

Hunting also structured Catlin's experience with Native Americans. In his biography Catlin recounted one of his earliest memories of an encounter with a Native American hunter in the woods near his family's home in eastern Pennsylvania's Susquehanna Valley. Young Catlin himself had been out hunting, and had tracked a deer to a clearing, but owing to nervousness had been unable to take the fatal shot. Catlin related that while he was drawing a bead on the animal, he heard a shot ring out from another rifle and another hunter emerged having felled the deer. Catlin described the figure with reminiscences of youthful exuberance: "What I never had seen before, nor ever dreamed of seeing in that place—the tall and graceful form, but half bent forward, as he pushed his red and naked shoulders and drew himself slowly over the logs and through the bushes, of a huge *Indian!*"¹⁶⁷ Catlin remained transfixed on the hunter, observing with a mix of terror and excitement the expert and brutal way in which he dispatched the deer with a knife across its neck and dressed the animal while suspended from a tree. By Catlin's words it would seem difficult to overstate the impact that this encounter had on the young artist: "No length of life could ever erase from my recollection the impression which this singular and unexpected scene made upon my infant mind, or the ease, and composure, and grace, with which this phantom seated himself upon the trunk of a large fallen tree, wiping his huge knife upon the moss and laying it by his side."¹⁶⁸ Catlin's reaction comprised both surprise at the figure's incongruence—as Native Americans had not been resident in that well-settled region for many decades—and recognition of the hunter's effortless command of the natural environment. The adult hunter seemed to innately possess the skills of observation and natural intelligence that

¹⁶⁷ Catlin, *Life Amongst the Indians*, 23-24.

¹⁶⁸ Catlin, *Life Amongst the Indians*, 24.

Catlin had been cultivating precociously as a young hunter. Catlin eventually overcame his fear and befriended the hunter who he discovered to be a member of the Oneida tribe, whose tribal lands had once encompassed the area around the Catlin family's property. Catlin and the hunter, who he referred to as On-o-gong-way, trade stories and gifts, including a quiver and arrows for young Catlin to hunt with, but sadly On-o-gong-way was later found murdered nearby the Catlin farm.¹⁶⁹ Though the strict veracity of the tale can never be fully known, Catlin's telling of it as a foundational myth within his own biography reveals an important insight into how he framed his understanding of Native Americans, and his own expertise on the subject. Hunting provided a common point of experience between the boy and man, which crossed cultural and social boundaries. Moreover hunting was an activity through which the Oneida hunter expressed his affinity with nature, on a more elemental level that Catlin had yet to be initiated.

This story of Catlin's formative encounter with a Native American outsider is less commonly related in the scholarship on the artist than the moment when as a middling portrait artist, he witnessed a delegation of Native Americans "from the wilds of the 'Far West,'" who passed through Philadelphia on the way to Washington D.C.¹⁷⁰ According to Catlin, the sight stirred within him a recognition of his true artistic purpose: to create an authoritative and complete artistic and historic record of Native American life in the West. Catlin was simultaneously struck with the realization that such an ambitious project could never be accomplished while remaining in the East. Catlin explained, "Man, in the simplicity and loftiness of his nature, unrestrained and unfettered by the disguises of art, is surely the most beautiful

¹⁶⁹ Throughout this chapter I have largely treats names of people, tribes, and places historically in employing the terms that Catlin used, or were accepted in Catlin's day. For a larger discussion of this encounter see Laurence M. Hauptman and George Hamell, "George Catlin: The Iroquois Origins of His Indian Portrait Gallery," *New York History* 84 no. 2 (Spring, 2003), 135-37.

¹⁷⁰ Catlin, *Letters and Notes* vol. 1, 2.

model for the painter,—and the country from which he hails is unquestionably the best study or school of the arts in the world: such I am sure, from the models I have seen, is the wilderness of North America.”¹⁷¹ Catlin’s overwhelming desire to treat Native Americans as subjects for his art was readily apparent from the enraptured way he described the elaborate costumes and ceremonial armaments, with which the party was “arrayed and equipped in all their classic beauty.”¹⁷² However, the necessity of traveling to the far away homelands of such figures appears less obvious from Catlin’s recounting of the chance meeting with the delegation in Philadelphia. Here, the story of the encounter with the Oneida hunter provides an important corollary to understanding Catlin’s motivations. By emphasizing the hunter’s easy facility with tracking and killing of animals, Catlin presents the hunter as existing within his natural state of wilderness and conducting himself according to customs inherent to his race. The traveling delegation appearing within a modern American city on the other hand were figures displaced; resplendent in their appearance, but according to Catlin clearly removed from the setting in which they fully embodied the characteristics inherent to all Native Americans. Catlin frequently expressed his opinion that civilization had a degrading effect on Native Americans, a theme that he would most fully express in his double portrait of Wi-jun-jon, known as Pigeon’s Egg Head or The Light, an Assiniboin warrior who travelled to Washington and returned to his home clad in U.S. military dress and exhibiting eastern mannerisms, to disastrous effect.¹⁷³ (Figure 2.17)

In Catlin’s view hunting was an activity that expressed the essential character of Native Americans and therefore it was an activity best understood and represented visually through on

¹⁷¹ Catlin, *Letters and Notes* vol. 1, 2.

¹⁷² Catlin, *Letters and Notes* vol. 1, 2.

¹⁷³ William H. Truettner, “Introduction,” *George Catlin’s Souvenir of the North American Indians: A Facsimile of the Original Album* (Tulsa, Okla: Gilcrease Museum, 2003), xxi, xxvii, note 23, provides an excellent summation of The Light’s ordeal. In *Letters and Notes* Catlin presented the man’s story as the paramount example of the deleterious effect of white society on Native Americans, vol 1. 55-57, vol 2., 194-200.

the spot observation, far from the depreciating influence of eastern civilization. A trip westward also offered Catlin the opportunity to indulge his own innate propensity for hunting and fishing. As he explained, the journey would not only bring him closer to his desired subjects, but “at the same time to place in my hands again, for my living and protection, the object of my heart above-named; which had long been laid by to rust and decay in the city, without the remotest prospect of again contributing to my amusement.”¹⁷⁴ Catlin was referring of course to his beloved hunting rifle and fishing-pole, which had presumably been waylaid for several years while he pursued legal studies and struggled to establish himself as a portraitist. More than simply contributing to his “amusement,” hunting seemed to offer Catlin a neutral ground with which to confront Native Americans, a natural point of affinity stripped of the trappings of civilization. However, it is also important to note that Catlin’s motivations for commencing his grand project to portray Native American life in situ in the West surely encompassed many additional factors beyond those he cited, including a desire to transcend the confines of itinerant portrait commissions, overcome professional rejection, achieve commercial success, and attain familial approval.¹⁷⁵ The signing into law of the Indian Removal Act in May 1830, which dictated that all Native American tribes residing east of the Mississippi be relocated to the West, perhaps added a sense of urgency to Catlin’s purpose.

Whatever his precise motivations, Catlin set about determinedly toward his goal and in 1830 arrived in St. Louis, at that point a burgeoning western metropolis and the gateway to the frontier. There he established contacts with important government figures, chiefly General William Clark, the explorer and former Governor of the Missouri Territory, who at that moment

¹⁷⁴ Catlin, *Letters and Notes* vol. 1, 2-3.

¹⁷⁵ For a deeper analysis of these motivations see Dippie, *Catlin and His Contemporaries*, 3-25, and Hausdoerffer, *Catlin’s Lament*, 21-23.

served as the Superintendent of Indian Affairs, a position in which he held titular authority over all of the western tribes. Catlin made several minor excursions with Clark from St. Louis, visiting forts and outposts in the western territories where he claimed to observe the signing of important treaties between tribes, and took the opportunity to produce a number of portraits, his first of Native American subjects in the West. (Figures 2.18, 2.19) Catlin may have returned east in order to drum up interest and funds in preparation for a more extensive expedition westward, but by the end of 1831 he had returned to St. Louis in anticipation of his first major foray up the Missouri River.¹⁷⁶ Catlin departed from St. Louis on March 26, 1832 aboard the *Yellow Stone*, a steamboat operated by the American Fur Company, traveling with the express permission of the Secretary of War. Major Steven Long had been the first to suggest the idea of using steam ships to traverse western rivers, and this voyage was to be the first by a steam vessel to travel all the way to the American Fur Company's furthestmost outpost at Fort Union, near the confluence of the Missouri and Yellowstone Rivers. Clearly energized to be on his first grand expedition, Catlin produced numerous studies of the river banks and landscapes nearby. (Figure 2.20) He traveled as the welcome guest of John Jacob Astor's American Fur Company and accompanied its western agent, Pierre Chouteau, Jr. on excursions along the way to meet with tribal delegations.¹⁷⁷

Fort Union had been constructed just a few years prior, following the American Fur Company's absorption of the Columbia Fur Company, one of the nation's leading traders in buffalo hides. The fort served as the company's main western outpost along the upper Missouri, and the former president of the Columbia Fur Company, a Scotsman Kenneth McKenzie,

¹⁷⁶ See Truettner, *The Natural Man Observed*, 18-20 for the most complete accounting of the artist's timeline during this period.

¹⁷⁷ Catlin, *Letters and Notes* vol. 1, 214.

oversaw its operation. Both Chouteau and McKenzie encouraged artists, scientists, and other well-to-do travelers like Catlin to and take up residence at the outpost. As learned as well as enterprising men (Chouteau possessed one of the most extensive libraries in the West) the Fur Company officials recognized the mutual benefit of fomenting fascination with the West among distant eastern audiences by encouraging its scientific and artistic exploration.¹⁷⁸ Upon arriving Catlin was given a studio space in the upper story of one of the fort's bastions and quickly set to work in a flurry of activity. Fort Union served as a major connecting point for commercial intercourse among the American Fur Company, Native American tribes, and trappers and hunters of various Euro-American national backgrounds. In addition, the fort was home to a semi-permanent population of tradesmen and support staff which included Europeans, free blacks, whites from the eastern United States, and members of a handful of different Native American tribes.¹⁷⁹ In exchange for furs and hides, Native American traders received a range of provisions from agents at the fort including weapons, manufactured and dry goods, and controversially, alcohol. Sometime during his stay, Catlin created a simple but evocative landscape which hints at the scale of commerce that sustained Fort Union. (Figure 2.21) Among a verdant and expansive landscape, the fort appears somewhat diminutive in the distance, surrounded by dozens of encampments of Native Americans who have come to conduct business there.

The cosmopolitan character of Fort Union would seem to offer a disappointing contrast to the unadulterated experience of Native American life, free from Euro-American contact, that Catlin had envisioned while back in Philadelphia. Though he had penetrated the West to a distance few other artists had ventured, Catlin largely followed the track of previous expeditions

¹⁷⁸ Fort Union hosted Duke Paul Wilhelm of Württemberg, Prince Maximilian of Wied-Neuwid, John James Audubon, and Lewis Henry Morgan, among others. Barton H. Barbour, *Fort Union and the Upper Missouri Fur Trade* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 66.

¹⁷⁹ Barbour, *Fort Union*, 111, 116.

that had functioned as outgrowths of U.S. government military and Indian policy and the fur trade. Around Fort Union Catlin was not to meet his chosen subjects in an ideologically pure environment free of contact with whites (if such a situation could even have been found anywhere in the American West), but rather at the business end of a vast corporate empire that engaged in trade with Native Americans in resources for luxury goods obtained through the hunting and killing of animals. Catlin, however, seemed undeterred and unbothered by such complications. Shortly after arriving at the fort he proclaimed in a letter published in the *New York Commercial Advertiser*, “Yet am I surrounded by living models of such elegance and beauty, that I feel unceasing excitement of a much higher order—the certainty that I am drawing knowledge from the true source.”¹⁸⁰ Although such statements may have expressed some sincerity, the artist carefully constructed an aura of self-assurance as a means to burnish his reputation as a true chronicler of the West. Befitting his immense confidence, Catlin threw himself into his work, embarking on the most productive period of his career. Later estimates credit Catlin with producing around 170 paintings during his five month journey up the Missouri.¹⁸¹ From his Fort Union studio Catlin received a steady flow of visitors who sat for portraits from surrounding tribes including the Assiniboin, Crow, Blackfoot, and Plains Ojibwa.¹⁸² (Figures 2.22, 2.23) Adhering closely to his stated artistic objectives to depict the true aspects of Native American experience, Catlin took little notice of the diverse cadre of residents and temporary travelers at the fort, and produced very few images of non-Native American subjects while there.

¹⁸⁰ George Catlin, “Nature and Art” *New York Commercial Advertiser* (July 24, 1832). Catlin dated the letter June 17th, around the same time he arrived at Fort Union.

¹⁸¹ Dippie, *Catlin and His Contemporaries*, 27; Truettner, *The Natural Man Observed*, 23.

¹⁸² For the sake of clarity, I have followed Catlin’s use of nineteenth-century naming conventions.

Beyond the sheer volume of work Catlin undertook, the quality of his painting blossomed and some of the most powerful and captivating portraits of his career can be dated to this period. *Sha-có-pay, The Six, Chief of the Plains Ojibwa* offers a typically accomplished example of the genre, representing the imposing and ornately dressed leader of the Ojibwas in a bust length portrait in three-quarters profile. On the one hand the portrait hews closely to conventions of the day. The standard pose, resolute expression, and indistinct background, deviate little from the period's standard portrait practices, exemplified by Catlin's associate John Neagle. However, Catlin distinguishes himself (and his sitter) through the elaboration of detail in the middle-aged man's dress, as well as his highly sympathetic portrayal of the important leader's character and disposition, which the artist had gleaned through his contact with his family and his familiarity with other members of the Ojibwa tribe. In *Letters and Notes* Catlin writes that he was attracted to Sha-có-pay's "beautiful dress" which he explains was adorned with scalp locks taken from the heads of vanquished enemies. Catlin explains that his shirt contains painted representations, which he calls "curious hieroglyphics" of the battles and historical events of his life, reinforcing Catlin's painting's status as not simply a likeness, but a historical portrait.¹⁸³ Catlin also relates that Sha-có-pay possessed "a dignity of manner, and pride and vanity, just about in proportion to his bulk." These complex and compelling inner characteristics are conveyed in a manner which both emphasizes the leader's dignity but also his capacity for terrifying violence.

In *Medicine Man, Performing His Mysteries Over a Dying Man*, Catlin depicts a ritual he witnessed in which a Medicine Man performed a ceremony over a Blackfeet chief who was fatally wounded by malicious gunfire at Fort Union. The resultant full-length figure does not portray an individual but rather works to construct a stereotype. Catlin records the intricacies of

¹⁸³ Catlin, *Letters and Notes* vol. 1, 58.

his elaborate costume which included a full bear skin, with the head still attached, that the man wore as a mask, as well as the skins and body parts of numerous other animals including snakes, frogs, bats, deer, goats, and antelope. Dressed in an amalgam of animal garb, Catlin reported that the Medicine Man proceeded to perform a “rattling din of and discord of all of which, he added the wild and startling jumps and yelps of the Indian, and the horrid and appalling grunts, and snarls, and growls of the grizzly bear, in ejaculatory and guttural incantations to the Good and Bad spirits, in behalf of his patient.”¹⁸⁴ Catlin’s painting and its subsequent description emphasized the foreignness of the scene he witnessed, which would have been totally unfamiliar to most eastern audiences. For Catlin the exotic character of the ritual, essentially a form of last rites, was heightened by the conflation of animal and human elements. The melding of Native Americans and their natural environment was a common visual strategy employed to accentuate the primitiveness of Native American cultures.¹⁸⁵ In Catlin’s view the Medicine Man’s hybrid state reflected the deep connections between the Native American culture and the realm of animals, a theme that he would return to in his hunting images. While Catlin did not necessarily embellish or fabricate aspects of the Blackfoot religious custom, his accentuation of the animalistic aspects of the ceremony, absent any significant context, repurposed its meaning away from its actual religious or spiritual application, toward Catlin’s larger essentializing narrative. Catlin’s depiction is that of a hybrid creature, conflating human and animal and presenting Native Americans as occupying a similar existential plane to the animals they invoked for ceremonial purposes.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁴ Catlin, *Letters and Notes* vol. 1, 40.

¹⁸⁵ See Truettner, *Painting Empires and Building Empires in North America*, 25, 109.

¹⁸⁶ Elsewhere in similarly demeaning example, taken from a book intended for young readers, Catlin related the existence of Native Americans to that of children: “...halting but for one impression more, which I deem it important you should start with, and never lose sight of for a moment when you are estimating the character, the thoughts, the actions, the condition, and the wrongs of these poor people to be set forth in this little book—that they are *children*—like yourselves in many senses of the word. They are without the knowledge of the arts of civilized

Catlin did not remain stationary at Fort Union but ventured out to experience the landscape and visit Native American settlements further from the orbit of the trading post. One of his principal attractions and amusements were the numerous buffalo hunts carried out near the fort, which Catlin participated in on a near daily basis.¹⁸⁷ These hunts were a common occurrence according to Catlin and often were conducted within view of the fort, or only a mile or two distant.¹⁸⁸ Though his entire journey was undertaken in order to witness the practices of Native Americans, Catlin's first experience of a buffalo hunt occurred with officials and hunters from the American Fur Company, who set out to acquire meat to supply the fort. Catlin quickly became caught up in the excitement of the chase, pursuing a massive bull bison which had separated from the herd:

My first shot seemed to have no effect, but the second one brought him down upon his knees and the herd passed on.... When I got relieved from the herd, I reloaded and rode back to my noble prize, who had risen up, and stood balancing his huge carcass on three legs, one of his shoulders being broken. His frightful mane was raised and his eyes bloodshot with madness and rage as he was making lunges at me, and tumbling partly at the ground at each attempt.¹⁸⁹

Captivated by the brute violence and thrilling spectacle, Catlin only later realized that his first errant shot had in fact wounded his own horse.

The painting *Batiste and I Running Buffalo, Mouth of the Yellowstone* captures the excitement and high stakes of Catlin's first encounter with buffalo hunting. (Figure 2.24) The work depicts Francis Chardon, an employee of the American Fur Company and expert hunter, at a perilous moment of that first hunt in which a buffalo he had wounded moments earlier squared

man; they are feeble; they are in the ignorance and innocence of nature, with no real parent but the Great Spirit, whom they all acknowledge. In their relationship with civilized people they are like orphans." Catlin, *Life Amongst the Indians*, 2-3.

¹⁸⁷ Catlin, *Letters and Notes* vol. 1, 26.

¹⁸⁸ George Catlin, "From Our Correspondent," *New York Commercial Advertiser* (October, 20, 1832).

¹⁸⁹ Catlin, *Life Amongst the Indians*, 110-11.

up against his horse, catapulting the hapless Chardon yards through the air. Only slightly bruised and bewildered, Chardon recovered quickly while the bull lay vanquished. Catlin's representation of his first hunt showcased the speed and excitement of the chase, couching the danger posed to the hunters in the slightly comic manner in which he depicts their foibles. Catlin was clearly invigorated by the experience of hunting and its visual potential, but he was not without misgivings. Catlin related an account of a hunt sometime later in which a herd passed by unseen, allowing him to fire rapidly, killing at least a dozen bison in a few short minutes. Describing the aftermath Catlin wrote: "This wanton slaughter, which I always regretted, was easy, was simple, and wicked; because Ba'tiste and Bogard had got meat enough to last us for several days. Not even the skins, the tongues, nor the humps of these poor creatures were taken, but were left for the wolves to devour." Clearly moved by the scene he had witnessed Catlin added, "I never shot for the mere pleasure of killing after that."¹⁹⁰ While Catlin's resolution might seem assuring, it raises the question whether he had previously killed solely for pleasure. Certainly many white easterners and Europeans did travel to the West to hunt as a form of leisure and masculine performance. This type of hunting largely escaped Catlin's view. Instead he focused on what he considered unadulterated forms of Native American hunting for subsistence or trade.

Catlin did however continue to take a keen interest in the buffalo, depicting it in many different attitudes of life and death. Catlin produced a number of finished paintings of buffalo based on his first extended encounters with the animals around the upper Missouri. These ranged from straightforward depictions such as *Buffalo Bull Grazing on the Prairie* to baroque portrayals of bloodied beasts like *Wounded Buffalo, Strewing His Blood Over the Prairies*.

¹⁹⁰ Catlin, *Life Amongst the Indians*, 117-18.

(Figure 2.25, 2.26) The intricate attention Catlin paid to the animals and their attitudes indicates that the artist regarded the animal as an essential feature of western life. Paintings like the *Buffalo Bull* and its correspondent *Buffalo Cow, Grazing on the Prairie* borrowed somewhat from the conventions of Natural History, presenting the animals in a standard pose shown in stark profile view against a featureless landscape. (Figures 2.25, 2.27) Although the species of American Bison was already commonly known throughout the eastern United States and beyond, Catlin's depictions offer some of the most lifelike portrayals yet seen in American art. Catlin paid particular attention to the weight and heft of the animals, as well the peculiar character of their hides and the dense mane that surrounded their head and shoulders—traits that would have stood out in particular to those who hunted the animal for food and fur.

Catlin keenly recognized the importance of the animal to Native American life, proclaiming, "The Buffaloes (Bisons) of North America are the largest and most useful animal browsing on the great plains of the Far West....These animals have been the great staple of the Indians of the prairies since time immemorial, who believe that the Great Spirit created them expressly for their use."¹⁹¹ Catlin subscribed to the popularly held belief that the fates of the buffalo and that of Native Americans were inextricably linked, and as the animal species teetered toward annihilation so too the humans who relied upon them stood at the precipice of destruction. Catlin further believed that the historical association between Native Americans and Bison had ancient roots.¹⁹² As such, his images of buffalo go beyond mere tenets of natural

¹⁹¹ George Catlin, *The North Americans in the Middle of the Nineteenth Century, A Numerous and Noble Race of Human Beings Fast Passing to Oblivion & Leaving No Monuments of their Own Behind Them* (Unpublished Manuscript) Huntington Library, Plate 118.

¹⁹² During the nineteenth century numerous scholarly debates surrounded the construction of a history of Native Americans. See Steven Conn, *History's Shadow: Native Americans and Historical Consciousness in the Nineteenth Century* (University of Chicago Press, 2006). Recent scholarship has demonstrated the relative newness of the relationship between Native American cultures and the bison, which arose with the massive expansion of the fur trade in the nineteenth century. See for example Jeanne Kay, "Native Americans in the Fur Trade and Wildlife Depletion" *Environmental Review* 9 no. 2 (Summer, 1985), 118-30.

history to describe and fix the physical attributes of the animal, and stand as something of a record or monument to a moment in time in which human and animal history intersected.

In his *Notes on the State of Virginia* Thomas Jefferson was one of the earliest authors to propose that the buffalo as an exemplar of the natural bounty of the American continent. In a chart comparing the relative size of European and North American animals Jefferson placed the buffalo at the top, listing its massive weight at 1,800 pounds and noting that it had no European counterpart.¹⁹³ Though it is unclear whether Mark Catesby ever actually encountered the animal, he confidently asserted in his *Natural History* that bison “ranged[d] in droves” and that they were a primary staple of Native American diet and manufacture. By the nineteenth century explorers like John B. Wyeth, who joined an expedition organized by his cousin to establish an outpost in the Oregon territory, not only marveled at the expanse of animals that covered the plains, but confidently asserted their right to possession of such treasures. Wyeth recounted, “Buffaloes were plenty enough. We saw them in plentiful droves, as far as the eye could reach, appearing at a distance as if the ground itself was moving like the sea.... Our company after killing ten or twelve of them, never enjoyed the benefit of more than two of them, the rest being carried off by the wolves before morning.”¹⁹⁴ Despite widespread belief in the inexhaustibility of the buffalo herds, Catlin was among the first to voice warning that the rampant slaughter of the animal to satisfy eastern hide markets would lead to the annihilation of the species. Catlin wrote that despite the buffaloes’ vast numbers, one had to “contemplate it so rapidly wasting from the world, drawing the irresistible conclusion too, which one must do, that its species is soon to be extinguished, and with it the peace and happiness (if not the actual existence) of the tribes of

¹⁹³ Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 51. The buffalo was the first extant species listed, just under the mammoth.

¹⁹⁴ John B. Wyeth, *Oregon, or, A Short History of a Long Journey from the Atlantic Ocean* (Cambridge: Printed for John B. Wyeth, 1833), 30.

Indians who are joint tenants with them, in the occupancy of these vast and idle plains.”¹⁹⁵

Although Catlin’s hunting images express the interconnectedness between Native Americans and the buffalo, they reveal little of his dire warning of either’s extinction. Such dissonance played a necessary and useful role in promoting the forces of expansion despite the mounting evidence of its costs.

In such a light Catlin’s group of paintings of mortally wounded bison, pictured in a bloody frenzy and the throes of death, take on even deeper sense of macabre. (Figure 2.28) Catlin first took the opportunity to sketch one of these dying animals during his very first hunt, when after wounding a large bull he circled around to capture its dying moments. Not content to let the animal die in peace, he rode around it several times, throwing his hat in order to rouse and agitate the poor creature into a new pose or expression.¹⁹⁶ The pathos with which Catlin portrayed wounded animals, as in *Dying Buffalo, Shot with an Arrow* belies such cruel tactics, instead casting the animal’s suffering as gruesome, but nevertheless dignified and necessary. In a later description of this death struggle Catlin relates the brutality of such a violent scene:

The Buffalo is an animal extremely tenacious of life, and oftentimes the Bulls...shot through the heart, will hold this position for ten or fifteen minutes, gushing out the blood at their mouth and nostrils at every breath; and at the last gush, they fall dead (and generally on their backs) without the movement of a muscle or a limb after they fall. It is a singular trait in natural history, and difficult to account for.¹⁹⁷

Catlin’s death scenes offer an unequivocal conclusion to the narrative of the buffalo’s life cycle. Although the intensity of Catlin’s depictions suggests a deeper meaning beyond the simple life and death of a single creature, such violence was also naturalized as an inevitable outcome of the hunt. In such a view hunting was simultaneously key to Native Americans’ livelihood but also

¹⁹⁵ Catlin, *Letters and Notes*, vol. 1, 261.

¹⁹⁶ Catlin, *Letters and Notes* vol. 1, 26-7

¹⁹⁷ George Catlin, *The North Americans in the Middle of the Nineteenth Century*, Plate 126.

necessitated the brutal death of the very species that Catlin and other white writers and historians insisted was integral to their history and culture. Catlin's omission of such complicated interrelationships within his hunting scenes (despite his acknowledgment of their complexities in his writings) represents one of the key fictions that proved central to his visual mythology of the West. While the type of hunting that Catlin witnessed was largely instigated at the behest of whites in support of the fur industry, Catlin stridently depicted such scenes as authentic expressions of Native American culture.

Catlin also took a keen interest in the particularities of the hunting practices of the Native Americans he encountered along the upper Missouri and produced numerous depictions of different aspects of the hunt. The principal attraction for Catlin in terms of visual and ethnographic interest was the Buffalo hunt, which Catlin and many others considered to display essential aspects of Native American identity and character. According to Catlin, the Buffalo hunt was the means by which the Native American "obtains the food for his family, and most of the comforts and luxuries of Indian life."¹⁹⁸ In paintings like *Buffalo Chase, a Single Death* Catlin expanded upon the simple visual formula established by Peale of high stakes, close combat between hunter and prey, undertaken at great speed and proving considerable skill on the part of the hunter. (Figure 2.2) Though some eastern audiences might have read accounts of buffalo hunts from explorers and scientists and perhaps been aware of the scant visual records of this type of hunt, Catlin's wide ranging treatment of the visual spectacle afforded by the practice would have been almost completely unfamiliar to most who encountered it. In formulating a new visual paradigm for picturing buffalo hunting, Catlin sought to present a range of scenes that provided an encyclopedic and exhaustive view of the hunt. Paintings showcased the size of the

¹⁹⁸ George Catlin, *The North Americans in the Middle of the Nineteenth Century*, Plate 121.

herd and shape of the terrain in *Buffalo Chase over Prairie Bluffs* while others illustrated dangerous entanglements of horses, hunters, and bison as in *Buffalo Chase, Bulls Making Battle with Men and Horses*. (Figures 2.29, 2.30) Other more complex works like *Buffalo Chase, a Surround by the Hidatsa* depict scenes that are less easy to decipher without Catlin's narration of the events. (Figure 2.31) This particular episode captures a hunt that Catlin witnessed after being invited to join a hunt with the Minataree tribe. Catlin recounted, "The plan of attack, which in this country is familiarly called a 'surround,' was explicitly agreed upon, and the hunters who were all mounted on their 'buffalo horses' and armed with bows and arrows or long lances, divided into two columns, taking opposite directions, and drew themselves gradually around the herd at a mile or more distance from them; thus forming a circle of horsemen at equal distances apart, who gradually closed in upon them with a moderate pace." The painting shows the moments after the herd has been completely encircled and as Catlin put it, "the work of death commenced."¹⁹⁹ Catlin included other curious or singular episodes such as the method by which Native American hunters used animal skins to disguise themselves when approaching a buffalo herd or scenes of battle with a pair of fearsome Grizzly bears among these depictions of hunting. (Figure 2.32) These were balanced with scenes of the chase which depicted the hunt in a more straightforward but no less thrilling manner.

In these first efforts at capturing the broad spectrum of hunting practices Catlin developed a style that emphasized visual communication through directness and simplicity in order to portray the essential values of the hunt as he saw them, such as excitement, peculiarity, and brutality. In paintings like *Buffalo Chase, Mouth of the Yellowstone* the abundant details of wounded and dead buffalo, bounding horsemen, and streaming herd appear more as brief

¹⁹⁹ Catlin, *Letters and Notes* vol. 1, 200.

notations rather than highly naturalistic representations. (Figure 2.33) The approach of these hunting scenes differs dramatically from his portraits produced around the same time which present highly naturalistic depictions that seem to strive for lifelikeness and accuracy. This disparity in style in manner might in part be explained by Catlin's lack of formal training. Although he had benefitted from his close association with portraitists including John Neagle, he had little background in more complex formal arrangements and in fact had been criticized roundly by members of the National Academy of Design when he had previously attempted more ambitious compositions.²⁰⁰ The more notational manner of the hunting scenes also might owe something to the circumstances of their creation, as Truettner contends that most of these canvases were completed during the subsequent winter and spring after Catlin had returned from the Upper Missouri.²⁰¹ In some instances this required considerable synthesis and creativity on the part of the artist. In the winter hunting scene *Buffalo Chase in Snowdrifts, Indians Pursuing on Snowshoes* for example Catlin depicts the hunters in summer war dress, presumably because he had never witnessed a wintertime hunt, having returned from the Upper Missouri by the early autumn of 1832.²⁰² (Figure 2.34)

The broadness of Catlin's hunting scenes (as compared to the more detailed and refined portraits) was also perhaps a compositional strategy intended to bolster their authenticity in the eyes of many contemporary viewers.²⁰³ In a testament included in the front of the catalogue for a

²⁰⁰ See William Dunlap *A History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States* vol. 2 (New York: George P. Scott and Co., 1834) who described Catlin's full length portrait of New York Governor De Witt Clinton as "utterly incompetent" and "the worst full-length which the city of New-York possesses," 378.

²⁰¹ Treuttner, *The Natural Man Observed*, 23.

²⁰² See John C. Ewers, *George Catlin, Painter of Indians and the West* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1956), 500..

²⁰³ See Joan Carpenter Troccoli, *First Artist of the West: George Catlin Paintings and Watercolors from the Collection of the Gilcrease Museum* (Tulsa: Gilcrease Museum, 1993), 30-32. Troccoli details how Catlin emphasized the sketchiness of his works and their speed of execution as a means to appeal to romantic conventions and thereby bolster his artistic authority.

London showing of the Indian Gallery, William Clark opined, “The Landscapes, Buffalo-Hunting Scenes, &c above mentioned, I have seen, and although it has been thirty years since I travelled over that country, yet a considerable number of them I recognized as faithful representations, and the remainder of them are so much in the peculiar character of that country as to seem entirely familiar to me.”²⁰⁴ Clark’s affirmation makes clear that although such scenes lacked certain specific details that might identify the Native American tribe shown hunting, or the precise location of the hunt, they evoked a more universal association with the “peculiar” aspects of western life by focusing on novel aspects of western hunting. Such scenes included just enough visual information to validate viewers’ expectations of western tableaux, even as such expectations were being actively shaped by Catlin’s novel imagery. This approach required considerable editing on the part of the artist, who was in fact picturing a practice that was neither deeply ingrained nor free of outside influence. Rather, the buffalo hunts that Catlin witnessed and depicted in his first summer along the Missouri River and later years in the West were largely carried out in response to and governed by the American and European fur trade and its outposts which brought ever increasing cultural and economic influence from the East. Despite his stated intentions to create an encyclopedic and accurate record of the intricacies of Native American life, from the outset Catlin’s hunting images indeed relied upon stereotype. Catlin drew upon popular characterizations of Native Americans in art and literature, and well-worn tropes of hunting imagery. This strategy proved largely successful with audiences who visited early exhibitions of the Indian Gallery in the United States. A review in the Philadelphia newspaper *The North American* praised Catlin’s views of western scenery and complimented the

²⁰⁴ *A Descriptive Catalogue of Catlin’s Indian Gallery: Containing Portraits, Landscapes, Costumes &c. And Representations of Manners and Customs of the North American Indians. Collected and Painted Entirely by Mr. Catlin, During Seven Years’ Travel Amongst 48 Tribes, Mostly Speaking Different Languages* (London: C. Adlard, 1840), 31.

buffalo hunting scenes in particular: “the habits of the Buffalo, singly and in droves, is given with a finished effect and leads to a perfect realization of their living and ranges, under every circumstance and condition, and from the rude attack of the Indian in open chase with bow and arrow, or the hunt through the drifted snow-swamped vallies with all his wiles and artifices, to the white man’s more improved and certain implements for destruction.”²⁰⁵ The hunting works clearly resonated with the author’s conception of Native American customs which were defined by their novelty, exoticism, and opposition to those practiced by whites.

Catlin’s first extensive journey into the lands west of the Mississippi in 1832 inaugurated a frenzied period lasting several years of travel, field study, studio work, and exhibition that culminated in the creation of the massive Indian Gallery. After devoting most of his time in 1833 to working up his sketches and studies in the studio, in the spring of 1834 Catlin joined a military expedition to the Southwest to make contact with the Comanche tribes. Catlin produced numerous portraits of Comanche dignitaries as well as scenes of compelling episodes such as *Comanche Feats of Horsemanship* which documents the impressive acrobatics of a party of Comanche who rode out to meet the dragoons with whom Catlin had been travelling. (Figure 2.35). During the next two years Catlin continued his pattern of travelling westward during the spring and summer, sometimes in the company of his wife Clara, and spending the autumn and winter working in the studio and exhibiting and lecturing in more eastern cities including New Orleans, Pittsburgh, and Cincinnati.²⁰⁶ By 1837 Catlin had amassed hundreds of paintings and numerous artifacts which formed the monumental exhibition he referred to as the Indian Gallery. Although he had shown works frequently in piecemeal during the preceding years, his first major

²⁰⁵ “Mr. Catlin’s Views of the Far West,” *The North American* (April 27, 1839)

²⁰⁶ My outline of this frenetic period of Catlin’s career is necessarily truncated, as its sequence has been well documented by other authors, particularly Truettner, *The Natural Man Observed*, 20-39.

endeavor to exhibit the entire ensemble was mounted at New York City's Clinton Hall, and in September, 1837 and later moved to the Stuyvesant Institute to accommodate swelling crowds. The exhibition was accompanied by the first catalogue of his collection which listed a staggering 494 paintings.²⁰⁷ The entries were organized into categories—portraits, (subdivided by tribe or nation), landscapes, sporting scenes, amusements, manners and customs, and Mandan religious ceremony—which likely corresponded closely to the installation of works within the exhibition hall. The bulk of the exhibition, representing more than 300 paintings was comprised of portraits.

