Scribner’s Monthly 1870-1881:
Illustrating a New American Art World

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation examines the illustrations and text of *Scribner’s Monthly*, arguably the most prominent monthly magazine during the 1870s. Initiating improvements in reproduction technology and art criticism, *Scribner’s* played a major role in the development of the nation’s art world in the Gilded Age, transforming the reception, perception and consumption of images by the American public.
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For John
Preface

Over the somewhat long course of writing this dissertation, I have frequently turned to magazines in search of academic release. One of the few diversions left in our society that remains based upon the printed word, magazines are easy to pick up and put down, and allow me to stay up to date on political events as well as current cultural and social trends; but even more importantly, I like to look at their pictures. I cannot lie and tell you that my first choice is always The New Yorker or The Economist, as I tend to search out the rather more prosaic titles such as Vanity Fair and Vogue, and on occasion, even the dreaded People. I remain intrigued by the abilities of savvy editors to lure me into their publications through images of homes, clothing and celebrities that I care little or nothing about, but continue to attract my attention. Having a sister who runs a public relations firm, I am aware of the numerous factors that influence these pictures, which, even though they seek to appear spontaneous, are always highly constructed. And so it is with much consternation that I read that the magazine industry is “dying and so are its readers,” with forecasters describing the outlook for periodicals as “bleak – print edition will matter less and less over the coming years.”¹ When I began my doctoral studies I commonly relied on two forms of media that appeared eternal: slide projectors and microfiche. In less than a decade both were seamlessly replaced by power point programs and digital ejournals. It leads me to wonder, will the IPad take the print out of print media? Will the decade of 2010 mark “the end of magazines as we know them?”

Introduction

This dissertation is about the formation of “magazines as we know them,” as it examines the images and text of arguably the most prominent general monthly magazine of the 1870s, another period of rapid change for the publishing industry. *Scribner’s Monthly* helped to inform and propel the extraordinary expansion of that industry, as it responded to the new demands for a pictorial marketplace that were driven by an emerging American consumer class in a post Civil War world. Initiating new ways of packaging and presenting visual information, *Scribner’s* ultimately caused the magazine industry to adopt conventions that have persisted right through the twenty first century. Even twenty five years earlier, illustrated magazines were almost unknown to the general public, and the nature and quality of their images were extremely limited.\(^1\) Responding to the enormous social, political, commercial and intellectual changes that occurred as the country began to rebuild itself after the war, *Scribner’s Monthly* took advantage of preferable conditions and, like the other capitalist ventures of its day, competed with a few mature periodicals through technological innovation to become a prominent publication shortly after its inception. As a means of differentiating itself from its primary competitor, *Harper’s Monthly*, *Scribner’s* chose to focus on the publication of American authors and to emphasize the use of high quality illustrations by American artists. Revolutionizing the process of wood engraving and dramatically improving the accuracy of its reproductions, *Scribner’s* recognized the new public desire for visual culture and effectively responded to it in the pages of the magazine, resulting in an unprecedented dedication to the image in print media. The dissertation not only reveals the technological

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development of the image over the course of the decade, but, more importantly, explores the changing nature of the space devoted to reproductions within the periodical, as the function of the image moves from pure illustration to that of a work of art in its own right. The nature of these images also changed during the decade, as *Scribner's* effectively guided its readers away from the large spectacular landscapes which appeared in its initial volumes, reproducing more intimate and expressive works of art while encouraging readers to appreciate pictures that incorporated more international, academic styles. Facilitated by the new engraving process that allowed for a looser, sketch-type line that more directly emulated the brush, *Scribner's* reproductions engendered new forms of criticism and art literature in the magazine. *Scribner's Monthly* effectively changed the way that Americans looked at, valued and understood images, and actively participated in the forging of a national art. As part of my investigation in this effort, I look closely at the pivotal role and aesthetic philosophy of Richard Watson Gilder, the assistant editor and driving force behind *Scribner's* commitment to the arts in America. While exploring the development of the image in the magazine and of Gilder as critic and cultural authority, I also delineate two broader themes throughout the dissertation. First, while situating *Scribner's* within the larger popularization of the fine arts to the nation’s middle class during the period, I examine the means by which it transformed the reception, perception and consumption of images by the American public. Secondly, by revealing the multiple roles played by Gilder and his circle of artists, illustrators, and taste-makers in cultivating that effort, I demonstrate how *Scribner's* effectively combined image and text to widely convey ideas about contemporary art in America and beyond that had not been previously possible without the use of quality reproductions.
Scribner's Monthly during the 1870s: Origins, Evolution and Industry Dominance

The idea for a new monthly magazine to compete with Harper’s Monthly, which had had no serious challenger since its founding in 1853, originated in Charles Scribner’s successful publication of a series of religious essays and his vision of a monthly “Christian periodical.”² Widely read among New Englanders, Josiah Holland’s letters on religious issues established his reputation as a moral lecturer and popular author during the 1850s and 60s. Scribner approached Holland in 1869 about the possibility of running a small monthly publication owned by his publishing house called Hours at Home, which was currently edited by a twenty-five year old poet named Richard Watson Gilder. Holland brought in Roswell Smith as his business partner and formed a partnership which named Holland as editor-in-chief, Smith as chief financial officer and Scribner as an investor; signed in 1870, the agreement called for a new name for the publication, Scribner’s Monthly, and clearly stated that, unlike its predecessor, the journal was to be independent of the book firm. The moment was marked by a mania for magazines, as the number of American periodicals grew from 700 in 1865 to over 1,200 in 1870.³ Leaders in the field were Harper’s Monthly, The Atlantic Monthly, and Lippincotts, but Harper’s, with its illustrations, its New York base and its serializing of popular British authors, was by far the most popular among the average American reader. Holland, Smith and Scribner were all devout Protestants, and their initial approach to differentiating their

magazine from the competition was to make it a vehicle for Christian thought in a time of religious questioning. Absorbing *Hours at Home* into the new concern, Scribner decided to keep the young Gilder on as assistant editor, and Gilder had fresh ideas to offer about the publication when Holland began to have difficulties finding new material. An emerging poet who was friendly with many writers of his own generation, Gilder urged the partners to focus on American authors, eschewing the British literature that was regularly published in *Harper’s*. While initially the periodical relied heavily on Holland’s own work, which was popular with the general public, the partners ultimately responded to Gilder’s suggestions and began to include more American writers. By 1875, Gilder had gradually been given greater editorial responsibilities and the periodical, now popular with the public for its publication of national literature, shed the evangelical tone of its early issues.

Initially Holland was against the idea of investing in illustration, and Scribner agreed with him that the expense might be better spent on improving format and content. Recognizing the vital role that illustration was beginning to play in newspapers, weekly and monthly magazines, Gilder urged the partners to reconsider, and ultimately they agreed. As work began on its second volume, which included many more engravings, new advertisements for *Scribner’s* described the magazine as “profusely illustrated.” In addition to illustration, the magazine was also aware of the need for a strong visual impact and committed to high quality materials with an elegant cover, clear print and better paper; over the course of the 1870s these improvements continued as *Scribner’s*

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4 Scribner’s also bought out *Putnam’s Monthly* to improve its initial subscription list and also for its roster of former contributors.

5 Advertisement for *Scribner’s Monthly* on the back cover of *The Book Buyer*, o.s. 3 (September 1870), reprinted in John, 16.
was recognized for its covers, its physical materials and the increasing amount of space dedicated to its distinctive illustrations. Anticipating the public demand for all things visual, Gilder sought out Alexander Drake, an engraver and teacher at the Cooper Institute, early on to run the art department and, while neither had an equity interest in the concern, the two men essentially transformed the new publication to meet the needs of the modern reader. Drake’s early success in acquiring and reproducing quality illustrations caused *Scribner’s* to be recognized in the critical press as unrivaled in the magazine field. However the early wood engravings that appeared in the magazine’s first five years are actually quite crude in comparison to those at the end of the decade. Gilder and Drake worked constantly to improve methods of print engraving, with Drake ultimately developing the technique of photoxylography; this process revolutionized the engraving process, allowing for photographs of original artwork to be directly transferred onto the wood block surface such that engravers could capture the artist’s painterly techniques, greatly enhancing the quality of the reproduced image as well as its veracity to the original. \(^6\) Born out of *Scribner’s Monthly*, this “new school” of engraving dramatically changed the nature of the image on the printed page and, in turn, encouraged Gilder to continuously increase his emphasis on and coverage of the arts. The dissertation charts this development, with the rudimentary pictures of Yellowstone described in Chapter I ultimately giving way to the sophisticated images of Whistler, La Farge, Blake, and Millet discussed in Chapters IV, VI and VII. Given its emphasis on the visual, Drake and Gilder hired Theodore De Vinne as the magazine’s printer in 1876; DeVinne’s technological innovations in printing made *Scribner’s* the standard for quality monthlies.

and resulted in more creative layouts on the page, greater tonal awareness in the illustrations and an overall modern aesthetic for the periodical. In 1878, the press noted that although *Scribner’s* was “a magazine for the people, [it had] become in reality a MAGAZINE OF ART.”

While technological improvements in the art and printing departments were vital to the periodical’s transformation, Gilder was the motivating spirit behind the innovations and the establishment of *Scribner’s* as an important player not only in the publishing industry, but also in the art world. Aware of his rank as assistant editor, Gilder catered to Holland’s ideas early on, but over time made his mark as an advocate of native authors and artists who served as the magazine’s primary contributors. Symbolic of his efforts in supporting national artists, Gilder was the first American editor to officially recognize the artists who illustrated his magazine, as he initiated changes in 1877 to include their names, along with the engravers, in each volume’s index. The dissertation follows the gradual decline of Holland’s influence as the magazine moved from a “Christian periodical dealing with everyday matters” to an aesthetic journal dedicated to the arts, driven by Gilder’s increased coverage of contemporary painters, sculptors and illustrators. When Holland set up his monthly editorial “Topics of the Times,” to comment on the religious, political and economic issues of the day, Gilder responded by establishing his own column, “The Old Cabinet” which initially consisted of cheerful anecdotes; ultimately the column became a platform for improvement in art criticism and the support of foreign trained American artists. With its in-depth analysis of the changes that occurred in “The Old Cabinet,” Chapter III highlights this transformation and the

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7 John, 80-81.
8 *Scribner’s Monthly* 17 (December 1878) Advertising Section:16.
emergence of Gilder’s aesthetic philosophy, as he became a confident spokesperson for the Society of American Artists. He was in an ideal position to do so, as his wife, Helena de Kay, whom he married in 1874, was one of its original founding members and established her home as a gathering place for many of its artists. De Kay’s influence on Gilder and his support, defense and promotion of the Society’s artists in the pages of *Scribner’s* was substantial and immeasurable. One of the primary themes that runs throughout the dissertation is how Gilder developed this circle of colleagues, which included artists, critics and cultural thinkers, to collectively participate in his effort to create an art world in America that conformed to his aesthetic ideas. The dissertation reveals how improvements in the both the magazine’s form (printing and engraving) and content (criticism and art literature) allowed Gilder to visually and literally demonstrate to his readers the importance of art in American life, and to change the nature of the way Americans perceived, understood and valued that art.

**The *Scribner’s* Agenda: Teaching Taste, Professionalizing Criticism, Promoting Gilder’s Circle and Endorsing the Spiritual Aesthetic**

The dissertation is structured around major series devoted to artistic topics that appeared in the magazine from its inception in 1870 until its final issue in 1881. In addition to the broader themes outlined above, I have used these series as a means to explore four of Gilder’s primary aesthetic goals for *Scribner’s* as it developed over the period: to teach taste to its middle class readership; to improve art criticism in the magazine itself and to establish the field professionally; to publicize the artists of Gilder’s circle, many of whom were foreign trained and employed as illustrators for *Scribner’s*; and to convey the notion of the spiritual in art to a society searching for alternative
religious experiences. I use the individual series in particular and *Scribner's Monthly* in general as a lens by which to examine these issues as they directly impacted the larger formation of a new American art world during the 1870s. A complex and vibrant period, the decade witnessed the establishment and growth of modernizing institutions, such as museums, worlds fairs and the publishing industry, that created a new demand for visual imagery in numerous aspects of contemporary life, most particularly in popular journals and periodicals.

In his discussion of *Scribner's* after its final volume, Gilder boldly confirmed the power of his position to mold public opinion and to teach taste:

> The monthly magazine is the great modern intellectual amphitheater, and the publicity it is able to give to works of excellence of widely differing kinds is a perpetual stimulus to the intellectual activity of the nation….there is no function in modern life more difficult or responsible [than the work of a monthly magazine editor]. The literary and artistic judgment of the editor who stands between the author and his readers – the artist and his public - must directly and strongly affect the taste and culture of the people, while the energy, originality and enterprise of the magazine publisher become modifying forces in art, literature and life. [9]

During an era of social movement and upward mobility, the American people were looking for voices of authority to advise them on all things “cultural.” *Scribner’s* anticipated the public demand, publishing Clarence Cook’s series on home decoration between 1874 and 1876. The subject of Chapter II, Cook’s articles on “Beds and Tables, Stools and Candlesticks,” effectively coincided with the Centennial Exhibition and provided *Scribner’s* with a direct opportunity to “teach taste” in terms of providing advice on the actual furnishing of its upwardly mobile, middle class readers’ homes; this instruction was aided by numerous illustrations of interiors which served as models for

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the new taste in all things decorative. Gilder took the notion of improving public taste to the next level in the late 1870s, with editorials and articles devoted, in his words, “to diffusing correct judgments and principles” about contemporary artists, both American and foreign (for the most part French); the vast improvement in the use of reproductions allowed him to explain his aesthetic ideas in depth and provide examples of works of art that embodied his aesthetic standards. In providing acceptable models of “taste,” whether in home decoration or contemporary works of art, Gilder responded directly to the consumer culture’s craving for guidelines and instruction within their quest for culture and refinement. The era’s concept of culture as broadly outlined by Alan Trachtenberg was the basis for much of the subject matter covered in Scribner’s, as it fully participated in the endorsement of non-utilitarian goods and leisure activities as hopeful social and political forces. In providing the public with accessible standards of “taste,” Scribner’s not only promoted certain styles of art or patterns of behavior, but also shaped and guided larger values and outlooks that defined a growing segment of American society during the 1870s. Living in a time of political corruption and increased class divisions, middle class readers sought out cultural sites such as Scribner’s to distinguish and insulate themselves from unrefined immigrants and laboring masses; as a prominent “teacher of taste,” Gilder provided them, in both text and image, the material to do so.