The hunting works, included in the “Sporting Scenes” section, numbered only eighteen canvases, most of which were produced from Catlin's first campaign in 1832-33. Despite the hunting works' relatively small footprint in the exhibition, they tended to provoke favorable mentions among reviewers who visited the exhibition in New York, and in subsequent cities of Washington D.C., Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Boston which Catlin toured the exhibition throughout 1838 and 1839. The hunting images and scenes of everyday life, along with artifacts and objects of Native American manufacture purported to offer a less mediated view of Native American life as it existed in the distant West. In addition to the paintings and objects on display, Catlin delivered a near daily lecture alongside the exhibition in which he recounted his first-hand observations of the intricacies of Native American life. A reviewer writing in the Washington D.C. paper *Daily National Intelligencer* asserted, “There has perhaps never been a *real Indian*—one totally unacquainted with the name of *whites* or their existence, and entirely uncontaminated with the vice and weakness which always accompany the first step of the white man—in Washington. These portraits, scenes, and curiosities come from regions which the white man has

²⁰⁷ George Catlin, *Catalogue of Catlin's Indian Gallery of Portraits, Landscapes, Manners and Customs, Costumes, &C. &C.* (New York: Piercy & Reed, 1837). Truettner points out that the walls of the exhibition probably included fewer paintings as some corresponded to multiple entries in the catalogue, *Natural Man Observed*, 36.

never trod before, and have a value which can be known only by sight.”²⁰⁸ While portraiture formed the bulk of the exhibition, the scenes of hunting, sport, dances, and other ceremonies activated Catlin’s subjects for eastern audiences and seemed to offer a glimpse into the uncorrupted and unfamiliar life of the nation’s indigenous inhabitants in the West. Despite the generally favorable reception Catlin received in each of the cities in which he exhibited, his larger goal of securing fame and fortune through the U.S. Congress’s purchase of the Indian Gallery eluded him.²⁰⁹ With his prospects in the United States uncertain at best, Catlin set sail for Europe in November 1839, arriving first in Liverpool before making his way to London.

If Catlin’s experiences travelling throughout the American West formed the initial creative basis for his art, it was in Europe that he fully developed the ancillary skills of exhibition, promotion, and publication which marked his arrival as a professional artist and earned him an international reputation as the foremost chronicler of Native American life. Catlin’s primary objective upon arriving in England was the exhibition of his Indian Gallery, a venture which he hoped would not only earn him the esteem of English audiences but also prove commercially successful. Catlin booked rooms in one of London’s premier exhibition venues, the Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly. A new catalogue was published for the occasion which listed more than 500 paintings, with the hunting works swelling slightly to comprise 23 entries.²¹⁰ The British reception to the exhibition was generally positive and attendance steady but not overwhelming, spurring Catlin to supplement his lectures and exhibits with theatrics, first by dressing himself in Native American regalia and then by hiring London actors to dress as Native

²⁰⁸ “Mr. Catlin’s Exhibition,” *Daily National Intelligencer* (April 16, 1838)

²⁰⁹ See Dippie, “Green Fields and Red Men,” in *George Catlin and His Indian Gallery* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian American Art Museum, 2002), 60-61.

²¹⁰ George Catlin, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Catlin's Indian Gallery; Containing Portraits, Landscapes, Costumes, Etc., and Representations of the Manners and Customs of the North American Indians* (Londo: C. & J. Adlard Printers, ca., 1840). The catalogue is in the collection of the Archives of American Art, George Catlin Papers.

Americans and reenact scenes of war and domestic life. These performances, which the artist called *tableaux vivants*, sustained moderate interest in Catlin's exhibition as it toured throughout Britain for the next two years, but Catlin truly achieved breakthrough success in 1843 when he engaged a group of nine Ojibwe to join the show. The exhibition of living Native Americans had a long and controversial history in Britain, and Catlin did not escape criticism for his employment of these individuals, though he stridently defended himself against any accusations of impropriety declaring, "In justice to *me*, it should here be known to the reader, that I did not bring either of these parties to Europe."²¹¹ Despite any misgivings among the public to Catlin's exploitation of the Ojibwe, their addition proved a tremendous success, leading to an invitation from Queen Victoria to bring his exhibition to Windsor Castle.

Having seemingly exhausted his audience in England, Catlin moved the exhibition, along with a new group consisting of members of the Iowa tribe, to France where King Louis Philippe invited the group to exhibit in the galleries of the Louvre. (Figure 2.36) During more than a year spent on the Continent Catlin was the toast of European nobles and intellectuals, meeting Eugène Delacroix, Charles Baudelaire, and the King Leopold of Belgium who invited Catlin to bring his exhibit to Brussels.²¹² Despite his ambitious exhibition schedule which greatly enhanced his reputation, financial success eluded Catlin, and he seemingly remained no closer to his goal of stimulating the United States' government to purchase the Indian Gallery. In 1846 a correspondent in the *Daily National Intelligencer* regaled Washington D.C. readers with tales of

²¹¹ Despite Catlin's protestations, there has been little agreement on what precisely motivated the group's travel to Europe. George Catlin, *Catlin's Notes of Eight Years' Travels and Residence in Europe, with The North American Indian Collection* (London: Published by the Author, 1848), vi. For more discussion of the complex history of Native American exhibition in Europe see Christian F. Feest, ed., *Indians and Europe* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989).

²¹² The Brussels exhibition ended in utter tragedy. A new group of Ojibwe had joined Catlin's exhibition before Brussels where seven of the eight-member party caught smallpox and leaving two Ojibwe dead. Christopher Mulvey "George Catlin in Europe" in *George Catlin and His Indian Gallery*, 2002, 75.

Catlin's many European triumphs, but insisted "In the midst of these honors Mr. C. appears to have one ambition above all others, and that is, that the Government of his own country may deem his works worth of attention, and that the collection may find a resting place under its protection, where it would be his greatest ambition to complete and arrange it, to be preserved to future ages as enduring memorials of a noble and dying race."²¹³ In addition to exhibiting, while in France Catlin continued to add to the Indian Gallery, producing a considerable number of new hunting works. Truettner places these hunting works in a separate stylistic and thematic category from those produced during his earlier campaigns along the Missouri River, proposing that these were meant to appeal to European audiences' tastes for the mythic "Wild West," and at their best offer only "nostalgic recollections of actual events from the artist's past."²¹⁴ Certainly in comparison with earlier efforts, works like *Catlin and Party Stalking Buffalo in Texas* and *Sioux Indians on Snowshoes Lancing Buffalo* appear cruder in execution and amplify the goriness of the pictured violence. (Figures 2.37, 2.38) The addition of these works to the Gallery though gives insight into the ways in which the expectations and preconceptions of audiences with virtually no direct knowledge of Native American subjects continually exerted considerable influence on the character of the Indian Gallery and the overall picture of the West that it manufactured. Catlin's own success in incorporating aspects of theater and spectacle in his exhibition performances helped engender a strong preference for narrative and anecdotal aspects of Native American hunt scenes, rather than ethnographic evidence. The later hunting additions to the Indian Gallery reflect this approach in both their increased narrativity (illustrating strange

²¹³ "Mr. Catlin's Collection of American Aboriginal Memorials—In Paris" *Daily National Intelligencer* (January 30, 1846).

²¹⁴ Truettner, *The Natural Man Observed*, 543, 115.

and exotic, rather than typical episodes) and the ways in which violent or comical imagery predominated their composition.

During his time in Europe Catlin also undertook efforts to publish his imagery and accounts of Native American life in the West. In 1841 Catlin published *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Conditions of the North American Indians* in London. The two-volume work was based partly on his numerous dispatches to the *New York Commercial Advertiser* and other newspapers and was supplemented by additional writings and 312 engravings based on subjects from the Indian Gallery. The book proved a resounding critical success (if not a financial one) and was reprinted in several subsequent editions in both Europe and the United States.²¹⁵ Near the conclusion of his time in Europe Catlin published another two-volume work, *Catlin's Notes of Eight Years' Travels and Residence in Europe, with His North American Indian Collection*, which chronicled his experiences exhibiting and traveling throughout Britain and the Continent. These books not only burnished Catlin's celebrity but were considered among the period's most authoritative accounts of Native American customs and culture.²¹⁶ Although these sources offer considerable insight into the world that Catlin sought to depict, it is important to keep in mind that the Indian Gallery, which accounted for the majority of the imagery Catlin created during his career, was formed prior to these publications and that the writings therefore respond to the images.

In addition to his efforts as an author, Catlin marshalled considerable energy toward his most ambitious publication project, the folio of twenty-five (later expanded to thirty-one)

²¹⁵ Catlin included a compendium of the book's favorable reviews in his subsequent publication *Catlin's Notes of Eight Years Travel and Residence in Europe with the North American Indian Collection* vol. 1, 52-59.

²¹⁶ Harold McCracken lists at least 17 editions of *Letters and Notes* published between 1841 and 1913. *George Catlin and the Old Frontier* (New York: The Dial Press, 1959), 212-13. The legacy of Catlin's accounts has been subject to ample critical scrutiny since the 20th century (see Conn, 54-64 for a distillation) and he was not without challengers in his own day such as John James Audubon who found much embellishment in Catlin's writing, Truettner, *The Natural Man Observed*, 118-119.

lithographs which he titled *Catlin's North American Indian Portfolio, Hunting Scenes and Amusements of the Rocky Mountains and Prairies of North America*. Although Catlin had produced prints including views of Niagara Falls and a portrait of the Seminole leader Osceola earlier in his career and included printed illustrations from the Indian Gallery in his books, the *North American Indian Portfolio* represented his first major foray into the realm of fine art printmaking and one which Catlin hoped would secure his rather precarious financial position. In London Catlin found himself at the nexus of a highly refined print market which boasted an abundance of both high quality printers and eager consumers of the printed image. Catlin engaged the printmakers Day & Haghe who had established a reputation as one of the city's premier firms working in the relatively new technique of lithography.²¹⁷ The plates were drawn on stone by John McGahey, a prolific (but relatively little known) lithographer in the employ of Day & Haghe, and were based closely upon paintings that appeared in the Indian Gallery. Catlin hoped to engage subscribers to support the endeavor among the wealthy and influential patrons who had supported and encouraged his exhibition of the Indian Gallery. The eventual thirty-one total lithographs included in the portfolio were printed on large 'Royal Folio' size sheets in both uncolored, tinted, and hand-colored editions and were accompanied by sixteen pages of text descriptions, mostly compiled from *Letters and Notes*.²¹⁸

Unlike the expansive Indian Gallery which sought to portray a broad swath of Native American likenesses, practices, and customs, the *North American Indian Portfolio* focused more

²¹⁷ Michael Twyman, 'Haghe, Louis (1806–1885)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press, 2004).

²¹⁸ The complex origin and publication history of the *North American Indian Portfolio* has yet to be fully and definitively established. The most important sources to date are: William S. Reese, unpublished "Paper for Conference" delivered March 28, 1996,; McCracken's "Bibliographic Checklist" in *George Catlin and the Old Frontier*, 213; and William H. Truettner, "For European Audiences: *Catlin's North American Indian Portfolio*," in Ron Tyler, ed., *Prints of the American West: Papers Presented at the Ninth Annual North American Print Conference* (Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum, 1983), 25-45.

narrowly on a select few subjects. These included full length figures (which were identified by tribe rather than individually), portraits, dances, ball sports, and hunting and animal scenes which accounted for seventeen of the plates and constituted the majority of the portfolio. (Figures 2.39, 2.40) In a note to the reader which preceded the portfolio, Catlin explained his emphasis on hunting subjects thusly:

No part of the human family furnish more picturesque subjects for the painter's brush than the North American Indians; nor any part of the brute creation, more furious and spirited examples than those which the Indians, in these sport, are contending with. The main object of the views contained in this volume will be to convey to the reader as full and complete an account as possible, of the Hunting Scenes of the American Indians, which, whilst they form a material part of their sports and amusements, furnish them with their whole means of subsistence.²¹⁹

According to Catlin hunting scenes not only presented the most visually enticing aspects of the West, but were also essential to understanding the livelihood and daily experiences of the Native Americans who resided there. Most of the hunting imagery was drawn from paintings Catlin produced during his first visit to the West, based upon his experiences around Fort Union and along the Missouri River. Many prints hewed quite closely to the compositions in the original paintings, as in *Buffalo Hunt*, *Under the White Wolf Skin* while some were slightly altered as in *Wounded Buffalo Bull*, which reverses the position of the wounded animal in the painting and replaces the green prairie with a snowy landscape. (Figure 2.41/2.42, 2.26/2.43)

The vision of hunting that emerges both in individual plates, and across the series is that of a spirited and vigorous exercise in which Native American hunters engage in a thrilling and artful spectacle of controlled violence. The sense of visual delight evident in prints like *Buffalo Hunt*, *Chase* owes a great deal to the lithographer who refined Catlin's original vision in the painted version *Buffalo Chase a Single Death*. (Figures 2.2, 2.39) Whereas the original canvas

²¹⁹ George Catlin, *North American Indian Portfolio*, 4.

conveyed somewhat the speed of the chase and the heft of the prey, the indistinct forms of the rider and buffalo offered little else. The lithograph on the other hand has acquired a wealth of visual attractions such as the frantic breath exhausting from the horse's nostrils, and the stark contrast in expressions between the steely determination of the hunter and slightly bemused terror of the prey. Throughout the portfolio, Catlin's imagery clearly gained in artistry and aesthetic sophistication in the transference to the lithographs. The awkward figures in *Buffalo Chase over Prairie Bluffs*—from the splayed legs of the animals to the hunched central rider whose feet seem to drag the ground from his horse—have been much more naturalistically rendered in the lithograph *Buffalo hunt, chase*. (Figures 2.29, 2.40) Critics singled out the portfolio's exquisite quality with one enthusiastic American author proclaiming "The execution is indeed unequalled by any thing of the kind that has fallen under our observation; and we are especially proud of it as the work of a native artist."²²⁰ Though the reviewer's nativist enthusiasm is perhaps understandable such praise should perhaps have been shared with the lithographer, McGahey, as the more refined and boisterous style seen in the portfolio is also reflective of the high degree of quality achieved in British printmaking in the early nineteenth century, particularly in the realm of sporting prints. Aside from borrowing formal devices which subtly improved upon Catlin's vision within the compositions themselves, the entire format of the portfolio, its terminology, and even the distinctive lettering of the frontispiece mirrored popular practices of firms like Ackermann's who specialized in folios of sporting prints.²²¹

The lithographs within the portfolio clearly offered a more polished and decorous vision of western hunting, but at the same time somewhat lost the paintings' sense of specificity

²²⁰ "Catlin's North American Indian Portfolio of Hunting Scenes and Amusements of the Rocky Mountains and Prairies of America," *Daily National Intelligencer* (August 30, 1845)

²²¹ See Malcolm Cormack, "The Making and Marketing of the British Sporting Print" in *Catching Sight: The World of the British Sporting Print* (Richmond: Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 2013) 1-16.

achieved through their sketchiness or other markers of their hasty construction. While the scenes composed and constructed for the Indian Gallery bore evidence of their close physical connection to the West as their place of origin, the lithographic versions of the same compositions were sanitized of such associations. Moreover, when removed from the context of the much larger Indian Gallery, which was populated by hundreds of portraits of named individuals and specific landscapes, the hunting prints in the portfolio morphed from ethnographic evidence of specific people's habits and customs to more universal and generic statements. This broadening of the imagery was mirrored in the descriptions which accompanied the plates.²²² For example, instead of referring to particular individuals, or even identifying tribes, the text for Plate 5, *Buffalo Chase*, begins: "In this picture we have the Indian mounted on his wild horse," and continues "Here is seen the mode in which the Indian generally approaches the Buffalo."²²³ In the subsequent description Catlin goes to great lengths to describe the length of the hunter's lance and the means by which dismounted riders might use the trailing lasso to regain control of their horse, but never identifies where the scene might have taken place or who the pictured hunters might have been. Although the hunting scenes in the Indian Gallery had always lacked the degree of ethnographic detail which characterized other genres, they were buttressed by imagery (as well as Catlin's lectures and later written descriptions in *Letters and Notes*) which connected them to distinctive people and places.

The isolation of hunting imagery in the *North American Indian Portfolio* combined with the more aesthetically sophisticated style in which the images were rendered served to both

²²² The *North American Indian Portfolio* did contain examples of other genres found in the Indian Gallery, including more specific scenes. But the predominance of hunting imagery throughout the portfolio, as clearly evidenced by the number of hunting prints, as well as the folio's subtitle "Hunting Scenes and Amusements" demonstrate that these works were considered only supplementary to the work's main theme of hunting.

²²³ George Catlin, *Catlin's North American Indian Portfolio, Hunting Scenes and Amusements of the Rocky Mountains and Prairies of North America* (London: C&J Adlard Printers, 1844), 7.

distance the viewer from the subject and to more fully sever the depiction of such practices from any grounding in historical reality that they might have previously possessed. A similar visual strategy had previously gained currency in British printmaking when it came to the depiction of hunting practices among imperial subjects. Picturesque portfolios comprised of scenes from the far flung corners of the British Empire and the people who inhabited those realms enjoyed great popularity in early nineteenth-century Britain. While landscape dominated such productions, a subset of imperial prints like Thomas Williamson and Samuel Howitt's *Oriental Field Sports* (1807) and Samuel Daniell's *African Scenery and Animals* (1804-5) featured hunting as a theme through which to visually explore disparate locations and indigenous cultures. (Figures 2.44, 2.45) Rather than an encyclopedic catalogue, such print portfolios presented their subjects serially, compiling amusing episodes which avoided specificity but coalesced into a coherent stereotype. Catlin's *North American Indian Portfolio* operated much the same way, illustrating exciting or grotesque moments typical of Buffalo hunts, but in an episodic rather than systemic way.²²⁴

While Catlin may not have been directly familiar with British imperial print projects, they would have been well known to the printmakers with which he collaborated and the public to which the *North American Indian Portfolio* was initially addressed. Although these artists certainly had far different thematic and aesthetic goals than Catlin—*Oriental Field Sports* for

²²⁴ This distinguished Catlin's effort from other prominent American printmaking projects like Thomas L. McKenney and James Hall's three-volume *History of the Indian Tribes of North America* (1836-44), which presented Native American subjects in a seemingly more comprehensive way by featuring mainly portraits of known distinguished sitters. McKenney and Hall's ambitious work was first published in Philadelphia and consisted mainly of prints after the gallery of portraits of Indian dignitaries by Charles Bird King and others that McKenney had compiled as Superintendent of Indian Affairs. See James D. Horan, *The McKenney-Hall Portrait Gallery of American Indians* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1872) Closer in conception to Catlin's portfolio was Karl Bodmer's *Reise in das inner Nord-America in de Jahren 1832 bis 1834* [*Travels in the Interior of North America between 1832 and 1834*] based on the artist's experiences travelling in the West with Prince Maximilian Alexander Philipp von Wied-Neuwied.

one follows the exploits of well-to-do British sportsmen as they adapt to Indian hunting customs—they offered a model by which printed images worked to mediate the experience of distant places and complex societies by reducing their identity to the visceral thrills of their most violent and seemingly uncivilized practices. One reviewer of Catlin’s portfolio seemingly extolled the perceived success of this universalizing approach, declaring “we seem in an hour’s pleasing survey of these pages, to have become intimate with the animal and human life of a vast continent; distinguishing Choctaws, Sioux, Assinneboin, Mandau [sic] &c. from each other, and partaking in their wild exploits in the procuring of food, and their stern resolves on every emergency.”²²⁵ Despite the author’s confidence in his identifications, Catlin in no way distinguished the individual tribes of the hunters that appear in the plates, nor did he give any indication that the hunts he witnessed were likely undertaken in the pursuit of trade commodities rather than sustenance. Instead through the serialization of hunting imagery, the portfolio formed a malleable narrative which allowed the viewer to comprehend the subjects through the lens of their own expectations and privileged outsider status.²²⁶

The North American Indian Portfolio marked a turning point in Catlin’s artistic approach as well as the larger public reception to his Native American subjects. In the portfolio and works that followed his vision of Native American life became more generalized and self-consciously artful, a shift reflected in his emphasis on rollicking hunting scenes over other more specific records of people and places. Financial difficulties with the Indian Gallery forced Catlin to seek evermore avenues for support, and one strategy was to produce bespoke albums of watercolors

²²⁵ “Fine Arts,” *The Literary Gazette* (November 30, 1844), 770.

²²⁶ Truettner has aligned the shift in Catlin’s approach in the *North American Indian Portfolio* with the adoption of the more sensational aspects of performance such as the *Tableaux Vivants*, meant to appeal to European audiences with virtually no foundation of knowledge of Native American subjects, but a healthy appetite for spectacle. “George Catlin’s North American Indian Portfolio,” 29-31.

and prints that distilled the subjects of the Indian Gallery into a smaller selection. The best extant example is that produced by Catlin in 1849, titled *Souvenir of the North American Indians*. Now in the collection of the Gilcrease Museum the album consists of fifty plates, drawn from the Indian Gallery and other sources. (Figure 2.46) The album reproduces nearly every subject from the *North American Indian Portfolio*, and as William Truettner has demonstrated, the watercolors are based upon the models in the print portfolio, rather than the oil paintings in the Gallery.²²⁷ To the initial hunting subjects from the *North American Indian Portfolio*, Catlin added additional plates based upon the hunting scenes he had produced several years earlier in Paris. In plates such as *Moose Chase*, Catlin deftly renders the human and animal figures and evokes the frigid landscape in daubs of white and streaks of color across the sky. (Figure 2.47) Despite the watercolor's charm, the scene was based on a canvas Catlin created in Paris years after he left the American West and could not be further removed from its subject in time and place. Whereas Catlin initially went west in search of an authenticity that he argued simply could not be acquired in cities along the eastern seaboard, he now found himself creating decorous and fictive images of hunting with only the most tenuous connection to western life.

In Catlin's artistic ventures that followed, hunting became increasingly prominent even as its depiction veered toward the overblown. Following the death of his wife and son and the loss of the Indian Gallery to his creditors, Catlin embarked on a journey to South America, where he again set about visualizing the appearance and customs of the continent's indigenous inhabitants.²²⁸ The hunting scenes based upon his South American journey such as *Shooting*

²²⁷ Truettner, "Introduction," *George Catlin's Souvenir of the North American Indians*, xii.

²²⁸ The little that is known about the circumstances surrounding Catlin's journey(s) to South America is complicated by the apparent fabrication of the narrative contained in Catlin's published accounts: George Catlin, *Life Amongst the Indians*, 1861 and George Catlin, *Last Rambles Amongst the Indians of the Rocky Mountains and Andes* (New York: Appleton & co., 1867). The most thorough critical account of this period is Krebs, "George Catlin and South America: A Look at His 'Lost' Years and His Paintings of Northeastern Argentina," *The American Art Journal* 22 no. 4 (Winter, 1990), 4-39.

Flamingoes, Grand Saline, Buenos Aires, seem at first glance to be merely a pretense to picture the wanton slaughter of exotic animals. (Figure 2.48) This painting shows Catlin, accompanied by a black companion rendered in a manner typical of racist nineteenth-century visual stereotypes, engaged in killing hundreds of birds that had been peacefully nesting only moments earlier.²²⁹ Rather than a record of indigenous hunting, the scene presents a fantasy in which the primitiveness and exoticism of the unsettled South American continent is expressed not through ethnographic fact or topographic detail, but through the depiction of a space in which the enactment of violence in the form of hunting serves as a definitive feature.

Catlin's hunting fantasies perhaps reached their apotheosis in the series of paintings he produced for Samuel Colt, meant to showcase the utility of the businessman's new repeating rifle.²³⁰ The series included scenes based upon Catlin's travels in South America as well as works that synthesized earlier imagery from the Indian Gallery. In *Catlin the Artist Shooting Buffalos with Colt's Revolving Pistol*, the artist has transformed the scene depicted in *Buffalo Chase Over Prairie Bluffs*, placing himself at the center of the composition. (Figure 2.49) The six puffs of white smoke indicate the rapidity with which Catlin has felled his prey, while the two Native American riders in the background with bows and arrows have failed to take down a single animal. Whereas Catlin had once praised the expert manner in which hunters wielded the

²²⁹ Catlin describes the black man as a "negro Indian boy," making it unclear whether the man was an indigenous person, free black, or enslaved. In Catlin's description of the scene, it is his own clumsiness rather than the black man's that causes the latter to tumble, but nevertheless his companion is presented as the butt of the joke: "From my two first raking shots, where in range they looked like a solid mass, seven or eight were lying dead, and others were hobbling off with broken wings; and of all together we picked up thirteen. But, before picking up my birds, I had been obliged to pick up my negro Indian boy; he had no idea of my firing more than once, and my agitation and somewhat of confusion in turning to fire right and left, and withed up in a bunch of bushes filled with smoke, the sharp breech of my rifle had struck him on the temple, and knocked him helpless down, without my knowing it." Catlin, *Last Rambles Amongst the Indians of the Rocky Mountains and Andes*, 284-85.

²³⁰ For a thorough discussion of Colt and Catlin's relationship and this series see Elizabeth Mankin Kornhauser, "George Catlin and the Colt Firearms Series," in *Samuel Colt: Arms, Art, and Invention* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 203-245.

bow and arrow in *Letter and Notes*, here he presents such instruments, and by extension the Native Americans who wield them, as obsolete. In another work from the series *Catlin the Artist and Hunter Shooting Buffalos with Colt's Revolving Rifle* the artist pictures a ravine filled with dead and dying buffalo, laid waste by the hunters' modern weaponry. (Figure 2.50) The craven nature of the scene marked a considerable transformation for an artist who once decried the wanton slaughter he witnessed among his very first hunts.²³¹ Though certainly the commercial nature of these works (Colt intended to circulate lithographs after the originals to advertise his new rifle) explains some of the unrestrained violence, it also is a symptom of the way in which Catlin had transformed the imagery of the West from a place where hunting was a facet of the lives of specific groups of people, to a place in which hunting and violence were features that broadly defined the character of the region. As his career progressed Catlin increasingly employed hunting imagery to recast the West (and locations he deemed similarly uninfluenced by modern civilization like South America) as a violent free-for-all, a categorical shift that would have important implications for the political and social history of the West, as well as its subsequent depictions in art.

In some ways Catlin's increasingly pessimistic and violent view of life in the West can be understood as a response to critical approaches to his art that were shaped by dominant intellectual trends in the study of Native Americans, as well as developments in the growing interventionist United States government policy toward Native American tribes. Though Catlin spent the 1840s in Europe, he maintained a constant dialogue with audiences in the United States through correspondence, the press, and his own publication projects. Despite his expatriate status, he self-consciously shaped his vision according to his incessant goal to achieve critical

²³¹ Catlin, *Life Amongst the Indians*, 117-18.

success in the United States, particularly through the government's purchase of the Indian Gallery. In 1847 one of Catlin's chief critics, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft persuaded congress to assign him to head a census of western tribes carried out by the Indian Office.²³² The vast undertaking sought to compile data and statistics on the history, language, demographics, economic interests, and any other useful information regarding nearly all the tribes resident in the United States. Under Schoolcraft's direction, such a study sought to avoid the deficiencies he saw in Catlin's initial approach which focused too much on amusing anecdotes of Native American customs such as buffalo hunting, and did not reveal enough of "Indian character."²³³ In the Indian Gallery Catlin had sought to create an expansive monument to Native Americans through the accumulation of a wealth of detail that recorded a static, but multifaceted picture of a race of people which he believed were destined to disappear. Schoolcraft also sought to accumulate factual details but not so much as a record of their particulars for posterity's sake. Rather this data served as a means to propose larger conclusions about the innate character of Native Americans so that the government might formulate policies and society might develop strategies for responding to and even facilitating their diminution in order to more fully capitalize on the settlement of the West.

While Catlin stridently defended his more narrative or anecdotal approach to the study of Native Americans throughout his career, his move toward generalization and further essentialization in his later hunting images reveals the ways in which his work was tempered by critical responses to his work and larger shifts in the public and governmental approaches to Native Americans. Although Catlin's work has often been understood as a resolute reflection of

²³² For more on Schoolcraft's biography and significant contributions to the study of Native Americans and his complicated relationship with Catlin see "Chapter 4: Indian Historian to Congress: Schoolcraft, Eastman, and the 'National Work'" in Dippie, *Catlin and His Contemporaries*, 157-208.

²³³ Dippie, *Catlin and His Contemporaries*, 173.

his own personal vision, it is clear that his imagery was also moderated by the dominant ideologies which governed western expansion. As the 1840s progressed the political and social exigencies of expansion necessitated a less nuanced and more paradigmatic view of Native Americans. Catlin's hunting imagery rose to fit such a role neatly, presenting a view of Native Americans and the West in which hunting was not simply a cultural practice, carried out by particular groups of people, but a state of being that defined the essential character of Native Americans as an anachronistic civilization inextricably linked to what Catlin and other considered primitive customs.

Catlin's hunting images paved the way for subsequent artists who treated the subject of hunting in the West in a similarly essentializing manner. Artists like Alfred Jacob Miller, Charles Deas and Arthur Fitzwilliam Tait took up the theme of western hunting, expanding upon Catlin's foundational vision of the practice as a marker of the fundamental character of Native Americans and the spirit of the American West. Miller traveled westward at the behest of the Scottish aristocrat Sir William Drummond Stewart, a big game hunter who travelled to the United States at the head of a massive hunting party in search of adventure. The images Miller produced for Stewart chronicling his journey, such as *The Buffalo Hunt* emphasize the romantic grandeur of the hunting experience, picturing the West as a space for white outsiders to experience fantasies of the violent sublime.²³⁴ (Figure 2.51) Miller transformed Samuel Seymour's imposing western landscape in *View of the Rocky Mountains* created several decades earlier, and enhanced the sublimity of the grand features of the West by picturing the violent exploits of white hunters. Working half a decade later, Deas focused much of his attention on a figure that completely escaped Catlin's view, that of the white huntsman-trapper. Deas's portrayal of trappers like *Long*

²³⁴ See Haltman, "Flight and Predation: The Anti-documentary Poetics of Alfred Jacob Miller," 2014.

Jakes, The Rocky Mountain Man elevated such figures, picturing the trapper's rough and rugged demeanor, and distance from refined, eastern society as necessary to survival in the violent atmosphere of the West. (Figure 2.52) Miller and Deas's work provide a glimpse of the ways in which the mythical vision of the wild and violent West initiated by Catlin began to take hold among white, Eastern audiences who coopted certain "western" values of self-reliance and strength as exemplars of white American, masculine character. Though the white hunter-trapper was categorically distinct from the Native American hunters pictured by Catlin, the mythology and ideological foundations of such figures (by which they came to be celebrated as exemplars of American virtues of ruggedness, self-reliance, and strength) were predicated upon Catlin's formulation of the West as a violent arena to be tamed by the forces of white progress.²³⁵

By the 1850s Tait, an artist who never travelled west of the Mississippi, pictured hunting as a mere pretext for violent fantasies of Native American treachery and white heroicism. Tait's images represent the culmination of the progression in hunting imagery from Catlin's portrayal of hunting as an essential feature of Western life, to Tait's incorporation of hunting and violent outdoor pursuits as an important component of American masculine identity. In a pair of prints produced by Currier & Ives titled *American Frontier Life: On the Warpath* and *The Hunters' Stratagem*, Tait creates a simple and grim narrative in which a group of white trappers engage their hunting knowledge and prowess to stalk and kill a group of Native American warriors. (Figure 2.53, 2.54) Set in a dense forest more reminiscent of the eastern woodlands than the Great Plains, the prints evoke a vague notion of the West not as a particular geographic location, but a frontier zone defined by violence. Tait's callous vision might at first glance seem merely a

²³⁵ The figure of the trapper-hunter in American art has been the subject of several studies of individual artists, but warrants a more exhaustive study. See William H. Goetzmann and William N. Goetzmann, "The Mountain Man: Fair Likeness," in *The West of the Imagination* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009), 73-82.

violent fantasy, but such scenes exemplified the growing brutality of the encounter between Native Americans and white settlers during these decades. Catlin himself recognized how easily the facility for violence could be redirected from the pursuit of animals to the pursuit of humans. In one of his last books he decried the practice of some western towns that offered bounties for killing Native Americans: “Twenty dollars offered by the corporation of Central City, in the middle of a state of the Union, for every Indian’s scalp—for every deliberate murder!—What a *carte blanche*! what a thriving business the trappers and whisky-sellers can make of this! How much better than killing wolves at two dollars per head, or catching cunning beavers for three dollars!”²³⁶ Each of the aforementioned artists (and many others) warrant a deeper investigation into their treatment of hunting subjects, and this brief sketch is not meant to suggest a simple narrative for the history of western hunting imagery following Catlin. Rather these examples suggest the ways in which Catlin’s formula for casting western hunting as a practice deeply ingrained in native American character and an essential aspect of the West, allowed for a wide range of interpretations beyond his own more seemingly principled, if still seriously shortsighted intentions.

While Catlin spent many years abroad struggling to consolidate his financial position and professional reputation, the progress of western expansion in the United States continued apace. The annexation of Texas in 1845 and the ensuing Mexican American War from 1846 to 1848 drastically expanded the United States’ land holdings in the West, while the Gold Rush of the late 1840s provoked thousands of eager settlers to venture across the Plains and Rockies in pursuit of western riches. The massive movement of white settlers across Indian territories increased the points of contact and necessitated new treaties including the Treaty of Fort

²³⁶ Catlin, *Last Rambles*, 349.

Laramie, 1851 and Treaty of Fort Atkinson, 1853 which established rights of way for wagon roads across the Plains.²³⁷ When Catlin began his project to chronicle the lives and appearance of Native Americans in early 1830s few questioned the inevitability of the westward march of progress and the eventual diminution of the Native American population. However, as evermore people and economic interests spread to the West, such propositions acquired an added urgency. The need to visualize the West and its Native American inhabitants could no longer be considered a didactic exercise but yielded increasingly to the social and political exigencies of expansion. In such a situation Catlin's highly articulated vision of Native American life, displayed through the vast accumulation of ethnographic detail in the Indian Gallery, appeared desperately outmoded. Catlin had intended his life's work to stand as a monument to a vanishing race, and his earliest depictions of hunting adhered to this formula, documenting the particular features of Native American hunting from the point of view of a first-hand observer.

While Catlin had many prominent supporters in the scientific and artistic fields, his vision inherent in the Indian Gallery failed to gain purchase with the federal government that was faced with the task of formulating policies that sought to diminish the position of Native Americans in order to facilitate expansion. Amidst this political climate, Catlin's images of hunting gained added utility as they were refigured and reformulated into various media and new contexts. As he continued to refine his vision through the 1840s, Catlin amplified the significance of hunting within his larger narratives of Western life through the addition and repetition of hunting scenes, most of which resulted from creative reconfigurations rather than on the spot observations, and thus bore little evidence of any direct physical association with their subject matter. Though Catlin continually sought to burnish his authority by referencing his first-hand knowledge of his

²³⁷ See Richard A Bartlett, *The New Country: A Social History of the American Frontier, 1776-1890* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 32.

subjects, his more aestheticized and generalized vision of hunting expressed through the *North American Indian Portfolio* and later efforts resonated widely with audiences seeking confirmation of the rectitude of western expansion. By placing such a high degree of emphasis on hunting, and picturing it as a deeply engrained and unchanging aspect of Native American life in the West, Catlin burnished ideologies that promoted white expansion as a means of rationalizing the West. This ideal perhaps reached its fullest visual expression in John Gast's *American Progress*, known more widely through the chromolithograph produced by George A. Crofutt titled *Westward Ho!* (Figure 2.55) At first glance, Gast's allegorical image, in which the Goddess of Liberty hovers above a western landscape, populated with all the stereotypical characters and attributes of western expansion, including the telegraph wires that Liberty causally unspools as she moves from east to west, seems completely at odds with the directness of Catlin's vision of the West. The Native American figures in Gast's work, seen at the left foreground, shown with hunting implements (or implements of war), are depicted hastily marching out of the picture just like the prey animals that scatter in multiple directions at the edge of the canvas. The Native American hunters in Gast's image are clearly presented as antithetical to the many categories of white progress on display such as the farmer, the prospector, the metropolis, or the railroad. Unlikely to change or adapt, these figures are left only to recede out of the frame.

Catlin's continual emphasis on hunting imagery allowed audiences to further reduce Native Americans (and by extension the West) to broad platitudes. The trajectory of Catlin's imagery paved the way for Gast's portrayal of Native American hunters as strange anachronisms whose association with a few narrow hunting attributes and activities cast them as the antithesis of white, eastern progress. While Catlin's earliest depictions of the hunt offered a vision of

Native Americans that sought to individuate their appearances and customs, the evolution of his imagery and in particular its emphasis on the boisterous and violent aspects of hunting, presented the model for visual schema that defined Native Americans broadly. Catlin's hunting images isolated a distinct set of rituals and practices that ultimately served as useful foils for eastern civilization. The strategy that Catlin pioneered in defining Native Americans, and the West at large through a visual association with hunting, would prove remarkably persistent among the complicated political, economic, and geographic process of the United States' western expansion. Eventually, this vision of the West as a venue for the expression of masculine values of strength, valor, and restrained violence was eventually adapted by white, eastern audiences who sought images of their own pursuits that embodied the rugged spirit of the West. The following chapter examines how artists who depicted a form of hunting practiced by well-to-do, eastern urbanites, called upon these same values to create a vision of sport that conformed to ascendant ideals of masculinity and class identity.

CHAPTER 3: “SPECIMENS OF MANLY STRENGTH AND BEAUTY:” THOMAS EAKINS, WINSLOW HOMER AND THE RISE OF A SPORTING IDEAL IN THE GILDED AGE

In the decades following the Civil War, hunting, which had previously figured in art and popular visual media as a decidedly rural or Western phenomenon, became an increasingly urban concern. Considering this fundamental shift in the perception of hunting, the editor of *Forest and Stream*, George Bird Grinnell, explained in 1885, “Now [sportsmen] are applauded—not too enthusiastically, but still applauded—a very few years ago they were barely tolerated, and short time before that a man who went ‘gunnin’ or ‘fishin’ lost caste among respectable people just about in the same way that one did who got drunk.”²³⁸ During the Gilded Age, as countless prosperous white men from Eastern cities took to the country to pursue game as a form of social recreation, class ritual, and masculine performance, numerous artists undertook to examine the visual and social intricacies of this newly ascendant form of sport. When not decamped to distant hunting grounds, urban sportsmen nurtured a vibrant sporting culture within the city through participation in the numerous hunt clubs that arose in major cities as well as the burgeoning sporting press that regularly carried stories and images from the field. In addition to written accounts, elite hunting regularly featured among the subjects of fine art that urban men of distinction commonly encountered in civic art venues like the annual exhibition of the National Academy of Design or the American Watercolor Society. Accordingly, these hunting works were eagerly consumed by many of the same wealthy urbanites who engaged in the sporting pursuits depicted.

²³⁸ George Bird Grinnell, “New Publications: Hunting Trips of A Ranchman,” *Forest and Stream* 24 (July 2, 1885), 451. Grinnell was reviewing Theodore Roosevelt’s sporting memoir of his time spent on a western ranch. Few statistical or demographic studies exist which might give an idea of the exact numbers of urban men who hunted during the late nineteenth century. However, the sport’s overwhelming popularity is clearly evidenced by its staggering cultural imprint, which forms the basis for much of this chapter.

This chapter focuses on two artists, Thomas Eakins and Winslow Homer, who examined the subject of urban hunters and their exploits through a series of works which probed the meanings and motivations behind the people, places, and practices that came to define elite forms of hunting during the Gilded Age. Both men hunted regularly themselves and could be counted among the well-to-do class that enthusiastically embraced hunting as a means of social distinction. Homer became well known during his lifetime for his numerous depictions of the figures and activities that surrounded hunts in the tourist region of the Adirondacks. Produced over the course several decades and more than twenty visits to the area, this segment of his oeuvre has received measured attention from scholars.²³⁹ Eakins also devoted considerable attention and energy to his images of shooting along the Delaware River, but these were produced largely over the course of a single year before the artist moved on to other subjects. Respectively, these works have less frequently appeared as major points of discussion within the scholarship on the artist.²⁴⁰ This chapter endeavors to isolate and focus attention on each artist's hunting works in order to establish these subjects' significance among their respective oeuvres,

²³⁹ Homer's sporting works have regularly been considered by contemporary critics and later scholars as important contributions to American art history, but they have less often been submitted to the intense socio-historical scrutiny of his more overtly politically charged imagery such as his depictions of Civil War scenes and African Americans. Aside from monographs which treat the hunting images to various degrees, David Tatham has produced the most comprehensive scholarship on the artist's hunting works, culminating in *Winslow Homer in the Adirondacks* (Syracuse University Press, 1996). Other important studies include Eleanor Lewis Jones, "Deer Drinking: Reflections on a Watercolor by Winslow Homer," *Smithsonian Studies in American Art* 2 no. 3 (Autumn, 1988), 54-65; Sarah Burns, "Revitalizing the 'Painted-Out' North: Winslow Homer, Manly Health, and New England Regionalism in Turn-of-the-Century America," *American Art* 9 no. 2 (Summer 1995), 21-37. Added to these is a study of Homer's angling pictures, Patricia A. Junker et al., *Winslow Homer: Artist and Angler* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2003). This chapter largely bypasses Homer's angling images for both reasons of space and because the angling images present a different, more pastoral view of elite leisure that is less pertinent to the thematic study undertaken here.

²⁴⁰ In monographs and exhibition catalogues, Eakins's hunting scenes are generally treated somewhat perfunctorily as transitions between the more important rowing pictures that preceded them and work on *The Gross Clinic* which came after. See Lloyd Goodrich *Thomas Eakins* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, Published for the National Gallery of Art, 1982), or Kathleen Foster, Jane Watkins, Jane Boyd, et al., *Thomas Eakins* (Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2004). More penetrating studies of the hunting works can be found in Kathleen A. Foster *Thomas Eakins Rediscovered: Charles Bregler's Thomas Eakins Collection at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), and Alan Braddock, "Eakins, Race, and Ethnographic Ambivalence," *Winterthur Portfolio* 33 (Summer-Autumn, 1998), 135-61.

and demonstrate how the artists both responded to and contributed to hunting's growth into a prominent ritual of elite urban culture.

While the landscape and activities portrayed by Eakins and Homer purported to depict aspects of the countryside, this imagery was highly mediated by the concerns of urban audiences who consumed the images, as well as the growing legion of urban sportsmen who forged the ideals and values that came to govern both the sport of hunting and the management of the wilderness and its resources. Depictions of sporting pursuits at once considered “manly” clearly offered affluent patrons and audiences the opportunity to model ideal forms of masculinity; however, a closer examination of the ways in which artists pictured various aspects of upper-class hunting also highlights urban anxieties over shifting gender expectations and the range of responses to such concerns. Images of leisure hunting also served to enforce social distinctions between rural and urban environments (both physical and social), by emphasizing a rigid code of behavior governing hunting that privileged fairness and the pursuit of game as a form of healthful recreation, rather than economic or agricultural necessity. This “sporting code” dictated the sportsman's actions in the wilderness, but also translated to an urban setting by shaping a standard of masculinity and overall refinement that was only accessible to middle and upper class men who possessed the means and social connections necessary to engage in elite forms of hunting. As cities became evermore stratified along class and racial boundaries, the ability to physically remove oneself to the countryside in order to hunt offered both a rigid class barrier and a marker of elite status, which could be continually re-expressed through the conspicuous display of remnants of hunting excursions such as mounted trophies and particularly hunting art.

Although gender expectations during the latter half of the nineteenth century were being constantly renegotiated and remained heavily contingent upon geographic location and social

standing, for many men of the middle and upper classes, masculinity increasingly came to be associated with ritualized forms of violence. Eakins's and Homer's hunting art spoke directly to this emergent model of masculinity, offering urban men the opportunity to see themselves and men of similar standing engaged in violent pursuits while still maintaining a high sense of probity. The rise in popularity of "manly" pursuits such as hunting (and their prominent depiction in art) coincided with what social historians have often referred to as a crisis in masculinity, in which new forms of society, commerce, and culture centered in cities, upended traditional notions of masculinity. The ideal of manhood pictured in both artists' works exalted a return to nature, expressed through the participation in backwoods pursuits like camping, fishing, and hunting. (Figure 3.1)

Sport hunting had existed in some limited form in the United States prior to the Civil War, but rarely in any organized or widespread manner.²⁴¹ Working in the 1870s and beyond, Homer and Eakins both contributed to and benefited from the improving reputation of hunting as an appropriate pursuit for respectable men. Hunting began to shed many of its more disreputable moral associations prior to the Civil War, aided by the rise of popular hunter heroes like Daniel Boone, the proliferation of literary tales of hunters by authors such as James Fenimore Cooper, and the production of popular prints of hunting subjects by artists like Arthur Fitzwilliam Tait. As the sport gained credence among wealthy urbanites, Homer and Eakins's art played a pivotal role in shaping the ways in which hunting and its visual representation served to express larger ideals important the upper classes, for whom hunting came to be enshrined as perhaps the utmost marker of elite status and social distinction.

²⁴¹ Daniel Herman, *Hunting and the American Imagination* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 123-4.

What most changed perceptions of sport hunting and fueled its rampant growth among the middle and upper classes was its associations with health, manly vigor, and individualism. In a rapidly industrializing nation, hunting seemingly offered an antidote to vices that were largely considered urban ills, such as gambling, drinking, and lewdness. Many American writers and thinkers had long extolled the restorative benefit of time spent outdoors among the wilderness, but as the nineteenth century progressed this activity became increasingly gendered and aligned with masculine virtue. Writing under a pseudonym Walt Whitman published a series of essays expounding upon the subject of “Manly Health and Training,” with numerous lessons on proper diet, exercise, dress, and comportment for modern men. On the benefits of hunting and outdoor pursuits he wrote, “Generally speaking there is that virtue in the open air, and a stirring life therein, that has more effect than any or all the prescriptions that go forth from the apothecary’s shop. Hunters, raftsmen, lumbermen, and all those whose employments are away from the close life and dissipation of cities—what specimens of manly strength and beauty they frequently are!”²⁴² Whitman’s essays not only emphasized the positive benefits of rugged outdoor pursuits but also the idea that cities were destabilizing spaces with the potential to de-masculinize their male inhabitants.²⁴³ Hunting offered the male urbanite the opportunity to embody the vigor and spirit of Whitman’s idealized backwoodsmen, while still maintaining the privileges of his class. Hunting art extended this role-playing, by celebrating and recording the exploits of privileged hunters and burnishing the cultural and social authority of the hunting class.

²⁴² Mose Velsor (Walt Whitman). “Manly Health and Training, With Off-Hand Hints Toward Their Conditions,” ed. Zachary Turpin. *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 33 (2016), 289. The essays were first published in the *New York Atlas* between 1858 and 1860.

²⁴³ The history and sociology of gender definitions and fluctuations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century American city has been the subject of a substantial body of literature, the breadth of which is impossible to fully cover here. Among this scholarship, this chapter is heavily informed by the following: Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) and John Pettegrew, *Brutes in Suits: Male Sensibility in America, 1890-1920* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007).

Escaping to the woods to engage in a homosocial ritual of controlled violence offered the opportunity to fix gender boundaries and reassert white male dominance. Accordingly, women were entirely absent from Eakins and Homer's depictions of hunting, and African American figures appeared only in Eakins's work, most commonly performing the work of hunt servants, rather than partaking in recreation. The historian Daniel Herman has argued, that among all the possible recreations of the era, hunting uniquely presented the ascendant, urban, white man with an opportunity to both express values essential to his own class such as strength and self-reliance, and take up the mantle of social distinction that marked hunting as the traditional preserve of the aristocratic elite. As Herman explains, "Not only was sport hunting intrinsically genteel, but it was also a ritualistic means of demonstrating self-assertion and social authority."²⁴⁴ In turn, the images created by Eakins, Homer, and other artists worked to cement and extend such authority.

The rise of elite sport hunting in the late nineteenth century was a complex historical phenomenon with wide ranging economic, social, and cultural sources and consequences. As such, the analyses of Homer and Eakins's artistic treatment of this form of hunting in art that constitute this chapter necessarily draw heavily upon the social history of sport hunting in order to more fully contextualize and interrogate the artworks under study. This chapter similarly engages a social history of the rise of urban life in America to further contextualize Eakins and Homer's sporting works.²⁴⁵ While the features of the city were virtually absent from the

²⁴⁴ Herman, *Hunting and the American Imagination*, 138.

²⁴⁵ Although the theorization of the sociology and structures of the city emerged most fully in the twentieth century, during the Gilded Age many writers and scholars readily noted the accelerated physical transformation of urban spaces and new social forms emerging within the borders of the city. The work of scholars associated with the 'Chicago School' of sociology in the earlier twentieth century can be considered among the most important early contributions to the study of the city, in particular Robert Park's "Suggestions for the Investigation of Human Behavior in the Urban Environment." *The American Journal of Sociology* 20 (1915): 577-612. In the nineteenth century, aside from journalistic accounts which often tended toward the tawdry aspects of urban life, studies largely focused on demographic and statistical analyses of cities as tools for social reform. See. Eric H. Monkkonen,

imagery of the hunt itself, the urban environment was the physical and social framework in which the participants in hunting ritual lived, worked, and consumed such images. Although rampant growth in population and economic activity occurred during the second half of the nineteenth century in cities throughout the country, this study focuses largely on the sporting culture surrounding northeastern cities, particularly Philadelphia and New York. It is not the aim of this chapter to fully encapsulate or significantly reevaluate the historical study of either the city or sport hunting. Rather, this chapter draws upon these approaches when relevant in order to trace how two particular artists developed new representational strategies in their depiction of sport that both reflected and contributed to the transformation of hunting from a facet of rural life to an elite form of recreation. As the ritual forms and social significance of hunting shifted throughout the late nineteenth-century, Eakins and Homer were both engaged in radically reevaluating the visual traditions of hunting art to create a modern vision of the practice that drew upon these new ideologies but also embodied their own aesthetic ideals. As such their images of hunting offer a unique insight not only into each artist's approach to human and natural subjects and the social history of sport, but also the ways in which art uniquely functioned to shape and extend the meanings of hunting, well beyond scope of the field and long after the conclusion of the chase.

Homer and Eakins took distinctly different approaches to picturing what were fundamentally similar forms of hunting. Though the artists depicted varying landscapes, prey, and methods of hunting, each artist centered their attention on a type of hunting exclusively carried out for the enjoyment and benefit of wealthy urban men. The body of this chapter is divided into two sections which treat each artist individually. Beginning with Eakins, I first

America Becomes Urban: The Development of U.S. Cities and Towns, 1790-1980 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 19-24.

situate his sporting paintings within the larger context of his early training and burgeoning career, demonstrating how hunting offered potent visual and conceptual metaphors for declaring his artistic and civic ambitions. After pinpointing these works more precisely within the artist's biography and oeuvre I examine how Eakins's fixation upon the sport of shooting reed birds along the marshes of the Delaware River, drew upon a complex set of familial and civic associations in order accentuate aspects of his own identity and to establish the contest between man and nature as a key marker of modern, urban manhood. Eakins's exploration of hunting themes was rooted in personal experience, but also served as a larger declaration of the ideals that he championed as essential to modern American society. This analysis presents a new approach to this segment of Eakins's oeuvre, complementing previous scholarly treatments which have somewhat uncomfortably situated the hunting works directly alongside (and perhaps slightly below) his other sporting subjects. My analysis shows how Eakins engaged the subject of hunting deliberately and specifically for its associations with elite culture, American individualism, and European aesthetic sophistication. In the hunting works, he built upon such associations in order to create a unique vision of modern manhood that found no direct equivalent in his representation of other sporting pursuits.

The chapter next shifts to the hunting works Winslow Homer produced upon his many excursions to the Adirondacks and based upon his own experience as a tourist-sportsman. Unlike Eakins's images which almost always depict well-to-do sportsmen (sometimes working in concert with both black and white hired hands), Homer's images almost exclusively focus on the work of the local Adirondack hunt servants who facilitated the chase for wealthy clients. This chapter builds upon previous scholarship which has mostly emphasized biography (of both Homer and others he encountered in the Adirondacks), in order to interrogate the ways in which

Homer's hunting images uniquely reflected the complex social order that surrounded the hunting experience. Although Homer depicts his subjects—primarily laborers, hunt servants, and prey animals—with great sympathy, through his visual elaboration of the sporting code which came to govern not only hunters' behavior, but the management of the wilderness itself, Homer's images ultimately reinforce the lines between servants and their urban clientele. Much as in the many other aspects of modern life and nature which formed the subjects of his art, Homer's images of hunting present an insightful record of the highly nuanced and often unspoken conventions (both natural and social) which governed the human experience.

Thomas Eakins

In October, 1866 after spending several frustrating weeks navigating the bureaucratic labyrinth of the French École des Beaux-Arts, Thomas Eakins wrote a lengthy letter to his father from Paris updating him on the progress of his studies and describing the novel sights of the city. Toward the close of the letter he inquired of his father, "Have you been gunning I hope you found everything in my drawer. The cleaning rod is in the closet. What luck had you?...I liked to have forgotten the sporting news from Paris."²⁴⁶ He went on to describe the deplorable conditions of the Seine and its poor prospects for sport fishing. Though clearly energized by the many cosmopolitan offerings of his new home, Eakins longed for news of the hunting and sporting pursuits he had frequently enjoyed as a young man in the areas surrounding his native Philadelphia. Throughout his life, hunting remained a much-loved pursuit for Eakins and he regularly made trips to shoot birds in the marshes along the Delaware River on the outskirts of

²⁴⁶ Thomas Eakins to Benjamin Eakins, October 26, 1866, reprinted in Kathleen A. Foster and Cheryl Leibold, *Writing About Eakins: The Manuscripts in Charles Bregler's Thomas Eakins Collection* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), 202.

Philadelphia. Soon after his return from Europe, Eakins engaged in a brief but penetrating exploration of the theme of hunting in a series of paintings and watercolors produced between 1873 and 1876. Following on the heels of his sequence of rowing pictures, the hunting images directly aligned with Eakins's objective to probe the attributes of modern life by portraying the pursuits and ideals that formed his own direct experience.²⁴⁷

Beyond a deep personal interest in the sport, several key elements fueled Eakins's preoccupation with the representation of hunting and shooting. In hunting scenes set in the marshes of the Delaware River, Eakins found a subject that tested his analytical approach to the depiction of figures within space through the complex arrangement of moving forms within a variable landscape. Aside from its compositional challenges, hunting's deep social and visual history offered Eakins a well-established motif in which to declare the superior values of masculine performance and modern intervention in nature, that marked the sport of rail shooting, a distinct form of hunting that was closely associated with Philadelphia in the 1870s. First exhibited in the Paris Salon where their American origin featured prominently in the works' titles, Eakins's hunting images broke with both European and American conventions of sporting imagery, creating a new vision of hunting as a thoroughly modern, urban pursuit that was the exclusive preserve of the middle and upper-classes. Eakins's hunting works also related closely to his paintings of pursuits like rowing, baseball, and later boxing which modeled ideal forms of masculinity. Such images offered a modern conception of manhood that was at once contingent upon one's comportment and social background, but that could also be constantly refashioned through both self-improvement and the modelling of dominant ideologies of masculinity.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁷ There is some overlap in chronology between the two series, but they can be viewed as distinct phases of work.

²⁴⁸ Martin A. Berger, *Man Made: Thomas Eakins and the Construction of Gilded Age Manhood* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 5.

Eakins's hunting works stand out among his other images of masculine activity in their emphasis on man's triumph not only over other men, but over nature itself. While the rectitude of man's dominance over nature was a persistent marker of American national identity in the nineteenth century, in art and literature this concept was commonly expressed broadly, through regional associations and allusions to the timelessness of landscape and nature. Eakins's portrayal of hunting modernized this ideal by placing the practice within a decidedly urban and middle class social sphere that still aspired to express values connected to an "American" identity but employed imagery tied specifically to his home city of Philadelphia.

Nearly two years into his training in the Paris atelier of Jean-Léon Gérôme, Eakins had already begun to codify the aesthetic principles that would guide the course of his art throughout his career. In a much-quoted letter to his father, he elaborated on his understanding of the relationship between art and nature, using the metaphor of an artist guiding a canoe through a marshy landscape:

Then he's got a canoe of his own smaller than Nature's but big enough for every purpose except to paint the midday sun which is not beautiful at all. It is plenty strong enough though to make midday sunlight or the setting sun if you know how to handle it. With this canoe he can sail parallel to Nature's sailing. He will soon be sailing only where he wants to selecting nice little coves & shady shores or storms to his own liking, but if he ever thinks he can sail another fashion from Nature or make a better shaped boat he'll capsize or stick in the mud & nobody will buy his pictures or sail with him in his old tub.
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This letter is often cited as evidence of Eakins's growing faith in his own abilities, as well as his commitment to a realist vision that was rooted in a close study of nature, but not confined to slavishly imitating its effects.²⁵⁰ However, it is also instructive that Eakins would turn to a metaphor of piloting a small boat (an essential aspect of his beloved sport of waterfowl shooting)

²⁴⁹ Thomas Eakins to Benjamin Eakins, March 6, 1868 quoted in Foster and Leibold, 1989, 206.

²⁵⁰ See Goodrich, 1982 Vol 1, 30-31 and Johns 1983, 14-15.

when elucidating his theory on the role of nature in modern painting. From the outset of his career as an artist, hunting and its associated pursuits functioned as potent material embodiments of the encounter between man and nature. Moreover, hunting offered a shared language of experience when addressing his father (and other men of similar social standing) with which to construct larger metaphors regarding the import of his art.

At the conclusion of his studies and after spending several months travelling through Spain, Eakins returned from his nearly four year stay in Europe in 1870. His period of apprenticeship provided him a thorough education in the academic principles of draftsmanship and painting as well as the work of the old masters and the leading European artists of the day.²⁵¹ Though he returned buoyed by his training and confident in his prospects as an artist, Eakins had yet to establish himself in any meaningful regard. His period in Spain culminated in the unsatisfying experience of his first finished canvas, an outdoor genre scene, *A Street Scene in Seville*. (Figure 3.2) After three trying months laboring on the painting through the spring of 1870, Eakins declared that the work was merely “an ordinary sort of picture,” that despite its few merits possessed an “earnest clumsiness.”²⁵² Moreover, he returned to a tumultuous domestic situation in Philadelphia where he was confronted with his mother, Caroline Cowperthwaite Eakins’s, worsening mental illness.²⁵³ Eakins attended to her diligently throughout her illness, but she died two years after his return in 1872 at the age of fifty-two, with the official cause of death listed as “exhaustion from mania.”²⁵⁴ Despite challenges in his domestic life, Eakins remained dedicated to pursuing the life of a professional painter. He arranged a studio in the top

²⁵¹ For a thorough history of Eakins’s period of artistic training see Elizabeth Milroy, *Thomas Eakins’ Artistic Training, 1860-70* PhD Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1986.

²⁵² Thomas Eakins to Benjamin Eakins, April 28, 1870, quoted in William Innes Homer ed., *The Paris Letters of Thomas Eakins* (Princeton University Press, 2009), 298.

²⁵³ See Henry Adams, *Eakins Revealed: The Secret Life of an American Artist* (Oxford University Press, 2005), 169-76.

²⁵⁴ Goodrich, 1989, 76-79.

floor of the family's house at 1729 Mount Vernon Street, where he focused his attention on the family members and friends that formed his immediate social circle. In paintings such as *Home Scene* depicting Eakins's sisters Margaret at the piano and Caroline writing upon a slate on the floor, the artist mounted a study of his immediate social circumstances. (Figure 3.3) The painting is typical of Eakins's domestic scenes from this period, which probed the domestic experience of female acquaintances and balanced narrative content with psychological introspection.²⁵⁵

While his first forays into painting upon his return to Philadelphia were largely interior scenes of well-to-do women, the first major work that Eakins exhibited was quite different—an outdoor rowing scene, *The Champion Single Sculls (Max Schmitt in a Single Scull)*. (Figure 3.4) The painting depicts the celebrated oarsmen and Eakins's boyhood friend Max Schmitt on the Schuylkill River following his victory in the 1870 Schuylkill Navy Regatta. In addition to the painting's precise naturalism (partially achieved through the employment of a complex perspectival system), the recognizable landmarks of the Philadelphia riverside as well as Eakins's inclusion of his own self portrait, shown rowing a scull in the background, heighten the specificity and modernity of the work. Rowing was a subject with personal connections for Eakins as he had engaged in the sport from a young age. After the Civil War, rowing had also become an immensely popular urban pastime, particularly in Philadelphia which boasted an active rowing culture along the Schuylkill River. The city hosted numerous regattas which attracted many spectators and at the moment of Eakins's debut of *The Champion Single Sculls*

²⁵⁵ Martin A. Berger has proposed a reading of *Home Scene* as an interplay between the creative and replicative arts, and a commentary on female development. Martin A. Berger in John Wilmerding, ed. *Thomas Eakins (1844-1916) and the Heart of American Life* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 1993), 64.

Philadelphia had just begun to elicit the attention of the national press as a major center of rowing.²⁵⁶

Beyond rowing's modernity and connection to urban life, Eakins's images also concentrated on the sport's capacity to celebrate masculine achievement. Amateur racers like Schmitt and professional rowers like Philadelphia's Biglin Brothers were widely held to represent the pinnacle of manly athletic achievement. The sculls that they paddled were equally acclaimed as examples of modern engineering. A critic discussing one of Eakins's rowing watercolors at the exhibition of the Watercolor Society in 1874 declared the scull "the only exquisitely artistic production of the American nineteenth-century mind thus far."²⁵⁷ As Martin Berger has argued, Eakins's rowing paintings provoke associations with dual contemporary masculine virtues of scientific refinement and athletic vigor. Underpinned by a scientific viewpoint, achieved through a complex perspectival system laid out in numerous preparatory drawings, Eakins's rowing images commemorate the union of modern boating technology with athletic prowess thereby forging a modern vision of ideal masculinity.²⁵⁸ (Figure 3.5)

Shown at the 1871 exhibition of the Union League of Philadelphia, *The Champion Single Sculls* was the first painting Eakins exhibited in the United States. Though he had not previously exhibited a work in his home city, Eakins was already known in the Philadelphia art circles as a promising student of the academic master Gérôme. However, his first publicly shown painting attracted only measured attention in the press with two critics acknowledging the artist's promise but reserving praise. The writer for the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* offered a positive though

²⁵⁶ For a thorough social history of Eakins's rowing images see Elizabeth Johns, *Thomas Eakins: The Heroism of Modern Life* (Princeton University Press, 1983) and Helen A. Cooper, *Thomas Eakins: The Rowing Pictures* (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1996).

²⁵⁷ "The Watercolor Exhibition," *New York Daily Tribune* (April 14, 1874), 7.

²⁵⁸ Martin A. Berger, *Man Made: Thomas Eakins and the Construction of Gilded Age Manhood* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 12-27.

unenthusiastic recognition of Eakins's interest in scientific realism and subjects drawn from modern life: "This artist, in dealing so boldly and broadly with the commonplace in nature, is working upon well-supported theories, and, despite a somewhat scattered effect, gives promise of a conspicuous future."²⁵⁹

Over the ensuing months Eakins continued to explore the theme of rowing, producing nearly twenty paintings, drawings, and watercolors of rowers and races. Clearly captivated by the subject, he also seemed keen to mark his artistic progress by working through a single motif. In 1873 he sent his former teacher a watercolor (now unlocated) depicting a single rower in the midst of a stroke of the oars. In a letter received later that year, Gérôme responded generally favorably to the work of his pupil, though also included an ample formal critique. His primary recommendation was that Eakins focus his attention not on the intermediate stages of the rower's action, but rather on the moments at either end of the stroke as they carried the most potential to create a forceful composition. Gérôme concluded, "What pleases me above all, and this in looking forward to the future, is the construction and the building up combined with honesty which has presided over this work."²⁶⁰ Eakins was clearly encouraged by his master's reply as he set to work on a new composition incorporating his instruction, which he sent to Gérôme several months later. (A similar version is now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Figure 3.6) Eakins must have been heartened by his teacher's praise of the second work as, "entirely good" but even further gratified by Gérôme's endorsement of the modern subject matter.²⁶¹

²⁵⁹ "The Fine Arts: The Third Reception at the Union League III," *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* (April 28, 1871), 1 in Ilene Susan Fort ed, *Manly Pursuits: Writings on the Sporting Images of Thomas Eakins* (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2011), 62.

²⁶⁰ Gérôme to Thomas Eakins, May 10, 1873, Quoted in Goodrich, 1989, 114. The watercolor sent to Gérôme is now lost.

²⁶¹ Gérôme to Thomas Eakins September 18, 1874. Quoted in Goodrich, 1989, 116.

It is not entirely clear what specifically prompted Eakins to move on from his series of rowing images and turn his attention to the subject of hunting.²⁶² In the fall of 1873 he travelled with his father (as he had many times before) to the family's property near Fairton, New Jersey along the Delaware River. There Eakins along with his family and friends often engaged in a range of outdoor leisure pursuits including swimming, boating, and hunting.²⁶³ Situated near the confluence of the Cohansey and Delaware Rivers, the marshlands near the Eakins' "Fish House" were considered some of the best areas for the prospect of shooting waterfowl, and served as a popular destination for Philadelphians of high social standing. Though perhaps not as bountiful and well traversed as the more distant hunting grounds near the Maurice River, the Cohansey marshes were said to offer the sportsman average hauls of 75 to 100 birds at the height of the season.²⁶⁴ In addition to hunting, Eakins set about making numerous studies of the landscape, figures, and fauna that surrounded the hunt. Unfortunately, Eakins's 1873 trip was cut short when the artist contracted malaria and had to return to Philadelphia to recuperate. The illness was quite serious as Eakins later related to Gérôme that "The doctors believed that I would die" and his father informed a friend that his son had spent ten to twelve weeks bedridden with fever.²⁶⁵

Despite the setback, Eakins remained committed to pursuing a series of hunting works and by January of 1874 he had begun working again. Working from a set of drawings and oil studies produced during the previous summer and fall, Eakins produced a small group of finished watercolors and paintings which depict hunting and its associated pursuits during this period.

These include *Starting Out After Rail* (watercolor and oil), *The Artist and His Father Hunting*

²⁶² Henry Adams has suggested Eakins turn toward outdoor subject matter was in part a result of greater freedom to leave his home following his mother's death. Adams, 2005, 193.

²⁶³ Margaret McHenry, *Thomas Eakins Who Painted* (Privately Printed, 1945), 131

²⁶⁴ "Where to Shoot Rail," *Forest and Stream* (November 10, 1881), 290.

²⁶⁵ Thomas Eakins to Jean-Léon Gérôme ca. March 1874 quoted in Foster and Leibold, 63. This letter exists as a draft in the Bregler collection, but some parts must have been sent as Gérôme's reply is also recorded in the collection. Benjamin Eakins to Henry Huttner, July 29, 1874 reprinted in Foster and Leibold, 340.

Reed Birds in the Cohansey Marshes, *Pushing for Rail*, *Whistling for Plover*, and *Hunting* (as well as several additional works known from the literature but now lost). (Figures 3.7-3.12)

These works were all based upon the previous campaign of studies that the artist made while still ambulatory the previous year. In a letter to Gérôme Eakins explained that though he had recovered from his illness, his doctor forbid him from returning to the marshes that year, where he might have made additional drawings and notes.²⁶⁶ Despite his confinement to the city, Eakins was armed with plentiful source material. These included landscape studies, precise architectural drawings of hunting boats, sketches of game birds and gunners, and highly articulated perspectival drawings. While some of these may have been further worked up in the studio, many bear the hallmarks of having been produced in the field. Studies of reed birds in flight for example would have been impossible to make in the city, but also the complex notations included in drawings like *La Chasse: Perspective Study for Rail Shooting* contain topographic information and distance measurements that surely were based on first hand observation in the field. (Figures 3.13, 3.14) Like all of Eakins work to this point, the hunting images he produced in early 1874 resulted from the synthesis of deep personal experience and memory, analytic visual study, and creative formulation in the studio.

In hunting subjects Eakins found fertile ground to further refine his artistic practice by challenging himself to construct evermore complex compositions. Later in life, in a manual intended for students at the Pennsylvania Academy, Eakins wrote,

I know of no prettier problem in perspective than to draw a yacht sailing. Now it is not possible to prop her up on land to photograph her, nor can she be made to hold still in the water in the position of sailing...A vessel sailing will almost certainly have 3 different tilts. She will not likely be sailing in the direct plane of the picture. Then she will be tilted

²⁶⁶ Thomas Eakins to Jean-Léon Gérôme ca. March 1874 quoted in Foster and Leibold, 63.

over sideways by the force of the wind, and she will most likely be riding up on a wave or pitching down into the next one.²⁶⁷

Eakins's *Setting Out After Rail* offers a perfect demonstration of the artist's mastery of this problem. (Figure 3.7, 3.8) The oil and watercolor versions of this work depict Eakins's friends Sam Helhower and Harry Young, setting out in a distinctive "Delaware River ducker," an all-purpose boat distinctive to the region.²⁶⁸ The two men carry the necessary equipment for rail shooting, a shotgun stashed in the right side of the boat, and a pushing pole seen extending beyond the stern. Eakins's perspective study distills the painting's complex formal arrangement in which the boat moves away from the picture plane at an angle, while tilting under the force of the wind against the sail. (Figure 3.15) While the sailing vessel provides the impetus for the perspective problem, hunting is not an inconsequential aspect of the work, as Eakins has quite deliberately raised the viewer's position so that one looks down into the boat, revealing the hunting instruments.²⁶⁹

In the series of hunting images Eakins also continued to develop his understanding of light and color by portraying scenes outdoors. While his academic training emphasized the primacy of drawing and design, problems of color had vexed Eakins as a student. In his notebook of his travels through Spain, Eakins ruminated on the problems of light and color: "A picture suitable for any sort of light can be utterly spoiled by too strong a light... Would it have been better to color my lights more intensely [?] Can a picture be painted so that it requires a particular kind of light?"²⁷⁰ In attempting to depict an outdoor activity on water, Eakins was

²⁶⁷ Thomas Eakins, *A Drawing Manual By Thomas Eakins* Kathleen Foster, ed. (Philadelphia Museum of Art in Association with Yale University Press, 2005), 74-5.

²⁶⁸ "The Delaware River Ducker," *Forest and Stream* (April 21, 1887), 285-86; Benjamin A.G. Fuller, "The Delaware Ducker," *Wooden Boat* 48 (Sep-Oct, 1982), 78-86.

²⁶⁹ See Kathleen Foster, "Chapter 13: Original and Studious Boating Scenes," *Thomas Eakins Rediscovered: Charles Bregler's Thomas Eakins Collection at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1997), 131-143.

²⁷⁰ Thomas Eakins, "The Spanish Notebook" 1870, in Homer, 2009, 306-307.

building upon the technical challenges that he had proposed in the rowing images of naturalistically representing the effects of sunlight upon the varied marine landscape as well as the figures who inhabited it. However, as Kathleen Foster has shown, in the hunting images Eakins went a step further by exploring through a singular subject the varying effects of light at different times of day. Foster has proposed *Starting Out After Rail* and *The Artist and His Father Hunting Reed Birds* as “narrative pendants” showing the differing effects of light in morning when hunters would typically leave to reach the hunting grounds, and evening when the hunt was usually at its peak.²⁷¹ In a draft of a letter intended for Gérôme Eakins pinpointed the problem posed by such an exercise, particularly when working within unideal studio conditions: “I painted my two pictures in a very strong light and a warm enough one, in a reflected light that shone on houses. A feeble light then darkened my colors, but a blue light destroyed them. I might have been more sensible to have taken a middle road, to have chose to work on a day neither strong nor weak, with a light completely white. What is the practice of the best painters? Is there a conventional solution?”²⁷² Though Eakins’s vacillations indicate a dissatisfaction with the final result, they also demonstrate the degree with which he continued to push himself technically and formally in such works.

In addition to challenging himself formally, it would seem that Eakins also saw his hunting works as suitable subjects to further his reputation as a painter of note through the prominent exhibition and sale of his work. In May 1874, along with the revised watercolor depicting a single rower, Eakins sent two oil paintings of hunting subjects to Paris which he asked Gérôme to forward to the French dealer Goupil. While it is uncertain exactly which two

²⁷¹ Foster, 1997, 134.

²⁷² Thomas Eakins, draft of letter, Bregler Collection, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, quote and translation in Foster, 1997, 136. It is unclear if this portion of the letter was ever sent.

canvases constituted this initial shipment, they assuredly depicted the sport of rail shooting because Eakins included a lengthy description of the practice in a letter to Gérôme. Appealing to Gérôme's own sporting proclivities, Eakins wrote, "I send you two little paintings and a watercolor. The first shows a fine hunt of my country. It is done in canoes. There are two men in each canoe, the pusher and the hunter."²⁷³ Eakins goes on to describe in depth the roles that each man plays in the hunt, making *The Artist and His Father Hunting Reed Birds* a compelling candidate for one of the two oil paintings. Regardless of exactly which paintings comprised the shipment, Eakins must have been displeased when Gérôme reported in his letter later that year that the paintings were on deposit with Goupil but he, "did not know if this will answer the firm's purpose, in two words, if this kind of painting is saleable."²⁷⁴

Nevertheless, Eakins continued working through hunting subjects and exhibited a hunting watercolor, *Whistling for Plover*, alongside a baseball and sailing subject at the 1875 exhibition of The American Watercolor Society. (Figures 3.11, 3.16) *Whistling for Plover's* radical portrayal of an armed African American hunter masterfully taking game stands apart from Eakins's other hunting works. At a moment of heightened racial consciousness surrounding the conclusion of Reconstruction, the depiction of an African American figure in an imposing, and even dangerous posture would surely have arrested attention among contemporary viewers and a more in-depth discussion of the work's volatile contexts follows later in this chapter. While the salability of his hunting works remained in question, Eakins was likely buoyed by Earl Shinn's praise in *The Nation* for his exhibited works: "The selection of the themes in itself shows artistic insight, for American sporting-life is the most Olympian, beautiful, and genuine side of its

²⁷³ This letter was first published in McHenry, 39-40 who was saw the letter in French. It is republished in Goodrich, 1982, I 319-20. The draft of the letter resurfaced in the Bregler Collection and is published in full in Foster, 1997, 134-35

²⁷⁴ Gérôme to Thomas Eakins September 18, 1874. Quoted in Goodrich, 1989, 116.

civilization from a plastic point of view.”²⁷⁵ Shinn’s critique offered an endorsement of the subject matter on which Eakins had focused his earliest years of artistic independence but also revealed something of the artist’s motivations in pursuing such a path. While seeking to establish himself both in the eyes of his former teacher as well as his native public, Eakins deliberately chose subjects that asserted both his Americanness and his modernity.