The evolution of art criticism in the pages of Scribner’s over the course of the 1870s mirrors the industry at large, as the publication of art journals, illustrated books

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10 Ibid., p. 25.
and exhibition catalogues, as well as the increased art related writing in the popular monthlies, came to represent a substantial and significant portion of American print media during the decade. In her discussion of the creation of an organizational field in the art publishing world, JoAnne Mancini highlights *Scribner’s* as an example of a general monthly publication that encouraged its readers to expand their horizons beyond its pages, as it cited other art publications that contained additional images, theories on art or further instruction. The dissertation demonstrates that *Scribner’s* was much more than a conduit of additional sources, as it consistently encouraged and propagated the development of the professional critic and the expanded notion of “art criticism” during the period. Tracing the evolution of art criticism on its pages, Chapter I sets the scene with its examination of art related articles in the early issues that are essentially biographical, descriptive and un-illustrated. Interim chapters reveal the development of a critical literature that culminated in the final volumes’ fully illustrated articles featuring prominent artists. In these articles, which are the subjects of Chapters V, VI and VII, writers now offered critical evaluations of works of art that were reproduced within the text. Gilder made it his mission to establish an acceptable style and language of art criticism, a voice of authority, on the pages of *Scribner’s*. In addition to his own discussions on the editorial page, he hired critics whose work participated in the development of that language, such as Cook and William Crary Brownell. Rejecting earlier methods and seeking to guide and inform the way that their audience actually looked at and understood works of art, these critics provided judgments and evaluations based on specific criteria. Gilder also sought to expand the notion of art criticism,

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publishing diverse types of “art literature” that effectively engaged his audience with works of art in a variety of ways. Crucial to these new forms of “art literature,” which are explored in depth in Chapter IV, were the quality illustrations that accompanied them; image and text worked together to instruct and inform on the printed page, engaging *Scribner’s* middle class readers in ways which had never been previously possible in a mass produced periodical. Responding to critical reviews as well as popular series that recounted the comical antics of the Tile Club and the sentimental tale of the life of Jean François Millet, *Scribner’s* readers engaged with art on an unprecedented scale.

Gilder saw himself as the mouthpiece of a new generation of artists in America. Almost all of these artists had trained in the early 1870s in Europe and returned home to find little interest in their international, academic styles and little opportunity to sell or exhibit their work. *Scribner’s* was a vehicle for these new “young men” (and women), as the magazine promoted them on the editorial page, in exhibition reviews and in the extensively illustrated series on “The Younger Painters of America.” Never before had a particular group of painters received such intensive publicity and, as such, the dissertation participates in the contemporary debate explored by Sarah Burns about the “modern artist,” as it responds to the emerging cult of celebrity and the use of new methods of print media to effectively craft an intriguing public personality.¹³ *Scribner’s* served as a virtual art gallery for the new generation. Its articles on the emerging American art world, which offered a window into their clubs, associations, schools and travels, were extensively illustrated with their own images. Further, Gilder offered them work as illustrators on a variety of subjects, allowing them to continue their endeavors as “artists”

while providing them with a vital regular income for contributing images to the magazine. *Scribner’s* was recognized as the unofficial organ for the Society of American Artists, which was formed at Gilder’s home in 1877 and promoted throughout the rest of the decade on the pages of the periodical. Through a combination of text and image, *Scribner’s* endorsed the society’s values as well as its individual artists, proclaiming their particular style of more expressive and intimate painting as the ideal aesthetic for contemporary cultivated viewers, and effectively changing the way that Americans valued works of art. While this is made particularly clear in Chapter IV and V’s discussion of monographs and series on featured painters, Gilder’s consistent and unyielding promotion of his selected circle of artists is evident throughout the dissertation.

The fact that the magazine originated as a “Christian Periodical” and, over the course of its publication, gradually adopted a more aesthetic, secular tone makes *Scribner’s* an ideal site to examine the relationship between art and religion during the 1870s. Chapter I demonstrates how, in its early publications, the periodical privileged the sublime, spectacular paintings of the Hudson River School and pictures of the emerging West; the geo-piety inherent in these images spoke to the notion of a Biblical God in the landscape. In her discussion of Thomas Moran’s grand western landscapes, Joni Kinsey has demonstrated how that geo-piety had wide appeal with Christian viewers. I argue that Moran’s illustrations were also ideally suited to the Protestant doctrine of Holland, who, as *Scribner’s* original editor, openly questioned the value of European aestheticism to the American people while assuring them that the magazine would represent “the

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interests of Christian [specifically Protestant] truth and culture in America and the world.”¹⁵ The dissertation charts the transformation of Scribner’s engagement with religion; as Gilder effectively gained control over the course of the decade, the periodical became more receptive to alternative types of spiritual experience and to more intimate, expressionist works of art. Encouraging his public to look to art as a means of filling a spiritual void, Gilder published a variety of editorials and illustrated articles that embraced Catholicism as well as other non-Christian religions, while sanctioning an alternative aesthetic experience to achieve transcendence; this new dialogue is the focus of the dissertation’s final chapters as the topic comes full circle. Scribner’s widespread endorsement of an individual and subjective encounter with the divine through aesthetics anticipates and in many ways engenders the dynamic exchanges that occur at the end of the century between art and religion as effectively described by Kristin Schwain.¹⁶

By 1880 Scribner’s was internationally recognized as the most popular monthly of its day and claimed a circulation of 125,000 readers. At this time the descendants of Charles Scribner chose to part with Holland and Smith, and Scribner’s Monthly officially became the Century Magazine two years later, with Gilder now a partial owner and editor in chief. Gilder further improved the periodical’s popularity in its second decade, with its readership exceeding 250,000 in the mid 1880s; he would remain editor in chief until his death in 1909, with the Century ultimately ceasing publication in 1930.¹⁷ Although the Century continued Scribner’s Monthly’s dedication to aesthetic concerns, Gilder began to

¹⁵ Scribner’s Monthly 3 (November 1871) Publisher’s Department: 7.
¹⁷ John.
focus his efforts on politics, social issues and the publication of substantial historical series including the extremely popular “Civil War;” the arts coverage itself became more art historical, with a greater emphasis on instruction over critical assessment. As such, I have limited my discussion to Scribner’s and its eleven years of publication between 1870 to 1881. I believe that this unique period was a formative moment in which a wide variety of art institutions, including museums, art schools, galleries and spaces for public sculpture, were being founded or expanded and the dissertation explores Scribner’s role in this forging of a national art. The decade also witnesses the shift in the publishing and culture industries from Boston to New York and the dissertation tracks the complex dialogue between the two in its examination of the changing nature of the relationship between Scribner’s and the Atlantic Monthly, and Gilder and the Brahmins. While a variety of studies on Scribner’s and the Century have been published, all have focused primarily on either the literary aspects of the magazine or its historical position within the publishing industry.\textsuperscript{18} Works on other important journals of the period, such as Joshua Brown’s insightful investigation of Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Magazine, have addressed Scribner’s tangentially, as have studies on the innovations in printmaking during the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{19} All of these scholars have provided me with a strong base from


which to examine the generally unexplored yet significant aesthetic contribution of *Scribner’s* to the American art world as it developed in the 1870s and early 1880s.

The idea for this dissertation emerged during the beginning of my engagement with painting in the Gilded Age. It seemed that every time I did any type of general research, *Scribner’s Monthly* was commonly referred to as a primary source, and its articles frequently provided relevant quotations and examples. Intrigued as I learned more about the magazine and the Gilders, I believed that an in-depth examination of *Scribner’s* could enhance and extend many of the ideas about the manipulation of the press by artists during the period, particularly those found in Burn’s *Inventing the Modern Artist.*

Having begun work on the subject, I eagerly read Mancini’s *PreModernism* and was further encouraged, as the book in many ways validated my claims, particularly in terms of its ideas about criticism and print media; the dissertation answers Mancini’s call for further study on the intricate relationships within the American art world between critics, editors, publishers, artists and the public, as a means to more deeply understand the substantial aesthetic change that took place during the period. Further, one could not find a more ideal example than *Scribner’s* of Mancini’s conception “that all art derives from and is defined by a multilayered process of cultural production, deeply rooted in the art world.”

One of the most influential cultural institutions of its time, *Scribner’s* was a vital force in the definition, creation, distribution and consumption of art in the Gilded Age. In its exploration of this larger role as well as many of *Scribner’s* specific projects, such as the inculcation of aesthetic standards through mass reproduction of images by painters such as Whistler and Millet, and its full scale endorsement of wood engraving as

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20 Burns.

21 Mancini, 10.
a fine art rather than a craft, the dissertation addresses many of the complex social
conflicts related to the study of American visual culture in the nineteenth century culture;
as such, I see it as an extension of many of the discourses presented in Patricia Johnston’s
Seeing High & Low.\textsuperscript{22} Finally, the important role of \textit{Scribner’s} in the development and
circulation of quality illustrations on such an unprecedented scale allows the dissertation
to participate in the Benjamin debate of “aura” versus agency.\textsuperscript{23} The vitality of its images
speaks to David Morgan’s compelling approach to the argument which suggests that
reproductions of original works of art, such as those seen in \textit{Scribner’s}, worked to
effectively disseminate knowledge and artistic value to viewers without access; as such,
given the high quality of the images as well as their inaccessibility, the aura of the
original is essentially enhanced through its copy as viewers were unaware of the means of
reproduction and it did not intrude on their visual experience.\textsuperscript{24} Rather than dissipating
aura, \textit{Scribner’s} engravings of works of fine art helped to establish the iconic status of
numerous images in modern mass culture. Given the new forms of media that have
emerged since I began my doctoral studies, the Benjamin debate has become even more
relevant, as, with the prophesied “death of print media” and the continuous improvements
in digital technology, the notions of “original,” “copy,” and “aura” are even more
complex.

\textsuperscript{22} Patricia Johnston, ed., \textit{Seeing High & Low: Representing Social Conflict in American
Visual Culture} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).
\textsuperscript{23} Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in
217-51.
\textsuperscript{24} David Morgan, \textit{Protestants and Pictures: Religion, Visual Culture, and the Age of
The following chapters have much more to say about the rise of *Scribner's* over the course of the 1870s, as they explore in depth how issues of taste, religion, and art were treated by the periodical during the period. Laid out chronologically, the chapters build upon each other as they describe Gilder’s rise to power in the editorial department and how he effectively drove the magazine away from its initial purpose as a Christian periodical, toward a more culturally focused, aesthetic publication, in both text and illustration. Each chapter looks closely at Gilder’s specific agendas highlighted above through an examination of particular series, with an overriding awareness of *Scribner’s* popularization of the fine arts to middle class Americans along with the circle of colleagues cultivated by the periodical who participated in this effort.

While the dissertation addresses many aspects of *Scribner’s* role in the development of an American art world during the Gilded Age, the true emphasis (and the key to its success) is on its illustrations. No other popular journal came close to *Scribner’s* in terms of its imagery, and the dissertation traces the evolution of that imagery while underscoring the substantial contribution made by the periodical to the American public at the time in terms of its visual culture. Guided by Gilder’s vision, *Scribner’s* opened a new visual window on the world to its readers, and in my discussion I seek to convey the wonders of that new world, beginning with its initial volumes and the wonders of the West.
Chapter I. The Early Years At *Scribner’s*: Ruskinian Aesthetics, Christian Ideology and Thomas Moran

Who could tell at that early date if [Moran’s illustrations] were not convincing by objective standards? Yellowstone was still so little known, and sounded so fantastic that incredulity was the common reaction. A reviewer blasted [the author of the article] as the champion liar of the Northwest, and still other readers reminded the editors that the *Scribner’s* prospectus had promised a moral tone which presumably ought to exclude plain lies.¹

Readers of the new *Scribner’s Monthly* appeared to have felt betrayed. Hadn’t the editors assured them that this magazine would be a Christian periodical that would truthfully discuss the topics of the day with candor and authority? Surely these images reproduced in the May 1871 edition’s feature article about the newly discovered region called “The Yellowstone” could not be authentic (figures 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4). Some of the pictures depicted such bizarre and unearthly geological formations that they had to be the products of the illustrator’s vivid imagination - who was this Thomas Moran? Were the editors toying with their readers, encouraging Moran to create fictitious pictures to lure them into the periodical’s pages, and how did these images relate to *Scribner’s* original mantra as a popular Christian publication for all Americans? Why did the magazine choose these illustrations and this region to launch its first issues, and why should the public accept these images as real?

As the newly appointed assistant editor of this newly incorporated monthly magazine at the beginning of a new decade, Richard Watson Gilder was well aware of his current, and somewhat challenging, situation. He needed to give the people what they craved: spectacle and extensive visual information in a style with which they felt

comfortable, and that also conformed to their Christian values of truthful, upstanding reporting. However, having had his small journal, *Hours at Home*, absorbed by the recently formed and much larger concern of *Scribner’s Monthly*, he also knew that in order to maintain his position he would have to defer to the views of his senior editor, the established writer, lecturer and novelist, Josiah Holland, as well as those of the business manager Roswell Smith and major partner Charles Scribner. But Scribner had obviously seen something in the young Gilder during his brief time as editor at *Hours at Home* and had kept him on for a reason. Gilder had demonstrated to Scribner that he was in touch with current trends in the emerging publishing and cultural industries and understood how the two could be effectively combined to attract the American public. He also recognized the most vital aspect of those trends in America in 1870 – the insatiable desire for imagery. While Holland, Smith and Scribner sought to establish a “Christian periodical,” Gilder realized that the publication would have to do much more than speak to religious issues of the day if it were to compete with the more established monthlies such as *Harper’s* and the *Atlantic*. In addition to introducing the periodical in its inception, and setting the scene for its initial approach to artistic and religious topics, this first chapter traces the difficult dance that the young Gilder performed during these early days, as he adhered to his elders’ call for a Christian message while responding to public demand for popular illustrations and coverage of cultural issues. Although Holland had initially rejected the idea of an extensively illustrated periodical, Gilder convinced him not only of the vital importance of these images but also of the value of *Scribner’s* primary illustrator in its early issues, Thomas Moran. The chapter explores how, in Moran’s awe-inspiring, reverential images of the West, Gilder recognized a means by
which he could effectively respond to the popular demands of the public while addressing
the primary concerns of Scribner’s managing partners. Through a discussion of
Scribner’s two major series on the exploration of Yellowstone and the Grand Canyon, as
well as critical reviews of Moran’s major paintings of these subjects, the chapter will
demonstrate how Gilder used Moran’s images to engender notions of “God in the
landscape” while offering visual information to a public hungry for knowledge of these
uncharted, uncivilized regions. In addition to successfully launching the periodical,
Moran’s illustrations offered the American public its first glimpse of the wonders of the
West, providing indelible images of places associated with geographic destiny, economic
opportunity and spiritual resources that became part of the national psyche on the pages
of Scribner’s.²

Given the Christian agenda of Scribner’s founders and their somewhat Protestant
distrust of an excessive use of illustrations, Gilder needed to find the appropriate criteria
to choose particular images and illustrators, as well as the tone in which to discuss these
unique engravings. Initially, most of the pictures in the magazine had a purely illustrative
function (as opposed to later in the 1870s when paintings were reproduced in their own
right to be appreciated solely as works of art); in terms of the selection and discussion of
images in these early days, Gilder relied heavily on the ultimate recognized authority on
aesthetics and morality, John Ruskin. As both Neil Harris and Roger Stein have made
clear, the intricate commingling of artistic and religious issues in America before the
Civil War was both demonstrated and strengthened by the popularity of Ruskin’s

² For an in-depth discussion of the imagery of these regions and their impact on the
American public see Kinsey, Thomas Moran and the Surveying of the American West,
and John F. Sears’ Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth
philosophy in mid century. Ruskin allowed Americans, unfamiliar with artistic critical language, to discuss art in ethical terms; he encouraged his followers to search for the moral lessons that could be drawn from each work of art, thereby privileging qualities such as directness, clarity, and simplicity in visual imagery over obscurity or complexity.³ While Gilder was personally being introduced to an alternative aesthetic which he would broadly promote at the end of the decade, he recognized the American attachment to Ruskin’s philosophy and the high level of comfort with his critical style, assessing the quality of a work by its ability to convey a moral message. Gilder also shared Ruskin’s faith in the power of art as a means of transforming society, and used his own editorial column to educate his readers and promote increased aesthetic awareness.⁴