After receiving Gérôme’s missive in the fall of 1874, and exhibiting successfully at the Watercolor Society, Eakins sent an additional shipment of works to Paris which likely included *Pushing for Rail* and a now unlocated oil related to *Whistling for Plover*. In 1875 Eakins had two oil paintings (from among the half dozen previously sent to France) accepted for exhibition in the annual Paris Salon. Both were exhibited with the title *Une chasse aux États-Unis*, though it is now unclear precisely which two works were shown. While Lloyd Goodrich contended that the two works were *Pushing for Rail* and *Starting Out After Rail*, other art historians have demonstrated the impossibility of definitively establishing which works were in fact exhibited.²⁷⁶ Kathleen A. Foster has made a more convincing case that the two works were instead *Starting Out After Rail* and *The Artist and His Father Hunting Reed Birds* based on the sequencing of Eakins’s paintings arrival in Paris, critical descriptions of the works, and the artist’s correspondence with Gérôme and Earl Shinn.²⁷⁷

Sorting out the precise identity of the works shown at the Salon poses an intriguing art historical problem but the lack of a concrete accounting of the exhibition record presents only a

²⁷⁵ Earl Shinn, “Fine Arts: The Water-Color Society’s Exhibition, II,” *The Nation* 20 (Feb 18, 1875), 120.

²⁷⁶ Goodrich, 1982, I, 118. Lois Marie Fink provides a clear and concise overview of the case for possible candidates in *American Art at the Nineteenth-Century Paris Salons* (Washington D.C.: National Museum of American Art Smithsonian Institution, 1990), 214-16, n. 80 305-6.

²⁷⁷ Foster, 1997, n. 16, 263. In the *Revue des Deux Mondes* F. de Langevais describes the works thusly: “The two canvases, each containing two hunters in a boat, resemble photographic prints covered with a light watercolor.” *The Artist and His Father* was perhaps more likely than *Pushing for Rail* to fit this description, though the latter does depict pairs of men in boats. Quoted in Spassky, *American Paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* II, 595.

minor impediment to discussing their significance. That both works were exhibited with the title *Une chasse aux États-Unis* firmly identifies the subject as a hunting scene, but also places the action specifically within the United States, marking it as a distinct form of hunting that would have been somewhat unfamiliar to Parisian audiences.²⁷⁸ The French critic Paul Leroi fixated on this novel aspect of Eakins work: “Mr. Thomas Eakins, a disciple of Mr. Gérôme who sends from Philadelphia a very strange painting; it is nevertheless not without merit. *Une chasse aux États-Unis* is a true work of precision; it is rendered as a photograph; there is a truth of movement and of details really great and singular. This exotic product teaches us some things and its author is not to be forgotten.”²⁷⁹ Beyond praising Eakins’s skill and promise, Leroi called attention to the painter’s (and by extension the painting’s) Philadelphia origins. The “exotic” character of the painting could refer both to Eakins’s highly realist technique as well as to the distinctive method of hunting depicted.

Hunting subjects were quite popular at the Salon among both French and foreign artists. In 1875 more than two dozen hunting works were shown in addition to Eakins’s contribution.²⁸⁰ The taste for English sporting imagery and customs during the Second Empire led to a French revival of sporting art and literature that endured into the 1870s. The proliferation of sporting imagery expanded beyond the Salon and works were frequently shown in other venues at dealers’ galleries and private exhibitions.²⁸¹ Late nineteenth-century French sporting art typically oscillated between older French venery customs, and imagery influenced by British sporting art,

²⁷⁸ See numbers 757 and 758, *Explication des Ouvrages de Peinture, Sculpture, Architecture, Gravure et Lithographie des Artistes Vivants, Exposés au Palais des Champs-Élysées, le 1 Mai 1875*. Reprint *Catalogues of the Paris Salon 1673 to 1881* vol 1875, H. W. Janson, ed. (New York: Garland, 1977), 111.

²⁷⁹ Paul Leroi [pseud.] “Salon de 1875—XVI: Les Étrangers,” *L’Art: Revue hebdomadaire illustrée* 2 (1875), 270-76, translated and reprinted in Ilene Susan Fort, ed., *Manly Pursuits: Writings on the Sporting Images of Thomas Eakins* (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2011), 64.

²⁸⁰ See *Catalogues of the Paris Salon 1673 to 1881* vol 1875, H. W. Janson, ed. (New York: Garland, 1977).

²⁸¹ Claude d’Anthenaise, *À Courre, à cor et à Cri: Images de la vénerie au XIX siècle* (Paris: Musée de la chasse et de la nature, 1999), 15.

which was considered more modern. Jean-Richard Goubie's *The Prize for the Hunt* serves as a representative example of period tastes. (Figure 3.17) Shown at the 1872 Salon, the scene is set in a dateless landscape and populated by hunt servants at left who wear the French bicorne hat, marking the conventional roots of their livery. Most of the hunt party meanwhile is dressed in modern hunt dress after the English custom. Depicting a moment at the end of the hunt in which a woman is ceremonially presented with the stag's foot, the painting's emphasis on the significance of group hunt rituals forges a deep connection with traditions of hunting carried out by landed classes.²⁸²

Eakins's choice to send hunting works to Paris for submission to the Salon might be seen as a shrewd attempt to gain entry to the exhibition by aligning himself with a well-established genre known to be popular with Salon goers. Eakins was not the only American artist who attempted to appeal to European tastes for hunting imagery. David Neal who trained in the Munich Academy launched his artistic career with the exhibition of *After the Hunt*, a hybrid of hunting still life and genre scene. (Figure 3.18) First exhibited in 1871 at Munich's Royal Academy and shown later that year at the National Academy, the work revels in olden details from the antique rifle to the conventional dress of the huntsman and servant.²⁸³ The painting was quickly purchased in 1871 by a Brooklyn collector, and a year later a critic discussing the painting in *The Aldine* declared, "America may well feel proud when her sons earn for themselves such high positions as David Neal has won for himself in one of the great art-centres of Europe."²⁸⁴ The popularity of such traditional hunt subjects endured despite the aesthetic

²⁸² See Charles Sterling and Margaretta M. Salinger, *French Paintings: A Catalogue of the Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art II* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1955), 198-99.

²⁸³ See Ilene Susan Fort and Michael Quick, *American Art: A Catalogue of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art Collection* (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1991), 149-50.

²⁸⁴ "After the Chase," *The Aldine* 5 no. 11 (Nov. 1872), 227.

upheavals posed by the new generation of avant-garde artists who rose to prominence in the 1870s and 80s. The American expatriate artist Julius LeBlanc Stewart, who also studied under Gérôme several years after Eakins, exhibited *A Hunt Ball* at the 1885 Salon. (Figure 3.19) The painting captures the decorous pomp of a cotillion following the day's hunt. While the scene contained recognizable depictions of Stewart's high society friends, the painting serves mainly as a portrait of a class—the wealthy elite who participated in hunting as a means of expressing class values.²⁸⁵ Like both Neal and Goubie, Stewart's vision of hunting was of a practice steeped in traditions of the European landed aristocracy in which the significance of social ritual and refined decorum eclipsed the action of the pursuit itself.

Though Eakins may have benefitted from his paintings' association with the theme of hunting more broadly, he broke from the traditional modes of representation that defined European sporting in a pronounced way. While European sporting artists and their American devotees fixated on the ceremonial splendor of the hunt, Eakins's portrayal of rail shooting was decidedly straightforward. Eakins's naturalistic and unpretentious vision of hunting allowed him the opportunity to declare his own sense of modernity by opposing hunting's entrenched artistic traditions on two fronts—formally and thematically. Eakins's developing commitment to realism, expressed through both a mathematical synthesis of space, and a direct treatment of nature aligned him with the stylistic tenets of the European avant garde and revealed his commitment to modernist ideals. The staged manner and formal convolutedness of past sporting art offered Eakins the opportunity to work through a well-established (and perhaps moribund) visual tradition, stripping it of the many layers of artifice and contrivance in order to arrive at a totally new and radical manner of depicting a fundamentally old ritual. The manner and customs

²⁸⁵ Karen Zukowski, "Julius LeBlanc Stewart" in Annette Blaugrund, ed., *Paris 1889: American Artists at the Universal Exposition* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1989), 211-13.

of Eakins's beloved method of hunting was ideally suited to such a task, as the hunts themselves were more solitary and simple affairs, devoid of pomp and circumstance. For Goubie and Stewart hunts were large communal affairs, comprised of both sportsmen and servants. In paintings like *Starting out After Rail* and *The Artist and his Father* Eakins presents the hunt as a more restrained event, usually involving a pair of hunters. Even in *Pushing for Rail* where multiple groups of hunters are shown, each pair seems to operate more or less independently, with many more boats scattered haphazardly throughout the background. Moreover, the simple costume of Eakins's hunters bears no ceremonial, aristocratic, or upper class connotation. Instead each of the sportsmen is dressed in modern middle class sporting dress. Although the men who control the boats with large poles in *Pushing for Rail* are likely hired hands, the hunt lacks the overblown retinue of servants typical of large-scale European hunts. Eakins's hunters are individuals acting against nature. Utterly self-reliant and unencumbered by trappings of tradition, they are simultaneously part of a longstanding natural order and thoroughly modern.

This is not to say Eakins hunting images were devoid of the deep social divisions that marked European hunting imagery, but in Eakins's case these were often couched by the artist's modern and straightforward portrayal of both the hunt participants and servants and a rejection of visual conventions which emphasized hunting dress and ceremony. In *Rail Shooting on the Delaware* (sometimes referred to as *Will Schuster and Blackman Going Shooting*) Eakins focuses closely on a boat carrying a white hunter and black pusher who is nearly certainly a hired hand. (Figure 3.20) Although Eakins depicts both men with a sense of individuality and the same degree of sympathy, as Brian Allen has argued, "there is no question of actual equality."²⁸⁶ This lack of equity stemmed partly from Eakins's understanding of the relationship between whites

²⁸⁶ Brian T. Allen, "Will Schuster and Blackman Going Shooting," in Wilmerding, 1993, 89.

and African Americans, which hewed closely to the period's dominant ideology of white supremacy. However, the relationship between the two men is also structured by the fact that one is partaking in leisure while the other is laboring for a wage. While it was not unusual for middle class sportsmen to hunt in pairs without a hired pusher, those decamping from the city for the day could easily hire guides at sites along the Delaware River and frequently did so. Produced around two years after his other hunting works, *Rail Shooting* isolates an episode from *Pushing for Rail*, repeating the rightmost group of hunters but substituting the white pusher in the earlier work with a black man. As Allen further notes that this formal choice, perhaps undertaken in response to criticism by Gérôme, heightened the intensity of the earlier work by editing elements that could be considered extraneous and focusing on the crucial shot.²⁸⁷ The motivation for the change from a white pusher to a black pusher is more difficult to ascertain. African Americans who lived in the areas around the Delaware River commonly worked as guides and the inclusion of a black man in this role might have meant to heighten the specificity of the location. Allen proposes that in highlighting an African American man in the clearly subservient role Eakins was visualizing the country's longing to reestablish a strict racialized social hierarchy in the wake of the upheavals of the Civil War and Reconstruction.²⁸⁸ While such a reading has considerable merit it also overlooks the esteem with which Eakins held the work of the pusher, (as evidenced in other images and writings discussed below) and the necessity for constant cooperation between the more physical work of the pusher and visual work of the shooter.

Eakins's representation of hunting also differed from traditional sporting subjects in his insistence on portraying the dynamism and action of the hunt. Instead of focusing on the formalities that surrounded the proceedings, Eakins's hunters are engaged in the act of hunting

²⁸⁷ Allen, "Will Schuster and Blackman Going Shooting," in Wilmerding, 1993, 88.

²⁸⁸ Allen, "Will Schuster and Blackman Going Shooting," in Wilmerding, 1993, 89.

itself. This is shown most clearly in *Pushing for Rail* in which the groups of hunters form a narrative link from left to right, with the first sportsmen loading, the middle hunter readying to take aim, and the right figure shooting at the prey. In focusing on the most potent moments of narrative interest, Eakins may have been responding to Gérôme's earlier criticism of the rowing watercolor of John Biglin. Gérôme argued that Eakins had failed to capture the strength and energy of the scene because he had depicted the least consequential moment of the stroke and "taken an intermediate point hence the immobility."²⁸⁹ In the series of hunting images Eakins responded to such criticism by focusing on moments of high dramatic tension, pivotal to the progress of the hunt. Though *Starting Out After Rail* for example might at first seem to depict an inconsequential episode in the lead up to the hunt, timing one's departure for the marsh with the tides was essential to the success of the hunt and the journey required considerable sailing skill.

Similarly, *The Artist and his Father* might at first glance seem to depict a lull in the action, rather than a moment of high drama. However, as Eakins explained at great length in a letter to Gérôme, the painting showcases the highly specialized work of the pusher who directs the boat (in this case Eakins himself,) carried out in tandem with the hunter:

As soon as the water is high enough to float on the marsh, the men get up and begin the hunt. The pusher climbs up on the deck and the hunter stands in the middle of the boat so that his head will not be hidden, his left foot a bit forward. The pusher pushes the boat among the reeds. The hunter kills the birds that take flight. I show in my first canoe the movement when a bird has just risen. . . . I have chosen to show my fellows in the season of the cool nights of autumn when the shooting stars have fallen and the reeds have dried. When a bird is killed, the hunter reloads his gun (if it was his second barrel just discharged) and then the pusher, having observed the spot where the bird fell, goes there and collects the dead bird by means of his net. Sometimes while going there, other birds fly up and finally there will be perhaps a dozen birds dead before the pusher is able to pick up one, even though only one bird can be killed at a time. It is principally in remembering well that places that to a novice seem all alike after have once turned the head, that the good pushers distinguish themselves.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁹ Gérôme to Thomas Eakins, May 10, 1873, Quoted in Goodrich, 1989, 114.

²⁹⁰ Draft of letter from Thomas Eakins to Gérôme, Bregler Collection, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, reprinted in Foster, 1997, 134-35. The letter was first published in McHenry, 39-40.

The rich description Eakins provides of the pusher's work and the dusky setting seem to correspond most closely to the scene depicted in *The Artist and His Father*, though it is not absolutely certain that this letter references this painting directly.

Placing himself in the pivotal role of the pusher, Eakins both performs the labor necessary to the hunt and surveys the action from an elevated position in which he ultimately directs its course.²⁹¹ As Eakins explained further in his letter:

The pusher cries mark and [illegible] on the deck stiffens up and tries to stop the boat or at least hold it more steady. He should not be able to stand upright, because the inertia of the boat makes considerable pressure against his thigh, a pressure that he resists with his weight. The hunter [sic] always calls out when he sees a bird because, for the better part of the season when the reeds are still green, he is the one who sees it first because of his higher position on the deck. He sees it often while the hunter sees nothing because the reeds are tall and thick.²⁹²

This expression of the harmony of manual labor and learned expertise calls to mind Eakins's earlier analogy expressed in a letter to his father, of the painter guiding his canoe through nature. The activity of piloting a boat is the same both the letter and the painting, but there are also parallels in the way Eakins described both the pusher and the artist's work. In the earlier letter he wrote, "The big artist does not sit down monkey like, & copy a coal scuttle or an ugly old woman like some Dutch painters have done nor a dung pile, but he keeps a sharp eye on Nature & steals her tools. He learns what she does with light[,] the big tool & then color[,] then form and appropriates them to his own use."²⁹³ Eakins acknowledges the artist's handiwork, but just as in his description of the pusher's role in the hunt, the way an artist truly distinguishes himself is through the prescience of his vision.

²⁹¹ Alan Braddock, "Eakins, Race, and Ethnographic Ambivalence," *Winterthur Portfolio* 33 (Summer-Autumn, 1998), 152.

²⁹² Draft of letter from Thomas Eakins to Gérôme, Bregler Collection, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, reprinted in Foster, 1997, 134-35.

²⁹³ Thomas Eakins to Benjamin Eakins, March 6, 1868 reprinted in Homer, ed., 197.

In the same letter Eakins also praised the ideas of Herbert Spencer, the British philosopher who popularized a socially oriented evolutionary theory in the United States and Europe. Eakins likely absorbed many of Spencer's ideas from the French philosopher Hippolyte Taine, a devoted proponent of Spencer's theories, who served as a lecturer in aesthetics at the École des Beaux-arts during Eakins's tenure there.²⁹⁴ Taine also stressed that the artist was not a mere copyist of nature, but instead followed the example of nature in order to form his own vision. In a series of lectures delivered in 1864 Taine argued, "It is essential, then, to imitate something in an object; but not everything.... Your object is to reproduce the aggregate of relationships, by which the parts are linked together, and nothing else; it is not the simple corporeal appearance that you have to give, but the *logic* of the whole body." He thereby declared that the artist could achieve "a more elevated character for art, which thus becomes intellectual, and not mechanical."²⁹⁵

In addition to being a genre scene, *The Artist and his Father Hunting Reed Birds* is also highly elaborate self-portrait in which hunting and its associated ideals function as markers of key aspects of Eakins's identity. Eakins placed himself in the role of the pusher, in the midst of executing the complicated maneuvers that he described in his long letter to Gérôme. Indeed the majority of the letter is devoted to describing in great detail the important work of the pusher:

The pusher's pole is fourteen feet long. At the end is a fork to engage the roots and reeds and to prevent the pole from getting broken in the mud. At the other end is a knob, so that the pole won't slip between the pusher's hands. The pusher always looks ahead and plants his pole so that the resistance of the boat will be equal against his two feet. Then the least additional pressure on one or the other foot will turn the bow of the canoe to the opposite side.²⁹⁶

²⁹⁴ See Milroy, 1986, 229-238.

²⁹⁵ Hippolyte Taine, *Lectures on Art* (New York: H. Holt and Company, 1875), 56-57, 59.

²⁹⁶ Draft of letter from Thomas Eakins to Gérôme, Bregler Collection, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, reprinted in Foster, 1997, 134-35.

Eakins's self-image in the guise of the pusher was constructed with great care and based on at least one known portrait photograph showing his head capped with the same hat seen in the painting. (Figure 3.21) The great detail with which Eakins explained the pusher's task hints at the level of esteem with which he held such work. Although the pusher's labor was often carried out by hired hands (as seen in *Pushing for Rail*) it would not have been unusual for well-heeled sportsmen hunting in pairs to trade off such duties. In Eakins's representation of himself as pusher, he emphasizes not only the brute mechanical aspects of the work, but also its intellectual side. Eakins is shown expertly balancing the boat, an achievement which calls to mind his later pronouncement that the "prettiest problem in perspective" is to depict a boat moving on water.²⁹⁷ While physically propelling the boat, Eakins stares intently forward searching for new prey which will dictate the course of the hunt. Eakins's father, Benjamin Eakins, stands in the bow of the boat and although he will ostensibly be the one to shoot for the reed birds, it is Eakins as pusher and artist who has composed the whole scene and is ultimately responsible for the success of the hunt and the canvas.

Besides identifying himself with pusher's work, Eakins also embedded markers of his familial, social, and civic identity throughout his depiction of hunting. While at least one art historian has interpreted the relationship depicted between father and son as one of cold subordination, in fact the two men are engaged in a highly cooperative and symbiotic pursuit.²⁹⁸ As Eakins explained, the shooter and pusher worked in concert with each other, with each man's work giving meaning to the other. Their interconnectedness as hunters offered a potent metaphor for their larger relationship in which Benjamin Eakins nurtured and supported his son through his

²⁹⁷ Thomas Eakins, *A Drawing Manual By Thomas Eakins* Kathleen Foster, ed. (Philadelphia Museum of Art in Association with Yale University Press, 2005), 74-5

²⁹⁸ Adams, 2005, 185-87.

studies and early working years. At this moment in his career Eakins was poised on the cusp of fulfilling his obligations by developing into a major artist, but was still reliant upon his father. In discussing a later image of Eakins and his father, *The Chess Players*, Martin A. Berger describes “Thomas’s identity as interpenetrated with Benjamin’s.”²⁹⁹ (Figure 3.22) He argues that the painting suggests an untangling of the father and son’s identities through the generational ascendancy of the younger man playing at the table. This interconnected relationship applies even more emphatically to the earlier *Artist and His Father* which depicts father and son together. While the two men are still inextricably linked in the sporting work, Thomas Eakins confidently inhabits his present role in both the boat as he is depicted in the implied overall familial structure. The inscription “BENJAMINI EAKINS FILIUS PINXIT” (The son of Benjamin Eakins painted this) placed prominently on the side of the boat shared by the two men is not a statement of Thomas Eakins’s subordinate position, but a recognition of the artist’s place within a patrimonial line in which ascendancy progresses generationally. Eakins’s painting not only illustrated a seemingly real-world example of the two men’s cooperation, but firmly naturalized his position as a member of a professional family and the larger urban middle class.

In addition to declaring his prominent position within his own family, Eakins’s hunting scenes asserted a particular geographic location closely associated with Philadelphia leisure. Though Eakins’s illness prevented him from traveling to the marshlands while working on the finished canvases, his deep knowledge of the area based on personal experience and careful visual study gives each of the works in the 1874 hunting series a high degree of geographic specificity. The features of the Cohansey Marsh that form the landscape of *The Artist and His Father*, though perhaps not easily recognizable to most who encountered the painting, were tied

²⁹⁹ Berger, 2000, 80.

to specific landmarks that Eakins had observed while hunting the previous autumn. (Figure 3.23) The two trees which bracket Eakins's head were worked out in the sketch and then transferred to the finished canvas at the same size. In another sheet Eakins recorded the jagged topography of the tree-filled skyline viewed across the Delaware River. (Figure 3.24) These details reappeared in the distant landscape seen in the watercolor and oil version of *Starting out After Rail*. Even in the case of works like *Pushing for Rail* in which a specific landscape study has not been identified, the character of the landscape with vast expanses of marshy reeds abutting a large waterway traversed by larger boats (with deeper drafts) identifies it unmistakably as within the Delaware River region.

Philadelphia boasted an active sporting culture in the 1870s and the Delaware River was the city's primary hunting ground. In 1875 the Philadelphia Sportsmen's Association hosted its annual meeting and shooting tournament along the River near Tinicum, Pennsylvania, where its 250 members arrived aboard a special train dispatched by the Pennsylvania Railroad.³⁰⁰ More typically, an urban sportsman could take a short regular service from Philadelphia to Chester, where he could hire a guide and spend several hours shooting during which time he might bag as many as 100 birds.³⁰¹ While some wealthier families like the Eakins's owned or rented property near the river from which to hunt, many more made the day trip to hunting sites. The sport of shooting waterfowl had been connected with the city well before Eakins depicted it. An 1853 illustration by William Croome in *Gleason's Pictorial Drawing* shows two boats with pushers and shooters hunting in an identical manner to that depicted by Eakins two decades later. (Figure 3.25) In the distance the large masts and steam stacks of ships indicate the busy commercial activity along the Delaware River and hint that the scene takes place in the vicinity of

³⁰⁰ "Annual Reunion of the Philadelphia Sportsmen's Association," *Forest and Stream* (May 13, 1875), 218.

³⁰¹ "Rail Shooting on the Delaware," *Forest and Stream* (Aug 26, 1880), 64.

Philadelphia.³⁰² Although Eakins's hunting images were shown in the Paris Salon with the more generic title "A Hunt in the United States," savvy viewers would have recognized that the artist had actually created a highly localized representation of modern life by focusing on a particular sport and a specific landscape closely associated with his home city.

The primary quarry of hunts along the Delaware was the Rail, a small waterfowl, several species of which could be found in the area's marshes. Rail made their habitat throughout the eastern seaboard, but two of the most desirable varieties, the Virginia Rail and the Sora Rail, were particularly abundant along the Delaware River, and came to be closely associated with the area's sporting culture during the nineteenth century.³⁰³ As early as 1853 one magazine reported "During the greater part of the months of September and October, the market of Philadelphia is abundantly supplied with Rail, which are sold from half a dollar to a dollar per dozen."³⁰⁴ Rail were generally considered good eating, but their primary attraction for sportsmen was their behavior as prey in which they provided for a vigorous hunt with ample opportunities for shooting. Accordingly, rail had been long sought after game birds in the United States. In *American Ornithology* Alexander Wilson began his entry on the *Rallus Carolinus* or Sora Rail: "Of all our land or water fowl, perhaps none afford the sportsman more agreeable amusement, or a more delicious repast, than the little bird now before us."³⁰⁵ Similarly, in a letter to G r me Eakins recounted the sheer abundance of the birds as well as the excitement of the pursuit as the quarry are suddenly flushed from their hiding places in the reeds. Other accounts of Rail shooting commonly fixated on the vast number of birds available for shooting. One sporting

³⁰² The short article accompanying the image confirms the location along the Delaware River. "Rail Shooting," *Gleason's Pictorial Drawing Room—Room Companion* 5 (Dec. 3, 1853), 353.

³⁰³ Henry William Herbert, "Rail and Rail Shooting," *Graham's American Monthly Magazine of Literature, Art, and Fashion* 37 (Sep., 1850), 190.

³⁰⁴ "Rail Shooting," *Gleason's Pictorial Drawing Room—Room Companion* 5 (Dec. 3, 1853), 353.

³⁰⁵ Alexander Wilson, *American Ornithology, or, The Natural History of the Birds of the United States* Vol. 3 (New York: Collins & Co., 1828), 185.

correspondent advised sportsmen not to waste too much time searching for downed birds maintaining, “you will do better to leave them, for in the ten minutes you consume in searching you may shoot five or six birds.”³⁰⁶ Eakins made several studies of the birds in flight as well as an oil study of deceased birds presented as if specimens. (Figures 3.26, 3.27) Although the birds themselves appeared infrequently in Eakins’s hunting images, it is clear from the tenor of the action that unfolds in *Pushing for Rail*, and *The Artist and his Father* that rail are the hunt’s quarry.

Though rail shooting along the Delaware was closely associated with Philadelphia middle and upper class leisure, the pursuit was not entirely disconnected from the complex demographic and geographic dynamics that governed the city’s lower social registers. In 1881 two of Eakins’s images of rail shooting were used to illustrate a *Scribner’s Monthly* article, “A Day in the Ma’sh,” which offered readers a tour of an area of South Philadelphia near the confluence of the Delaware and Schuylkill Rivers known as the Neck.³⁰⁷ According to the author of the article, Maurice Egan, the Neck was a rough and tumble area inhabited by immigrants, African Americans, and people at the margins of society, where more well-to-do Philadelphians sometimes came to shoot and take in the local scene. For his illustrations Eakins provided *Scribner’s* with a monochromatic copy of *Rail Shooting on the Delaware* and a drawing based on the leftmost figure in *Pushing for Rail*, which is now known as *The Poleman in the Ma’sh*.³⁰⁸ (Figures 3.28, 3.29) Egan describes the Neck as a semi-polluted wasteland dotted with ramshackle buildings and factories belching industrial waste. However, during the fall, “sportsmen, boatmen, and ‘pushers,’ who propel the flat bottomed skiffs through the reeds,

³⁰⁶ “Rail Shooting on the Delaware,” *Forest and Stream* (Aug 26, 1880), 64

³⁰⁷ Maurice Egan, “A Day in the Ma’sh,” *Scribner’s Monthly* 22 (July, 1881), 343-52.

³⁰⁸ See Ellwood C. Parry, III and Maria Chamberlin-Hellman, “Thomas Eakins as an Illustrator, 1878-1881,” *The American Art Journal*, 5 (May, 1973), 42-45.

swarm into the Neck.”³⁰⁹ As Alan Braddock has shown, Eakins’s illustrations reveal little of the hardscrabble character of the region, and present instead a “picturesque retreat largely untouched by modernity”.³¹⁰ This makes sense because Eakins’s images in fact do not illustrate episodes in “The Ma’sh” but the artist’s own experiences hunting further afield. Rather than stripping Eakins’s earlier works of their original context, Eakins’s later illustrations offer further evidence of the deep connections between the sport of rail shooting and Philadelphia culture. Their re-contextualization within the article removed the sport from the region on the outskirts of the city and located it firmly within a specific Philadelphia location. On the pages of *Scribner’s* representations of hunting became intermeshed with the social world of the Neck, in which different people of differing classes, ethnicities, and races often mixed. That the editors and Eakins chose two images which prominently featured African Americans working as hired hands speaks to the complexity of social relationships that formed around hunting (and many other middle class leisure pursuits) in which those taking part in the pursuit often had drastically differing motivations. As the physical location of the hunt moved further from the city in paintings like *Starting out After Rail* and *The Artist and his Father*, such connotations did not disappear but instead became more deeply embedded in Eakins’s sporting images. As Braddock has noted Eakins’s rowing pictures “belonged to, and implicitly affirmed a world of white exclusivity and privilege.”³¹¹ Eakins’s vision of hunting was further segregated by class and geographic mobility. The social boundaries implicit in the hunts he depicted demonstrated how such seemingly rural pursuits were always governed by the social hierarchy of the city.

³⁰⁹ Egan, “A Day in the Ma’sh,” 352.

³¹⁰ Alan C. Braddock, “Bodies of Water: Thomas Eakins, Racial Ecology, and the Limits of Civic Realism,” in Alan C. Braddock and Christoph Irmscher, eds. *A Keener Perception: Ecocritical Studies in American Art History* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2009), 139.

³¹¹ Braddock, “Bodies of Water: Thomas Eakins, Racial Ecology, and the Limits of Civic Realism,” 143.

In *Whistling for Plover* Eakins complicates such hierarchies further, depicting an African American man crouched along a marshy shore with shotgun in hand, hunting plover, a species of wading shorebird. The many fallen birds that surround him attest to his prowess, a notable accomplishment as the cry of the plover was considered particularly hard to mimic. In addition to the extant watercolor, Eakins also produced a closely related oil version of this composition, which was included in the group of four canvases the artist sent to Gérôme in spring, 1874. In a letter to Earl Shinn Eakins related that the work depicted William Robinson, a resident of Backneck, a small hamlet in Cumberland County, New Jersey, along the Cohansey River and very near to Fairton, the town where the Eakins family maintained their vacation property, the “fish house.”³¹² While virtually nothing of Robinson’s biography is known, Eakins depicted the man with a great degree of expressiveness and individuality. In his review of the 1874 Society of American Watercolors’ Exhibition, Shinn wrote that Robinson’s “face is modelled like a bronze.”³¹³ In Eakins portrayal, Robinson appears a keen and expert hunter, employing a wide range of skills and cunning in order to bag a large quarry. The hunter laying in the distance meanwhile seems not to have taken down a single bird. However, Eakins’s choice to depict an African American man in the role of expert hunter cannot be understood merely as a narrative or aesthetic happenstance. More than a decade after African American soldiers first carried arms and fought with valor in the Civil War, the image of an armed black man training a gun in the general direction of the viewer would have surely carried more weighted connotations among contemporary viewers.³¹⁴ The inevitable winding down of Reconstruction made apparent by the

³¹² Thomas Eakins to Earl Shinn, January 30, 1874, Reprinted in Gerald M. Ackerman, “Thomas Eakins and His Parisian Masters Gérôme and Bonnat,” *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 73 (April, 1969), 241.

³¹³ Earl Shinn, “Fine Arts: The Water-Color Society’s Exhibition, II,” *The Nation* 20 (Feb 18, 1875), 120.

³¹⁴ The most penetrating analysis of the racial context of this painting can be found in Braddock, “Eakins, Race, and Ethnographic Ambivalence,” 152-3.

Democratic Party's national resurgence in 1874 brought an increasing awareness of incidences of racial violence throughout the South. The pages of *The Philadelphia Inquirer* pedaled both outrage at accounts of violence enacted upon black southerners by white lynch parties, and exotic fascination at lurid tales of roving parties of armed African Americans murdering whites and disrupting the rule of law.³¹⁵

Violence and social unrest only intensified as Reconstruction drew to a close and Redeemer governments comprised of Democrats reasserted control over state politics throughout the South. Accounts of armed action carried out by black Southerners challenged perceptions of the submissiveness African Americans but also reinforced stereotypes which exoticized blacks by exaggerating their capacity for violence. Thomas Nast's illustration *He Wants a Change Too* published in *Harper's Weekly* depicts a shirtless black man, defiantly holding a rifle and staring out at the viewer. (Figure 3.30) The wall behind him is covered in quotes from Southern Democrats that make various claims attempting to reestablish the antebellum political and social order. The central figure stands over the bodies of several dead or wounded African Americans, while a ruined smoldering building is seen in the background bearing signs that read "School House," "Home," and "Work Shop." On the one hand the image makes a strong case for black defiance in the face of racial oppression, seemingly presenting force as the only possible recourse to violence. However, the man's unidealized features, unclothed body, and glowering

³¹⁵ The long titles of two representative articles, published two days apart discussing separate incidents of violence in Louisiana and South Carolina, hint that the public's fascination rested more in the details of the bloodshed, rather than the politics of the conflicts: "The Lawless South, The Recent Massacre at Coushatta, Louisiana, Another Account of the Affair, The Alleged Origins of the Troubles, Negroes, Said to be the Aggressors, A Party of Texans the Lynchers," *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (September 2, 1874), 1; "Southern Atrocities, Justice for the Oppressed, The General Government Alarmed, Action of the President and Cabinet, Strict Orders to U.S. Marshals, Troops to Assist Preserving Peace, Proclamation of Governor Kellogg, Heavy Reward for Coushatta Fiends, His Statement of the Affair, Bloody Deeds of the 'White League'" *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (September 4, 1874), 1.

expression, paired with the violent power of modern weaponry, also menace the viewer and bring to mind a powder keg waiting to explode.

Although he was clearly a hunter and not involved in any kind of social unrest, Eakins's depiction in *Whistling for Plover* of an African American man, William Robinson, armed and poised to shoot, could not easily have been divorced from such volatile connotations. However, in the more local context of the social world of Philadelphia sport (and its associated middle class values) Eakins did take steps to neutralize the perceived threat of such a work. Unlike the white middle class sportsmen who travelled to the area from the city in search of recreation, Robinson was a native of the rural town Backneck.³¹⁶ He is further separated from these men by the manner in which he hunts. While many urban sportsmen preferred to shoot from the water, such hunts required either the possession of boat or the means to hire a guide. Although Robinson appears to be an adept marksman, the skills he employs hunting solo lack the level of cooperation involved in Rail shooting. Finally his choice of plover as his prey likely indicates that he is hunting in order to sell his quarry, rather than in the pursuit of leisure. Plover were among the most expensive and sought after game in Philadelphia markets fetching almost three times as much as duck or geese.³¹⁷ Robinson's status as a local market hunter places him within an entirely distinct class from the well-to-do urban sportsman. While the representation of an armed black man would have still been startling to most white audiences at the time it was first exhibited, Eakins neutralizes some of the perceived threat to the racially defined social order by grounding the work in the modern context specific to his own city's sporting culture.

Despite hunting imagery's vestigial rural connotations and indebtedness to tradition, the subject ultimately served as an ideal vehicle for Eakins to declare his artistic commitment to

³¹⁶ Can find reference re: type of industry, social life, around Backneck

³¹⁷ "Game Bag and Gun: Game in Season for March," *Forest and Stream* (Mar 18, 1875), 90.

modernity and realism. As the second major theme he explored after rowing, it represented a culmination of his early training and first attempts at independence. Like Eakins's burgeoning approach to his art, hunting demanded the synthesis of forethought and action. This is perhaps most readily apparent in *The Artist and His Father* in which Eakins's role as pusher calls upon his vision to guide the hunt, his expert control to pilot the boat, all in concert with his father's decisive action in taking the shot. While depicting a specific incident typical of countless hunts, the work also serves as a demonstration of the artist's commitment to the interconnectedness of theory and practice through both its iconography and its own meticulously designed formal qualities. Beyond hunting's resonance with Eakins's personal and artistic development, his treatment of the subject also enmeshed himself within his particular time and place. The theorist Hippolyte Taine, who exerted a considerable influence on Eakins during his training, described the moment at which an artist achieves mastery: "A superior life dawns on him—that of contemplation, by which he is led to interest himself in the creative and permanent causes on which his own being and that of his fellows depend, in the leading and essential characters which rule each aggregate, and impress their marks on the minutest details."³¹⁸ For Eakins, hunting expressed the "essential character" of the modern urban man, masculine, proficient, and possessing the means and deportment to exist comfortably within his class.

Eakins's hunting works exuded promise, despite the fact that he had only exhibited a handful of works in the United States, and sold just a single watercolor in his home country. After working through the theme of hunting for most of 1873 and 1874, he would marshal all of the confidence expressed in those works for his next grand endeavor, a portrait of the esteemed surgeon Dr. Samuel Gross, now known as *The Gross Clinic*. (Figure 3.31) While the shift from

³¹⁸ Taine, 1875, 83.

smaller scale paintings of outdoor genre scenes to monumental portraiture might seem radical, the differences in subject matter were perhaps not quite so momentous. In the portrait the stately doctor is shown at a pivotal moment of the surgery, wielding a scalpel, an instrument much like a gun which bears great power and portent. *The Gross Clinic* celebrates a man of great learning and intellectual rigor who also works with his hands. This marriage of forethought and action is the same theme that guided Eakins's vision of hunting and his art. Eakins clearly intended *The Gross Clinic* to be his most grandiose and authoritative artistic statement to date and he ardently hoped that it would represent him famously at the Centennial Exhibition.³¹⁹ However, the exhibition's art committee declined to hang the painting within the art exhibition in Memorial Hall and it instead was less ceremoniously placed within the fair's "Army Hospital" exhibit among displays of the latest examples of medical technology. Despite this setback, Eakins was well represented in the art galleries, showing three oils, *The Chess Players*, *Elizabeth at the Piano*, *Professor Benjamin Howard Rand* and two watercolors, *Baseball Players Practicing*, and *Whistling for Plover*.

While *The Gross Clinic* proved too unseemly in its stark portrayal of modern reality for the jury, it is instructive that at least one hunting work was considered more appropriately modern. Except for a single painted reprisal of the subject in the 1876 work *Rail Shooting on the Delaware* and the illustrations for the *Scribner's* article, after *The Gross Clinic* Eakins did not revisit the subject of urban hunters and their exploits outside Philadelphia. Although he continued to travel to the "Fish House" and hunt throughout the rest of his life, it was not surprising that Eakins would leave behind the pursuit as a subject for his art. Having worked

³¹⁹ See Kathleen A. Foster and Mark S. Tucker, ed. *An Eakins Masterpiece Restored: Seeing The Gross Clinic Anew* (Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2012), particularly Foster, "A Portrait of Ambition: Eakins, *The Gross Clinic*, and the American Centennial," 35-43 and Foster, "*The Gross Clinic* in Philadelphia and New York, 1875-79," 71-82.

through the hunting images, Eakins had little else to offer on the theme and steadily moved on to depict other facets of modern life. As a subject matter for his art, hunting had ably served his purposes at this early stage in his career, by allowing the Eakins to engage his newly developed aesthetic ideals through the depiction of a pursuit with which he was deeply personally connected. Moreover, these hunting works offered the venue in which he declared his steadfast commitment to the modern, urban ideals of intellectual rigor, physical prowess, and masculine control of nature.

Ultimately Eakins's exploration of hunting themes played an important role in his own personal development as an artist and served to burnish the image of hunting as a culturally prominent pursuit by which men of distinction could express class values and model ideal forms of masculinity. Sporting culture existed and thrived in the areas around Philadelphia prior to Eakins's investigation of the subject and had indeed already accrued specific social connotations, such as its class boundaries and geographic connection to Philadelphia's civic identity. Eakins's accomplishment in his hunting works was to build upon these associations through an innovative representational strategy that overwhelmingly rejected the visual traditions of hunting art in order to recast hunting, and the male hunter, as exemplars of modernity. Such a strategy allowed Eakins to construct complex metaphors within such works which associated the skills and experience of the hunter—consisting of equal parts intellect, handiwork, vision, labor, and technology—with the values most appropriate to his ideal for modern life. While this exploration was at once highly personal, the paintings worked to extend the meaning of hunting for a wider audience. Critics' endorsements Eakins's hunting works as stridently modern and distinctly American, simultaneously claimed such praise for the sport of hunting itself. While perhaps few subsequent artists embraced hunting in such a modern and heroic way, Eakins's investigation of

the subject left a lasting impact by using art to bridge the divide between the rural and ancient roots of the practice of hunting and its reformulation within modern society as an elite form of recreation.

Winslow Homer

When Winslow Homer's canvas *Right and Left* arrived for consignment with his dealer Knoedler and Company in New York in January, 1909 it was received with the more straightforward and descriptive (if less evocative) title *The Golden Eye or Whistler Duck*.³²⁰ (Figure 3.32) According to Homer's biographer William Howe Downes, the painting acquired its current title shortly thereafter when it was on view at the gallery and "a sportsman came in, caught a glimpse of the picture, and at once cried out: 'Right and left!'—admiring, not so much the picture *per se*, as the skill of the hunter who could bring down a bird with each barrel of his double-barreled shotgun in quick succession."³²¹ While Downes's account is the only record of this anonymous sportsman's fortuitous visit, the new title clearly caught on quickly. The painting was being referred to by its new moniker in Knoedler ledgers by April, 1909 and by the time it was purchased in June of that year, the title *Right and Left* had been firmly set.

Beyond simply an appealing episode in the painting's history, the anecdote of the sportsman's encounter also provides an example of the complex ways in which imagery of rural sport circulated within an urban context. Located on the fashionable Fifth Avenue in Manhattan, Knoedler's gallery was a cosmopolitan enterprise that trafficked in masterpieces from Old Masters to the Barbizon School and French Impressionism, as well leading American artists such

³²⁰ Franklin Kelly, Nicolai Cikovsky, Jr., Deborah Chotner and John Davis, *American Paintings of the Nineteenth Century, Part I*. (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1996), 328.

³²¹ William Howe Downes, *The Life and Work of Winslow Homer*, 1911, Reprint, (New York: Lenox Hill, 1974), 245

as Homer, William Merritt Chase and John Singer Sargent. Such an establishment, which epitomized urban sophistication, might not at first seem the most likely place to for a sportsman—a type perhaps more readily associated with rural life—to wander in off the street. However, in Downes' tale the sportsman seems quite at home, confidently appraising the painting and providing the key insider knowledge necessary to decode its complex depiction of the sport of duck hunting.³²² The painting's first owner, Randal Morgan, a lawyer and executive with the United Gas Improvement Company living in the tony Chestnut Hill suburb outside Philadelphia, was motivated in his purchase by a similar strong interest in the sport depicted. Daniel H. Farr of Knoedler and Co. relayed several detailed inquiries between Morgan to Homer as to the method by which the ducks were hunted and the ultimate fate of the animals depicted. While Homer's response lacked the insider sporting knowledge that Morgan might have craved, he seemed satisfied enough, as he subsequently purchased the painting for \$5,000.³²³

While *Right and Left* was Homer's final hunting image, over the course of the preceding decades, he undertook a sustained investigation of the intricacies of hunting, particularly in the Adirondacks, a region popular with elite sportsmen like himself. Homer's treatment of Adirondack hunting reflects the more mediated experience of the sportsmen which included extensive travel and accommodation on trips that lasted from several days to many weeks.

³²² Scholars have more recently debated whether the ducks have in fact both been wounded, or are diving to escape the shot of the hunters in the background. Nevertheless, the sportsman's initial interpretation has been associated with the painting in both its title and the literature ever since. See for example John Wilmerding, "Winslow Homer's *Right and Left*" in "Winslow Homer: A Symposium," *Studies in the History of Art* Vol. 9. (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1990) 59-85.

³²³ Homer replied through Knoedler that the two birds were actually procured for Thanksgiving dinner, presumably from a butcher. Letter from Daniel H. Farr to Randal Morgan, April 3, 1909. Getty Research Institute. See also letter from Daniel H. Farr to Winslow Homer, April 19, 1909 and Letter from Daniel H. Farr to Randal Morgan, April 3, 1909 in M Knoedler & Co., Letter copying Book: Domestic Letters, 1909 April, 1- 1909 July, 8. Getty Research Institute. Also See Sales entry for May, 1909 in M. Knoedler & Co., Sale Book 9, 1907 May- 1912 January, Getty Research Institute. For more on Randal Morgan see, Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, *University of Pennsylvania: Its History, Influence, Equipment, and Characteristics, with Biographical Sketches and Portraits of Founders, Benefactors, Officers and Alumni* (Boston: R. Herndon Co., 1901), 445.

Instead of directly depicting the experiences of urban tourists (like Homer himself), these works focus exclusively on the work of the guides and hunt servants who carried out the labor of the hunt and the visceral act of killing. This marks a clear departure from Eakins's hunting works which foster a greater degree of narrative certainty by picturing both sportsmen (including Eakins and his immediate social circle) and servants, working together in identifiable tasks of the hunt. In Homer's works the artist instead draws a marked distinction between the actions of the hunt servants who are working, and the point of view of the unseen sportsman who engage in refined recreation. Homer actively marketed his sporting paintings toward well-to-do sportsmen and clearly felt that the imagery of rural hunt servants resonated with their interests. For an artist who valued the close observation of nature as a means of revealing its inherent truths, this privileging of the position and values of the gentleman sportsman-observer over the local hunter bestowed upon the former a strong sense of authority. Such images suggest a sense of clarity for a social situation that was in reality quite muddled, in which local hunters were castigated for "unsporting" hunting methods that were in fact largely practiced at the behest of the outsider sportsmen who purported to oppose such practices. Rather than being understood as strictly in favor or opposed to the practice, Homer's public might have been able to recognize within them a distinction between codes of conduct that governed the countryside and an endorsement of a sporting ideal based on urban, middle and upper class values of sportsmanship.

When Homer first visited the Adirondacks region of New York in 1870, he had already spent several years travelling to fashionable northeastern tourist sites and depicting the experience of well-to-do travelers there. Having established a reputation as a rising artist of note based upon his straightforward and forceful images of Civil War subjects, Homer turned his

attention to the seemingly more genteel subject matter of middle-class leisure.³²⁴ In 1868 he travelled to the White Mountains of New Hampshire, a popular destination for both tourists and artists since the 1830's.³²⁵ Hudson River School Painters who visited the region reveled in its sublime beauty, portraying the area as a sparsely settled frontier where a handful of pioneer families eked out a hard scrabble existence. Thomas Cole's *A View of the Mountain Pass Called the Notch of the White Mountains (Crawford Notch)*, 1839 depicts a popular mountain pass where many travelers first accessed the mountain range. (Figure 3.33) The towering peak in the distance dwarfs the small clearing and humble homestead in the foreground, while an approaching storm hints at the elemental power and looming hazards of such a place. In the far distance a wagon, likely carrying adventure-seeking tourists, proceeds through the mountain gap. Cole deliberately chose this view for its association with a well-known site of a devastating landslide three years earlier which killed an entire family who lived and farmed nearby.³²⁶ Cole's work emphasizes the wild grandeur of the landscape, which although already frequented by travelers, remained a wild and unpredictable place.

In Homer's paintings from the same region of the White Mountains executed nearly three decades later, such as *Bridle Path, White Mountains*, he captured the rugged, untamed beauty of the landscape but also the highly controlled experience of the popular diversions that awaited visitors there. (Figure 3.34) In Homer's work, the meticulously dressed young woman

³²⁴ My discussion of Homer's biography and career are necessarily truncated, relying upon the considerable previous scholarship devoted to the artist during the century following his death, particularly: Lloyd Goodrich, *Winslow Homer* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1944); Lloyd Goodrich with Abigail Booth Gerdtz, *Record of Works by Winslow Homer* (New York: Spanierman Gallery, 2005-14); Nicolai Cikovsky, et al. *Winslow Homer* (Washington D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1995); Elizabeth Johns, *Winslow Homer and the Nature of Observation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Margaret C. Conrads, *Winslow Homer and the Critics: Forging a National Art in the 1870's* (Princeton University Press, 2001).

³²⁵ See Donald D. Keyes, et al., *The White Mountains: Place and Perceptions* (Hanover: University Art Galleries, University of New Hampshire, 1980).

³²⁶ Franklin Kelly, *American Paintings of the Nineteenth Century*, Vol 1. (Washington D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1996), 87-95.

effortlessly guides the sturdy horse across the hazardous, rocky terrain. The overcast sky both obscures the mountains beyond and isolates the central figure, adding a sense of vulnerability to the scene. The somewhat perplexed critic for *The World* described the painting when seen at the National Academy exhibition as “a woman on horseback looking resignedly at a bank of frozen oatmeal into which her horse is carrying her.”³²⁷ Though more a reaction to Homer’s technique than the subject matter, the critic’s appraisal also speaks to the artificiality of the refined wildness found in such excursions. Those familiar with the region would have known that there was little danger in this journey to the top of Mount Washington, as more than 5,000 travelers were making the summit each year and by 1866 they could even take a railway to within 500 feet of the peak.³²⁸ The painting serves as a testament to Homer’s growing interest in naturalism and the development of his distinctive style, but in its juxtaposition of middle-class refinement and natural grandeur also perfectly embodied the experience of White Mountains tourism.³²⁹

At other popular leisure destinations such as Long Branch, New Jersey, Homer seemed similarly absorbed in the experience of the well-to-do tourist. Paintings such as *Long Branch*, *New Jersey* and *Beach Scene* both depict the newly fashionable pastimes of bathing and promenading on the seashore. (Figures 3.35, 3.36) Such images perhaps developed out of Homer’s contact during his visit to France two years earlier with the work of the burgeoning Impressionists, especially Eugène Boudin.³³⁰ Beyond revealing Homer’s artistic influences, these works also attest to the artist’s status as an insider who shares the point of view and cultural experience of the middle-class holidaymakers he depicted. Connected to New York and

³²⁷ “National Academy of Design,” *The World* (April 24, 1870), 3.

³²⁸ Gail S. Davidson et al., *Frederic Church, Winslow Homer and Thomas Moran: Tourism and the American Landscape* (New York: Smithsonian Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum, 2006), 42.

³²⁹ Margaret C. Conrads, *American Paintings and Sculpture at the Sterling Francine Clark Art Institute* (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1990), 63-67.

³³⁰ See Henry Adams, “Winslow Homer’s ‘Impressionism’ and Its Relation to his Trip to France,” in *Winslow Homer: A Symposium, Studies in the History of Art* 26 (Washington D.C., 1990), 61-89.

Philadelphia by railroad, Long Branch experienced a boom following the Civil War, with numerous prominent families from Eastern urban centers building seaside cottages within its environs.³³¹ However, by the time Homer created these images, Long Branch and other seaside towns were also coming under criticism for the influx of lower-class tourists who began partaking in the ritual of day-tripping to the seashore. As one travelogue observed, “Its nearness to the metropolis...puts it under the peculiar disadvantages of a place accessible to the ‘rough-scuff’ for a day’s pleasuring.”³³² The settlement of this tourist town resembled that of the larger city in that separate zones catered to different classes and races. At some point Long Branch acquired the nickname “Jerusalem” because of the large number of Jewish travelers who frequented one end of the beach.³³³ However, little evidence of this heterogeneity or “rough-scuff” can be found in Homer’s representations of Long Branch. Instead he focuses his attention on the genteel, upright, and seemingly carefree experience of the elite or middle-class tourist.

After spending summers in the White Mountains and along the coast of New Jersey, it is not surprising that Homer would undertake a journey to the Adirondacks region during the summer and autumn of 1870. The region had supported travelers for several decades, but the publication of William H.H. Murray’s best-selling *Adventures in the Wilderness; or Camp-life in the Adirondacks* in 1869 led to a boom in popular interest and tourism in the region.³³⁴ While tourist infrastructure was somewhat less developed in the Adirondacks than in other mountain resort regions, its isolation and the ruggedness of its supposedly unspoiled wilderness served as its principal attractions. Travelers usually arrived by train from northeastern cities in order to

³³¹ “The American Brighton,” *The World* (May 1, 1870), 1.

³³² “Long Branch-The American Boulougne,” *Every Saturday* 3 (August 26, 1871) 3.

³³³ “Long Branch-The American Boulougne,” 3.

³³⁴ William H.H. Murray, *Adventures in the Wilderness; or Camp-life in the Adirondacks*. (Boston: Fields, Osgood and Co., 1869).

hunt, fish, and experience the purported physical and mental benefits of time spent in the wilderness. A writer for the art journal *The Aldine Press* enthusiastically extolled the restorative virtues of the region:

This strong mountain air exercises a peculiar influence;—the active, scheming businessman, oppressed with many cares, is at once soothed to a dreamy lethargy, lulled by the music of the trees, and the murmur of the many waters, and is inclined to sleep and take things easy in a way that cannot fail to work wonders for the restoration of an overtaxed nervous system.³³⁵

Though this correspondent aimed his appeal at the weary businessman, women also travelled to the region (almost always accompanying male family members), though in smaller numbers than their male counterparts, particularly during the 1870s and 80s. Homer's accommodations in 1870 were typical of many early visitors to the region. He stayed on the property of Thomas Baker and his family, who operated a small farm and boarding house near Minerva, New York which catered to sportsmen and tourists. However, as the region continued to attract visitors from urban centers, infrastructure grew in kind, with grand hotels and sports clubs dotting the landscape by the late 1880s.

Beyond the restorative benefits of nature, the Adirondacks' main attraction for most visitors was its prospects for hunting and other wilderness sports like angling and mountaineering. Such pursuits comprised a well-established visual tradition that predated the Civil War and the region's growth as a popular middle class destination. Scenes of Adirondack hunting exploits formed the subject of numerous popular prints published during the 1850s and 60s by Currier & Ives and other printmakers. Images like *Camping Out in the Woods: A Good Time Coming* and *Halt in the Woods* focus almost exclusively on the experience of the well-heeled sport hunter. (Figures 3.37, 3.38) The nattily dressed sportsmen are depicted amongst

³³⁵ J.S. Jr. "From the Adirondacks," *The Aldine Press* 2 (July, 1869), 57.

their social peers engaged in healthful and upstanding recreation while guides and other hunt servants were frequently absent from popular representations of the chase. Such images helped to establish the popular conception of the Adirondacks as a refuge in which one could pursue rugged diversions within the bounds of social propriety.

Like the popular prints of the Adirondacks, Homer's earlier depictions of tourist regions in New Hampshire and New Jersey mainly pictured the experience of middle class tourists like himself. However, upon arriving in the Adirondacks his subject matter shifted decidedly, focusing instead on the local guides, woodsmen, and trappers who facilitated sporting pursuits for well-to-do visitors. This was likely the first time Homer had encountered such personages, as the relatively untraveled and unknown character of the Adirondacks (unlike the White Mountains for example) demanded the employment of someone with extensive local knowledge in order to not only hunt successfully, but to traverse the wilderness safely. Writing in 1870, a correspondent for *Appleton's* declared that "Twenty years ago, Adirondack was almost as unknown as the interior of Africa," and urged potential visitors to hire experienced guides which were to be found at any tavern or inn.³³⁶ Guides were usually year-round residents of the region who made a living accommodating tourists in the Summer and early Fall, and in a variety of local trades during the rest of the year such as trapping, logging, and farming. An experienced guide could be hired for around two to six dollars a day, depending upon the rigor of the expedition.³³⁷ These rugged and capable guides quickly became fixtures of the Adirondack tourist experience, making Homer's fascination with their world far from unusual.

Homer's first major treatments of an Adirondack subject in 1870 resulted in two closely related oils, *The Trapper*, *Adirondack Lake*, and a larger version, *Adirondack Lake*. (Figures

³³⁶ "Adirondack Scenery," *Appleton's Journal of Literature, Science and Art* 4 (September 24, 1870), 361.

³³⁷ "Adirondack Scenery," (September 24, 1870), 361; "The Adirondacks," *New York Times* (July 5, 1871), 2.

3.39, 3.40) Both works depict a nearly identical view of a local trapper standing atop a fallen tree trunk while guiding his canoe to the lakeshore. The trapper stares off into the distance of a stunning Adirondack landscape, his attention momentarily diverted by some unseen signal or disturbance. Isolated within a vast wilderness, the trapper seems comfortably at home in his environment, masterfully navigating the varied terrain. When one of these related works was exhibited a year later at the Century Club (it is unclear precisely which version was shown) it was well received with the reviewer for the *New York Evening Mail* declaring “no picture in the gallery attracted more attention.” Despite being exhibited under the lengthier but more generic title *A River Scene with a Man on a Decayed Trunk Guiding a Boat*, the critic easily parsed both the geography and the figure’s identity recognizing him as not only as a trapper but an Adirondack guide.³³⁸ Though Homer was known to have traveled to the region, the assurance with which the critic described the trapper’s status also attests to the growing popular fascination with such figures.

The Trapper, Adirondack Lake also signaled Homer’s keen awareness of the intricacies of hunting methods practiced in the Adirondacks, despite having spent only a single season there. The most significant difference between the two versions of the composition can be found in the prominence of the lantern within the canoe, which is positioned standing upright at the front of the boat in the smaller version and leaning towards the rear of the vessel in the larger work. This lantern would have conveyed to many contemporary viewers, that although the trapper did not appear with a gun or in the pursuit of game, he was indeed a hunter. Lanterns were used in a method of night hunting, commonly known as jacking. Working from boats, hunters scoured the shore using the lamp to locate deer from the reflections in their eyes. Once the animal was

³³⁸ “Art Gossip,” *New York Evening Mail* (April 3, 1871), 1; for the original title see Conrads, 38.

located, the bright light immobilized the deer and provided a cover for the hunter who was able to shoot undetected from behind or beneath the lantern.

The Trapper has commonly been interpreted as depicting this contested practice as a custom of local hunters in search of sustenance rather than sport. According to its many detractors, jacking was an unsporting practice because it conferred an unfair advantage on the hunter. Many contemporary writers (as well as modern scholars) associated this method of hunting with the locals who lived in the Adirondacks, but it was also regularly practiced by tourists who traveled to the area.³³⁹ One sportsman offered a stirring defense of the practice in the pages of *Forest and Stream*:

Now I have hunted deer by nearly every known method, and I know of no way by which more exciting sport may be had than by this same way of night hunting. Your guide must understand paddling and the habits of the deer thoroughly or it is useless to hunt, and it requires something more than an ordinary shot to take correct aim at a couple of shining specks 25 or 30 yards off in the darkness.³⁴⁰

The editors of the journal, which catered largely to middle class, hobby sportsmen, also endorsed the merits of hunting by lamplight. Favorable accounts of jacking could even be found in children's magazines like *Our Young Folks*, which published a seventeen year old's enthusiastic report of the thrills of a night hunt in the Adirondacks. After paddling for some time silently in the dark, the boy and his companion lucked upon a "magnificent buck," but owing to their nervousness, they wounded the animal several times before finally ending its suffering at close range with a revolver.³⁴¹ While local hunters often bore the brunt of the public's disdain for jacking, many elite sportsmen readily participated in the practice upon their visits to the region.

³³⁹ David Tatham, *Winslow Homer in the Adirondacks*. (Syracuse University Press, 1996), 27

³⁴⁰ "Jacking Deer," *Forest and Stream* (October 19, 1876), 166.

³⁴¹ F. Emerson, "An Adirondack Deer-Hunt," *Our Young Folks, An Illustrated Magazine for Boys and Girls* 8 (January, 1872), 46.

Part of the public's unease with jacking might have stemmed less from the means of killing deer, but by its association with the lower classes moving about at night time. Sordid tales of nighttime vice like George G. Foster's *New York by Gaslight* published in 1850, frightened middle class readers with accounts of urban ills carried out under the cover of darkness.³⁴² In cities progressives ramped up efforts following the Civil War to increase public lighting in urban areas (where impoverished slums were often the last to receive street lights) in order to snuff out social disorder among the lower classes.³⁴³ Shown moving about in the daytime without attempting to disguise the night hunting equipment, Homer's trapper avoided any such nefarious connotations. While Homer seems to reserve judgment of the trapper, neither heroicizing or criticizing his exploits, the distinction inherent in this painting between visiting sportsman and indigenous hunter was an important one that underlies much of the work he produced in the Adirondacks. The figure of the trapper could serve as both a model of the virtues of manly vigor and unadulterated wilderness experience, and also reflect the mediated experience of the middle class hunter who traveled to the region.

Based on his early visits to the Adirondacks, Homer also produced several illustrations for popular magazines *Harper's* and *Every Saturday* which depicted local residents trapping mink, stalking deer, and felling lumber. (Figures 3.41-3.43) These images focused on pursuits that fell outside the tourist season, suggesting a popular interest among the magazines' urban readership in the more workaday details of life in the region. In his *Adirondacks Illustrated* Seneca Ray Stoddard introduced many readers to Orson Phelps who would become one of the most famous guides in the Adirondacks:

³⁴² George F. Foster, *New York by Gas-Light* (New York: Dewitt and Davenport, 1850).

³⁴³ See Peter C. Baldwin, "Nocturnal Habits and Dark Wisdom: The American Response to Children in the Streets at Night, 1880-1930," *Journal of Social History* 35 no. 3 (Spring, 2002), 593-611.

He had an enthusiastic love for the woods, took to them on every possible occasion, and was a long time engaged in tracing out wild lot lines that extended far in the interior...he afterward cut what is now known as the Bartlett mountain trail, and soon guided two ladies up, which was considered quite a feat for them to perform and a feather in his cap, as it had been considered impracticable until then. He also marked trails to the top of Hopkins Peak, the Giant, up John's Brook to Marcy, and several others ; has made a valuable map of the country around, is a prized and regular contributor to a local paper, and has written a voluminous treatise on the Adirondack lakes and mountains, trees, birds, beasts, etc.³⁴⁴

As Stoddard makes clear, Phelps was not only adept at wilderness pursuits but also possessed a self-taught erudition in more learned matters. Phelps defied the stereotype of the ignorant country bumpkin, such as the local farmer pictured in William Sidney Mount's *The Herald in the Country* who looks on bewilderedly while a presumably urban sportsman reads the newspaper. (Figure 3.44) Homer's *Two Guides* serves as a culmination of his intense interest in Adirondack guides in the 1870s and pictures Phelps alongside a younger guide Charles Monroe Holt, likely scouting in the service of a group of camping tourists. (Figure 3.45) Though Holt was a regular resident of the rural Adirondacks, his shirt with its heart shaped emblem was typical of those worn by urban fire companies.³⁴⁵ (Figure 3.46) Standing next to the learned Phelps, the two men present a complex and nuanced picture of the interaction between rural guides, and the unpictured sportsmen and concomitant urban values.

While Homer's Adirondack works of the 1870s pictured a wide range of the figures and exploits that characterized the experience of sportsmen who traveled there, other than in one of the 1871 illustrations, he did not actually depict the conduct of the hunt itself. In 1881 Homer embarked on a journey to England that contemporary critics as well as later scholars considered

³⁴⁴ Seneca Ray Stoddard, *Adirondacks Illustrated* (Albany: Weed Parsons & Co, 1874), 137-38.

³⁴⁵ See Tatham, "The Two Guides: Winslow Homer at Keene Valley, Adirondacks," *American Art Journal* 20 (1988), 31. Conrads, also suggests based on discussion with an acquaintance of Holt that the shirt may have been his own, and the emblem Homer's embellishment, *American Paintings and Sculpture at the Sterling Francine Clark Art Institute*, 74 n. 3.

a pivotal turning point in his development as an artist.³⁴⁶ Settling in the small fishing village of Cullercoats along the North Sea, Homer made his primary subject the men and women who worked and lived on its rocky coast and rough waters. Upon returning to the United States in 1882, critics were struck by the new level of intensity and seriousness that marked his English output. While in England or shortly after his return to the United States, Homer created a single image of sporting life in England entitled, *Coursing the Hare*, which depicts the sport of coursing, or hunting game with sight hounds, a popular amateur sport in England during the nineteenth century.³⁴⁷ (Figure 3.47) The scene depicts a single hare, bounding across a field, while in the background a figure called the slipper releases two greyhounds that set off in pursuit. To the left women dressed in the typical costume of the Cullercoats area direct the hare to keep it on course. Whereas the intense action of the hunt and the plight of the prey animals had previously been absent from his American sporting images, here the hare is placed at the forefront of the composition, confronting the viewer directly with the terror of its flight. As the hare bounds toward the picture plane it turns abruptly as if the viewer joins in directing its course along with the three women at left. Such a compositional device forces both a visual and emotional connection on the part of the viewer with the prey. While most scholars have considered this work an anomaly within Homer's oeuvre, I would argue that it signals a turning point in his approach to the representation of hunting, toward images which engaged more

³⁴⁶ See John Wilmerding, "Homer's English Period," *American Art Journal* 7 (November, 1975), 60-69; Franklin Kelly, "A Process of Change," in Nicolai Cikovsky, et al., *Winslow Homer* (Washington D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1995), 171-245.

³⁴⁷ In *The Record of Works by Winslow Homer* Abigail Booth Gerdtz considers this image a reference to the sport of foxhunting, with a rabbit substituted for the fox, Vol IV.2, 213. However, coursing and foxhunting were two completely different pursuits, with foxhunting occurring over long distances with hounds who hunt by scent, and coursing occurring in a relatively small area using hounds that hunt by sight. Moreover, coursing was not as Gerdtz states exclusively practiced by the English gentry, but by this point was a much loved sport of the lower and middle classes in England. See Malcolm Cormack, *Country Pursuits: British, American, and French Sporting Art from the Mellon Collections at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts* (Richmond: Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 2007), 351.

deeply with the conduct of the chase, the differing roles that both sportsmen and guides played in the proceedings, and the plight of prey animals.³⁴⁸

Upon returning to the United States, Homer renewed his interest in the Adirondacks, continuing to travel to the region and producing a large body of works which deal with the subject of deer hunting. In many of these works such as *On the Trail* and *An October Day* Homer depicted a common but frequently maligned method of hunting known as hounding, in which deer were pursued to the point of exhaustion by hounds over long distances. (Figures 3.48,3.49) *On the Trail* shows a guide unleashing the hounds in order to direct the quarry onto established trails through the dense forest. These trails usually led to bodies of water, into which the deer were forced in search of escape. Without the advantage of speed and agility in the water, the deer were easily overcome by guides waiting in boats who either clubbed, knifed, or shot the trapped animal to death. In *An October Day*, while the buck in the foreground appears tantalizingly close to escape, in reality its awkwardness in the water meant near certain death at the hands of the approaching huntsman in the distant rowboat. Homer captured the morose result of this type of hunting in *Hound and Hunter* which depicts Michael Francis Flynn, an employee of the North Woods Club where Homer hunted, struggling to carry a dead buck to shore.³⁴⁹ (Figure 3.50) In Homer's numerous depictions of the sport of hunting after hounds, he seems intent on capturing all aspects of the chase from the mundane moments before the quarry is spotted, to the dramatic climax in works like *A Good Shot, Adirondacks*, and even its grisly aftermath. (Figure 3.51)

³⁴⁸ *Coursing the Hare* has rarely been discussed in the Homer literature. One of the few mentions is Gordon Hendricks who called the work "curious," *The Life and Work of Winslow Homer* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1979), 175.

³⁴⁹ Although some early audiences thought that Flynn was shown in the act of killing the animal, Homer emphatically stressed that the deer was already dead, writing "It is a simple thing to make a man out an Ass & fool by starting from a mistaken idea—So anyone thinks this deer is alive is *wrong*." Winslow Homer to Thomas B. Clarke, December 11, 1892, quoted in Franklin Kelly, et al., 1996, 324.

Although Homer's treatment of the sport of deer hunting verges on the encyclopedic, from his emphasis on hunt servants through the course of the chase, one might get the impression that the well-to-do sportsmen who travelled to the Adirondacks rarely took part in the hunts. The lack of any depiction of recreational sportsmen seems all the more conspicuous when one considers that the activities Homer depicted and indeed the entire process of the hunts he witnessed was not a spontaneous or indigenous activity but rather a large-scale production carried out for the benefit of the wealthy participants who travelled from cities specifically for the purpose. While David Tatham has argued that depicting urban sportsmen in such works would have upset the conceptual and visual uniformity of such works, Homer's decision to exclude such figures also reflects the sharp delineation of the roles that different classes of participants played and the ritual of the hunt and the ideals that guided their behavior.³⁵⁰

The practice of hounding had many detractors who objected to it for a variety of reasons from its inherent cruelty, to the unsporting nature of the contest. In 1878 Charles Dudley Warner, penned an essay for *Atlantic Monthly* that was highly critical of deer hunting, and hounding in particular. Largely told as if from the point of view of a harrowed doe that was pursued over many miles by baying hounds, the story anthropomorphizes the animal making her pursuers cruelty all the more barbaric by comparison. As the deer is driven toward a lake, Warner expressed her abject terror at the fate that awaited her: "At her first step into the water she saw a sight that sent her back with a bound. There was a boat mid-lake; two men were in it; one was rowing, the other had a gun in his hand." The deer bounds into the water to try and escape.

Warner continues,

The brave pretty creature was quite exhausted now. In a moment more, with a rush of water the boat was on her and the man at the oars had leaned over and caught her by the tail. 'Knock her on the head with that paddle!' he shouted to the gentleman in the stern.

³⁵⁰ Tatham, *Winslow Homer in the Adirondacks*, 117-118.

The gentleman *was* a gentleman, with a kind, smooth-shaven face, and might have been a minister of some sort of everlasting gospel. He took the paddle in his hand. Just then the doe turned her head and looked at him with her great, appealing eyes.³⁵¹

However, the gentleman, overcome by sympathy for the animal (and perhaps objecting to the unfair advantage) refuses to deliver the final blow. Instead the guide pulls the doe's head from the water and brutally cuts her throat.³⁵² While the story is scornful of nearly all depicted, Warner's gentleman sportsman is somewhat redeemed by his acknowledgment of the unsportsmanlike nature of the whole process. More crucially though, it is the hunt servant who enacts violence directly upon the deer, the gentleman's hands stay clean. Warner concludes the tale with a hauntingly ironic image: "And the gentleman ate that night of venison."³⁵³ In Warner's telling though the sportsman eagerly participates in all the trappings and spoils of the hunt, the actual killing is the exclusive province of the hired guide. In Homer's depictions of similar hunting practices, he avoids the awkwardness of the sportsman's role in the proceedings by excising him altogether.

Many scholars have searched Homer's images of deer hunting for signs that he either endorsed or criticized the practice of hounding.³⁵⁴ Contemporary observers, such as the critic for the *New York Tribune* who was reviewing a show of Homer's Adirondack watercolors, seemed less troubled with parsing out Homer's individual feelings on the matter:

Whatever we may think of the propriety of 'hounding' deer, we can hardly deprecate the practice in the presence of Mr. Homer's pictures. For the hounds have furnished him pictorial material which we could not afford to lose from this record of an Adirondack

³⁵¹ Charles Dudley Warner, "The Adirondacks Verified," *Atlantic Monthly* 41 no. 246 (April 1878) 528-529.

³⁵² Homer's *An October Day* and *Hound and Hunter* could perhaps even be considered as illustrations of the moments just before and just after the kill.

³⁵³ Warner, "The Adirondacks Verified," 529.

³⁵⁴ See Tatham, *Winslow Homer in the Adirondacks*, 118 who argues that Homer "avoided both sentiment and heroics". Though others such as Nicolai Cikovsky have found the images more pointed in their critique. He writes: "The feelings of moral revulsion that deer hounding provoked... were feelings that Homer clearly shared." See Cikovsky and Kelly, 269-70 for example.

summer... Such are the true artist's notes of Adirondack life. They are impressions, it may be said, but they preserve all that we care to know.³⁵⁵

Homer was known to have participated actively in this method of hunting and the prolonged engagement he maintained with subject clearly signals his intense interest.³⁵⁶ While Homer often highlighted the brutality of animal death at the hands of the hunters, he did so in the same matter-of-fact manner that characterized his depiction of a range of human endeavors and natural phenomena. In *After the Hunt* for example, the carcass of the large buck rests incidentally in the boat while the aging huntsman and his assistant go about the routine work of gathering the hounds. (Figure 3.52) Their labor is neither redeemed nor enhanced by the excitement and ritual of the hunt. Although their work required killing, in Homer's depiction it remains simply routine labor.