In addition to the public admiration and acceptance of Ruskin, Gilder was also aware of the particular types and styles of images Americans found appealing. As Janice

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⁴ The terms “aesthetic,” “The Aesthetic Movement,” and “aestheticism” are somewhat loaded and used extensively throughout the dissertation. “Aesthetic” relates to the branch of philosophy dealing with the beautiful in art, primarily in respect to theories of its essential nature, tests by which it may be judged and its relation to the human mind. I see the Aesthetic Movement as defined by Roger Stein as a period of rich artistic activity in America during the 1870s and 1880s, centered on the decorative arts but also expressed in painting, architecture, collecting, art education, museums and the printed page, with work produced ranging from unique objects fashioned for an exclusive elite to mass-produced goods and popular forms. The movement, which had its deepest roots in Great Britain, was in many ways a critique of previous modes of thought (and life) and sought to transform the arts, encouraging the artist-craftsman to respond to and express contemporary culture. When using the term, “aestheticism” I am referring to the variety of ways that literary and philosophical movements of the time period privileged beauty, art and taste over moral principles and utilitarian concerns. See Roger Stein’s “Artifact as Ideology: The Aesthetic Movement in Its American Cultural Context” and Jonathan Freedman “An Aestheticism of Our Own: American Writers and the Aesthetic Movement” in In Pursuit of Beauty: Americans and the Aesthetic Movement, eds. Doreen Bolger Burke et.al., (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art 1986.) 23,386.
Simon has noted, during the 1870s, the American art world encouraged a shift away from the optimism and “labored aesthetics” of antebellum landscape painting; upcoming artists were offering a more introspective approach to art, as scientific renderings and three-dimensional spaces gave way to atmospheric canvases that expressed “evocation, emotion, and subjective aspects of the artistic process itself.” While Gilder personally was also turning toward this more poetic type of painting, he, like other editors of periodicals during the time, continued to publish illustrations that adhered to established landscape conventions, responding to a nostalgia for the open lands of America that had been cleared and settled over the course of the previous decades. Even though most contemporary artists had abandoned these older formulas of naturalistic depiction, popular illustrators continued to employ them, feeding that desire for the lost wilderness and offering predictable landscapes filled with sublime visual metaphors.

In addition to responding to popular demand, Scribner's was also in its infancy in terms of its production of quality wood engravings. The nuanced murky atmospheres of contemporary artists were, at this point, difficult to accurately capture with the industry’s current technology in print, while these more conventional images, with their emphasis on clarity and directness, were easier to reproduce more faithfully. The chapter’s discussion of images which appeared in the early Scribner's issues establishes the magazine’s initial preference for both linearity and nostalgia in its illustrations; it also sets the stage to demonstrate over the course of the dissertation, how dramatically the periodical’s visual imagery changed in both style and subject matter as its public, aided

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5 Janice Simon, “Reenvisioning ‘This Well-Wooded Land,’ ” in Seeing High & Low, 143.
by improvements in technology and critical encouragement, slowly came to accept a more poetic, expressive aesthetic.

This reliance on conventional landscape imagery and Ruskinian philosophy is clear in both the artists who were highlighted in the initial issues as well as the images that were selected to illustrate major series in the magazine. Gilder recognized early on that among the group of possible illustrators, the ideal artist to incorporate the two in his illustrations was his childhood friend, Thomas Moran. He immediately endorsed Moran as *Scribner’s* most prominent artist, publishing his images throughout the periodical’s first ten volumes. Moran’s illustrations of the West, with their depictions of sunlight gleaming on tall peaks and deep crevasses, gave the landscape a sublime grandeur which captured the optimism and individualism not only of the region’s explorers, but also of the associations with the land itself by middle class readers back East. Confirming the visual sense that “God was in the landscape,” Moran’s pictures satisfied the Christian ideology of the senior editors. Further, they also responded to Gilder’s desire to offer his readership their first glimpse of these uncharted regions by providing extensive quality illustrations, publishing the images that they craved. Both men were young and ambitious and used each other’s abilities and position to effectively enhance their own reputations at critical junctures in their careers. The first of Gilder’s “selected artists,” Moran was introduced to western regions such as Yellowstone, Yosemite and the Grand Canon, their explorers and photographers through the efforts of *Scribner’s*; throughout his life Moran would maintain a strong professional association with these regions, a relationship which would continue long after his death. By providing Moran with continual exposure to the public through his illustrations as well the positive reviews of his paintings and personal
vignettes in editorial columns, *Scribner’s* essentially crafted his reputation in the early 1870s, such that its readers immediately associated Moran with many of the mythic qualities of his western landscapes.

The period of Moran’s popularity in *Scribner’s* also represents the highpoint of Gilder’s commitment to Ruskinian aesthetics and geo-piety in art criticism. As Joni Kinsey has pointed out in her seminal book on Moran, these concerns were central to his art, as he incorporated the scientific and religious ideology of explorers such as Ferdinand Hayden and John Wesley Powell, as well as many of the tenets of John Ruskin, into all of his images of the West. While much of Kinsey’s extensive research provides an important foundation for the chapter, and our work intersects on a variety of topics, my focus is on Moran’s illustrations and critical reviews in *Scribner’s* and what they can tell us about the periodical in its initial years. The dissertation differs from Kinsey and other scholars work in its use of Moran as a means to situate *Scribner’s* at the time of its inception and to examine the central problem of the chapter, how a periodical with an overriding Christian platform addressed the demand for visual imagery in America in the early 1870s.

*Scribner’s* early volumes, published between 1870 and 1875, provide a sense of its Christian agenda and how that agenda was translated into articles and images, while underscoring its commitment to “geo-pious” landscape imagery. In its analysis of those early series and their illustrations, the chapter sets the scene, allowing us to witness the

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6 Kinsey.
7 I use Stein’s term “geo-piety” to describe a sense of the Divine in nature. The term relates to certain Western survey leaders such as Hayden, King and Powell, whose scientific research was often employed as evidence to confirm the presence of God in the natural world. See Stein, (1967), 171 as well as the entire chapter, “Ruskin and the Scientists,” 157-185.
transformation of *Scribner’s* imagery, criticism and ideology during the later part of the 1870s.

**Holland’s agenda for *Scribner’s Monthly* at its Inception: “First and foremost a Christian Periodical”**

In order to more fully grasp the differing ideologies of Gilder and Holland and how they played out in the early issues, it is important to understand Holland’s mindset during the initial organization and publication of the periodical. Upon its founding in 1870, Holland assured his business partners as well as his public that, “first and foremost, *Scribner’s* was to be a ‘Christian periodical.’” A devout Protestant, novelist and evangelical lecturer, *Scribner’s* editor-in-chief was somewhat suspect of the visual arts; Holland focused his efforts on the literary aspects of the magazine, and used his monthly editorial column “Topics of the Time” to comment on events of the day, frequently proselytizing on the state of Christianity in a post Civil War society. Discussing the “Past and Future” of the periodical after its first year in print, Holland attributed its initial popularity to its commitment to Christian values:

*Scribner’s Monthly* is not a religious periodical in the ordinary sense of the term, but it has been and is thus controlled and it has become a great success. It has thriven and won hundreds of thousands of readers, not only by the ability and variety of its contents, but by its fidelity to the highest standard of truth and morality…The department will continue to be conducted with candor, independence and ability in treatment of current questions of morals and society, and in all matters of literature and art, they will represent fairly, intelligently and with spirited purpose, the interests of Christian truth and Christian culture in America and the world.8

In its initial volumes *Scribner’s* featured a variety of articles endorsing traditional religious practice in America. Indicative of the tone in these early years, the series

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8 “Past and Future,” *Scribner’s Monthly* 3 (November 1871) Publisher’s Department: 7.
“Modern Skepticism: What it is, and What it Signifies to Us,” published in 1873
condemned the widespread unsettlement of religious belief, particularly among the
“educated classes” while critically denouncing the ideas of modern skeptics such as
Froude, Renan, and Huxley, as well as Darwin and Spencer, and the impact of these
intellectuals on the decaying state of Christianity abroad.9 Stating that both scientists and
aesthetes had adopted a “positive belief in a religious faith hostile to Christianity,” the
article urged the American press to educate the public and challenge these anti-Christian
radicals.10 In his editorial on the series, Holland strongly encouraged readers to respond:
“we beg them, to read every word of this paper and they will there obtain a view of the
infidelity of the day which will give them food for reflection and suggestions for action.”
Holland, who had earlier proclaimed *Scribner’s* mission to be a “Christian power in
literature” used his editorial position to lead the fight against these skeptical infidels, to
“summon the whole Christian host to battle” in an effort to maintain the sanctity of the
Bible and traditional religious (Protestant) practice in America.11 In an 1874 editorial,
Holland defended the moral tone of his magazine as unique within the industry:

9 Augustus Blauvelt, “Modern Skepticism,” *Scribner’s Monthly* 6 (August, September
and October 1873): 424-432, 582-94, and 725-41. The series was probably written in
response to an international meeting of the Evangelical Alliance, convened in New York
in 1873, to discuss the progress theologians were making against the forces of religious
skepticism in America.
10 Ibid., 432.
Protestantism and its offshoots dominated the American religious landscape for most of
the nineteenth century, particularly between 1800 and 1875. Broadly defined it includes
Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Quakers, Unitarians, Methodists, and Baptists.
According to James Turner, “Forced to single out a religious tradition as the American
mainstream, one could point only to this one.” James Turner, *Without God, Without
Creed: The Origins of Unbelief in America* xv as well as the entire preface. (Baltimore:
we have reviewed the editorial notes of this magazine, and we find them pitched to a high tone of morality, and full of reverence and love for Christianity. If it is not always true in its theological utterances, always correct in its religious sentiments, always squarely up to our notion of Christian morality and taste, what other monthly of all the rest surpasses Scribner’s in these respects—nay, what one of them equals it? As for ourselves we thank God for the many qualities in Scribner’s Magazine that, in our opinion, make it to be the purest, safest and best of all these monthly periodicals which are seeking a welcome at family firesides.\textsuperscript{12}

Given this moral agenda for a family friendly periodical, Holland was suspicious of a variety of aesthetic topics and generally wary of the nation’s new interest in all things cultural. In an 1871 editorial entitled “Culture versus Religion,” Holland condemned current trends in the arts that led toward secularization in British society, and called for Americans to develop a “Christian culture, and culture that serves.”\textsuperscript{13} Initially, Holland did not fully endorse Gilder’s desire to educate \textit{Scribner’s} audience in issues regarding taste and current trends in the art world, viewing “culture” in its own right as a danger to the American people:

As culture comes in faith goes out...culture that ends in itself and its possessor is infidel in every tendency....constantly ripening culture has been a descending path to Paganism. God save us all from the influence of a culture as sad as this. Christianity must kill it or Christianity must die. It must kill Christianity or die. The event is not doubtful. Indeed the wants of the world are things that the devotees of culture ‘for its own sake’ are quite apt to despise, though they have not infrequently undertaken to tell the world what is good. Such blunders as they have made in the past prepare us to be surprised at nothing they may do in the future.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{12} “Topics of the Times,” \textit{Scribner’s Monthly} 7 (February 1874): 498.
\textsuperscript{13} “Culture versus Religion,” in “Topics of the Times,” \textit{Scribner’s Monthly} 3 (December, 1871): 370. For more on the concept of “culture” and its political, social and economic implications in late nineteenth century America see Alan Trachtenberg, \textit{The Incorporation of American}, Chapter 5.
\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Ibid.}
In these comments as well as many other editorial pieces, Holland echoed the Ruskinian concern that a particular type of “culture” would lead to a decadent America, just as similar conditions in England had given rise to the recent popularity of secular aestheticism among the British. Holland shared Ruskin’s preference for artistic styles that not only critiqued the excesses of contemporary consumer society and the luxuries of the Aesthetic Movement, but more importantly, that provided a visual representation of God as seen in the beauty of nature.

**An Uneasy Dialogue: The Conflicting Religious and Aesthetic Agendas of Holland and Gilder**

While Gilder personally was becoming quite intrigued with artists of the Aesthetic Movement who explored notions of “art for art’s sake,” and non-traditional modes of spirituality, he recognized the need to adhere to this “Christian culture” in the magazine itself. As a result, he sought out writers and illustrators who could express a more traditional religious worldview in their work. In terms of the periodical’s features on the American art world, as well as its illustrations for other series that appeared in the body of each issue, this adoption of the Ruskinian notion of “God in the landscape” was clear in the periodical’s early volumes. However, Gilder did use his influence in the smaller columns under his control, “The Old Cabinet” and “Culture and Progress,” to address current trends in aesthetic thought. These columns were generally two to three pages in length, un-illustrated and appeared at the end of each issue following the main editorial page. As such, a unique dialogue appeared in the early issues, which, while clearly emphasizing Christian values in subject matter and geo-pious imagery, also
allowed for a discussion of contemporary cultural topics. While Gilder did subtly
interject some of his ideas on aesthetics, he also worked assiduously to meet the various
requirements of the periodical, setting the tone in the series on the “New South” and the
Hudson River School artists in the very first issues between 1870 and 1873, as well as in
those on the western territories which continued to appear until 1875.

Aware of the rising interest in the American art world, as manifested by the
founding of various art institutions at the time, Gilder chose D.C. O’Downley to profile
the nation’s popular painters of the day. O’Downley wrote a conservative account of the
prominent members of the National Academy who were presented as the leading artists
in the nation. The three part series entitled “Living American Artists” was published in
the second and third volumes of the periodical and represented Scribner’s first attempt to
cover the arts in America in a feature story. In its celebration of the leading figures of
the NAD, such as Asher B. Durand, Daniel Huntington, William Page and Albert
Bierstadt, the article emphasized the importance of these established members in the
development of a national academy of the arts in America, but failed to provide any
specific discussion of the nature of these artists’ works, the grand landscape tradition in
American art, or the reasons behind their critical acclaim. In terms of images, the articles
included engraved portraits of the artists, but did not reproduce any of their paintings; the
focus of the series was entirely biographical and when images were mentioned the
emphasis was on a standard type of description over analysis. For example, in his
discussion of Albert Bierstadt, O’Downley proclaimed him to be the “leader among those
in American painting who gave expression on canvas to the great and the grand in

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nature;” frequently resorting to Burkian terminology, O’Downley described his paintings using terms such as “fear and majesty.” The author presented these grand landscape painters as the nation’s premier artists, in spite of recent trends in the contemporary American art world away from what Janice Simons calls the “optimism and labored aesthetics” of antebellum landscape painting that was associated with the group. The article supports Simons’ argument that while the detailed naturalism of these artists was being rejected in aesthetic circles, periodicals such as *Scribner’s* continued to promote the style in both the artists they featured as well as the type of imagery they reproduced.\textsuperscript{16}

The series was also representative of post Civil War art criticism in the American press, purely descriptive and biographical, a style of criticism that Gilder ultimately fought against and transformed over the course of the decade.\textsuperscript{17} As such, this full length series, one of the first to be devoted to American artists in a monthly periodical, set the scene for the early coverage of the nation’s artists in *Scribner’s*. Over the course of the dissertation, I will demonstrate how dramatically Gilder worked to change this type of narrative, biographical commentary in his development of a variety of “art literatures” in the periodical. The series also conveyed the tone of the early *Scribner’s* issues which focused on art that was imbued with intensely sublime themes of the divine in nature; it captured a moment in time, of pre-war artists in a post-war environment, whose critics and

\textsuperscript{16} Simons.

\textsuperscript{17} For more on this biographical, descriptive style of “straight forward reporting” in American art criticism during the period see David Dearinger, ed., *Rave Reviews: American Art and Its Critics, 1826-1925* (National Academy of Design: New York, 2000), particularly Margaret Conrads’ essay, “‘In the Midst of an Era of Revolution’: The New York Art Press and the Annual Exhibitions of the National Academy of Design in the 1870s,” 93-106.
readership were both poised to discover new styles of painting and new ways to write about them.

In terms of pure illustration for the magazine, a similar adherence to Ruskinian models of geo-piety was evident throughout the early issues, as images relying on standard devices, such as rainbows, cliffs, sunsets and shining peaks appeared throughout, particularly in *Scribner’s* first major series, “The Great South.” The periodical hired the author Edward King and artist J. Wells Champney to travel extensively throughout the southern states and to produce a twelve part, four hundred page, fully illustrated series that promoted the redevelopment of the South while recounting the history of its various regions.18 Although the series was clearly aimed at attracting southern readers, the regionalist articles had a strong romantic element, describing the simplicity of the pastoral South while appealing to nostalgic desires nationwide for the less complicated nature of antebellum life. Champney’s images, which were often reworked by other *Scribner’s* illustrators, including Thomas Moran, served to

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18 Edward King, “The Great South” *Scribner’s Monthly* 6 (June 1873): 257-284; 7 (November 1873-April 1874): 1-33, 129-160, 513-545, 645-674; 8 (May 1874-October 1874): 129-160, 257-284, 385-412, 513-535, 641-669: 9 (November 1874-April 1875): 1-31, 129-157). As Mark Noonan has argued, the editors of *Scribner’s* had a strong interest in pacifying sectional antagonisms in order to develop a nationwide audience and to project the image of a disparate yet unified nation, such that readers had a vision of the country marked by harmony, civility and progress. According to Noonan, King’s series, which was quite widely read, favored an immediate return to elite white home rule and economic regeneration through northern investment and industrial expansion that privileged capital over labor. His article discouraged reconstruction and reform movements. At the same time, however, *Scribner’s* was publishing regional fiction, such as George Washington Cable’s *The Grandissimes*, an account of New Orleans Creoles which encouraged the just treatment of former slaves, nonascriptive egalitarianism, a commitment to “free labor” and the promotion of shared civic ideals. Readers responded to King’s romantic vision of the south, which was reinforced by Champney’s images, over Cable’s un-illustrated, realistic one, and unfortunately, King’s vision became the reality until the Civil Rights movement almost one century later. Noonan, 62-3.
reinforce this nostalgia, with illustrations of the southern landscape that drew directly on sublime metaphors. For example, in “Frankfort, on the Kentucky River,” the image portrays the town in the manner of the grand landscape tradition, incorporating a requisite bluff that allows small human figures to look out over the scene; with its winding river and rainbow shining down on its church steeple, Frankfort, Kentucky could easily be mistaken for a small town on the Rhine (figure 1.5). In “Southern Mountain Rambles,” the illustration of “Lookout Mountain” in Tennessee draws directly from Cole’s iconic Oxbow of forty years earlier (figure 1.6). These types of sublime landscape images appealed to readers, who could easily understand their pictorial language, and appeared extensively throughout the periodical in the early 1870s.¹⁹

In spite of his larger promotion of a sublime aesthetic in the main body of the periodical at this time, one does witness Gilder’s attempt to introduce new artistic trends and ideas to his audience in the smaller, un-illustrated regular monthly columns found at the end of each issue. While the magazine was publishing its “lead-off” illustrated series on American artists, applauding the grand manner of the Hudson River School and other members from the National Academy in their detailed biographies, at the same time, in these smaller columns Gilder criticized the old guard and endorsed new styles of painting. Through these short monthly columns, Gilder began to disseminate his own platform, which focused more on aesthetic issues of taste and perception, than the national religious agenda of Holland. In the monthly column “Culture and Progress”

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¹⁹ I use the term “sublime” in its late-eighteenth-century context, interpreted largely in terms of Burke’s definition, as conveying fear and majesty and provoking intimations of infinity, Deity and the divine. For more on the notion of the sublime see Barbara Novak, “Sound and Silence: Changing Concepts of the Sublime” in Nature and Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 33-44.
Gilder published brief reviews of current exhibitions both local and abroad, subtly introducing more complex conceptual ideas about contemporary art practice. In the periodical’s first review of the annual NAD exhibition, the critic, tired of traditional grand landscapes, longed for more “figure-subjects.” Reviewing the Royal Academy show in London, the author explained in detail the differences between British academics and the work of Rossetti and Burne-Jones, identifying them as “the two most remarkable colorists and painters of ideal subjects England possesses,” while praising Whistler’s Wapping series; short articles on Ford Maddox Brown and Burne Jones further explored and explained the varying aims of the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood over the prior two decades.

Scribner’s covered trends in contemporary American art with a discussion of recent work by artists in Newport, followed up by a brief profile of William Morris Hunt, whose work was praised for its simplicity and its ability to “render life, to render nature.” In his “Old Cabinet” review of the NAD’s winter exhibition, Gilder attacked the banality of the “pictures here from leading men as well as from the rank and file - where can you find a single fresh idea? How much honest patient work or high and intelligent aim is there?” Scribner’s shorter monthly columns also introduced contemporary ideas on aesthetics, as Gilder sought to gradually expand the horizons of his readership while critiquing the old guard.

24 Gilder also used these small columns to discuss ideas on aesthetic philosophy that were fairly sophisticated for the average monthly periodical reader. For example, he published
Acutely aware of the lack of American interest and awareness in aesthetics, Gilder commented frequently in the early issues on the nation’s insecurity over cultural matters. In “Esthetics at a Premium” even Holland lamented the lack of artistic elements in American life, the result of a nation “too busy creating itself to devote time to such matters;” he described America as “raw,” a country where the “material overlies the spiritual” and the primary stimulus is “greed.”

Gilder clearly sought to address this void by enlightening his audience on cultural issues, and saw the instruction of his readership in the periodical’s short reviews and critiques as his personal mission. In the early days of *Scribner’s*, Gilder used these brief, un-illustrated monthly columns to introduce “aesthetic language” to a broad-based American audience, presenting to his readers specific ways to talk about art, to make particular judgments about what they were seeing, and to encourage a more sophisticated form of visual literacy. While the columns echoed the ideas and concerns of current art criticism found in many smaller publications, a review of “Taine’s Art Lectures” and explored the French theorist concept of “aesthetical science by experimental method.” Critical of Taine’s analytical attempt to trace and classify artistic phenomena, the reviewer argued for the “essential nature” of the artist as the impetus for creativity rather than the social, spiritual and intellectual condition of a community. In the same column the author explored the relation between science and art, raising questions over the nature of perception and the tension between “the real and the ideal” in painting. The review cited Turner’s paintings as the perfect expression of “the Ideal” with their light and color conveying no recognizable facts, but rather the essence of the object: “True art lies in the harmony and proportion between form, line and color used to express emotions excited by respective ideals; as such art is neither an imitation or an intellectual perception, but a successful expression of the object, excited by the artist as the Ideal.” Many of the ideas put forth are Ruskinian in their discussion of the imitation of nature and the depiction of its essential character. “Culture and Progress,” *Scribner’s Monthly* 2 (October 1871): 666-7. The discussion is representative of a critical movement in America that had begun to explore the relation between science and art in the 1870s. For more on this critical movement see Stein, (1967) and Jonathan Freedman, *Professions of Taste: Henry James, British Aestheticism and Commodity Culture* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1990), 85.

both at home and abroad, *Scribner’s* was unique among the popular monthlies in its early commitment to expose lesser-known contemporary artists and aesthetic theory to the public at large.

These small critical reviews and commentary on contemporary artists and aesthetic ideas promoted by Gilder suggest a more progressive view of the current state of the arts in America than that put forth in the premier series on the “Living Artists of America,” and in the standard form of illustration prevalent in the magazine at the time. Through this comparison one can also discern Gilder’s cultural program in these early years, seeking the ideal combination of traditional and contemporary, while adhering to Holland’s “Christian culture.” Given these initiatives, it is not surprising that Gilder turned to Moran, whose geo-pious images, with their adoption of romantic metaphors and Ruskinian precepts, provided the ideal aesthetic for *Scribner’s* during these early years. While proclaiming the older, established painters as the “leaders of American art,” on the front pages of its issues, and simultaneously discussing new aesthetic ideas in the back pages of its monthly critical pieces, *Scribner’s* promoted Moran throughout the publication, both in his illustrations of major full feature articles, and in critical reviews and discussions of his own paintings. Moran’s illustrations, which, in their depiction of sublime landscapes, did not deviate enormously from the earlier traditional artists’ work, presented an aesthetic which was clearly in line with Gilder’s desired Ruskinian approach. A relatively unknown artist, Moran’s illustrations appeared extensively throughout *Scribner’s* early issues. Gilder had found his first “new, popular artist” in Moran who would attract an expanding readership through his widely admired images of the West and address the various concerns of the editorial staff, while appealing to a large
American audience with his traditional grand landscapes. A close examination of Moran’s illustrations as well as the criticism of his paintings in *Scribner’s* reveals how his work mediated between the differing agendas of Holland and Gilder, serving moral and aesthetic purposes in both its style and content.

**Moran: Bridging the Gap Between Culture and Religion in Images of the West**

In an effort to differentiate his periodical from rival popular monthlies and to assemble a loyal audience early on, Gilder recognized and capitalized on the public’s current fascination with the West. This recently discovered landscape, which was considered neither “Northern” nor “Southern” but rather “American,” was currently being surveyed by four different government teams, all of which were vigorously mapping, cataloging and photographing these new uncharted lands. Aware of the uniqueness of the western terrain with its unprecedented variety of unusual botanical and geometric formations, Gilder saw in regions like Yellowstone, Yosemite and the Grand Canyon, a means by which to redirect American interest toward national attractions over their European counterparts. Gilder also realized that to make these articles on the West interesting and accessible to an eastern audience, he would have to include dramatic illustrations that not only documented these novel territories but also appealed to the viewer’s religious and romantic associations with the region.26 Aware that the collaboration between author and illustrator was essential to a successful reception,

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26 *Atlantic Monthly* had published the articles by Clarence King entitled “Mountaineering in the Sierra Nevada” but the text was not illustrated and failed to make a significant “splash” with the public. “Mountaineering in the Sierra Nevada,” *Atlantic Monthly* 27(May 1871): 602-613; (June 1871): 714-715; 28 (July 1871): 64-76; (August 1871): 207-215.
Gilder looked to Moran to achieve that level of sophistication in illustration, to bring unknown landscapes to life and to capture the public’s imagination with the West, while conveying the notion that Americans were fulfilling God’s promise in its settlement. *Scribner’s* was the first monthly magazine to fully grasp the commercial potential of the subject matter and Gilder recognized in Moran’s work the capacity for his illustrations to become, in the minds of Americans, closely identified with the regions themselves. Moran’s initial involvement with Yellowstone began with an assignment from Gilder, and he quickly became the recognized illustrator for original images of the West in the periodical; *Scribner’s* early articles on Yellowstone, with their elaborate images and tales of adventure, significantly contributed to the rapidly growing popularity of the periodical.

The close friendship between Moran and Gilder dated back to their boyhood years. Gilder grew up in Bordentown, New Jersey, not far from Moran who later settled with his family in Philadelphia, and the two had kept in touch with each other in the 1860s, with Gilder frequently visiting Moran’s home.27 When Gilder moved to Newark in 1868 he remained close with Moran and contacted him when planning the initial layout of *Scribner’s*, discussing his intention to incorporate fine quality engravings in the earliest issues; although Moran was little known at that time as either a painter or an illustrator, Gilder included his images in the opening number.28 Recognizing Moran’s talents early on, Gilder, in one of his first columns of “The Old Cabinet,” provided an

27 Wilkins, 75.
28 An illustration of Moran’s on the “Bottom of the Sea” was included in the very first issue and, at Gilder’s request, Moran contributed a number of drawings to an article on Fairmont Part. *Scribner’s Monthly* 1(January 1871): 227-237. Also included in the issue was an illustration by Moran for a poem called “Northern Lights” (310) which depicted a towering mass of ice illuminated by the aurora borealis.
unusual endorsement for this emerging artist during a time in the popular press when magazine illustrators were not credited for their work and rarely named in print:

A Portfolio full of pictures lies here on the desk of the Old Cabinet…Calame, Achenbach, Turner, Dore, Vedder, Blake – each has been suggested by a different sketch. But after you have become familiar with his work, you will see the artist’s strong individuality shining through in all the pictures of Thomas Moran. Diversity of style and touch he surely has, for here you behold almost equal mastership with pencil, brush and etching needle, - ink, water-color, oil; unsurpassed brilliancy in effect; seldom equaled intelligence and delicacy in detail. He knows the language of the rocks, the curving pathway of the branch out toward the light, the sky’s every trick of cloud and color. Not only is he, like Turner, a seer of visions, but loving intercourse has made familiar to him all the ways of the visible creation.29

In introducing Moran to his audience and praising him as an early Turner, Gilder adopted Ruskin’s terminology as well as his belief in the religious aspect of landscape painting to affirm the talent of Scribner’s newly featured artist. For Gilder in the early 1870s, Moran proved to be the ideal bridge between aesthetics and Christian values.

*Scribner’s Introduces Moran to Yellowstone: Ruskinian Models in the Creation of the “American Alps”*

In early 1871 Gilder asked Moran to rework the rough sketches of two unofficial explorers who had just returned from the West and had offered him a story on “The Wonders of the Yellowstone.” Gilder planned to introduce the magazine’s second volume with the first installment, which would include Moran’s reworked illustrations.30 The timing was perfect for both Moran and Gilder, as no extensive studies of the region had been published, and no drawings or photographs had yet been produced to give a proper description of Yellowstone; as such, the periodical was able to not only document but also control the presentation of a newly discovered landscape. The two part series, a tale

of action, danger and adventure, was written by Nathanial Langford, one of the early explorers, and had wide appeal, immediately distinguishing *Scribner’s* from its peers. The strange peculiarity of that landscape caused the public to become enamored with the region and Moran’s revised images depicted Yellowstone’s unique geological attractions in visual terms that it could understand and appreciate. Moran, however, had actually never seen Yellowstone, and, in reworking the explorers’ sketches, he relied more on standard patterns of romantic landscape scenes and Ruskinian aesthetics than he did on their original drawings or the text. In the images from the first article of the series, such as “Rock Pinnacles Above Tower Falls,” and “Tower Falls, on Tower Creek, Wyoming” one can witness Moran developing an awareness of the novelty of the West while using stylistic conventions to convey the region’s intersection of man and nature in the landscape (figure 1.7 and 1.8).