Both the ambiguity and deep pathos of these images defies a singular interpretation of Homer's personal outlook on hunting. However, Homer's choice to focus exclusively on the local hunt servants does reveal his identification with a particular point of view—that of the gentleman sportsman. Images such as *On the Trail* capture the unfolding action precisely from the vantage point that would have been observed by such sportsmen. The viewer follows the guide who both directs the chase and carries out the difficult labor of managing the hounds and tracking a path through the forest. Even in works like *An October Day* or *Hound and Hunter* which place the viewer in a more indeterminate position, the point of view is still clearly separate and at a distance from the action carried out by the guides and hunt servants. In repeatedly employing such visual strategies Homer distinguishes between those who carried out the gruesome but necessary work of the hunt, and the unpictured gentleman-sportsman turned

³⁵⁵ "Mr. Homer's Watercolors: An Artist in the Adirondacks," *New York Tribune* (February 26, 1890), 6.

³⁵⁶ David Tatham, "Recently Discovered Daybook Reveals Winslow Homer's Participation in Deer Hunting in the Adirondacks," *American Art Journal* 26 no ½. (1996), 108-112.

spectator. Such divisions served to distance the urban sportsman from morally questionable aspects of the hunt, but also assert the authority of his spectator position and consequently the sporting ideals which outsiders brought to bear upon the chase.

Homer's emphasis on hunt servants and guides on the one hand reflects his longstanding interest in depicting working people from all strata of society. However, the popularity of accounts of rugged backwoods guides in literature and art also suggests at the least a deep sympathy, but also perhaps a sense of identification with such figures among the wealthy clientele who consumed such imagery. A correspondent for Appleton's described the transformation that city gentleman undertook on arriving in the Adirondacks:

There stood three men, who can be seen any day on Third Street new Chestnut, where brokers do congregate and are known as perfect Turveydrops of deportment, men who could tell you all you want to know about the changes in the gold-market, in knit jackets and army shirts like so many small boys in an orphan asylum. And there...stood one who, though he walks quietly down the principal street of the Centennial City every afternoon about five o'clock, was here calling out wildly like Sempronius, for war to the very knife with all the tribes of deer, fish, and fowl, for miles around.³⁵⁷

Many historians have connected this performance of "roughing it" with a crisis of masculinity among urban professional men during the Gilded Age who sought to establish clear ideals of manly virtue by engaging in so-called primitive pursuits like hunting and camping.³⁵⁸

Anthropologist Matt Cartmill has described these desires as a "Nietzschean view of the hunt as therapy for the human sickness, a cleansing participation in the healthy violence of the natural order."³⁵⁹ Privileging the point of view of the tourist-sportsman, Homer's images of virtuous hunt servants engaged in violence offered a neutral space in which the wealthy urbanites who

³⁵⁷ "Adirondack Adventures," *Appletons' Journal of Literature, Science and Art* (December 11, 1875), 351.

³⁵⁸ See John Pettegrew, *Brutes in Suits: Male Sensibility in America, 1890-1920* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007) and Daniel Justin Herman, *Hunting and the American Imagination* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001).

³⁵⁹ Matt Cartmill, *A View to a Death in the Morning: Hunting and Nature through History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 159.

consumed such images were able to identify with such figures and simultaneously see masculine virtues reflected back upon themselves. By picturing only guides these sporting images maintained the fiction that urban sportsmen were as rugged and capable as their local counterparts, while still upholding their authority to determine the moral conduct of the hunt. Indeed although Homer's hunting images show a strong degree of sympathy and even admiration for the hunt guides, there is never any doubt as to their social status and the rigid social hierarchy so essential to life in the city (privileging upper class, white, male authority) remains firmly in place.

The distinction between the urban outsider sportsman and his indigenous counterpart has a long history of visual representation of the hunt, particularly within British sporting art.³⁶⁰ Particularly prominent in prints, the Cockney Sportsman type represented the worst possible behaviors of those urban dwellers who engaged in sport without a proper understanding of its codes of sportsmanship. Charles Ansell's *Cockney Sportsmen Spying Game* of ca. 1805 shows a typically hilarious, if disturbing, result of the foibles of such improperly initiated sportsmen as the drunken urban transplants terrorize all in their path, shooting unwitting peasants and their own party members alike. (Figure 3.53) The Cockney Sportsman lacked a direct social equivalent in the United States. Instead urban sportsmen with no connection to the rural land beyond their status as tourists unabashedly dictated the rules of proper sportsmanship that governed the countryside with little regard or ridicule attached to their outsider status. Accordingly, the division between those who were qualified to hunt, whether by status, property, or respect for the sport, and those who were not, would nevertheless become an important aspect of the visual language of American hunting. While during much of the nineteenth century,

³⁶⁰ See Corey Piper, "The Social World of the British Sporting Print," in Mitchell Merling *Catching Sight: The World of the British Sporting Print* (Richmond: Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 2012), 50-52.

British sportsmen were required to own property in order to be qualified to take game, no such restrictions existed within the United States. In the absence of clear cut property qualifications, American sporting culture negotiated social distinctions based on ideals of conduct and sportsmanship and sportsmen expressed class identity through their adherence to shared values.

Such divisions became increasingly important as the popular growth of hunting as a diversion from urban life accelerated during the final decades of the nineteenth century. Unlike in Britain, where hunting was traditionally held as the province of the landed classes, in the United States hunting had been more commonplace among all social classes along the frontier and rural areas as an important means of sustenance, pest control, and protection. Following the Civil War, as the nation's population continued its shift to the city, many reformers looked to hunting and other wilderness pursuits as a means to promote good health and ameliorate the negative effects of urban living. A wide array of physicians, cultural critics, and even ministers published numerous articles and books extolling the value of retreating to the country in order to rest and promote vigor among the "brain-workers" who comprised the rising urban professional class.³⁶¹ During the 1870s these interests were promoted by a spate of new magazines and journals devoted to field sports such as *The American Sportsman*, *Forest and Stream*, and *American Angler*. Although these magazines enjoyed a wide circulation, they were primarily addressed to those who subscribed to the ideals of sportsmanship associated with the new class of recreational sport hunters. Charles Hallock, editor and publisher of *Field and Stream* declared as much in the inaugural issue, writing:

The publishers of *Forest and Stream* aim to merit and secure the patronage and countenance of that portion of the community whose refined intelligence enables them to properly appreciate and enjoy all that is beautiful in Nature. It will pander to no depraved

³⁶¹ See Sarah Burns, "Revitalizing the 'Painted-Out' North: Winslow Homer, Manly Health, and New England Regionalism in Turn-of-the-Century America." *American Art* 9 no. 2 (Summer 1995), 21-37.

tastes, nor pervert the legitimate sports of land and water to those base uses which always tend to make them unpopular with the virtuous and good.³⁶²

Following the lead of specialist journals, by the 1880s most metropolitan daily newspapers began including notices of a variety of sports, including hunting, horseracing, boxing, and baseball.

After purchasing the *New York World* in 1883, Joseph Pulitzer founded what was perhaps the first newspaper sports department, but by then most major newspapers at least employed paid correspondents exclusively devoted to sports reporting.³⁶³

The popularity of hunting and field sports among urban enthusiasts enjoyed a propitious rise during the 1880s and 1890s, but as evermore newcomers took to the woods, they began to threaten sport's status as a marker of elite leisure and refinement. When Homer first came to the Adirondacks, like many other tourists he stayed at a small farm turned boardinghouse near Minerva, New York run by Thomas and Eunice Baker. Their property, along with around 5,000 additional acres, was eventually purchased by a group of New York businessmen who formed a corporation in 1886 known the Adirondack Preserve Association for the Encouragement of Social Pastimes and the Preservation of Game Forests. Renamed the North Woods Club in 1895, Homer was among the group's earliest members and was joined by elite members of New York society including Henry Clay Frick.³⁶⁴ Associations like the North Woods Club represented an ideal of wilderness respite, as men of like stature could retire from the city to enjoy genteel company as well as rugged pursuits.³⁶⁵

³⁶² Charles Hallock, "To Correspondents," *Field and Stream*. 1 (August 14, 1873), 8.

³⁶³ John Rickards Betts, "Sporting Journalism in Nineteenth-Century America," *American Quarterly* 5 no. 1 (Spring, 1953), 52-3.

³⁶⁴ Tatham, *Winslow Homer in the Adirondacks*, 102-7

³⁶⁵ Women did visit the North Woods Club, though in much smaller numbers than their male counterparts. See Sarah Burns *Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 205-217.

While the North Woods Club represented perhaps the most elite stratum of sporting society, hunting clubs began to be formed even closer to metropolitan centers, catering to a broader reach of urban sportsman for whom an extended journey to the Adirondacks or other distant regions was out of reach. When hunts were carried out by clubs closer to New York, they were often held to be dangerous, raucous, and cruel affairs. For example, the headline of account in the *New York Times* of the deer hunting season in Islip on Long Island declared: “To Venture Into Long Island Woods is to Jeopardize Life.” According to the correspondent, the influx of urban “pot hunters” (those who hunted for profit rather than recreation) led the normally orderly hunt season to descend into chaos. One particularly rowdy Saturday was “marked by such scenes of disorder, bloodshed, and general rioting that an appeal has been made to Sheriff O’Brien of Suffolk County to send a force of deputies to the deer-hunting ground and disperse the gangs of pot-hunters.”³⁶⁶

Such mayhem was not merely a mild nuisance but in fact represented a real danger to the countryside and its inhabitants. A lithograph entitled *The Slaughter Season* by John S. Pughe published in *Puck* magazine, humorously charts the havoc an unskilled hunter could inflict upon the countryside. (Figure 3.54) The uppermost vignette shows a clueless and foppish urban sportsman being carried on a litter from a train a short distance to a rustic hunt cabin. Meanwhile a humble hunt servant bids farewell to his fearful family, who are convinced that the sportsman will shoot their father and husband. Their fears seem well founded, as we also see a cluster of game animals wondering aloud why the sportsman shoots so often at humans rather than themselves. Finally, in the center the sportsman shows off his numerous hunt trophies which include not only the heads of animals, but the portraits and clothing of the unfortunate humans

³⁶⁶ “A Rabble Hunting Deer: To Venture in Long Island Woods is to Jeopardize Life” *New York Times* (November 15, 1894) 15.

who crossed his path. Rather than embodying virtues of sportsmanship and love of the wilderness, this American version of the Cockney Sportsman hunts only to present himself fashionably and tell stories of his supposedly rugged exploits.

Boorish behavior on the part of day-trippers might have been of limited concern to the echelon of society that both frequented clubs like the North Woods Club and also patronized Homer's art, except that these unruly habits also began infiltrating more distant sporting realms including the Adirondacks. An account in the *New York Times* reported on the growing dissolution of order within the region: "Still hunters and pot hunters are in their element and under the protection of the law will savagely slaughter all the deer on which they can draw their guns. They kill for profit, and will ship the deer to market in large quantities, realizing a nominal sum for each deer killed when compared with the value of the live deer in the woods for sportsmen and tourists."³⁶⁷ Although "unsportsmanlike" methods of hunting had persisted in the Adirondacks among local inhabitants for many years, it was not until the influx of unqualified hunters from the city that efforts began in earnest to protect game through hunting legislation.³⁶⁸ The state of New York briefly banned the practice of hounding in the 1880s but lacked the means to enforce the law, and in 1889 overturned the ban.³⁶⁹ In fact much of the pressure to restrict particular hunting practices came not from the nascent animal rights movement, but from well-connected urban sportsman, who sought to preserve game and wilderness for the exclusive recreation of those deemed worthy of its pursuit.

The influence of urban sporting ideals extended beyond just images of the hunt itself to also include the artifacts hunters brought back from the wilderness in the form of trophies. In

³⁶⁷ "Deer Hunting in the Adirondacks," *New York Times* (November 8, 1885), 6.

³⁶⁸ See Thomas R. Dunlap, "Sport Hunting and Conservation, 1880-1920," *Environmental Review* 12, no. 1 (Spring 1988), 52-53.

³⁶⁹ The ban was eventually reinstated in 1896 and remains in effect. Tatham, 1996, 116.

Huntsman and Dogs Homer captures a local Adirondack hunter hauling the remnants of a successful kill across a formidable landscape. (Figure 3.55) The model for the painting was Michael Flynn the same hunt servant as in *Hound and Hunter* and contemporary critics immediately pegged him as an “authentic” indigenous huntsman. Critic Alfred Trumble, demonstrating some familiarity with sporting practices, declared: “The type of the huntsman...is low and brutal in the extreme. He is just the sort of scoundrel, this fellow, who hounds deer to death up in the Adirondacks for the couple of dollars the hide and horns bring in, and leaves the carcass to feed the carrion birds.”³⁷⁰ While critics might have identified the huntsman as a lowly pot hunter, the practice of skinning and field dressing the deer was the same carried out by employees in the service of elite clubs such as the North Woods Club. In an earlier watercolor version of the composition, Homer depicts the huntsman carrying an entire carcass across his shoulders, complicating the conception of him as an opportunistic pot hunter. (Figure 3.56) In the painting the huntsman carries not only the buck’s antlers, but indeed the animal’s entire head, wrapped in cloth in order to preserve it for mounting. If the huntsman were in the employ of a hunt club, the meat of any deer killed by members would likely become property of the club, but the head and antlers might be procured by the lucky sportsman as a trophy of his kill.

Hunt trophies and mounted animals were commonly encountered in urban environments, particularly in spaces associated with masculine homosociality such as saloons and social clubs.³⁷¹ Hunting imagery served as an indicator of the rugged and masculine character of those who inhabited such spaces, but also connected them to the ideals of sportsmanship which

³⁷⁰ Alfred Trumble, “Notes for the New Year” *The Collector* 3 no. 5 (January 1, 1892), 71.

³⁷¹ For a thorough discussion of the role of hunting imagery in the definition of masculine space see David Lubin, “Harnett’s Trompe l’Oeil Paintings” in *Picturing a Nation: Art and Social Change in Nineteenth Century America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994) and David Scobey, “Nymphs and Satyrs: Sex and the Bourgeois Public Sphere in Victorian New York” *Winterthur Portfolio* 37 no. 1 (Spring, 2002) 43-66.

elevated the urban huntsman of elite social status. Perhaps the most famous hunt trophy in New York during the 1880s was not comprised of taxidermy, but rather a painting—William Harnett’s trompe l’oeil still life *After the Hunt* which hung in Theodore Stewart’s popular saloon on Warren Street near City Hall. (Figure 3.57) Harnett’s painting revived a Dutch tradition of trompe l’oeil game still life for American audiences, inspiring numerous imitators. While Harnett and his followers enjoyed great popularity, the rhetoric surrounding their imagery in both the popular press and art journals centered on the deceptive nature of their art.³⁷² While still lifes such as Harnett’s proposed to forge connections between the spaces in which they hung and the activities that they depicted, in fact the highly illusive nature of these painted trophies called attention their artificiality. Taxidermy hunting trophies on the other hand served as tangible evidence of the encounter between living animal and sportsman. The carefully wrapped head of the deer seen in Homer’s *Huntsman and Dogs* destined for mounting could only serve as a marker of a properly conducted kill on the wall of qualified sportsman. A mounted trophy garnered by other means such as purchase was rendered counterfeit.

Homer’s Adirondack hunting scenes display a deep cognizance of the ways in which the social world of the city could be mapped onto the countryside. Although they rarely depict the urban sportsman for whom the hunts were staged, they almost exclusively circulated within an urban environment among the same class of people who engaged in such pursuits. Returning to *Right and Left* one can see just how easily such meanings could become attached to such imagery. Although the prospective purchaser Randal Morgan was keen to interpret the painting as a faithful depiction of noble sport, the dealer Daniel Farr, relayed from Homer a decidedly

³⁷² See Alfred Frankenstein *After the Hunt: William Harnett and Other American Still Life Painters 1870-1900* (Los Angeles: UCLA Press, 1953), 79-82 which includes numerous accounts of the popular deception of Harnett’s painting.

different version of events surrounding the painting's creation: "Mr. Winslow Homer called this A.M. and I had a very pleasant chat with him, and gathered a little extra information concerning "Right and Left"... The Picture developed in this way: He ordered two ducks for his Thanksgiving Dinner, and directly they were delivered he began a sketch without any idea of doing a picture."³⁷³ Homer's imaginative reconfiguration of a butcher's wares seemingly acquired its status as a major work of hunting art through its fortuitous encounter in the gallery with a devoted sportsman, and its first owner's (himself a well-to-do urban sportsman) longing to see his own ideals of sport reflected back to him. Ultimately even the circumstances and history of individual paintings succumbed to the larger ideological imprimatur surrounding the imagery of elite hunting which cast the practice exclusively as a class-based ritual employed as a means of masculine performance and social distinction.

³⁷³ Letter from Daniel H. Farr to Randal Morgan, April 3, 1909. Letter Copying Book, Domestic Letters 1909, M. Knoedler and Co. Records, Getty Research Institute. Though Homer was often prone to sarcasm, Farr's letter continues at some length describing the process of the painting's execution, so there is little reason to doubt the tale's veracity.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the nineteenth century, hunting sustained a highly visible position in American cultural life, due in large part to the pursuit's pervasive representation in the visual arts. Despite the fact that a relative minority of the population engaged in hunting (for either sport or sustenance) depictions of hunting had taken on an outsized significance in defining "American" character and identity. It seems fitting then that hunting would also figure prominently at the massive World's Columbian Exposition mounted in Chicago in 1893 which set out to showcase the greatest achievements of the American nation in commerce, technology, and the arts. Among the fair's gleaming white beaux-arts buildings and endless exhibits of American industrial might, the exposition also featured a humble hunter's cabin, situated at the end of the fairgrounds' Wooded Island, a short distance across the lagoon from exhibition halls for mines and electricity.³⁷⁴ (Figure 4.1) The popular exhibit was erected by the Boone and Crockett Club, a hunting fraternity comprised of well-to-do sportsmen including Theodore Roosevelt and George Bird Grinnell. The simple log cabin was furnished with rustic fixtures—a bed, table, and hearth—which were presented as typical of the appointments of an "ordinary hunter's or ranchman's cabin in the west."³⁷⁵ The interior tableau also included various weapons, hides, trophies, and implements of the chase. (Figure 4.2)

A popular attraction among many of the fairs visitors, one correspondent even reported that the workers building and decorating the fair before its opening would gather nightly at the hunter's cabin in order to smoke cigars, share stories, and escape the baroque spaces of the

³⁷⁴ The 1893 Hunter's Camp reprised a similar exhibit at the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia. See "Forest and Stream at the Centennial: The Hunter's Camp," *Forest and Stream* 6, no. 1. (April 27, 1876), 184.

³⁷⁵ "The Boone and Crockett Club," *Forest and Stream* 40, no. 3 (January 19, 1893), 49.

fairgrounds.³⁷⁶ Such a scene might at first seem a nostalgic relic, incongruous with the motives of the fair to celebrate pinnacles of American progress and technological achievement. The hunter's camp though served as both a celebration of the nation's mythic past as well as a pronouncement that hunting's implied values still held great relevance for the nation's contemporary trajectory. As a historic document the rustic hunter's camp presented an example of the types of spaces occupied by the figures who tamed the nation's western frontier. For contemporary visitors it also offered a space of respite from the modern forms of the city where modern fairgoers could see hunting's most prized values of strength, plainness, and authority reflected in themselves.

Like many of the exhibits at the exposition, the representation of hunting at the fair embodied dominant myths of American nationhood. The unassuming presentation of the hunter's cabin participated in the construction of an American history that appealed to contemporary ideals of social progress and American exceptionalism. The hunter's camp (like much of the hunting art which has been herein discussed) proposed a history in which a massive continent full of natural treasures was bestowed upon the American people in order that they might harness those bounties in order to grow and thrive. According to the popular mythology of hunting, it was hunters who were uniquely qualified to cultivate the characteristics and values necessary to take charge of the nation's divine gifts. Through the representation of hunting across many media, wilderness traits such as masculine vigor, brute strength, and resourcefulness became enshrined in American historical lore as crucial factors that led the nation to expand and prosper. However, the hunter's camp did not merely present a historical artifact, it also endorsed an ideology of natural and social dominance that actively engaged in shaping the nation's present

³⁷⁶ "The Hunter's Camp," *Current Literature* 13, no. 2. (June 1893), 166.

ideals and future trajectory. Indeed, at that same moment in time many of the nation's leading men regularly decamped from cities to occupy similar dwellings and engage in hunting as means of ritual masculine performance. The hunting exhibit upheld a certain vision of American nationhood that championed hunting as a quintessentially American activity. Despite their seemingly deep roots, the ideals and values that the hunter's camp and other hunting art expressed such as social dominance, ruggedness, and masculinity were never innate to the act of hunting. Rather, as this dissertation has argued, in order for hunting to become an emblem of American ideals and experience, the practice had to be represented to others. The act of hunting and its representations in art were inextricably linked throughout the nineteenth-century, with each form of human production giving meaning to the other.

The art of the hunt consistently reinforced an ideology that Americans enjoyed a special covenant that granted them dominion over nature. Many early American writers, political leaders, and artists cast the continent as a new Eden, devoid of the conflicts inherent in the Old World's social and political order. Accordingly, the continent's natural resources were held up as evidence of the land's, and by extension the American nation's untarnished status. As inheritors of this realm Americans were empowered to take control of and exploit the fruits of nature in order to fuel the prosperity of the new republic. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries artist-scientists found this arrangement most readily expressed through the visual representation of humans' relationship with the animal kingdom. In their quest to represent nature, Charles Willson Peale and John James Audubon directly intervened in the animal world by hunting and killing birds and other animals by the thousands. Each developed an artistic methodology in which killing and manipulating the bodies of animals structured the way in which they visually ordered the animal kingdom. In Peale's museum the artist physically

arranged and composed the very material of nature, perhaps approximating as near as any human possibly could the achievements of the Creator himself. Audubon harvested the bodies of birds through numerous hunting excursions, consuming and discarding their bodies as an element of his artistic practice. The final outcome of this consumption and representations that appeared in the massive volumes of *Birds of America* confirmed the artist's (and by extension the viewer's) dominance of nature. By parsing the differences between these two artists' major lifelong projects one can trace how the ideal of American ownership of nature shifted over time. Deeply connected to Enlightenment science, Peale's vision of the animal kingdom was one of rigid, hierarchical order laid out by a divine creator. Audubon's model meanwhile expressed that the hierarchies of nature were not immutable but rather negotiated among species. In *Birds of America* the unpictured human artist and viewer who created the images and surveys them across the pages clearly occupies the triumphant position in this struggle for dominance. This vision of nature as a set of constantly negotiated hierarchies gave warrant to American intervention in nature and subsequent expansion across the continent. Though neither Peale nor Audubon pictured the activity of hunting itself, both represented the perspective of the hunter as a means of understanding, ordering, and controlling the natural world.

Peale and Audubon's scientific models of the animal world, in which humans were positioned above all other species, contributed to the formation of political and social ideologies that fueled the nation's steady expansion westward. The art of the hunt played an important role in managing perceptions of the complex processes of geographic, political, military, and economic expansion over the course of the nineteenth century. Visual systems like Peale's Museum and Audubon's *Birds of America* did not take a discrete view of nature, but rather presented visual systems that encompassed all of the animal kingdom. The comprehensiveness of

these artists' natural vision gave rise to the impulse to spread the reach of Americans' physical and conceptual control of the natural realm across the entire continent. This expansionist impulse to visually record and catalogue the nation's bounty impelled artists like Catlin westward. In the West, Catlin encountered Native American people who resided on the land that eastern whites now claimed as their own. Native Americans meanwhile exerted control over nature in ways that competed with, or failed to conform to Euro-American values of commercial and political control. In representing the West and its inhabitants, Catlin isolated the hunting practices of Native Americans as a means of classifying and diminishing their civilization as inferior to promise of progress borne by white easterners. Though the artist and his audiences seemed to revel in the hunting exploits of Native Americans, his vision of hunting cast them as violent, and degraded anachronisms, opposed to eastern ideals of progress and prosperity. Catlin's formulation of hunting as a deeply ingrained Native American trait posited the progress of white civilization as the antidote to western irrationality. This paved the way for the widespread proliferation of American western hunting mythology and imagery which cast white settlers, frontiersman, and hunters as the rightful conquerors of the West.

Late in the century, the assertion of Americans' ownership of nature through hunting imagery was appropriated by middle class and elite urbanites as a marker of social distinction and refinement. Eakins and Homer's representation of the hunting experiences of well-to-do, urban, white men reconfigured the violent underpinnings of western expansion as emblems of the superior status of the urban upper classes. Depictions of elite hunters' exploits brought into place the distinct class, race, and gender barriers that came to govern the American ideal of ownership over nature. In his celebration of hunting forms associated with Philadelphia men of distinction, Eakins repurposed hunting's values of ruggedness, violence, and dominance as

exemplars of a highly particular form of modern, urban manhood. He modeled this vision of hunting after those who shared his similar social standing and circumstances, thereby excluding those who fell outside this narrow class from the affirmative values of refined hunting. Homer's depictions of Adirondack hunting guides similarly reveal the ways in which urban outsiders exerted control over the countryside and its fauna by demarcating the hunt as the social preserve of the middle and upper classes who traveled from the city to hunt. Though America's authority over its natural bounties was often held up as a communal endowment, Eakins and Homer's portrayal of hunting reveals how certain men wielded this ideal as a means of cementing their own social authority. Representations of hunting proved particularly useful in visualizing this power dynamic by staking out hunting as the privilege and preserve of middle class and elite white men. Such images simultaneously coopted the values of ruggedness and masculine strength that previously defined rural and western hunting, and conferred these upon the ascendant class of recreational hunters.

The range of hunting imagery discussed across these chapters reveals how such images were engaged throughout the century as a means of defining American nationhood. Practitioners of natural history like Peale and Audubon argued that while United States lacked the extensive human history of the old world it far surpassed Europe in its abundance of natural wonders. As such the killing, cataloging, and visual representation of the country's countless new species carried out by these artist-naturalists was viewed as a patriotic act that bolstered the political and moral authority of the new nation. The fact that both Peale and Audubon's ambitious projects to represent the vastness of the nation's fauna required the wide-scale slaughter of the very subjects of their inquiry seemed of little bother to the artists and their public. Instead as the nation expanded westward, the unbridled slaughter of wild animals and rampant exploitation of the

environment appeared across hunting art as triumphant markers of the nation's progress. As hunting and its associated representations became closely associated with elite and middle class culture, the pursuit came to be viewed as a marker of both refinement and national exceptionalism. Once hunting was enshrined as the favorite pastime of business titans and political leaders, those occupying lower rungs of the social ladder could engage in hunting or view hunting imagery in an aspirational way.

Hunting art worked to establish common perceptions of the American continent's abundant natural wealth by picturing the seeming inexhaustibility of animals. The constancy of hunting rituals as pictured by Catlin, Homer, and others suggested that America's overwhelming plenitude of wild animals could never be depleted. Though Catlin was an early proponent of setting up a wilderness preserves where animals (and Native Americans) could live unmolested by hunters and white civilization, few other artists engaged deeply with the notion that wildlife populations could be decimated until very late in the century.³⁷⁷ Painted around 1888, Albert Bierstadt's monumental canvas *The Last of the Buffalo* embodied the growing unease with which some Americans had come to view the widespread slaughter of wild animals. (Figure 4.3) An experienced traveler in the West, Bierstadt was also a member of the Boone and Crockett Club and thoroughly familiar with the history of the buffalo. Bierstadt professed that his painting showcased the cruelty inherent in the wanton slaughter of many generations of buffalo, as evidenced by the bleaching bones and skulls that surround the wounded and dying animals.³⁷⁸ Nevertheless, the grandeur and thrilling violence of the central combat between a buffalo bull and mounted Native American celebrate the heroic vigor that was central to America's hunting

³⁷⁷ On Catlin see Adam Duncan Harris, *George Catlin's American Buffalo* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian American Art Museum, 2013), 2-6.

³⁷⁸ See Alan C. Braddock, "Poaching Pictures: Yellowstone, Buffalo, and the art of Wildlife Conservation," *American Art* 23 no. 3 (Fall 2009), 50-54.

mythology. While at the outset of the century leading scientists like Peale struggled to comprehend the mere possibility of species extinction, by the end of the century Americans seemed to be witnessing the total annihilation of one of the nation's most iconic species within one or two human generations. Although some scientists and artists did begin to consider the negative ramifications of Americans' unceasing faith in the endlessness of its natural bounty, representation of hunting that positioned the destruction of nature as an American national ideal persisted largely unabated throughout the nineteenth century.

Although contemporary scholars and viewers might find a deep irony in hunting images that held up animals as exemplars of America's exceptional natural bounty while blithely picturing those same creatures' destruction, such incongruities did little to dampen the construction of nationalistic myths forged through representations of hunting during the nineteenth century.³⁷⁹ Hunting was often singled out as an activity that united Americans, forging a common national identity through shared customs and a mutual ownership of nature. At Peale's Museum, the broad public of Philadelphia could visit and consider the vast animal kingdom that Peale had killed, preserved, and ordered as the natural patrimony of the entire nation. Those who collected and viewed Catlin's prints of Native American hunting exploits engaged in propagating a mythic history of the West, in which the forces of white expansion tamed the violent character of the region and thereby endowed the entire nation with the economic and environmental spoils of the West. However, as this dissertation has argued, images of hunting which seemingly functioned as points of common national identity in fact served to affirm the values of particular groups of Americans over others. Indeed one reason that representations of hunting proved so pervasive as markers of American "nationhood" is because

³⁷⁹ See Nancy K. Anderson and Linda S. Ferber, *Albert Bierstadt: Art and Enterprise* (New York: The Brooklyn Museum, 1991), 103.

they were readily exploited by elite, white, men who elevated and consolidated their own social position by privileging certain values ascribed to hunting that proved most beneficial to their own class, race, and gender.

Representations of hunting offered a durable and versatile means of expressing and naturalizing many forms of social division throughout the century. Chief among these visualizations of hierarchy was the privileging of rugged masculinity as an utmost American ideal. In Peale's Museum, the artist literally placed portraits of white men above his displays of animal bodies, implying that these men and their ilk held dominion over all the lesser orders of beings below them. Audubon meanwhile cultivated a self-image of a masculine hunter-woodsman in order to burnish the authority of his vision. Within the pages of *Birds of America* the artist reinforced and naturalized gender hierarchies through the portrayal of animal pairings and family groups that conformed to nineteenth-century notions of human gender relations. The plates commonly emphasized the nesting behavior of female birds, the predatory activities of male specimens, and other gendered traits. Catlin's vision of western hunting pictured a space in which attributes that had come to be associated with masculinity such as virility, strength, and violence reached their utmost expression in the hunting activities of Native Americans. Rather than advancing the cause of these Native Americans, Catlin's depictions of their hunting customs were offered as a counterpoint to the forces of white, masculine civilization (in the form of trade and military control) which engaged hunting and its associated violence as a means of rationalizing the west. The gentleman-sportsmen pictured in Eakins and Homer's hunting works inherited this ideal of masculinity expressed through the controlled application of violence against wild animals. The highly mediated experience of the urban sportsmen who ventured into the wilderness to hunt as a form of recreation allowed well-to-do men to assume the guise of the

rough and wild frontiersman, while simultaneously asserting the superiority of their own class position.

In addition to creating a vision of America as a patriarchal nation, hunting imagery helped to reinforce additional racial and class boundaries in American society. Catlin, for example, rarely pictured white hunters, and instead focused on the hunting customs of Native Americans living west of the Mississippi. However, his vision edited out the pivotal role that contact with whites and eastern fur markets played in shaping Native American hunting practices in order to further the fiction that the hunting scenes represented an innate and deeply ingrained feature of Native American life in the West. Though hunting was once closely associated with the customs of Native Americans and rural whites, during the second half of the century hunting art worked to appropriate such imagery to serve the interests of middle and upper class whites from eastern cities. Eakins's presented hunting as an emblem of modern manhood, but his vision of the practice hewed closely to the racial divisions which governed the city of Philadelphia where his hunting scenes took place. Though he envisioned hunting as a modern and even progressive pursuit, in Eakins's depiction of the sport only white men pursued hunting as a means of refined recreation. In Eakins's hunting pictures African Americans appeared only as hunt servants or subsistence hunters, stripped of the heroic vigor that the hunt conferred on his white, middle-class sportsmen. Homer similarly drew a line between the interests of the wealthy sportsmen who travelled to the Adirondacks and the guides who lived there and facilitated their wilderness excursions. Through their depictions of hunting these artists mapped a social order onto the countryside that echoed and affirmed the ascendancy of elite, urban, white, men.

Although hunting art played an essential role in defining nation's relationship with nature, forging bonds of nationhood, and negotiating social hierarchies during the nineteenth

century, hunting's importance as a subject for art waned into the twentieth century. A full interrogation for the meanings and motivations behind this shift demands a more sustained analysis that falls outside the scope of this dissertation, but a few observations on the trajectory of hunting imagery at the outset of the century might gesture toward an explanation. Frederick Jackson Turner's formulation of his frontier thesis in 1893, which asserted that the frontier played an essential role in American historical development and that America's frontier project had now concluded, appeared at the same moment that 'Western Art' emerged as a distinct category of American art. Reaching its height around the turn of the century, the genre was popularized by artists such as Frederic Remington, Charles Russell, and Charles Schreyvogel. These artists pictured hunting less frequently, instead casting war and interracial conflict between cowboys and Native Americans, as defining features of the Wild West. (Figure 4.4) As art historian Alexander Nemerov has argued, rather than proposing a nationalistic narrative of common identity and shared domination of nature, such images instead responded to concerns over immigration and the instability of social change within urban, industrial America.³⁸⁰ Though as this dissertation has shown hunting images could be employed to express a range of ideological positions, their emphasis on a common national natural patrimony perhaps depressed their utility in navigating more complex and multivalent social encounters that marked the industrial city.

As Western Art coalesced into a distinct genre, animal and wildlife artists around the turn of the century also were increasingly confined to a distinct genre outside the leading currents of the mainstream art world. Still, artists like Carl Rungius achieved commercial success painting

³⁸⁰ Alexander Nemerov, "Doing the Old America," in William H. Truettner, ed. *The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier, 1820-1920* (Washington D.C.: National Museum of American Art, 1991), 287.

majestic scenes of wild, western game animals and tabletop bronzes of wild animals remained a fixture of many middle and upper class homes. (Figure 4.5) However, such artists were increasingly viewed as specialists that appealed to a subset of collectors and patrons (almost exclusively avid sportsmen) rather than major figures in the contemporary American art scene, as Catlin, Eakins, and Homer had been. The diminished resonance of animal subjects might be understood as an outgrowth of the massive demographic and economic changes brought about by the country's urbanization and industrialization. As evermore Americans resided in cities and relied less and less on animal power for locomotion and industry, contact with any animals—much less wild animals—decreased drastically. The art critic John Berger has described how the physical removal of animals from daily life precipitated their “cultural marginalization” in capitalist society.³⁸¹ The turn of the century also witnessed the increasing political power of animal rights movements centered in many cities which advocated against the cruel treatment and destruction of animals.³⁸² In the face of such physical and cultural diminishment, animal subjects found little resonance among the leading edges of twentieth century American art such as the Ashcan school artists and the Stieglitz circle who drew inspiration from the grittiness of urban experience and the cosmopolitan exchange of aesthetic ideas with Europe.

As a final consideration of the impact of hunting art and the particular ways in which the genre contributed to the construction of American myths and ideals during the nineteenth century, it is perhaps useful to conclude with an image not of hunting, but of animal combat—Winslow Homer's *Fox Hunt*. (Figure 4.6) Though it shares many qualities with Homer's and other artist's hunting works, such as the focus on prey animals and the perilous struggle between

³⁸¹ John Berger, “Why Look at Animals?,” in *About Looking* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 15.

³⁸² See Janet M. Davis, *The Gospel of Kindness: Animal Welfare and the Making of Modern America* (Oxford University Press, 2016).

life and death, *Fox Hunt* is not a representation of the human ritual of hunting. The nearly six foot wide canvas depicts a stark and macabre scene as a fox trudges across a barren, snow-covered plain alongside a rocky shore. The fox is menaced from above by two black crows who appear poised to attack the larger creature, aided by around a half dozen other birds seen emerging from the distance in order to join the fray. Like many of his most successful paintings, critics praised *Fox Hunt* as a reflection of Homer's astute sense of observation and a true record of nature.³⁸³ Modern scholars have pointed to the painting's severe manner and the matter-of-fact treatment of the brutal combat between species about to commence as an expression of the Darwinian notion of survival of the fittest.³⁸⁴ The painting borrows pictorial conventions from natural history in the strong profile of the animals and the elaboration of instinctual behaviors, and seemingly avoids sentimentalizing the plight of either species. The title meanwhile somewhat ironically refers to the more civilized human sport of fox hunting. However, the contest depicted between animals is presented without ceremony and with the most limited narrative exposition.³⁸⁵

Created in 1893, Homer likely intended *Fox Hunt* to represent him in the fine arts exhibition at the World's Columbian Exposition. However for reasons that are now unclear, the canvas did not travel to the fair.³⁸⁶ Instead the artist was represented by fifteen other works, including several of his most renowned hunting scenes including *The Two Guides*, *The Camp Fire*, *Huntsman and Dogs*, and *Hound and Hunter*.³⁸⁷ (Figures 3.45, 3.1, 3.55) While Homer's

³⁸³ See Maria Van Rensselaer's review in New York's *World*, (April 9, 1893) reprinted in Goodrich and Gerdts, *Record of the Works of Winslow Homer* 5, 142.