Illustrations, such as “Lower Falls of the Yellowstone, Wyoming: (350 Feet in Height.),” and “Upper Falls of the Yellowstone, Wyoming” (figure 1.9 and 1.10) reveal how Moran incorporated a number of Ruskinian visual metaphors to capture the awe-inspiring immensity of a region he had yet to experience; in these illustrations he also introduced many of the preconceived forms which would later appear in his large oil *The Grand Canôn of the Yellowstone* of 1872, painted upon his return from his first visit to the region (figure 1.11). Paradoxically, while *Scribner’s* was promoting the uniqueness of the area, I would argue that the images appealed to a large extent to an American

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31 In her chapter “Landscape as Metaphor,” Kinsey offers a detailed discussion of these preconceived types, such as “the arch,” “the rainbow,” “the tower,” “the tree,” and “the rock.” Kinsey, 20-40.
audience because of their associations with that grand landscape tradition and the authority of Ruskin’s writings.

In terms of his images of specific geological phenomena, it appears that Moran was forced to base his illustrations on the crude sketches made by the explorers, as he truly had no idea what geysers, hot springs and mudbaths actually looked like. The need to realistically convey these phenomenon in images such as “The Beehive,” “Crater of the Castle Geyser,” “The Grotto Geyser,” and “Crater of the Giant Geyser,” (see figures 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4), led Moran to prioritize descriptive detail and scale over a larger impression of the landscape; the drawings suggest a frustration on the part of Moran for being unable to consistently convey a sense of that higher order throughout the articles. These illustrations were less successful with the public as, in their lack of standard visual metaphors and conventional framing devices, they did not participate in the romantic landscape tradition in the same convincing manner as the larger views of canons and waterfalls. As noted above, some readers, in response to these images, accused *Scribner’s* of not holding to their moral standard to “honestly report the truth,” and attacked *Scribner’s* for “telling outlandish tales” reminding the editors of their “promise to maintain an ethical and moral tone.”32 While these images truly captured the “weirdness” of Yellowstone, they also conveyed no type of moral or uplifting message. Reacting to the public criticism of these pictures, Gilder recognized the need for a professional artist such as Moran to view these natural wonders in person and translate them into an artistic language that could be fully appreciated and accepted by a

32 Wilkins, 79.
readership looking for more conventional images that conveyed some type of spiritual message.

In the spring of 1871 Gilder arranged and financed the trip for Moran to join Ferdinand V. Hayden in his official survey of Yellowstone. Moran was to supply *Scribner’s* with illustrations for an article that Gilder had asked Hayden to write about his discoveries. Eager to take advantage of the public interest generated by the periodical to promote further exploration of the region, Hayden agreed and used the article as a platform to discuss not only the scientific aspects of the region but also to celebrate the wonder, power and beauty of God’s creation. Extensively illustrated by Moran, Hayden’s article on “The Wonders of the West – II. More about the Yellowstone,” appeared in the February issue of 1872, and in both its text and image appealed to Gilder’s agenda and Holland’s ideology. A comparison of Moran’s work for the Hayden article with his earlier illustrations for the Langford piece clearly supports Gilder’s decision to send him to Yellowstone. Now able to witness the phenomena of geysers, hot springs and mud volcanoes first hand, Moran presented a far more stylized impression of these novelties in images such as “Great Hot Springs at Gardiner’s River,” and “Ruins of Hot Springs and Geysers” (figures 1.12 and 1.13). Here human figures are incorporated in a more naturalistic fashion, and while still providing a sense of scale, the illustrations also convey the sensation of encounter and wandering through the landscape, offering a more conventional means of entry into the image. The earlier reliance on more

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33 Like many of the leaders of the Great Survey projects, including Clarence Cook and John W. Powell, Hayden saw Nature and the Divine as closely interrelated. For more on the subject see Roger Stein (1967) particularly his chapter on “Ruskin and the Scientists,” 158-185.

Romantic sublime techniques is now combined with a greater awareness of the actual topography, due in part to Moran’s close interaction with W.H. Jackson, the survey’s photographer. Illustrations such as “Great Spring Fire-Hole Basin” reflect the impact of Jackson’s work on Moran’s images of Yellowstone, as they combine scientific information with aesthetic style and a sense of geo-piety (figure 1.14 and 1.15).  

In a comparison of “The Great Cañon and Lower Falls of the Yellowstone,” the sweeping image of Yellowstone which opened the Hayden piece (figure 1.16), with earlier attempts to convey a panoramic view of the region from the first article (see figures 1.9 and 1.10, “Lower Falls of the Yellowstone, Wyoming: (350 Feet in Height.),” and “Upper Falls of the Yellowstone, Wyoming”), it is clear that Moran had acquired a new command of the landscape through personal witnessing and direct visual experience. In the illustration of the “Great Cañon,” Moran was able to select the ideal location from which to convey the notion of the “divine in the landscape,” depicting an actual site and embellishing it artistically with the Ruskinian tropes of the previous illustrations, to give a more panoptic view of the region not previously available from those images. Moran also actively makes use of light in this engraving; the earlier illustrations conveyed the idea of light through diagonal lines spaced farther apart, while the later images boldly

35 Although W.H. Jackson’s efforts were essential to both Hayden and Moran, he is never acknowledged in the article. Moran, recognizing this omission, sought to right the wrong in an additional article on Yellowstone that appeared in Scribner’s in 1873. In Nathaniel Langford’s piece on “The Ascent of Mount Hayden: A New Chapter in Western Discovery,” Scribner’s Monthly 4 (June 1873):129-57 (discussed below), Moran, aware of his power in selecting particular scenes, choose to include an substantial illustration of Jackson in the act of photographing, which was actually copied from the stereoscopic image taken while Jackson was shooting the Tetons for the Survey in 1872. “Photographing in High Places” depicts the challenges and struggles of the photographer in the West and, in this tribute, Moran conveyed his respect for Jackson as an heroic artist of the survey. Given the illustration, Langford included a brief paragraph on Jackson in the article, the sole mention of the photographer in all of the articles on Yellowstone.
used large patches of pure white created by an absence of line, to convey the bright sunlight reflecting off the waterfall and the river below it, as well as on the towers that visually frame that central motif in the landscape. This bold use of light also translated more dramatically onto the printed page, immediately attracting the viewer’s eye to the center of the scene. Unlike the cruder, isolated pictures of the geysers (see figures 1.1-1.4), in the second series of images, Moran’s sophisticated use of light and framing devices demonstrated a concentrated effort on his part to show any type of unique formations, such as hot springs and fire holes (see figures 1.12 and 1.15), within the context of the larger landscapes; these illustrations worked to combine the bizarre and otherworldly with a sense of naturalistic grandeur that appealed to readers, inviting them to visually explore the pictures and to become enamored with the region in the process.

Through these illustrations, both *Scribner’s* and Moran played vital roles in Hayden’s project, effectively transforming Americans’ conception of Yellowstone, and securing its designation as a national park just one month after the article’s publication. In these images, *Scribner’s* provided a vocabulary for describing the area, a means of viewing these natural wonders, and a way of attaching national and religious significance to a place unseen by most Americans who now adopted it as their own. In the Yellowstone articles, Gilder sought to create his own American version of Europe’s Alps and Gothic cathedrals, encouraging the public to experience the beauty of nature in a national landscape described and presented in Ruskinian fashion while celebrating God’s creation.

Recognized as the exclusive publisher of articles and images of Yellowstone, *Scribner’s* capitalized on the national interest in the park, which the magazine itself had
clearly helped to foster. The public’s ongoing fascination with the region and the Western territories was important to Gilder, as testified to not only by the additional articles which appeared in the periodical going forward, but also by Gilder’s strong promotion and endorsement of Moran as the artist of the West. As such, Gilder had a vested interest in the continued popularity of Moran’s images of the region, particularly his large oil painting that represented the culmination of his work at Yellowstone.

Those *Scribner’s* readers who saw Moran’s completed oil painting, *The Grand Canôn of the Yellowstone*, would have recognized its close resemblance to the opening illustration of the Hayden article in February 1872, which became the basis for the completed oil painting (see figure 1.11 and 1.16). After the appearance of the monumental picture, Gilder provided unprecedented coverage in “The Old Cabinet” column; describing, in great detail, the development of the work from early sketches to the final canvas, Gilder created a type of media “hype” that, at the time, was quite unusual. In the column he did not speak of the painting or the artist by name, but using religious imagery, likened its progress to that of “the successive ages of world creation – from darkness to the word Good,” piquing interest in this “mystery child of a canvas” soon to be available to the viewing public.36 This unprecedented coverage and promotion

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36Gilder’s account in his June 1872 column describes the development of the painting from its inception:
“...I knew the artist was going to paint a big picture, but I didn’t know how big it would be. It was not begun till he had been back from his summer rambles many months….. Watching the picture grow was like keeping one’s eye open during the successive ages of world creation – from darkness to the word Good. The outline was thrown upon the bare canvas in a single day. Afterward great streaks of, to me, meaningless color flashed hither and thither. I saw only hopeless chaos. Then blue sky appeared; by and by, delicate indications of cloud, mist, mountain, rock and tree crept down the canvas, slowly gathering body and tone; till at last the artist’s full, glorious Idea shone perfect in every part.
for an artist by a member of the publishing industry marks a substantial cultural shift, as even less than a decade earlier artists who sought exposure to the public had to be self-publicizing entrepreneurs. Further encouraging publicity for Moran’s painting, *Scribner’s* underwrote and advertised the unveiling of *The Grand Canôn of the Yellowstone* at Clinton Hall in New York City. Gilder, acting as master of ceremonies, invited the city’s prominent editors, publishers and others involved in the media and culture industries, along with officials from the Northern Pacific Railroad who had also helped to fund the project to attend a type of opening night. Requesting his presence at the event, Gilder wrote to Hayden:

> We have engaged Clinton Hall (Leavitt’s Room, Astor Place, Mercantile Library Building) for Thursday evening, May 2nd. You *must* be here. The Northern Central people, the press-the literati, the artists – the rich people- will all be out in full force- we want to make a big strike! And we want you to answer questions and be one of the heroes of the night! Why not bring your wife and make a grand spree of it! Write to me and say yes!

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I believe I have had almost as much worry and pleasure over it as the painter himself, although I put brush to it but once. My figure had a vast deal of action, he said, yet, on the whole, he thought it would look better the other side of a pine-tree. I take satisfaction in knowing it’s there, even if nobody can see it… I dropped in last evening just about dusk. A shadowy glow from the western window half illumined the big canvas. ‘Well, how comes on the baby?’ I said. ‘Oh, She’s behaved like a lady to-day. I guess we’ll carry her out to-morrow.’ And so we talked on about the picture in a low tone of voice, as if it were a child lying asleep there in the twilight.

Tomorrow the critics and the public will come rustling and gossiping about it. I know what some of the critics will do. Because it is a new departure in art; because it is something altogether fresh and daring – they won’t stand for that sort of thing. They will “pitch in!” They will prove that the noble fellow’s great-great uncle on his mother’s side was hung for horse-stealing some time in the latter part of the last century.” “The Old Cabinet,” *Scribner’s Monthly* 4 (June 1872): 242.

37 The most obvious example of this is Frederic Church’s marketing efforts in his public exhibition in 1859 of *The Heart of the Andes*, which toured in both America and England. For more on Church’s self-promotion see Kevin Avery, *Church’s Great Picture: the Heart of the Andes*. Exhibition catalogue (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1993).

38 April 27, 1872, National Archives, Richard Watson Gilder 57,mfm.623, roll 2, frame 540 quoted in Kinsey, 64.
Providing additional publicity for the work, Hayden attended, at both Moran’s and Gilder’s behest, in order to verify the accuracy of the geology and to dispel any questions regarding the veracity of the landscape’s vivid color or unworldly rock formations. No periodical had ever promoted a single artist with such intensity; Gilder had quickly become an expert at public relations.

Not surprisingly, *Scribner’s* featured the work in its “Culture and Progress” column, using moralistic language and continuously referencing Ruskinian principles to laud “the most remarkable work of art which has been exhibited in this country for a long time,” noting that, “the interesting region which forms the theme of the painting has been minutely described in our columns.” The review praised the painting’s “most fantastic groups of wild and beautiful bluffs, buttresses and pinnacles, all bearing more or less resemblance to human architecture,” as well as the “mass of luminous color – any skepticism as to which must give way before the distinct assertion of Prof. Hayden that the painting is, in this regard, as also in its definition of geologic forms strictly true to nature.” Moran was hailed for attaining the highest achievement in painting, in his ability to capture the impression of Yellowstone while accurately perceiving and depicting the region in detail:

> [Moran] not only understands the methods of art but the processes and work of nature, so far as the faithful interpreter of natural scenery must know them. In all the rush of enthusiasm and glow of artistic power, he seems never to forget the faithful manipulation by which absolute truth is caught and fixed in the splendor of picturesque art. It is noble to paint a glorious and inspiring poem; it is satisfying to render nature with firm mastery of technical detail. In ‘The Grand Canôn of the Yellowstone’ Mr. Moran has done both.39

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Tenets regarding morality in art and truthfulness to nature were highlighted in the review, which presented Moran as the noble perceptive artist guided by his imagination as he portrayed the essence of the scenery while providing an accurate view of the landscape. The painting itself was conducive to a Ruskinian critique, as an image that encouraged a dialogue on the intimate connection between nature and God. The inclusion of Hayden’s comments confirming the accuracy of the work underscored the compatibility of art and science, the idea that scientific knowledge could be useful to the artist.

This discussion of The Grand Canon of the Yellowstone represented the first time that specific works of art were highlighted and given individual reviews in Scribner’s; the “Culture and Progress” column also negatively critiqued Turner’s Slave Ship, which was currently on view in New York, while praising Frederick Church’s most recent work, The Parthenon (figures 1.17 and 1.18). Here one witnesses Gilder’s introduction of more sophisticated art criticism; while attention to subject matter and a preference for that which evokes “God in the landscape” remained, the reviewer discussed these paintings in aesthetic and critical language as he instructed the reader how to fully appreciate and perceive these works. In spite of Ruskin’s unadulterated love of Turner, as well as the artist’s recognition in America through the publication of Modern Painters, his deviation from standards of adherence to detail in The Slave Ship was considered “disturbing.” The reviewer clearly adopted Ruskin’s insistence on veracity in painting, and, in all likelihood, had only seen Turner’s earlier work through engravings and reproductions; as such, the review reflects both a critic and an audience who were familiar with a tighter,
more tonal Turner than the later paintings suggested.\textsuperscript{40} “Truthful” views such as those by Church and Moran adhered to accepted conventions which were more in tune with the critic and the viewing public’s notion of great works of art, and therefore more acceptable in their eyes. As such, Moran, in his commitment to veracity and “reality” is promoted as the painter of the moment, with “no single rival in American landscape art,” quite an endorsement for an artist who had been relatively unknown two years earlier. Proclaimed by \textit{Scribner’s} as a national icon, \textit{The Grand Canôn of the Yellowstone}, was sold to the United States government shortly after the publication of the review and put on display in the nation’s Capitol Rotunda.

Aware of the popularity of the Yellowstone articles and the vital role Moran had played both as the primary illustrator of these pieces and as the mediator of various agendas within the \textit{Scribner’s} editorial staff, Gilder ensured that Moran’s western images appeared continuously in the pages of \textit{Scribner’s} during its early years. Moran’s illustrations were the basis for additional articles on the Tetons as well as Yosemite National Park; although Moran had not witnessed many of the particular sites, Gilder worked constantly to keep his illustrations in the public eye. Isaac Bromley’s article “The Big Trees and the Yosemite: The Wonders of the West” which appeared in the January 1872 issue included Moran’s illustrations of “The Bridal Veil Fall,” “Cathedral Rocks,” “Mirror Lake; Watkins and Clouds’ Rest,” and “El Capitan: 3,300 Feet High” (figure 1.19), all of which were based on the photographs of Carlton Watkins. This unaccredited

appropriation further testifies to the fact that, while essential to an artist like Moran, survey photographers and their aesthetic role in the illustration process were never acknowledged by *Scribner's* or any other major periodical.\(^4\)

Keeping its name in the press and further assuring its iconic status, additional articles on the West often referred to *The Grand Canôn of Yellowstone*. In his piece on the Tetons, author Nathanial Langford noted upon visiting the site, “that unique and wonderful piece of scenery, so new and original in its attractions on my last visit, has since been made familiar to thousands by the graphic pencil of Thomas Moran.” In the article Langford wrote of the proposal by the party to make Moran an honorary member given his participation in the survey to date and his “strong claim to its recognition [through his] painting of the remarkable picture, now adorning the walls of the Capitol of ‘The Great Canôn of the Yellowstone’ – a painting not less meritorious as a work of art, than as a most accurate delineation of one of the grandest pieces of scenery in the world.”\(^5\) The article also described the ascent of the party to the summit of the Grand Teton, which the group chose to name “Mount Hayden.” While editing the article, Gilder suggested to Hayden that the other major peak that looked out over Jackson Lake be called “Mount Moran,” and quickly proceeded with the publication of the article announcing the official names of the twin peaks. With a clear disregard for any earlier

\(^4\) Isaac Bromley, “The Big Trees and the Yosemite: The Wonders of the West,” *Scribner's Monthly* 3 (January 1872):261-76. Moran probably completed these illustrations upon his return from the Hayden survey, whose article was published the following month.

names of these sacred peaks, Gilder, in his honorific naming, sought to further
immortalize his leading illustrator with the region he had become so closely associated.\textsuperscript{43}

*Scribner’s* support of Moran’s paintings continued unabated, with a review
praising his 1873 watercolor drawings for their idealized yet accurate depictions of the
natural landscape. Apologizing for the poor state of American art, the reviewer applauds Moran for his “simplicity” and “his poetic voice:”

To say that these drawings are the most brilliant and poetic pictures that have been done in America thus far, is unfortunately not to say much; because our work in landscape to the present time has been plain prose; anything, in short but poetry. But Mr. Moran’s water-colors show a strong man rejoicing to run a race… we think that the wild western desert has found in [Moran] a most faithful, most poetic voice.\textsuperscript{44}

Moran is credited for his artistic realism, his truth to nature, and his “audacity” in
faithfully painting Yellowstone in all of its “weirdness.” The reviewer’s emphasis on simplicity, veracity and truth ties him to the art-writing circles of the time in America, as he used a contemporary critical language to evaluate Moran’s watercolors as “quality” landscape paintings. The review served to keep Moran in the forefront of the American

\textsuperscript{43} Moran included an illustration in the Langford article of the two peaks derived from a Jackson photograph, entitled “Mount Hayden and Mount Moran from the West.” (143). Hayden actually changed his mind about the title of the mountain in favor of Mount Leidy, but Gilder convinced him not to make the switch, and immediately published the article. While “Mount Hayden” did not endure, “Mount Moran” remains the name of the largest peak in the Tetons; shortly afterwards a bay, a canyon and a town in the vicinity would also bear Moran’s name. (Wilkins, 73) In his declaration of the site as Mount Moran, Gilder participates in the larger “east coast imperialism” of the period, in which many of the earlier Native American names of sacred places in the West were disregarded in order to link them with well known figures of the time. Through these acts of renaming and reclaiming, many of these sites would become tourist attractions, losing their original spiritual associations. For more information on naming and claiming natural wonders in America see Cecelia Tichi, *Embodiment of a Nation: Human Form in American Places* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

\textsuperscript{44} “Culture and Progress,” in *Scribner’s Monthly* 5 (January 1873): 394.
art world, and did so in terms that adhered to Gilder’s call for more sophisticated critical writing.

Well-known in artistic circles and soon to be one of Gilder’s main contributors, the critic Clarence Cook’s first publication in *Scribner’s* was an article describing “Art at the Capitol,” that appeared shortly after the sale of Moran’s painting to the United States.⁴⁵ The former editor of *The New Path*, which had endorsed Ruskinian aesthetics and supported the American Pre-Raphaelite movement, Cook was characteristically critical of the classical architecture of the building itself as well as most of the artwork it contained.⁴⁶ However, Cook concluded his derogatory article with a sense of hope from the government’s recent acquisition of *The Canôn of the Yellowstone*. “one of the first evidences of a change of heart is the purchase outright of a good picture painted by an artist almost unknown.”⁴⁷ This was high praise coming from a seasoned critic like Cook, who would, however, become an increasingly harsh opponent of Moran later in the decade.⁴⁸ But during the early 1870s, Moran’s work was highly acclaimed with extremely positive support from the writers, critics and editors of *Scribner’s*, who

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⁴⁶ Cook, in his typically caustic style, lamented the design of the capital “it’s so big, and so white!” poking fun at the ignorant American unaware of architectural design or aesthetic sensibility while criticizing the dome’s “lack of structural relation to the building proper – it is an ugly excrescence, ugly in its lines, ugly in its disproportion.” Cook went on to state that “most of the ‘art’ that is in and about the Capitol has been commanded and produced in the same spirit that built this iron dome.” He deplored Trumbull’s *Declaration of Independence* – “he worked better in miniature”, Vanderlyn’s *Landing of Columbus* - “not a work of any value” and Powell’s *DeSoto* -“a thoroughly worthless piece of mendacity.” 495-99.
⁴⁸ Ten years later, Cook described Moran’s watercolors as “ghastly in their relentless record of Nature’s most incredible moments, unmitigated by the interference of the muse” Cook, *Tribune* Feb. 20, 1882, 5.
consistently publicized his western scenes as the ideal type of contemporary landscape painting.

**Moran, Powell and the Grand Canyon in Scribner’s: Geo-Piety reaches its Peak**

With the strong success of the “Wonders of the West” articles, Gilder remained watchful for additional opportunities in these unexplored regions, and found his next major publishing coup in John Wesley Powell’s plan to survey the Grand Canyon. Aware of the power of Moran’s illustrations and the impact they might have on his exploratory work in the Southwestern territories, Powell asked the artist to join his survey team in their exploration and mapping of the Colorado River shortly after the publication of the Yellowstone articles. Moran contacted Powell and made arrangements to meet the expedition in Salt Lake, from which he traveled along the Colorado River through Utah and Arizona. While Moran did not actually run the river, he did make excursions along the plateaus that overlooked the canyons and many of his illustrations were derived from these towering points of view; during this trip he also devised the design for his next major painting, *The Chasm of the Colorado*.  

Like Hayden, Powell purchased Moran’s illustrations for his survey report with funds from Gilder, who paid him to write a series on his explorations of the region for *Scribner’s* that would also include Moran’s images. The result was five lengthy articles that appeared over the course of 1875 that recounted his various excursions.  

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49 As in Moran’s earlier experience, he worked closely with the survey photographer Jack Hilliers, who had actually made the trip on the river itself in 1871; Moran would rely on Hilliers’ photographs for many of his drawings of the depths of the canons as well as for aspects of the larger oil painting.

same year, the articles combined scientific information and tales of heroic adventure that he had amassed during numerous trips to the region, including the expedition that Moran joined him on in 1873. Looking to Hayden as a model, Powell used these elaborately illustrated articles to promote his ideas regarding geological, hydrological and ethnological issues, many of which were vital to the understanding, settlement and civilization of the Southwestern United States.\(^{51}\)

These articles were written and published well after the completion in April 1874 of Moran’s second major canvas, *The Chasm of the Colorado*, which he began working on in October of 1873 shortly after his return from the territory (figure 1.20). The painting was displayed in New York for an evening in Leavitt’s Art Rooms before it was moved to the Knoedler gallery and ultimately settled in the Corcoran Gallery in Washington where it was purchased by the US government in July 1874. However, Moran’s second iconic painting of the West did not receive the rave reviews of its predecessor, as many critics, extremely disappointed with *The Chasm*, voiced their opinions. Representative of the widely negative response, Cook, whose review appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly*, saw no redeemable features in a painting whose focus was the mimetic representation of geological formations or the sublime power of God in the landscape. Critical of the work for its lack of imaginative impression, and the chaos and desolation of its tumultuous landscape, Cook also condemned Moran’s use of

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394-409; (March 1875): 523-37. These articles detailed Powell’s trip down the river in 1869; the “Overland Trip to the Grand Cañon,” *Scribner’s Monthly* 10 (October 1875): 659-78, also discussed part of the 1869 trip and “The Ancient Province of Tusayan,” *Scribner’s Monthly* 11 (December 1875):193-213, which recounted his experiences during his 1870 excursion.

51 For more on the Powell expedition see Kinsey, Chapter 6: 95-137.
conventional mannerisms. Heralding a new movement among younger critics as well as the general direction in which *Scribner's* would shortly follow, Cook stated his “weariness of sensation” and hailed instead the simplicity and poetic nature of John La Farge’s landscapes.

The *Scribner's* review acknowledged the general negative response and attempted to address critical concerns while still supporting its premier artist. The article began by encouraging the viewer to give himself over to the unsettling, sublime encounter with the work:

> Down in the awful chasms that gape before you are rumbling the swift currents of unseen streams. From their black waves arise these pale blue mists that creep and creep up the rocky walls, half hiding the crags, and starching out their ghostly hands to lay hold on the iron ribs of the monstrous forms. All is terrible, fantastic and weird. And though the marvelous faithfulness of detail attests the photographic accuracy of the picture, one must be smitten with a sudden incredulity as to the actual existence of the scene; it may have been the grotesque glimpse of a dream!

While the review did point out the “challenges” facing the viewer in front of this disturbing and discomfiting painting, Gilder was surely not going to allow a major work by his most popular illustrator to be dismissed for its “chaos and tumult.” Ultimately the reviewer commended Moran for incorporating notions of the divine and redemption into an image that, at the same time, was scientifically correct:

> This is geology and topography. That it is also bold to audacity, is apparent from what has been already said.. As nothing done in the name of Art and with a true and reverential feeling for Nature is ever wasted, we may account this picture a real and notable acquisition...In its treatment, handling and management of color,

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53 Of La Farge, Cook wrote, “He displays a kind of Oriental contentment with a few beautiful, sensuous impressions, delighting to accumulate appreciation of their simple satisfactoriness...it is a result of his intense sensitiveness to visual beauty.” *Ibid.*, 379.
that is even more satisfactory than the first, and, like that, it grows in power on the beholder, haunting his memory like the solemn music of a psalm.\(^55\) Kinsey has noted the extensive use of “Revelation terminology” in many of the Chasm reviews;\(^56\) I would add that the language used here is thoroughly in keeping with the more Christian overtones of Scribner’s at that time. References to the awful sublime power of God in the landscape resonate here, as they do in the painting itself as well as Moran’s illustrations for the upcoming Powell articles. The review responded to the varying agendas of the Scribner’s editors, addressing Holland’s concerns with a reading that linked Moran to a Christian message while simultaneously describing a sublime aesthetic experience as encouraged by Gilder.

The culmination of his work at Scribner’s, Moran’s illustrations of the Powell expedition in the Grand Canyon represent the climax of his career at the periodical. Even more so than the images drawn for the Yellowstone pieces, Moran’s pictures are filled with spiritual light and convey a moral message. Upon seeing them, Gilder immediately recognized the opportunity to take illustration to another level in Scribner’s, as the images had a more pronounced sublimity and wonder than anything that had been previously published in the magazine or in any other popular monthly.\(^57\) In keeping with the biblical language of the Scribner’s review, Moran’s illustrations exude a sense of the divine, filling each page with grand vistas, endless horizons and ebullient cloud formations. As evidenced in pictures such as “The Grand Chasm of the Colorado,” his

\(^{55}\) Ibid., 374.
\(^{56}\) Kinsey, 113-4.
\(^{57}\) Gilder wrote to Powell, “We are very desirous to make a splendid show with these articles and to this end would like to lead off in the January no. with them… The engravings are stunning! Moran has done his best.” Gilder to Powell, September 12, 1874, National Archives, RG 57, mfm.156, roll 2, frames 190-192. Quoted in Kinsey, 125.
illustrations are much more expansive than their Yellowstone counterparts, with Moran attempting to capture the drama of the landscape in each image, devoting more space to the sky with operatic sunsets and wide panoramic views (figure 1.21).

Gilder successfully convinced Powell to write an account of his travels for *Scribner's* that would not only tell the tale of his journey, but also provide a vehicle for the Moran illustrations. The *Scribner's* series was the first published narrative of Powell’s expedition as well as his first attempt to recount his heroic adventure. Reading an advanced copy of the piece before its publication in January of 1875, Moran wrote to Powell and urged him to make the account more emotional, more dramatic:

> One element that is always telling and interesting in connection with adventure and that is the expression of the impression and feelings under trying or unusual circumstances. You do not once (if I recollect aright) give sensations even in the most dangerous passages, nor even hint at the terrible and sublime feelings that are stirred within one as he feels himself in the stony jaws of the monstrous chasm. It seems to me that the expression of these impressions and thought tend to realize to the reader the descriptions and are almost as necessary as the descriptions themselves. I know that you will forgive this plain criticism because you know I wish your articles to have the greatest success.\(^{58}\)

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\(^{58}\) Moran to Powell, December 19, 1874. National Archives, RG 57, mfm. 156 roll w, frame 174, quoted in Kinsey, 128. It should be noted that Powell did make a number of changes in his final book, *The Exploration of the Colorado River of the West and Its Tributaries*, which was much more dramatic and adventurous. In addition to the previous adventure pieces on “The Wonders of the West” in *Scribner’s*, Moran may also have been comparing Powell’s work with Clarence King’s *Mountaineering in the Sierra Nevada*, which originally appeared as a series of (un-illustrated) articles in 1871 for the *Atlantic Monthly* (see fn 26), and was then published in book form in 1872 and revised in 1874 to include illustrations. While their educational backgrounds differed sharply, Powell and King shared a deep knowledge and appreciation for the writings of John Ruskin and his notions of spirituality in nature. Both deeply believed that only by understanding the physical character of the natural world, could one come to see truth, be it in God, nature or art, concepts put forth directly in volumes of *Modern Painters*. In fact, according to Roger Stein, many of King’s passages in *Mountaineering* directly mirror passages of Ruskin’s, in his “portrayal of a sublime mood of nature, with all those varying moods of human nature which best give it relief.” Stein (1967), 177.
Powell realized, with some help and urging from both Moran and Gilder, that he was writing for a large popular audience, and reworked the manuscript. While the final version did convey an atmosphere of danger, mystery and wonder, given Powell’s background as a geologist and surveyor, his primary mission was to educate the reader about the region itself with lengthy passages describing the terrain included alongside the hardships of the expedition.