³⁸⁴ Paul Staiti, "Winslow Homer and the Drama of Thermodynamics," *American Art* 15, no. 1 (Spring, 2001), 11; Wilmerding, "Winslow Homer's Right and Left," 139-140.

³⁸⁵ Nicolai Cikovsky, *Winslow Homer* (New York: Abrams, 1990), 112.

³⁸⁶ Goodrich and Gerdts, *Record of the Works of Winslow Homer* 5, 142

³⁸⁷ Carolyn Kinder Carr and George Gurney, *Revisiting the White City: American Art at the 1893 World's Fair* (Washington D.C.: National Museum of American Art and National Portrait Gallery, 1993), 262-263.

motivation for holding back *Fox Hunt* may never be fully known, perhaps the artist understood that representations of American hunting were ultimately more ideally suited to the fair which sought to celebrate the highest achievements of the American nation. Though *Fox Hunt* portrays the high stakes pursuit of a prey animal, it differs drastically both pictorially and thematically from Homer's hunting works in the Adirondacks, and indeed nearly all of the hunting works under consideration in this study. The crucial distinction rests upon the lack of a clear protagonist whose point of view stands to be affirmed or redeemed through the act of killing. Whereas American hunting art functioned to express the abundance of American nature, and negotiate who might rightly assume ownership of it, images which merely pictured the rote fact of animal killing served no such purpose. The creatures' struggle for a limited set of resources in *Fox Hunt* is cast as an innate, instinctual conflict rather than a ritualized pursuit that accrued deeper meaning beyond its physical performance. This study has shown that the various meanings that were applied to hunting in the nineteenth century were not innate to the act itself but depended upon the representation of the pursuit in order to promulgate its deeper significance. As a singular act, hunting was as inert as the prosaic and shrill death struggle depicted in *Fox Hunt*. However, through its depiction in the arts, hunting accrued and spread a wide variety of meanings that intersected in profound and pivotal ways with major currents of nineteenth century life.

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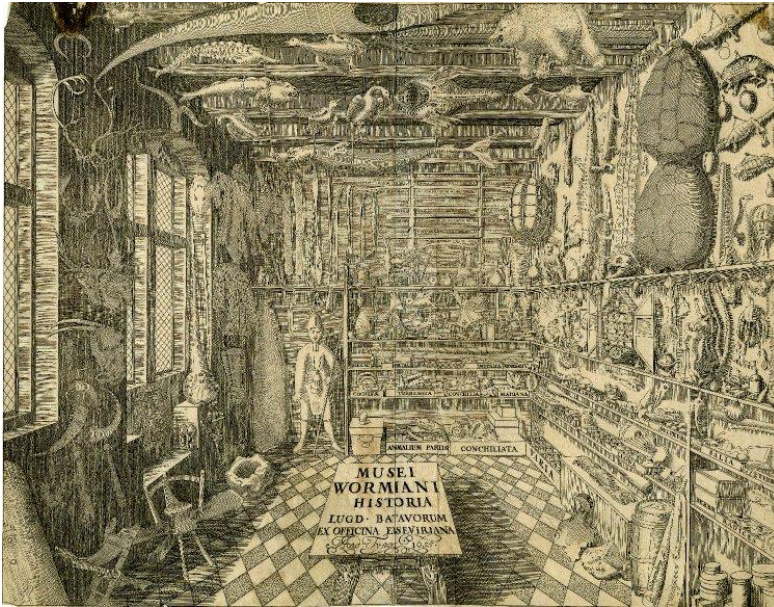


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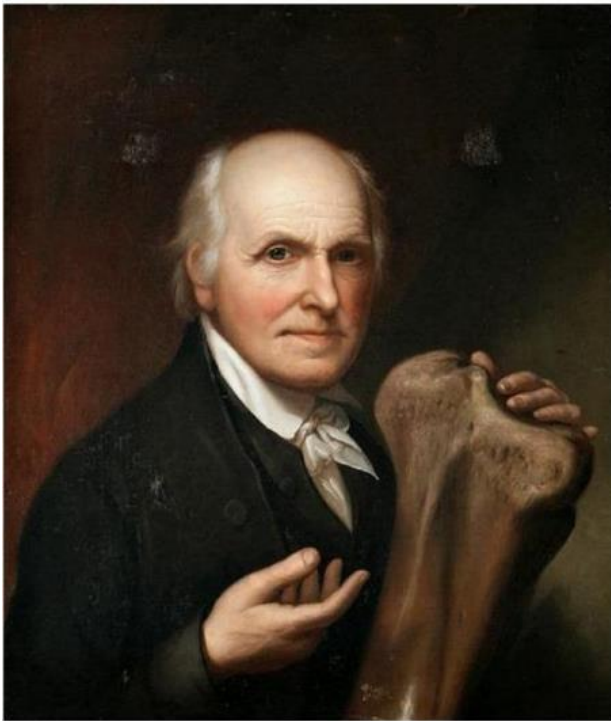


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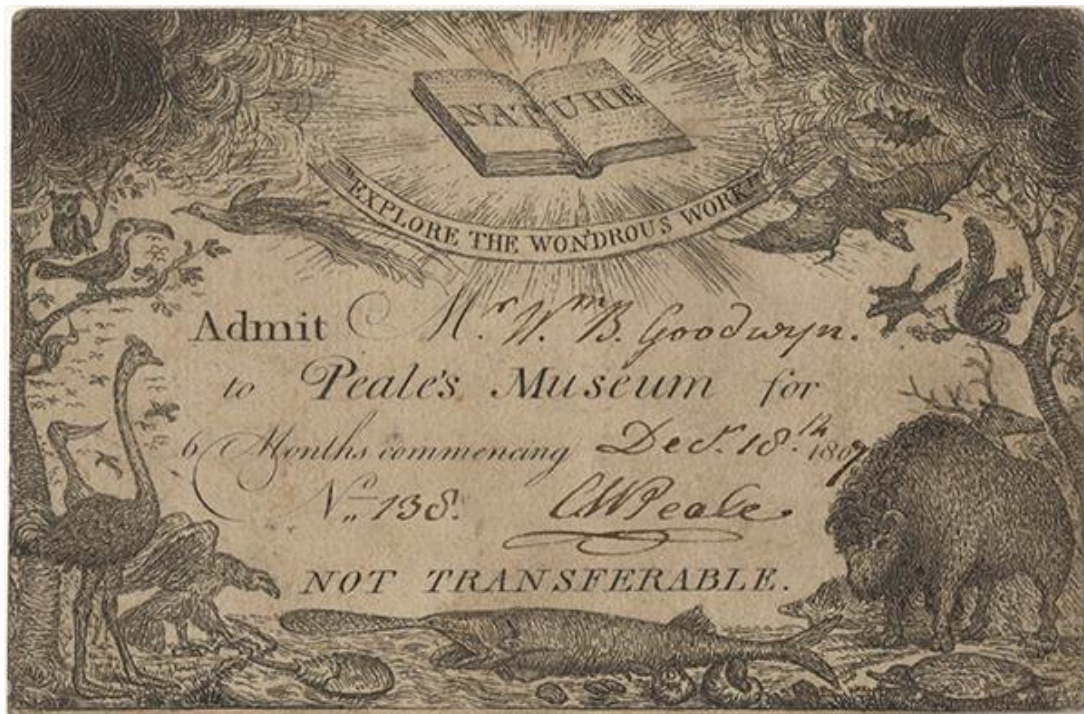


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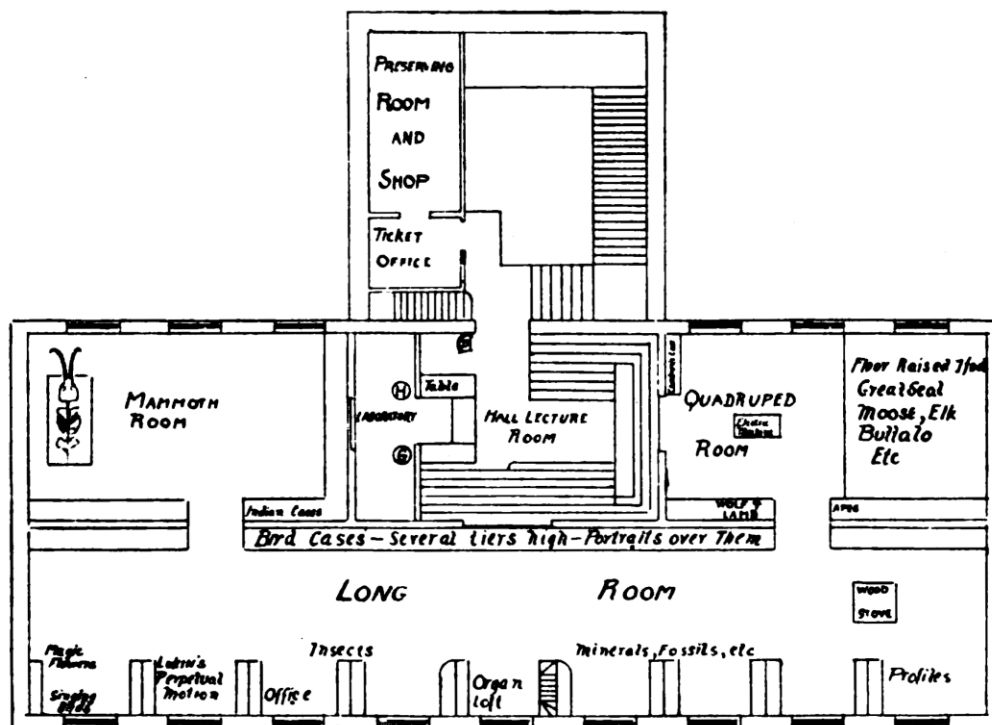


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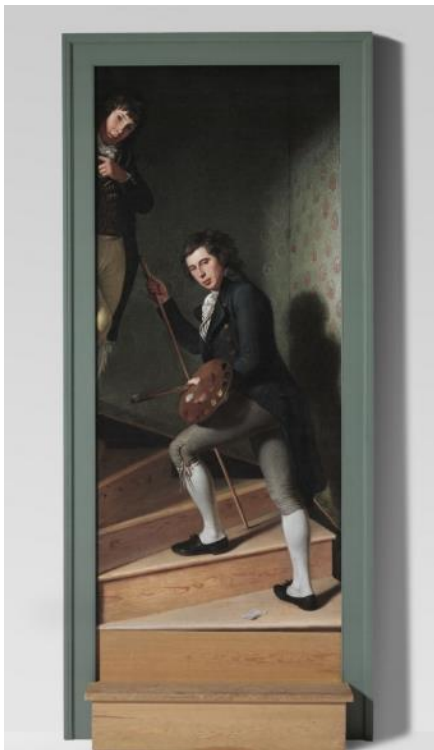


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Harvard University, Houghton Library, ms_am.21.089

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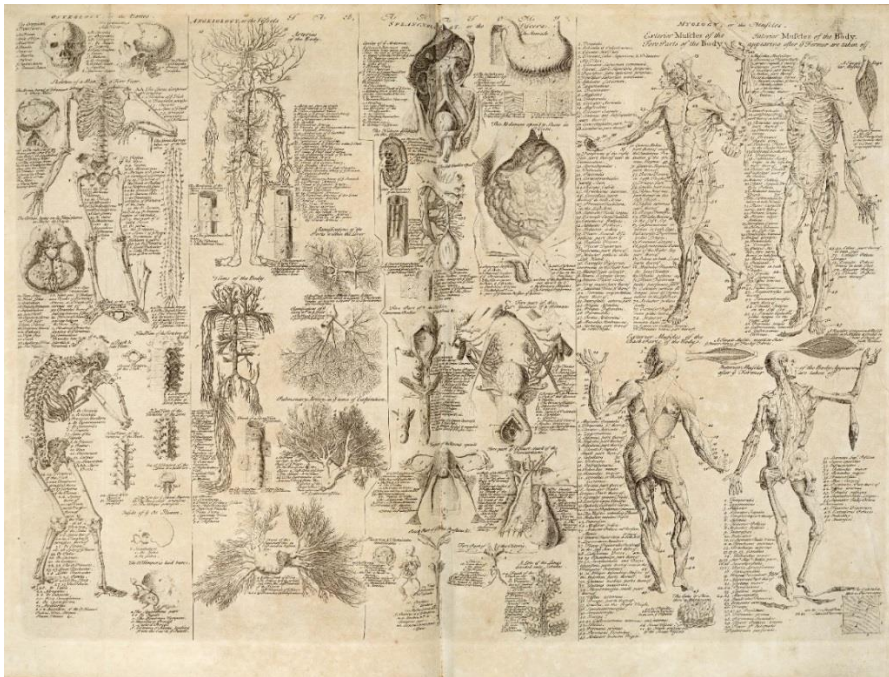


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Figure 1.27: John James Audubon, Engraved by Robert Havell, *Ivory-billed Woodpecker* Plate 66 of *Birds of America*, 1827-1838. Hand-colored etching and aquatint, 38.25 x 25.625 inches. University of Pittsburgh Libraries



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Figure 1.29: John James Audubon, Engraved by Robert Havell, *Black-bellied darter* Plate 316 of *Birds of America*, 1827-1838. Hand-colored etching and aquatint, 38.25 x 25.625 inches. National Gallery of Art



Figure 1.30: John James Audubon, *Self-Portrait*, 1822-23. Oil on canvas, 12 ½ x 10 in. Private Collection

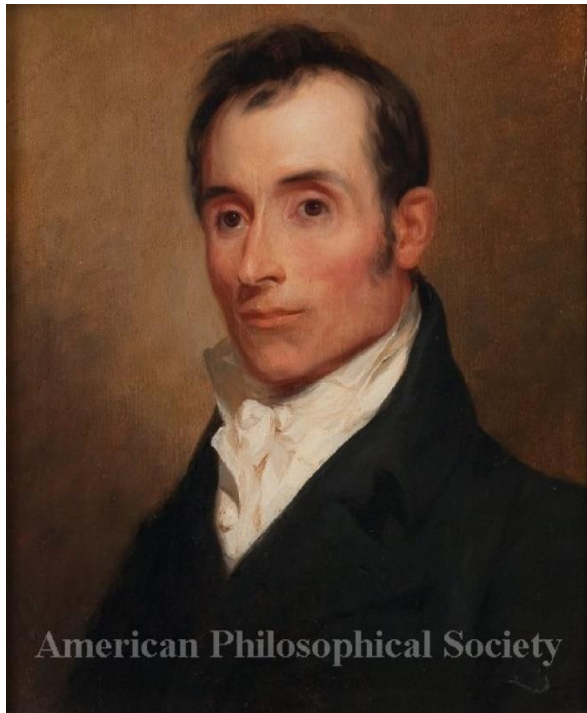


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Figure 1.32: Unknown Artist, *Man of Science*, 1839. Oil on canvas, 99.7 x 85 cm. National Gallery of Art

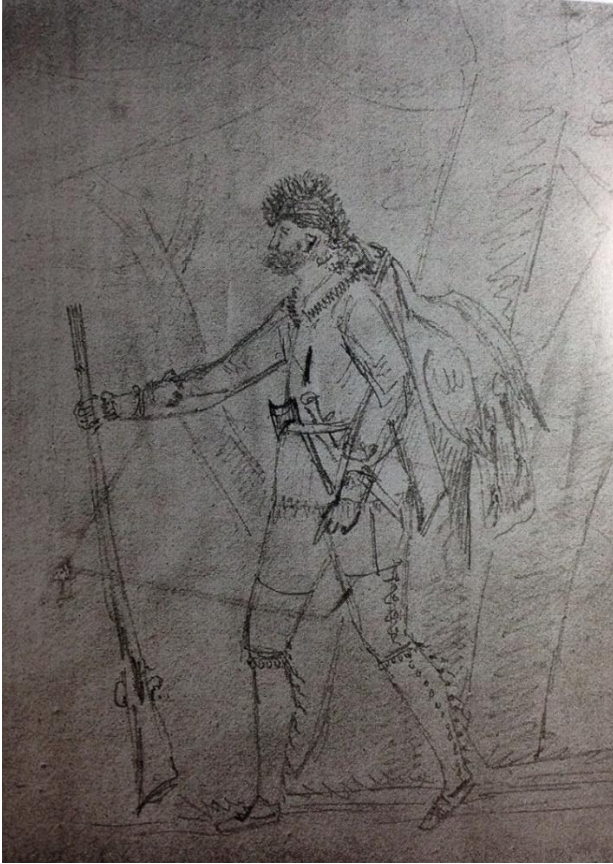


Figure 1.33: John James Audubon, *Self-Portrait*, 1826. Graphite on paper. Unlocated



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Figure 2.2: George Catlin, *Buffalo Chase, A Single Death*, 1832-33. Oil on canvas, 24 x 29 in. Smithsonian American Art Museum

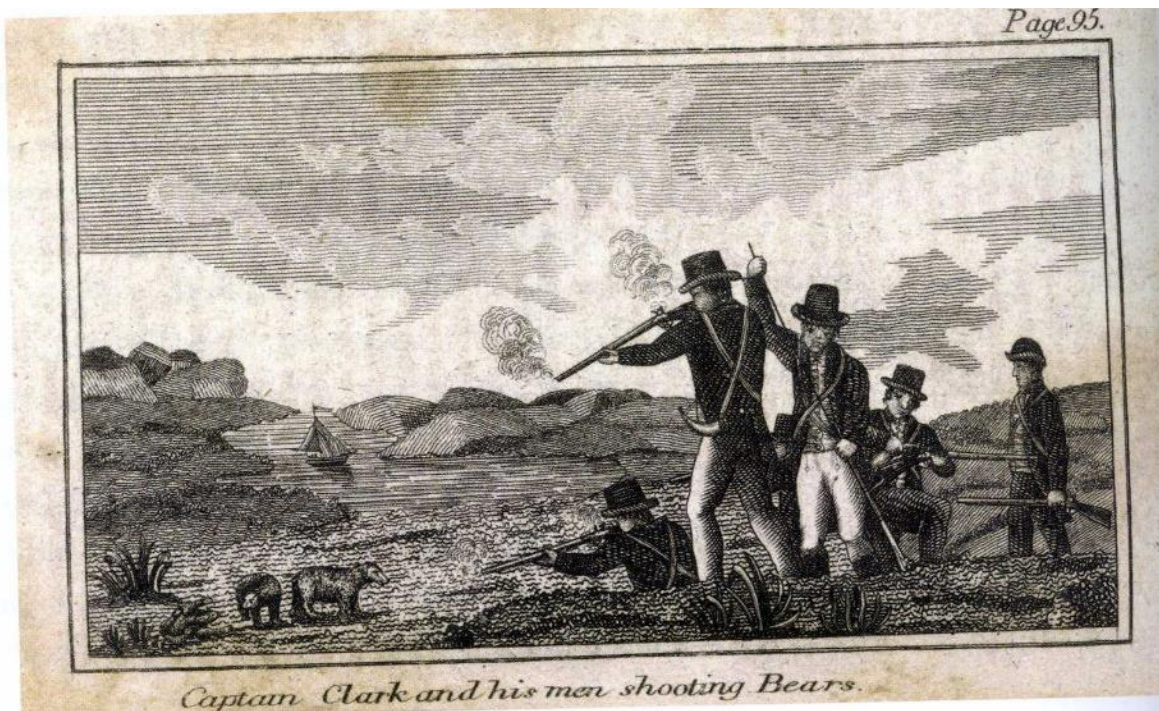


Figure 2.3: Unknown Artist, *Captain Clark and His Men Shooting Bears*, Wood engraving from Patrick Gass, *A Journal of the Voyages and Travels of a Corps of Discovery under the Command of Capt. Lewis and Capt. Clarke* (Philadelphia: Matthew Carey, 1810)

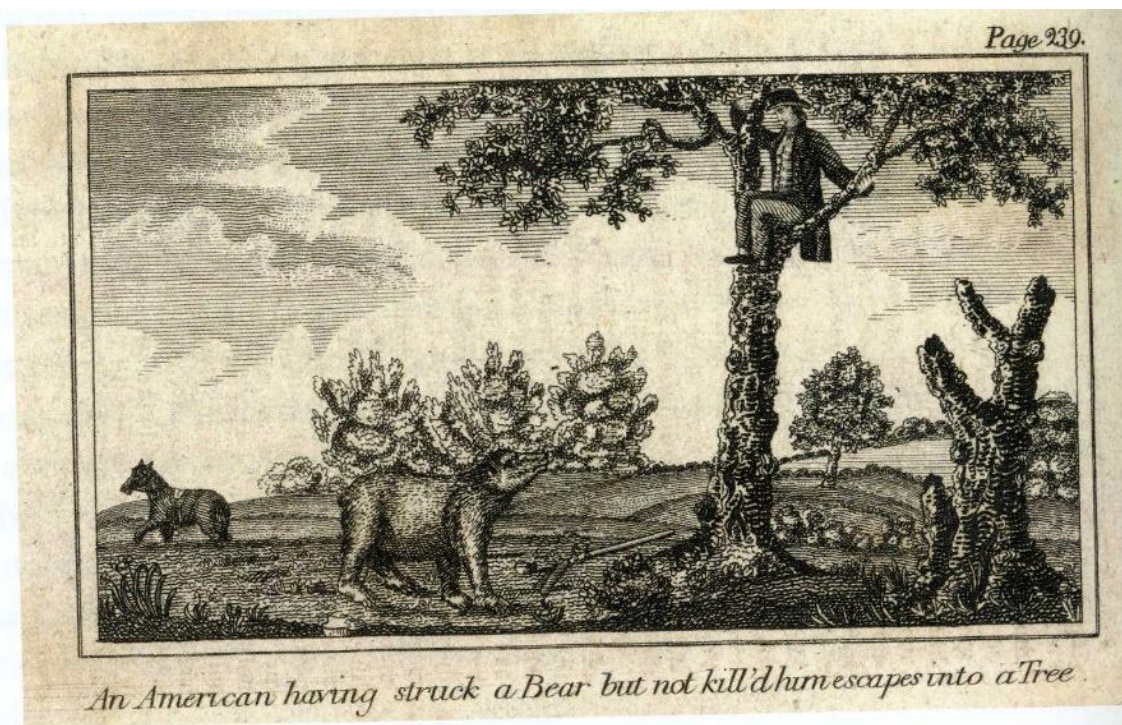


Figure 2.4: Unknown Artist, *An American having struck Bear but not killed him, escapes into a tree*, Wood engraving from Patrick Gass, *A Journal of the Voyages and Travels of a Corps of Discovery under the Command of Capt. Lewis and Capt. Clarke* (Philadelphia: Matthew Carey, 1810)



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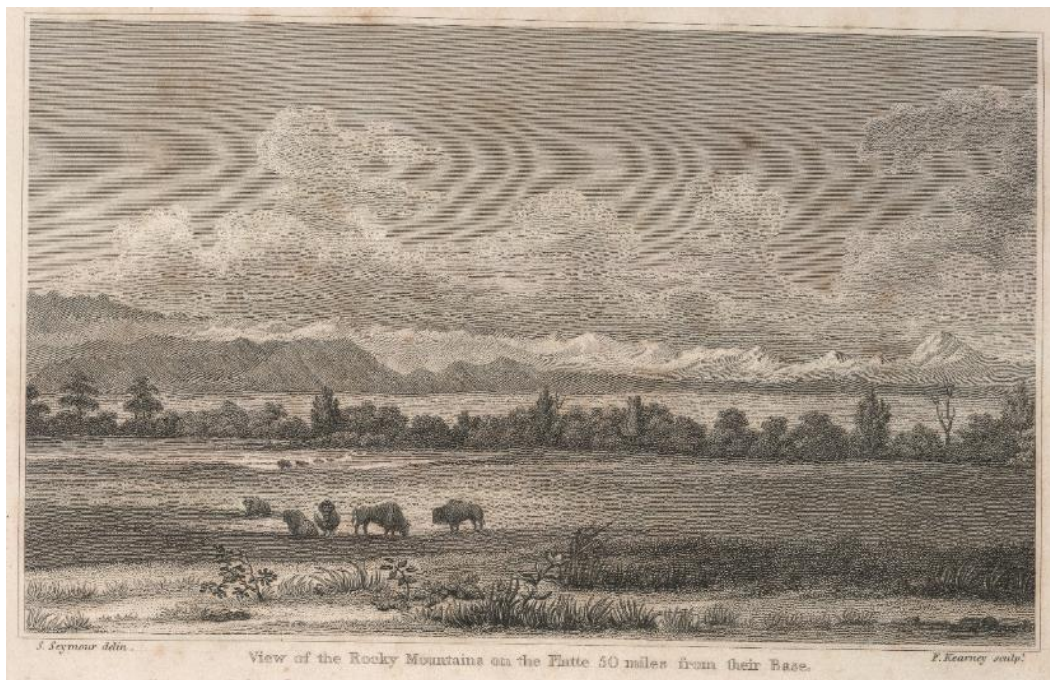


Figure 2.6: Francis Kearney after Samuel Seymour, *View of the Rocky Mountains, On the Platte, 50 Miles from their Base*. Engraving published in *Account of an expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains : performed in the years 1819 and '20, by order of the Hon. J.C. Calhoun, Sec'y of War ; under the command of Major Stephen H. Long / from the notes of Major Long, Mr. T. Say, and other gentlemen.* (Philadelphia : H.C. Carey and I. Lea, 1822-23) Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University



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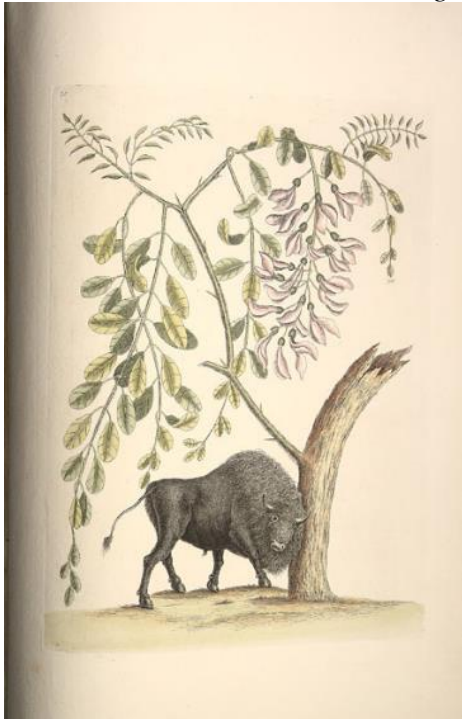


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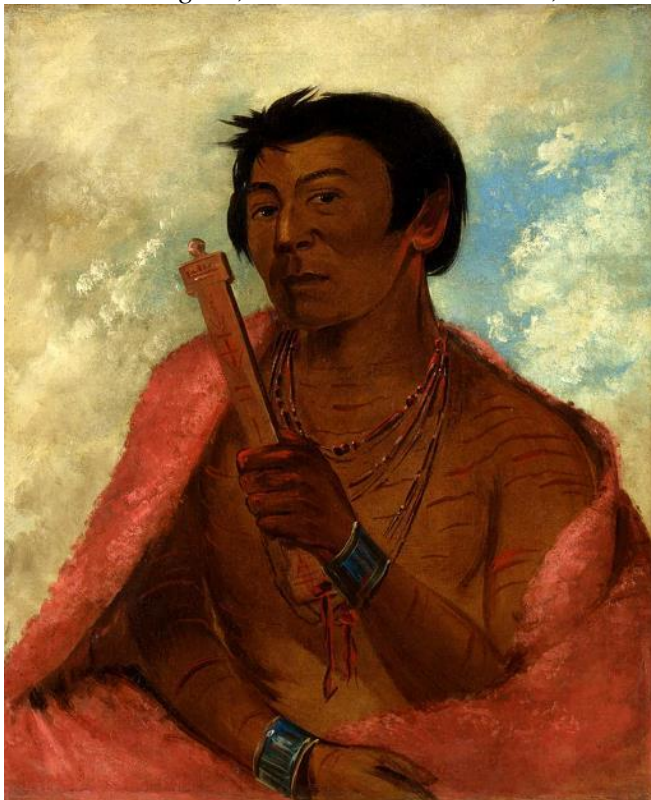


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Figure 2.25: George Catlin, *Buffalo Bull Grazing on the Prairie*, 1832-33. Oil on canvas, 24 x 29 in. Smithsonian American Art Museum



Figure 2.26: George Catlin, *Wounded Buffalo, Strewing His Blood over the Prairies*, 1832-33. Oil on canvas, 24 x 29 in. Smithsonian American Art Museum



Figure 2.27: George Catlin, *Buffalo Cow Grazing on the Prairie*, 1832-33. Oil on canvas, 24 x 29 in. Smithsonian American Art Museum



Figure 2.28: George Catlin, *Dying Buffalo, Shot with an Arrow*, 1832-33. Oil on canvas, 24 x 29 in. Smithsonian American Art Museum



Figure 2.29: George Catlin, *Buffalo Chase over Prairie Bluffs*, 1832-33. Oil on canvas, 24 x 29 in. Smithsonian American Art Museum



Figure 2.30: George Catlin, *Buffalo Chase, Bulls Making Battle with Men and Horses*, 1832-33. Oil on canvas, 24 x 29 in. Smithsonian American Art Museum

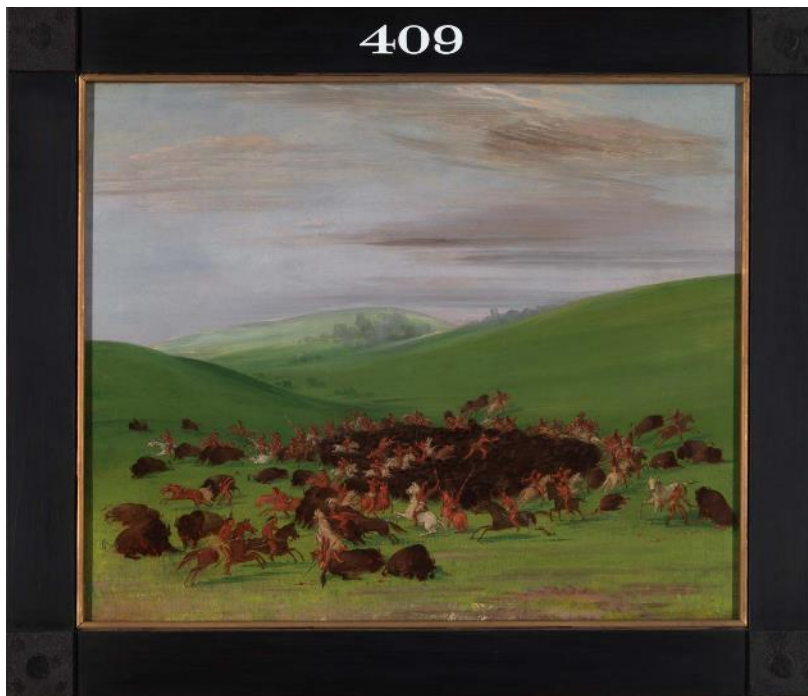


Figure 2.31: George Catlin, *Buffalo Chase, a Surround by the Hidatsa*, 1832-33. Oil on canvas, 24 x 29 in. Smithsonian American Art Museum



Figure 2.32: George Catlin, *Grizzly Bears Attacking Indians on Horseback*, 1832-33. Oil on canvas, 24 x 29 in. Smithsonian American Art Museum



Figure 2.33: George Catlin, *Buffalo Chase, Mouth of the Yellowstone*, 1832-33. Oil on canvas, 24 x 29 in. Smithsonian American Art Museum



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Figure 2.35: George Catlin, *Comanche Feats of Horsemanship*, 1834-35. Oil on canvas, 24 x 29 in. Smithsonian American Art Museum



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Figure 2.38: George Catlin, *Sioux Indians on Snowshoes Lancing Buffalo*, 1846-48. Oil on canvas, 20 1/8 x 27 3/8 in. Smithsonian American Art Museum



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Figure 2.40: J. McGahey after George Catlin, *Buffalo hunt, chase* from *The North American Indian Portfolio*, 1844. Lithograph, New York Public Library



Figure 2.41: George Catlin, *Buffalo Hunt under the Wolf-skin Mask*, 1832-33. Oil on canvas, 24 x 29 in. Smithsonian American Art Museum



Figure 2.42: J. McGahey after George Catlin, *Buffalo hunt. Under the white wolf skin*. from *The North American Indian Portfolio*, 1844. Lithograph, New York Public Library



Figure 2.43: J. McGahey after George Catlin, *Wounded Buffalo Bull*. from *The North American Indian Portfolio*, 1844. Lithograph, New York Public Library

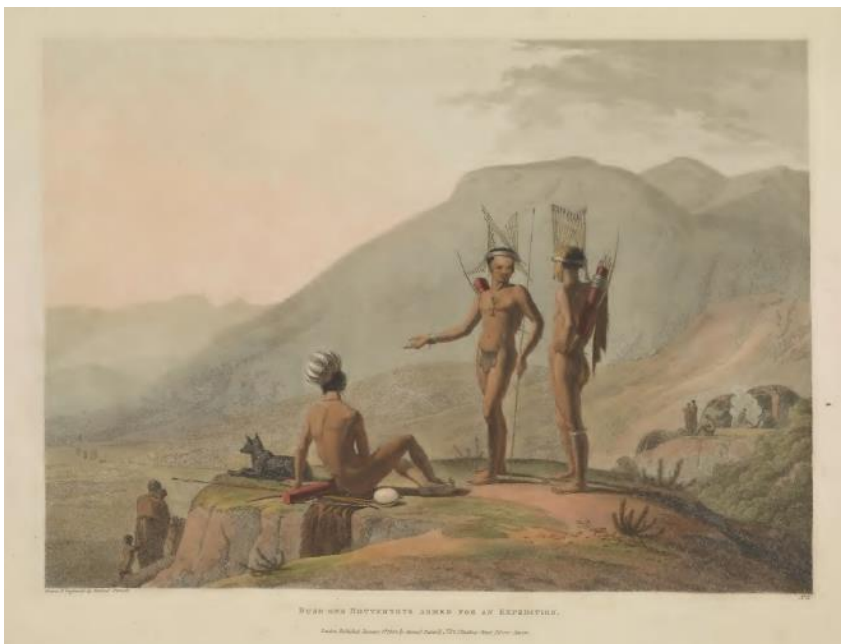


Figure 2.44: Samuel Daniell, *Bush Men Hottentots Armed for an Expedition*, 1804-05. From *African Scenery and Animals*, Smithsonian Institution Libraries



Figure 2.45: Thomas Williamson and Samuel Howitt, *A Tiger Springing Upon an Elephant*, 1807 from *Oriental Field Sports being a complete, detailed, and accurate description of the wild sports of the East and exhibiting, in a novel and interesting manner, the natural history of the elephant, the rhinoceros, the tiger... and other undomesticated animals*, Donald A Heald Rare Books and Maps



Figure 2.46: George Catlin, *Buffalo Chase*, 1849. Watercolor. Gilcrease Museum



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Figure 2.48: George Catlin, *Shooting Flamingoes, Grand Saline, Buenos Aires*, ca 1853-70. Oil on paperboard, 18 ½ x 25 ¾ in. Virginia Museum of Fine Arts



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Figure 2.51: Alfred Jacob Miller, *Buffalo Hunt*, 1839. Oil on canvas, Philbrook Museum of Art



Figure 2.52: Charles Deas, *Long Jakes "The Rocky Mountain Man,"* 1844. Oil on canvas, Denver Art Museum



Figure 2.53: After Arthur Fitzwilliam Tait, *American Frontier Life: Life on the Warpath*, 1863. Lithograph, 18 3/8 x 26 15/16 in. Yale University Art Gallery



Figure 2.54: After Arthur Fitzwilliam Tait, *American Frontier Life: The Hunters' Stratagem*, 18623. Lithograph, 18 3/8 x 26 15/16 in. Yale University Art Gallery



Figure 2.55: George A Crofutt, *Westward Ho! (American Progress)* ca. 1873 after John Gast. Chromolithograph, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division

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Figure 3.2: Thomas Eakins, *A Street Scene in Seville*, 1870. Oil on canvas. Private collection.



Figure 3.3: Thomas Eakins, *Home Scene*, ca. 1871. Oil on canvas, 21 7/16 x 18 in. Brooklyn Museum.



Figure 3.4: Thomas Eakins, *The Champion Single Sculls (Max Schmitt in a Single Scull)*, 1871. Oil on canvas, 32 1/4 x 46 1/4 in. Metropolitan Museum of Art.

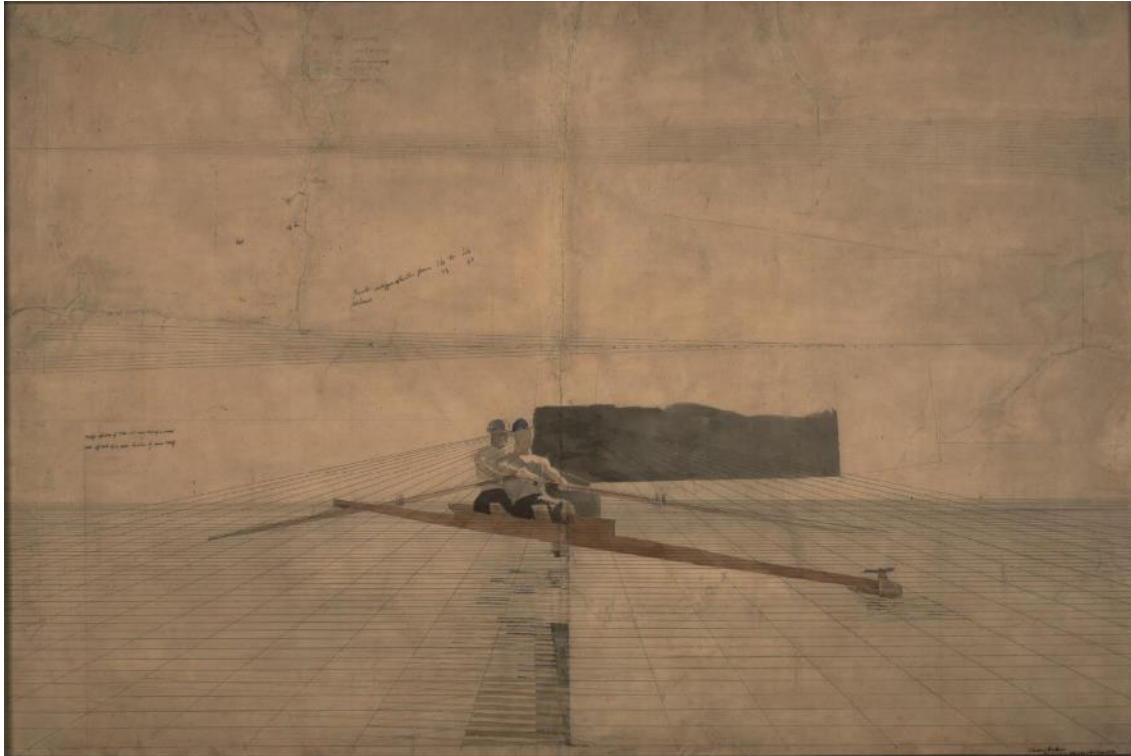


Figure 3.5: Thomas Eakins, *Perspective Drawing for "The Pair-Oared Shell"*, 1872. Pencil, ink, and watercolor on paper, 31 13/16 x 47 9/16 in. Philadelphia Museum of Art



Figure 3.6: Thomas Eakins, *John Biglin in a Single Scull*, ca 1873. Watercolor, 17 1/8 x 23 in. Metropolitan Museum of Art



Figure 3.7: Thomas Eakins, *Starting Out After Rail*, 1874. Oil on canvas, 24 1/4 x 19 7/8 in. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston



Figure 3.8: Thomas Eakins, *Starting Out After Rail*, 1874. Watercolor, 25 x 20 in. Wichita Art Museum



Figure 3.9: Thomas Eakins, *The Artist and His Father Hunting Reed Birds on the Cohansey Marshes*, ca. 1874. Oil on board, 43.5 x 67.31 cm. Virginia Museum of Fine Arts



Figure 3.10: Thomas Eakins, *Pushing for Rail*, 1874. Oil on canvas, 13 x 30 1/4 in. Metropolitan Museum of Art



Figure 3.11: Thomas Eakins, *Whistling for Plover*, 1874. Watercolor, 11 5/16 x 16 11/16 in. Brooklyn Museum



Figure 3.12: Thomas Eakins, *Hunting*, 1874. Oil on canvas. Private collection



Figure 3.13: Thomas Eakins, *Rail Birds in Flight*, ca 1873. Graphite on foolscap, 7 11/16 x 4 15/16 in. Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts

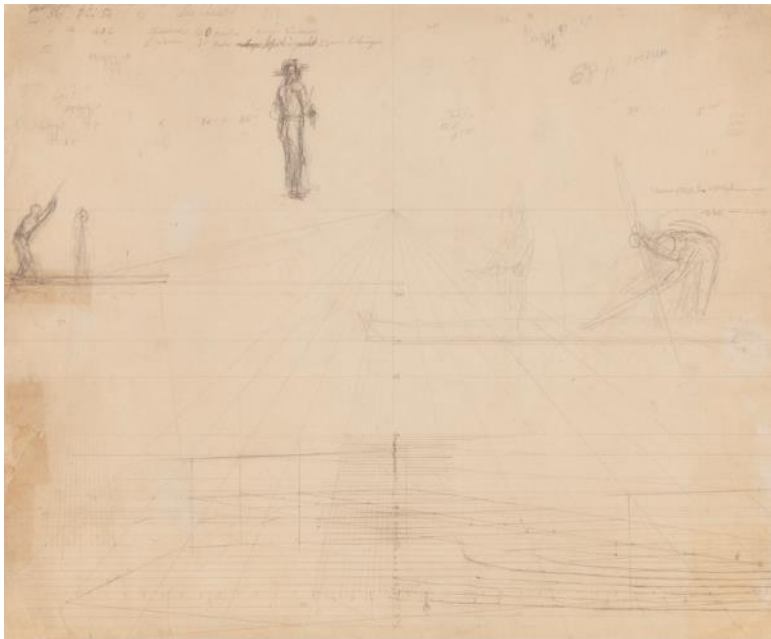


Figure 3.14: Thomas Eakins, *La Chasse: Perspective Study for "Rail Shooting,"* ca. 1873-4. Graphite on paper. Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

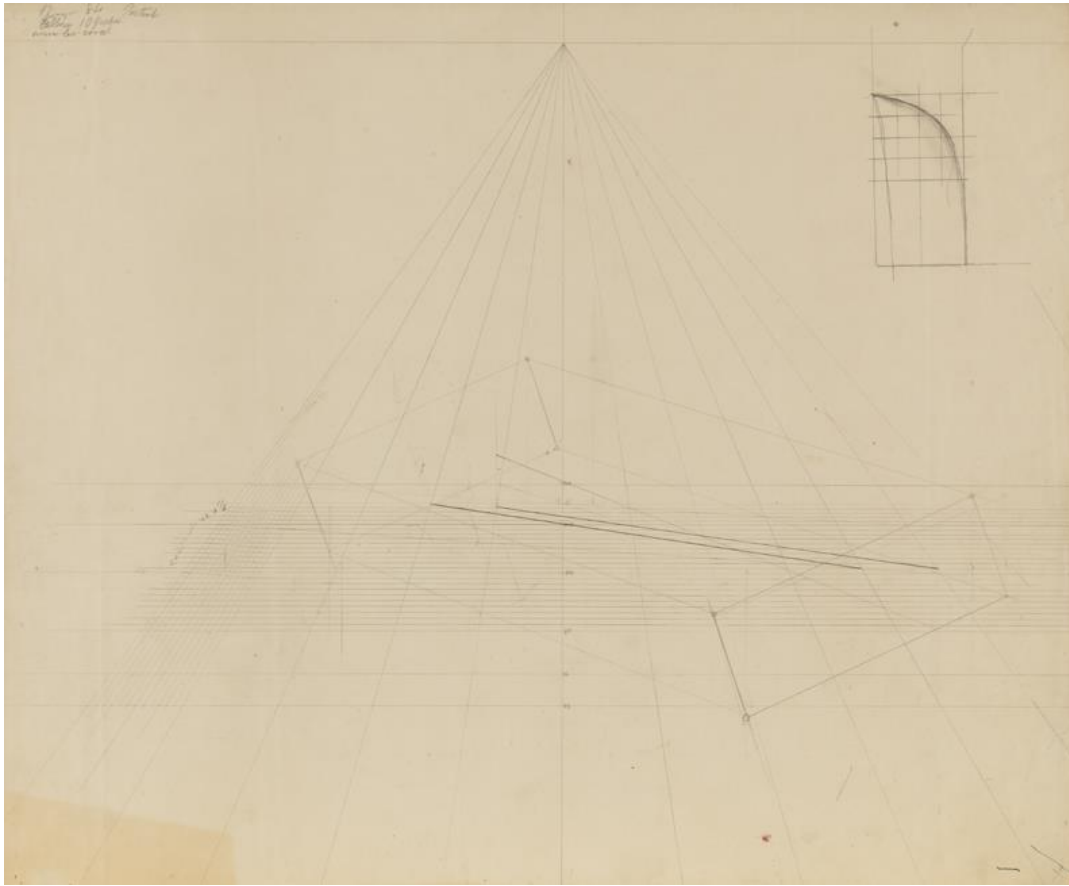


Figure 3.15: Thomas Eakins, *Partant Pour La Chasse (Starting Out After Rail): Perspective Study*, ca 1873-4. Graphite on paper. Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts

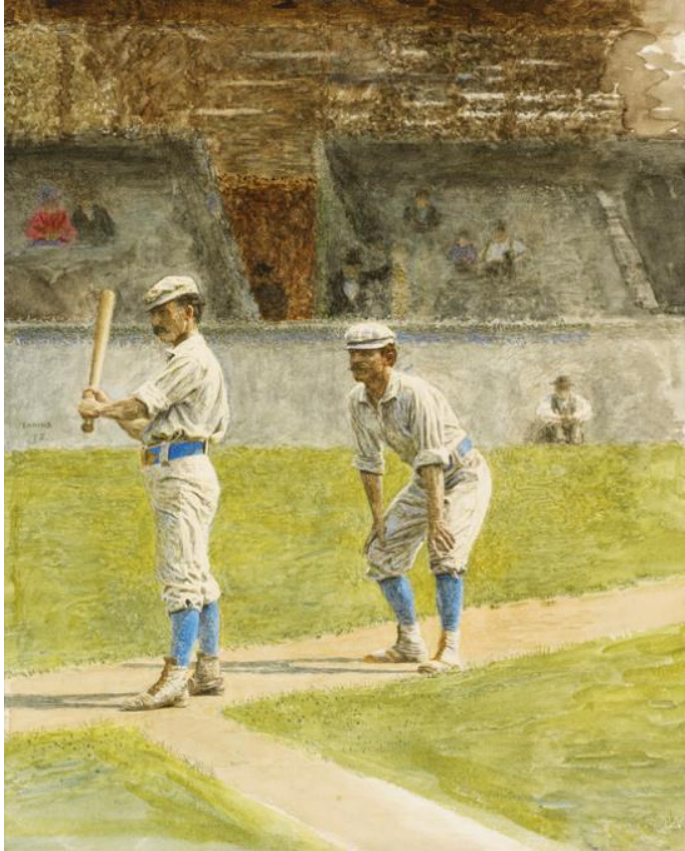


Figure 3.16: Thomas Eakins, *Baseball Players Practicing*, 1875. Watercolor over charcoal on paper, 27 x 20.2 cm. Rhode Island School of Design Museum

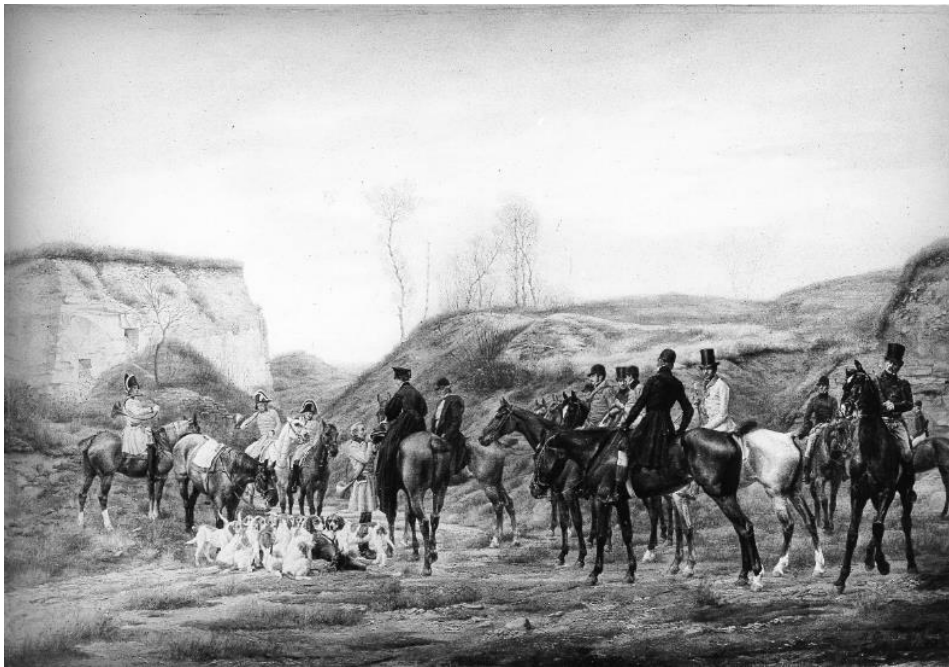


Figure 3.17: Jean-Richard Goubie, *The Prize for the Hunt*, 1872. Oil on canvas, 30 x 43 1/2 in. Metropolitan Museum of Art

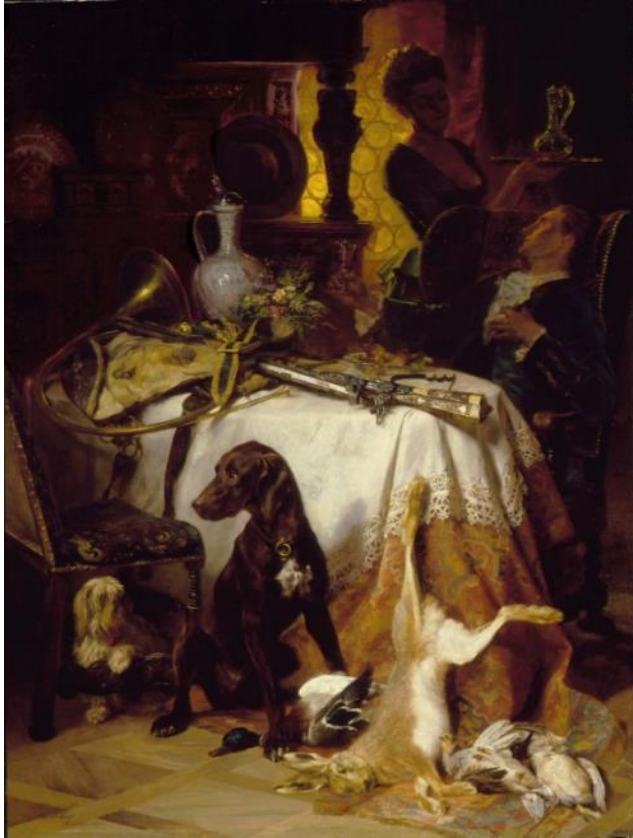


Figure 3.18: David Neal, *After the Hunt*, 1870. Oil on canvas, 62 $\frac{5}{16}$ x 46 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. Los Angeles County Museum of Art



Figure 3.19: Julius LeBlanc Stewart, *A Hunt Ball*, 1885. Oil on canvas, 49 x 79 in. Essex Club, Newark



Figure 3.20: Thomas Eakins, *Rail Shooting on the Delaware (Will Schuster and Blackman Going Shooting)*, 1876. Oil on canvas, 22 1/8 x 30 1/4 in. Yale University Art Gallery



Figure 3.21: Possibly by Henry Schreiber, *Thomas Eakins in Hunting Garb*, ca. 1873-74. Albumen silver print 2 x 2 in. Philadelphia Museum of Art



Figure 3.22: Thomas Eakins, *The Chess Players*, 1876. Oil on wood, 11 3/4 x 16 3/4 in. Metropolitan Museum of Art



Figure 3.23: Thomas Eakins, *Artist and His Father Hunting Reed Birds: Marsh Sketch*, ca. 1873. Oil on canvas, 5 1/2 x 8 7/16 in. Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts

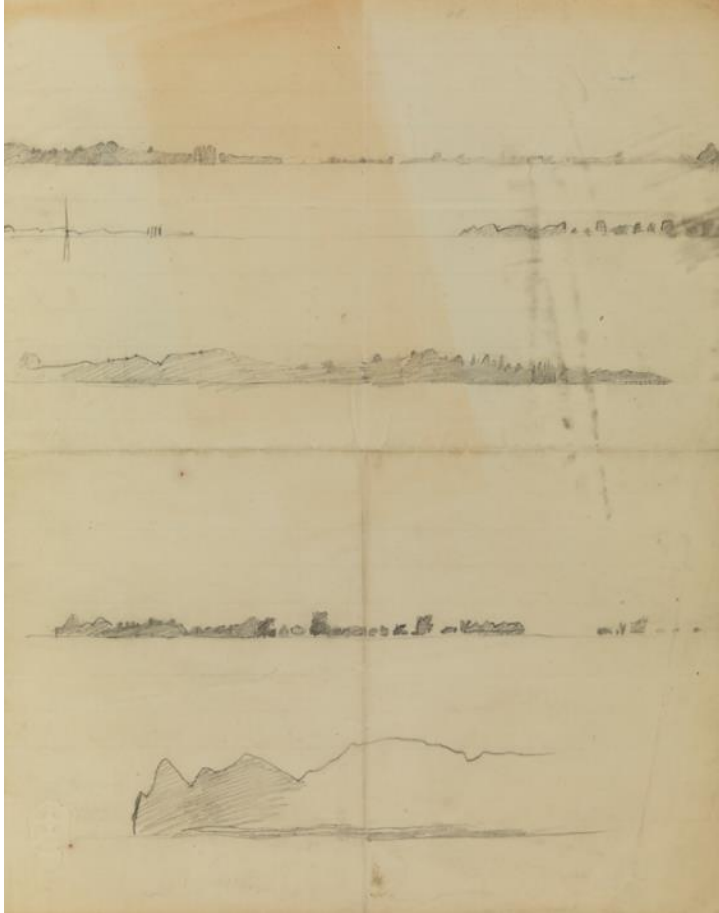


Figure 3.24: Thomas Eakins, *Delaware River Skylines*, ca. 1873-4. Graphite on paper, 9 3/4 x 7 11/16 in. Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts



Figure 3.25: William Croome, *Rail Shooting*, 1853, published in *Gleason's Pictorial Drawing Room—Room Companion* 5 (Dec. 3, 1853), 353.

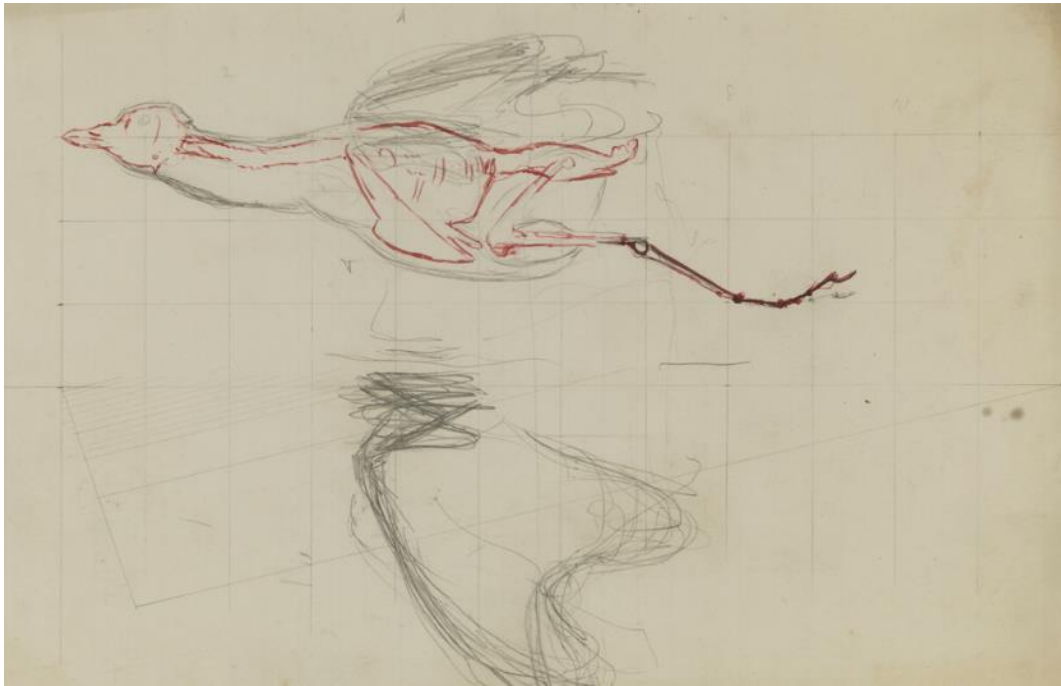


Figure 3.26: Thomas Eakins, *Bird in Flight: Anatomical Cross Section*, ca. 1873-76. Pen and red ink over graphite, 8 1/2 x 13 15/16 in. Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts



Figure 3.27: Thomas Eakins, *Studies of Reed Birds, Probably Virginia Rail*, ca. 1873-4. Oil on board. Virginia Museum of Fine Arts



Figure 3.28: Thomas Eakins, *Study for Rail Shooting from A Punt*, ca 1874-76. Brush and black wash, 8 7/8 x 12 3/16 in. Yale University Art Gallery



Figure 3.29: Thomas Eakins, *The Poleman in the Ma'ash*, ca 1881. Brown wash heightened with white over graphite and black chalk, 11 x 5 15/16 in. National Gallery of Art

This is a reproduction of the painting 'The Dissection of William Harvey' by the Pre-Raphaelite painter John Everett Millais. The painting depicts a classroom scene where a professor, likely William Harvey, is demonstrating anatomy to his students. The professor, an older man with white hair, stands in the center, holding a small object in his hand. He is surrounded by students in dark academic robes. Some students are seated at desks, while others are standing, leaning over a table where a dissection is taking place. The background is filled with more students, creating a sense of a large, crowded lecture hall. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and deep shadows, emphasizing the figures and their actions. The overall composition and style are characteristic of the Pre-Raphaelite movement, which sought to revive the detailed and narrative focus of medieval and early Renaissance art.

Figure 3.31: Thomas Eakins, *Portrait of Dr. Samuel D. Gross (The Gross Clinic)*, 1875. Oil on canvas, 96 x 78 1/2 in. Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts



Figure 3.32: Winslow Homer, *Right and Left*, 1909. Oil on canvas, 28 1/4 x 48 3/8 in. National Gallery of Art



Figure 3.33: Thomas Cole, *A View of the Mountain Pass Called the Notch of the White Mountains (Crawford Notch)*, 1839. Oil on canvas, 40 3/16 x 61 5/16 in. National Gallery of Art



Figure 3.34: Winslow Homer, *The Bridle Path, White Mountains*, 1868. Oil on canvas, 24 1/8 x 38 in. Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute



Figure 3.35: Winslow Homer, *Long Branch, New Jersey*, 1869. Oil on canvas, 16 x 21 3/4 in. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston



Figure 3.36: Winslow Homer, *Beach Scene*, ca. 1869. Oil on canvas, 29.3 x 24 cm Museo Thyssen-Bornemiza

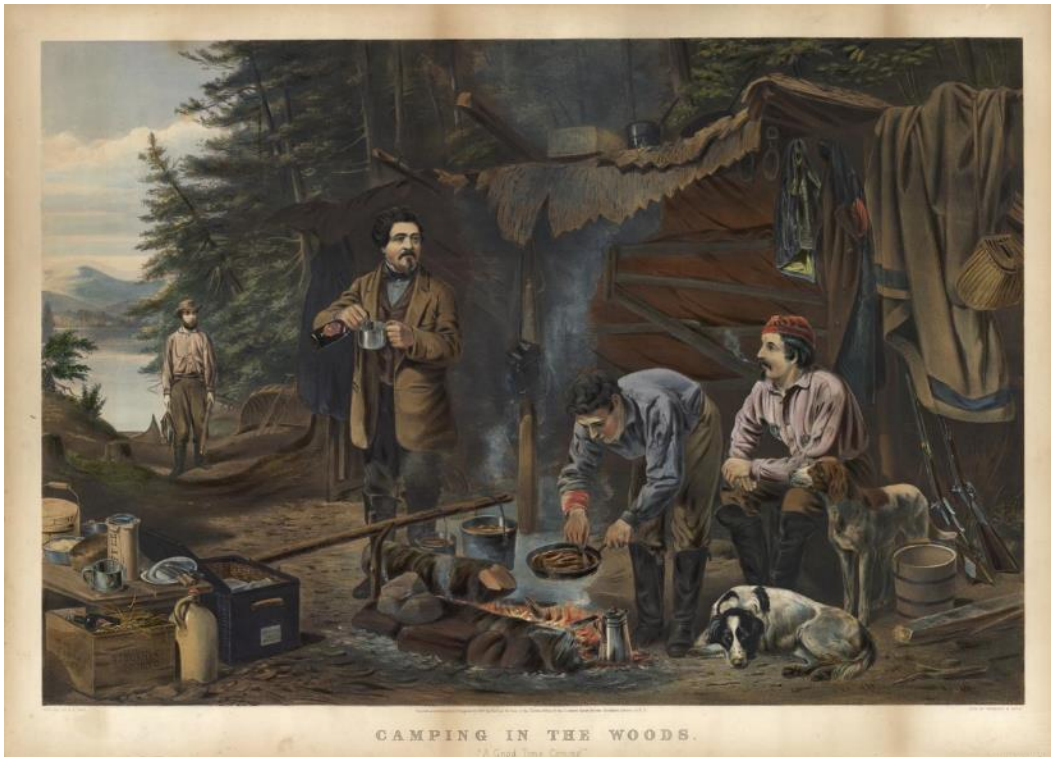


Figure 3.37: Drawn by Arthur Fitzwilliam Tait, Published by Currier & Ives, *Camping Out in the Woods: A Good Time Coming*, 1863. Lithograph, 18 5/8 x 27 1/2.



Figure 3.38: After Arthur Fitzwilliam Tait, *Halt in the Woods*, 1856. Engraving, 21 3/4 x 30 13/16



Figure 3.39: Winslow Homer, *The Trapper, Adirondack Lake*, 1870. Oil on canvas, 19 1/16 in. x 29 1/2 in. Colby College Museum of Art

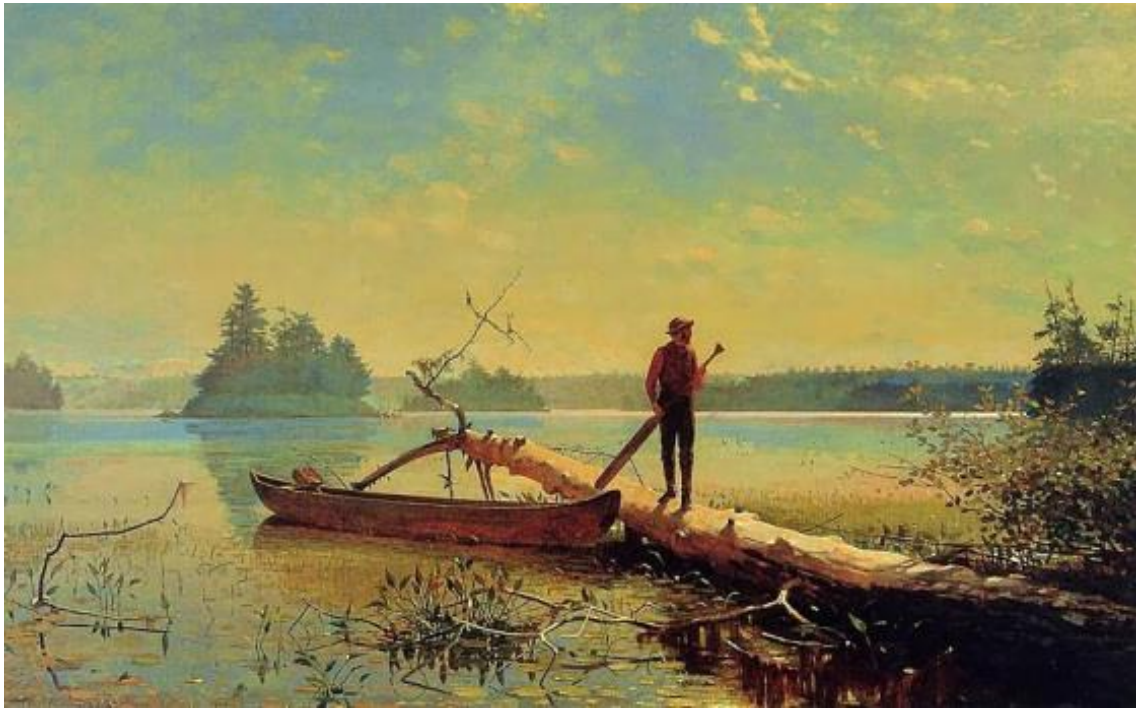


Figure 3.40: Winslow Homer, *Adirondack Lake*, 1870. Oil on canvas, 24 1/4 x 38 1/4 in. Henry Art Gallery



Figure 3.41: Winslow Homer, *Trapping in the Adirondacks*, from *Every Saturday: An Illustrated Journal of Choice Reading*, December 24, 1870. Wood Engraving, 8 7/8 x 12 in. Smithsonian American Art Museum

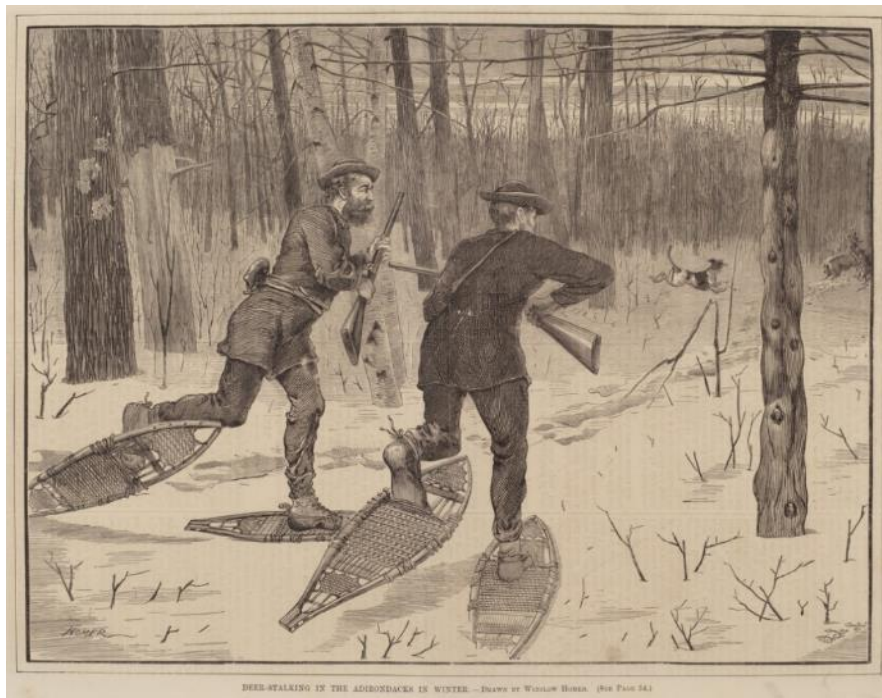


Figure 3.42: Winslow Homer, *Deer Stalking in the Adirondacks*, 1871. Wood engraving. National Gallery of Art

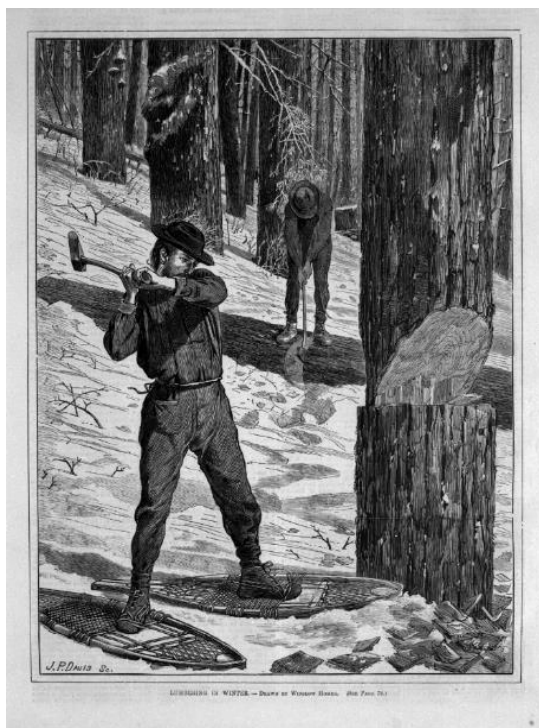


Figure 3.43: After Winslow Homer, *Lumbering in Winter*, 1871. Wood engraving, 12 1/8 x 9 1/8 in. Brooklyn Museum



Figure 3.44: William Sidney Mount, *The Herald in the Country*, 1853. Oil on canvas, 17 1/4 x 12 3/4. The Long Island Museum



Figure 3.45: Winslow Homer, *Two Guides*, 1877. Oil on canvas, 24 1/4 x 38 1/4 in. Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute



Figure 3.46: James Fuller Queen, *Hibernia Fire Engine Company No. 1 of Philadelphia* (Detail), 1857. Chromolithograph, 29.5 x 19.25 in. Library Company of Philadelphia



Figure 3.47: Winslow Homer, *Coursing the Hare*, ca 1883. Oil on canvas. Virginia Museum of Fine Arts



Figure 3.48: Winslow Homer, *On the Trail*, 1889. Watercolor, 12 5/8 x 19 7/8 in. National Gallery of Art



Figure 3.49: Winslow Homer, *An October Day*, 1889. Watercolor, 13 7/8 x 19 3/4 in. Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute



Figure 3.50: Winslow Homer, *Hound and Hunter*, 1892. Oil on canvas, 28 1/4 x 48 1/8 in. National Gallery of Art



Figure 3.51: Winslow Homer, *A Good Shot, Adirondacks*, 1892. Watercolor, 15 1/16 x 21 7/16 in. National Gallery of Art



Figure 3.52: Winslow Homer, *After the Hunt*, 1892. Watercolor, 14 x 20 in. Los Angeles County Museum of Art



Figure 3.53: Charles Ansell- *Cockney Sportsmen Spying Game* of ca. 1805. Hand Colored Engraving. Virginia Museum of Fine Arts



Figure 3.54: John S. Pughe, *The slaughter season*, : J. Ottmann Lith. Co.. 1905. Library of Congress



Figure 3.55: Winslow Homer, *Huntsman and Dogs*, 1891. Oil on canvas, 28 1/8 x 48 in. Philadelphia Museum of Art



Figure 3.56: Winslow Homer, *Guide Carrying a Deer*, 1891. Watercolor, 14 x 20 1/8 in. Portland Museum of Art



Figure 3.57: William Harnett, *After the Hunt*, 1885. Oil on canvas. Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco

CONCLUSION / ILLUSTRATIONS



Figure 4.1: C.D. Arnold, *World's Columbian Exposition, Boone and Crockett Club Log Cabin*, 1893. Photograph. Art Institute of Chicago, Ryerson & Burnham Archives



Figure 4.2: C.D. Arnold, *World's Columbian Exposition, Boone and Crockett Club Log Cabin*, 1893. Photograph. Art Institute of Chicago, Ryerson & Burnham Archives



Figure 4.3: Albert Bierstadt, *The Last of the Buffalo*, 1888. Oil on canvas, 71 x 118 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. National Gallery of Art



Figure 4.4: Charles Schreyvogel, *My Bunkie*, 1899. Oil on canvas, 25 $\frac{3}{16}$ x 34in. Metropolitan Museum of Art



Figure 4.5: Carl Rungius, *The Mountaineers*, 1912. Oil on canvas, 60 x 75 in. Whitney Museum of Western Art, Buffalo Bill Cody Center.



Figure 4.6: Winslow Homer, *Fox Hunt*, 1893. Oil on canvas, 38 x 68 ½ in. Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.