Moran urged Powell to incorporate a Ruskinian expressiveness into the tone of the piece, to match the overall sense of the divine portrayed in the illustrations of the Grand Canyon’s peaks, cliffs and gorges. Greatly varying the viewpoints in these illustrations, Moran’s pictures enable the textual and the visual aspects of the articles to work together, moving the reader down and into the depths of the canyon, encouraging him to experience it through passage (figures 1.22, 1.23, and 1.24). Initial images, such as “The Start from Green River Station” (figure 1.25), allow the viewer to visually enter the landscape as the illustration’s composition moves the eye up the river, following the lines of the boats; the sense of being “in the landscape” is even more enhanced once the travelers are in the canyon, and Moran’s images place the viewer at the base of the high walls of the gorges in pictures such as “The Gate of Lodore” (figure 1.26). The illustrations build along with the drama as the images take the viewer further into the depths of the Grand Canyon with “The Side Cañon of Lodore,” and “Side Gulch in Grand Cañon” (figures 1.27 and 1.28), followed by the treacherous “The Wreck at ‘Disaster Falls’” (figure 1.29) in which the dangerous churning of the waters at the bottom contrasts dramatically with the sunlit peak of the cliffs above. The diminutive size of the drowning man further emphasizes the horror and sublimity of the scene. The next
group of images offers a calmer vision of the base of the canyon, as “Noonday Rest in Marble Canôń,” depicts an idyllic scene of still waters and a sense of open passage. “Climbing the Grand Cañon” visually takes the viewer up to the plateaus, followed with numerous illustrations from high peaks, such as “The Grand Cañon at the Foot of To-Ro-Weap, Looking West,” and “The Grand Cañon at the Foot of To-Ro-Weap, Looking East” (figures 1.30, 1.31 and 1.23). Providing multiple vantage points from which to visually experience the Grand Canyon, Moran allows the reader to fully witness its terrain, from above and below, on the river and in the cliffs, in moments of calm and fury.

The two most powerful images of the series, “The Grand Cañon of the Colorado,” and “The Grand Chasm of the Colorado” (which closely resembles Moran’s 1874 painting of the subject), were both given a full page in order to fully convey the entirety of the landscape (figures 1.32 and 1.21). In these illustrations, Moran visualized the essence of Ruskinian geo-piety shared by Powell as well as the feeling of awe and terror he urged him to express. I would also make the argument that these two images, validated by their full page status as the most highly valued, represent an effort on the part of Moran to respond to the criticisms of his earlier oil painting of The Chasm of the Colorado (see figure 1.20). As mentioned above, critics denounced the painting for its unnecessary addition of sublime elements, such as the tumultuous storm, the visually confusing partial rainbow, and the desolation of the foreground; the center of the painting, rather than depicting a bright, uplifting focal point as in the more popular The Grand Canôn of the Yellowstone (see figure 1.11), contained a dark depression, a murky abyss portrayed in somber colors and suggesting escaping vapors from the unseen depths
of the Canyon. In the engraving, these disturbing ambiguities and somewhat disorienting proportions were eliminated; more low lying trees and ground cover along with fewer boulders were included in the foreground, a suggestion of a storm was placed off to the left of the picture, and a more focused area of light now illuminated the center of the image, giving it a less apocalyptic tone. As an engraving, the image could not convey the pale bluish vapors of the inferno-like abyss found in the painting; instead Moran imbued the illustration with a significantly greater sense of brightness, as white patches highlighted many more areas of the landscape, particularly the foreground, now transformed into a more visually inviting entry into the scene. The confusing depiction of the rainbow was also removed, affording an unobstructed panoramic view of the landscape. The illustration is clearly less challenging visually than the painting, due in part to Moran’s changes as well as the medium of wood engraving itself.

I would argue that Moran sought to convey the more Biblical, apocalyptic vision in his engraving of “The Grand Cañon of the Colorado” which captured the full grandeur and scale of the Canyon (figure 1.32). The engraving has a distinct and uplifting focal point, in the form of the directed rays of a rising (or possibly setting) sun that shine from the depths of the Canyon, bathing the scene in a divine light. While clearly an image of overwhelming sublimity, the engraving did not disorient the viewer, in fact it placed him firmly in the base of the Canyon. As noted above, Moran himself never made the voyage down to the river due to its complicated and dangerous nature, remaining above on the plateaus to capture primarily panoramic views. He was, however, acutely aware of the immensity of the drama of the canyon itself from his discussions with Powell, Hilliers and other members of the survey who reflected that the only way to truly appreciate the
Canyon was through the passage of its treacherous depths.\(^59\) I believe that Moran painted *The Chasm of the Colorado* as a companion piece to *The Grand Cañon of the Yellowstone*, yet his ultimate depiction of the wonders of the region are found in his illustration of “The Grand Cañon of the Colorado.” The viewpoint from the river’s banks allowed Moran to reveal the jagged cliffs and tower with a sense of distance that could not be captured in the panoptic view of the Chasm. The medium of engraving also allowed Moran to accentuate the texture of the rocks and to create bold contrasts of light and dark that further reinforced the sense of God in the landscape. The engraving inspired a positive sense of awe, wonder and redemption in the viewer, and, I would argue, it was this illustration that remained in the minds of *Scribner’s* readers when they thought of the Grand Canyon. The power of “The Grand Cañon of the Colorado” was validated by *Scribner’s* recognition of this illustration in particular, selecting it over “The Chasm of the Colorado” and the images of Yellowstone, for inclusion in a compilation of selected engravings deemed by the editors as the magazine’s premier illustrations; these one hundred images were published as a separate portfolio in 1878 and provide an ideal means to witness the improvements in *Scribner’s* illustrations as well as the changing nature of its overall aesthetic during the course of the decade. (For more on the first *Portfolio of proof impressions* see Chapter IV). \(^60\)

Moran was at his peak as an illustrator for *Scribner’s* in Powell’s Grand Canyon series, and the boldness of composition in these illustrations here conveys how his experience as the magazine’s premier artist positively impacted his work, particularly

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\(^59\) Kinsey, 128.

\(^60\) *A portfolio of proof impressions, selected from Scribner’s Monthly and St. Nicholas* (New York: Scribner & Co. 1879).
when compared to the earlier images of Yellowstone. While Moran did make use of the pictures by Powell’s survey photographers, one does not see the same direct reliance as in the Yellowstone illustrations; going beyond mere translation of the image, Moran often added dramatic sunbursts and greater texture in the faces of the cliffs themselves in order to compliment and augment Powell’s description of the terrain. Moran sought to include a sense of the terrible and sublime in his images, to convey the emotional aspect of the voyage, as demonstrated in the liberties taken in his “Monument in Glen Canôn” (figure 1.35). In this illustration he transforms a tall rock formation into an Egyptian-like monumental sculpture, ominously looming over the river. In images such as this one,

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61 Moran did rely on Jack Hilliers photographs of the bottom of the gorges from the perspective of the river, which he was never able to physically witness. However, a comparison between Hillier’s “Marble Pinnacle, Kanab Cañon” and its pictorial equivalent “Marble Pinnacle in Kanab Cañon” does reveal Moran’s reduced dependence on photography. One can be reasonably assured that Moran used this image, not only because of the strong resemblance to the photograph, but also because he never ventured into the canyon itself during his time on the expedition. Moran assimilates certain characteristics of the photograph, such as the texture of the rocks in the foreground, but also recognizes its limitations, adding a sense of the curving amphitheatre behind the pinnacle which allows for the illumination of the river, a dimension unable to be captured by the camera given the strength of the natural light; Moran also takes the opportunity to add his somewhat formulaic sky, clear on the left and stormy on the right. Kinsey goes so far as to suggest that he included replicas of Michelangelo’s slaves on the canyon wall in “Marble Pinnacle in Kanab Cañon;” I am not inclined to share in her visual interpretation, although I agree with the concept behind it. Kinsey, 123. An overall comparison between Jack Hilliers’ photographs and the articles’ illustrations reveals a newfound self-assurance in Moran, who seems less concerned about presenting an exact likeness and more willing to convey the power of nature than merely reproducing the photographic image (Figure 1.33 and 1.34). This new level of confidence, possibly fueled by his successes with his larger oil paintings, combined with the spiritual imagery, gives the work an almost Biblical sense of mission.

62 In preparing the drawing Moran had to rely on a photograph by E.O. Beaman, who had briefly participated in the survey as its photographer in 1871. While the original photo contains a non-descript barren beach in the foreground, Moran added survey members illuminated by a blazing campfire staring up in awe at the supernatural creature. To heighten its monolithic qualities, Moran moved the promontory away from the rock wall into the water, on its own island, while narrowing the view and heightening the rock; he
we witness Moran’s full understanding of his role as illustrator, enhancing the picture to speak in connection with the text, rather than merely reproducing visual information. He also achieved this in his use of the human figure. In the opening images, he incorporated figures frequently as a device to lure the reader into the text, as well as providing a sense of scale. However, over the course of the series, Moran dramatically expanded the landscape, with figures playing a less important role in the composition of the images, as the grandeur of the land itself became the focus of the articles; this sensation was enhanced by the art department who gradually yet subtly enlarged the size of the illustrations on the page over the course of the series. By the concluding piece, the human figures in Moran’s illustrations, when present, were essentially diminutive (figures 1.30, 1.31 and 1.23), conveying the insignificance of man in comparison to God’s creation as well as the sublime experience of being alone in such an overwhelming landscape (see figures 1.28 and 1.23).

Moran’s images also reveal the advances in reproduction technology at *Scribner’s*, as the art department continued to experiment with new means of printing and engraving. The progress made since the first issues is clear when comparing the early images of Yellowstone with the final illustrations of the Grand Canyon articles. *Scribner’s* art department was aware of the aesthetic possibilities offered by these “stunning” illustrations and experimented with new styles, such as the circular image of “The Start from Green River Station,” which playfully allowed for the flora and fauna of

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also included a full moon, rising up over the canon, illuminating the waters and part of the monument below. According to some critics the moon was placed at a physically impossible point in the Arizona night sky. Julius Stone, *Canyon Country*, 55 quoted in Wallace Stegner, *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian: John Wesley Powell and the Second Opening of the West* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1953),183.
the image to overflow onto the printed page (see figure 1.25). As discussed above, images were effectively laid out on the page to visually set up the sense of passage through the canyon, and also, when merited, given full-page status to emphasize the sublimity of the landscape. As evidenced in pictures such as “Side Gulch in Grand Cañon,” improvements in the ability to represent texture and the contrast between light and dark through the use of printing overlays contributed substantially to the dramatic effect of the illustrations themselves (figure 1.28).

While he would never surpass the grandeur of the Grand Canyon series, Moran did continue to work for *Scribner’s*, illustrating Powell’s additional articles on his further exploration of the region. More archeological in scope, these articles focused primarily on the Native Americans in the region and included few pure landscape images. While Moran was at the height of his illustrative powers in the middle of the decade, he was unable to foresee changes in the public aesthetic that were beginning to emerge. The Grand Canyon illustrations represent the end of Moran’s position as the premier illustrator at *Scribner’s*. As the 1870s progressed, Gilder’s exclusive promotion of Moran came to a close as new illustrators, many recently returning from foreign art schools, now took center stage in the periodical.

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64 An additional article published in 1878 on western cliff dwellings, did include illustrations by Moran of the cave dwellings, cliff houses and ruins near the Canõn de Chelley. See Emma Hardacre, “The Cliff-Dwellers” *Scribner’s Monthly* 17 (December 1878): 266-76.
Six months after the publication of the Powell series, Moran completed his third iconic painting of the West, *The Mountain of the Holy Cross*, in the fall of 1875 (figure 1.36). Although it was generally well received by the public, the *Scribner’s* review did not effusively endorse the work or utilize any of the sublime, Biblical metaphors employed in the earlier discussion of the *Chasm*, describing the work formally as “successful and satisfying,” the reviewer avoided any discussion of the spiritual nature of the painting, and the religious imagery associated with it despite the evangelical overtones of its discovery and depiction.65 While this work was put on view, like the earlier canvases, at a private showing and later opened to the public, *Scribner’s* had no involvement in its exhibition or promotion. Unlike the earlier iconic Western paintings, there was no reproduction of the image in the periodical, as Gilder chose not to cover the “discovery” of the phenomenon even though it shared many similar qualities to earlier reports on the wonders of Yellowstone, the trip down through the Grand Canyon and the scaling of the Teton (see figures 1.16 and 1.21). Gilder’s lack of interest was indicative of the trend, in both content and illustration, away from spectacular landscape in *Scribner’s*. As a result, its premier Western landscape artist was no longer prominently featured or promoted in the pages of the periodical after 1875.

Instead, *Scribner’s* began to publicly support and encourage artists whose work was recognized for its simplicity, sensitivity and expressiveness. Representative of this shift, the review of Moran’s *Mountain of the Holy Cross* was strategically placed in the “Culture and Progress” column between a description of the current annual Academy of Design show and an article entitled “Some Other Pictures,” discussing recent trends in

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contemporary art seen at an alternative exhibition held at Cottier and Company. These two articles reviewed the competing exhibitions of 1875 that ultimately led to the formation of the Society of American Artists, and mark the role that Scribner’s was soon to play as the primary supporter of the SAA in the press. The critic condemned the academy and the “obsolescent methods” of its traditional members who, just four years ago, were touted in the periodical as America’s leading painters. The work of such artists as Albert Bierstadt was described as a “a silent narrative of the most laborious operations, scumblings, scrapings, repainting – neither history nor idea,” while the review privileged newer members, such as John La Farge, who received accolades for his “high imaginative plane.” Although the impact and involvement of Scribner’s in the SAA will be the focus of Chapter III, the reviews are worth mentioning here to underscore the changing aesthetic at the periodical. Although Moran was discussed within the context of the “new painters” in the review of the NAD exhibit, he was not celebrated for his freshness of vision or expressiveness of tone, but cursorily mentioned for his image of The Overland Train: “[the work] reminds us that the painter is continuing his researches with care, in a field that will always present peculiar interest.” The critic associated Moran’s style with a type of scientific research, and while he recognized the popularity of landscape with the American public, sought to endorse artists with interior visions, and to promote a new aesthetic to replace that of a seemingly outmoded Ruskinian adherence to obsessively detailing truth in nature.

67 Ibid., 252.
68 Moran’s relationship with the Society of American Artists was rocky at best. Given Moran’s personal connections with Gilder and Walter Shirlaw, the SAA’s first president,
After its first five years of successful publication, the general tone at *Scribner’s* began to soften, as the periodical edged away from its original evangelical zealouslyness, and moved toward a more culturally driven ideology; by 1876 Holland, who was suffering from ill health, began to delegate many of the day-to-day matters of the magazine to Gilder. Occurring in tandem and possibly driven by the arrival of the Centennial Exhibition, this shift toward cultural topics was mirrored by a transition in the illustrations, as the dominant style of images between 1870 and 1875 of sublime western landscape was replaced with more decorative, expressive genres. The change is also reflected in the editorial columns, with reviews now favoring more “introspective

who had roomed with him in Newark upon Shirlaw’s return from studying abroad, it is not entirely surprising that Moran was elected its fourteenth member. Although his *Fort George Island* was hung at the SAA’s first exhibit in the spring of 1878, he stood out as one of the more “traditional” painters of the group. (Wilkins, 115.) Painting *en plein air* had never suited Moran, who generally worked in his studio from sketches made out-of-doors, following more traditional working methods of American landscape painting. In 1879, Moran’s *Bringing Home the Cattle, Cost of Florida* was rejected by the SAA hanging committee, led by William Merritt Chase, who saw Moran’s “worn-out, old fashioned methods,” as incompatible with the standards the Society had set for itself. Upon hearing this Moran demanded the return of his other picture, *Woodland Reflections*, and submitted his resignation to the Society. (Wilkins, 117.) Given the public interest in the SAA exhibition, the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts invited the Society to lend its entire show to the Academy’s annual exhibition, which they agreed to, subject to the proviso that all of the paintings shown at the Kurtz gallery would be on view. However, the Academy rejected the *Gross Clinic* - the blood in the operation apparently causing nausea for one of the jurors - and in its place, invited Moran to send his rejected landscape. Chase approached the Academy, calling for Eakins’ painting to be hung, and Moran’s removed, and threatening to cancel the entire exhibition if his demands were not met. Ultimately the Academy complied, although they prominently displayed *Bringing Home the Cattle*, while placing the *Gross Clinic* in a dark corner (Lloyd Goodrich, *Thomas Eakins: His Life and Work* (University of Virginia, AMS Press, 1970), 54. By 1879 Moran was better known to the public than many of the 1879 exhibitors such as Eakins and Ryder, but his contemporaries active in both the art and the publishing world saw his work as old-fashioned. Elected to the NAD in 1881, Moran would continue to paint the Western landscape, but would no longer be seen in the pages of the *Century* as Gilder had found a new Western artist ready for promotion in Frederick Remington.
scenes,” and in the larger articles which featured work by new illustrators recently returned from study overseas. The trend is particularly evident in *Scribner’s* treatment of Moran, whose work was deemed outdated, belonging to an earlier tradition that Gilder now sought to move beyond; as a result, Moran’s illustrations, as well as the critical approval of his paintings, faded from its pages.

During the early 1870s *Scribner’s* and Moran had served each other well: *Scribner’s* played a vital role in Moran’s development as an artist, promoting his work as both illustrator and painter, and introducing him to Hayden and Powell, to their survey photographers, to Yellowstone and the Grand Canyon; Moran’s illustrations helped to launch the magazine and their ability to capture the sublimity and allure of previously unknown western regions made *Scribner’s* a competitive player in the industry in its first years of publication. The period during which Moran’s images dominated the magazine mark the highpoint in *Scribner’s* commitment to Ruskinian ideas and traditional Protestant ideology. Through these pictures of the West, post-war eastern audiences were delivered a message of religious and geographic destiny in the presentation of natural facts about America and values associated with the myth of the expansive national landscape. The message spoke directly to *Scribner’s* moral agenda in its initial years, while under the direction of J.G. Holland. From the first issue, Gilder recognized Moran as the artist who could bridge the gap between his aesthetic motivations and Holland’s evangelical agenda. While these illustrations captured the American imagination and elevated both *Scribner’s* and Moran into positions of new found popularity and acclaim, they would not remain the primary focus of the magazine’s visual power, as Gilder began to gain control and move his audience away from scenic landscape images, toward a
vision less tied to associations with a Protestant deity, creationism and the geo-piety of nature.
Chapter II. *Scribner’s in 1876: Teaching Taste and Empowering an American Aesthetic Movement*

“We want in the living room, for a foundation, that the furniture shall be the best designed and best made that we can afford, and all of it intended to be used and necessary to our comfort. These wants being provided for first, then we will admit the ornament of life – casts, pictures, engravings, bronzes, books, chief nourishers in life’s feast…The room, from the very first, ought to represent the culture of the family, - what is their taste, what feeling they have for art - it should represent themselves.” – Clarence Cook, “Beds and Tables, Stools and Candlesticks. Some Chapters on House-Furnishing,” *Scribner's Monthly* June 1875.

The middle class American housewife could not get enough of Clarence Cook. She looked forward to the arrival of each issue of *Scribner's Monthly* in the months before and during the Centennial, avidly reading each installment of Cook’s popular treatise on current trends in home decoration. The articles fueled her desire to fill her home with the latest designs from Cottier and Company and Herter Brothers, as she took Cook’s advice to heart on each fixture and stool, each hearth and sideboard. And then there where the illustrations, which literally pulled her into these new decorative interiors. She could see herself in these rooms, depicted with so many young women seated artfully in elegant chairs or at exquisite drawing tables (figure 2.1); these young women, women just like her, urged her to be a part of this new decorative aesthetic world. How could she resist?

Always looking for an important trend that the magazine might be able to capitalize on, Gilder was well aware of this young American woman and her life in an urban, post Civil War society; he also recognized that she represented a sizeable portion of his expanding readership. Thirty two years old, recently married, and decorating his own home on East 15th Street, Gilder was quite familiar with the contemporary obsession
regarding domestic spaces and the new American woman’s desire to fill them with beautiful objects that reflected her and her family’s tastes. Gilder sought to ensure that *Scribner’s* would respond to her needs, providing her with the information she required to create an environment of culture and taste. As such, Gilder published articles that would dictate style and design choices and construct larger models of taste, written by a critic who was not afraid to make strong judgments and decisive statements; unlike his colleagues, this opinionated taste-maker sought to mold a new American female consumer and her environment while advising her as to how she should live now.

By 1876 Gilder’s efforts to increase his periodical’s circulation through improved illustration and coverage of the West had paid off, with *Scribner’s Monthly* now established as one of the premier magazines in America, only six years from its inception. In his search for publishing opportunities, Gilder anticipated the popular impact of the upcoming Centennial Exhibition and began to feature articles whose topics dealt directly with the objects, art and ideas of the Aesthetic Movement. *Scribner’s* expanding commitment to aesthetics is evident in both the main body of the magazine as well as on its editorial pages, in its illustrations and even in its actual appearance, as it both reflected and encouraged many of the fair’s ideals and intentions.¹ As a catalyst for the widespread popularity of the Aesthetic Movement, the Centennial provided Americans with a glimpse of the work of artists, designers and craftsmen from around the world, and

¹ The Centennial International Exhibition opened on May 10, 1876 and closed six months later on November 10, 1876. The fair took place in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence and was held in Fairmount Park, along the Schuylkill River. Approximately ten million visitors attended. The fair’s organizers saw the Exhibition as a means to unify the United States after the Civil War and also to promote the country’s achievements in industry, manufacturing, agriculture and the arts, in an attempt to improve America’s status worldwide.
exposed that audience to a wide variety of cultural styles and artifacts. *Scribner's* also played an important role in spreading the message, as, during the mid 1870s, the periodical’s publication of lavishly illustrated articles addressing issues of design, decoration and international art forms increased significantly, replacing the stories of western discovery and the grand landscapes that had accompanied them. Its cover and its imagery became more ornamental with stylized borders and decorative motifs interspersed among sophisticated illustrations by young artists recently returned from study abroad. *Scribner's* articles on domestic interiors and the arts of foreign lands reinforced and disseminated information on the exhibits at the Fair, and introduced the idea of art as a redeeming social function.

Focusing closely on the years surrounding the Centennial, 1875 to 1877, the chapter explores the active role that *Scribner's* played during the period in transforming American culture in its promotion of the objects of the British Aesthetic Movement and the ideas of its reformers. *Scribner's* began to present “art” as a means by which to deal with the growing mechanization, industrialization and urbanism of the time.² Gilder

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² In terms of British reformers, I am referring primarily to William Morris and his associates, and their view of art as a moral source. Morris’s work in the decorative arts sought to align production and consumption in its notion of a “brotherhood” that could address the issues of the industrial revolution, and with its underlying assumption that art could resolve the social ills of modern society. For more on Morris and the “brotherhood” see Linda Dowling, *The Vulgarization of Art: the Victorians and Aesthetic Democracy* (London: University Press of Virginia, 1996), specifically chapter three, “The Brotherly Company of Art” 50-74, and Peter Stansky, *Redesigning the World: William Morris, the 1880s, and the Arts and Crafts* (Palo Alto: Princeton University Press, 1996). Although generally concerned with literature, Jonathan Freedman’s chapter on “British Aestheticism and American Culture,” in his *Professions of Taste: Henry James, British Aestheticism and Commodity Culture*, Stanford, 1990, also addresses issues relating to British reformers in America. While its emphasis is primarily on the origins of the Arts and Crafts movement, Eileen Boris’ *Art and Labor: Ruskin, Morris and the Craftsman Ideal in America*, (Philadelphia:Temple University Press, 1986), was also relevant to my
promoted many of the British reformers’ beliefs in art as a moral regenerative source in daily life; he used Scribner’s as a means to convey this philosophy, to engage middle class readers and consumers with notions of beauty and to endorse its universal admiration.

The chapter focuses on two major publications in Scribner’s during the period, the three part series by Donald G. Mitchell on the Centennial Exhibition, and the eleven installments of “Beds and Tables, Stools and Candlesticks: Some Chapters on House-Furnishing” by Clarence Cook. Both of these series contain at their center the reformers’ conception of art as a means to transform contemporary consumer society. Through an

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See also, Wendy Kaplan, “Art that is Life”:The Arts and Crafts Movement in America, 1875-1920 (Boston, Little Brown and Co., 1987).
analysis of these articles, the chapter examines *Scribner’s* role as a vehicle of the ideology of the Aesthetic Movement in America during the time of the Centennial. My formulation of *Scribner’s* as a site of aesthetic transformation is built on Roger Stein’s notion that objects displayed at the Fair (objects which were also featured in the periodical) responded to societal needs in a period of cultural change, and that the Centennial served as an active agent in transmitting the ideas and artifacts of the British Aesthetic Movement to American producers and consumers. Stein’s work on the Aesthetic Movement’s ability to impact American culture provided a base from which to examine and explore how *Scribner’s* served as a vehicle, both in text and illustration, for the ideas of British reformers in the post Civil War United States. Further, while studies of the Centennial generally acknowledge the Fair as America’s introduction to the Aesthetic Movement, I wish to include in that discussion the vital role of the expanding press as a means of conveying not only specific information on artistic objects but also philosophical ideas on Aestheticism and reform in the 1870s.

The chapter exposes the inherent paradox in Gilder’s program to bring the Aesthetic Movement to his middle class readers, as well as the conflicting ideas behind the “democratization of art” to his readers. The beliefs Gilder, Cook and Mitchell shared with British reformers regarding taste and beauty were difficult to realize in an emerging capitalist nation. In his series on home decoration, Cook promoted a utopian vision of design reform in the United States. He stressed the availability to Americans of stylistic

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4 Stein (1986).
5 In her discussion of “the brotherhood,” Dowling provides a useful model for examining the inherent paradoxes involved in the aim of democratizing art and spreading the reformist doctrine in a time of social upheaval. For more on this aesthetic paradox as it played out in the Arts and Crafts Movement in America, see Boris.
choices from a variety of cultures both past and present, encouraging home decorators, craftsmen and artists to borrow heavily from these decorative traditions, and to draw on an eclectic mix of forms and patterns. *Scribner’s* attempt to bring aesthetic and cultural improvement into home furnishings may initially appear democratic in its efforts to make suggested pieces and designs accessible to the average reader. However, the conflicting, idealistic concepts of the articles considered in this chapter are representative of the aesthetic contradictions found in a larger context throughout the Aesthetic Movement and the Arts and Crafts Movement in the 1870s and 1880s. Cook and Mitchell set themselves apart from their readers, as professional taste-makers, and their utopian visions for a more artistic society often appear somewhat elitist. Many of the objects described in these articles were out of reach for the average American consumers. Tension is apparent in Cook’s attempt to transcend the narrowness of Victorian America, even though his readership was the very society he sought to rise above; he was overwhelmed by the “ugliness” of the age and condemned the commercial degradation of culture. As such, the chapter speaks to Pierre Bordieu’s notion of taste as a middle class phenomenon, available only to those independent from the necessities of labor, constructed to further reinforce and determine class differences, and to impede social mobility.¹⁶ Both the Cook series and the articles on the Centennial suggest not only a shift towards a growing emphasis on the arts at *Scribner’s*, but also the emerging notions of the culture class and the problems inherent in the idea of an “aesthetic democracy.”

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¹⁶ For more on the notion of taste as a middle class construct and its control over individuals in economically and culturally dominated class strata to conform to certain aesthetic preferences at the risk of violating social codes, see Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1984).
Scribner's coverage of the Centennial and promotion of its decorative objects to its readers conveyed the larger ideas of the British reformers, while revealing the direction in which Gilder was guiding the periodical, and his desire for it to be a purveyor of “taste.” Both the larger series as well as the smaller editorials on the Centennial all speak to Gilder’s desire to “teach taste” to the American public. Donald G. Mitchell, the author of the “In and About the Fair” series in Scribner’s, used his discussion of the Centennial exhibits to inform his readers of the aesthetic superiority of English artisans. The notion of the professional critic as taste-maker is evident throughout “Beds and Tables,” as Clarence Cook’s suggestions on home decoration were laced with recommendations on how an aesthetic environment could improve the lives of Scribner’s readers and those around them. The chapter underscores the groundbreaking nature of Scribner’s introduction of the basic tenets of Aestheticism and “taste” to its middle class American readers.

Implicit in this desire to “teach taste” was a welcoming attitude toward European influence, countering the home-grown nationalism that was prevalent at most other publications during the time period. The Fair, with the exposure it afforded Americans to European art, decorative objects, and aesthetic ideas, provided an impetus for the growth of a national art and aesthetic as well as a greater awareness and acceptance on the part of the public. The Centennial prompted Gilder to realize the role Scribner’s could play in

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7 Surprisingly, in spite of its frequent citation, no in-depth study of Cook’s series has yet to be published.
8 For more on the fair and the Aesthetic Movement in America see Sylvia L. Yount, “‘Give the People What They Want’: The American Aesthetic Movement, Art Worlds and Consumer Culture, 1876-1890” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1995). Yount shares an interest in similar figures such as Gilder and Cook, and provides helpful background information on the Centennial as an early force in the American Aesthetic
that development as a mediator of foreign influences and a shaper of what Mancini would recognize as the “boundaries” of this emerging art world.⁹

In text and more significantly, in image, the articles convey a wealth of information about new stylistic trends of the period and the new decorative artists who designed them, promoting many of those in Gilder’s circle. Citing them directly by name and highlighting their work in the article, Cook commented on how these artists, in particular his main illustrator Francis Lathrop, had been exposed to the art work and ideology of British reformers during their time overseas. Although their primary function

Movement. While her primary focus in terms of the Centennial is the exposition’s role as catalyst in the context of Philadelphia’s social and cultural reform activities, her discussion of New York art groups is relevant to my Chapter III on Gilder’s “new men,” in which I argue against her view of Gilder as a purely genteel standard bearer of bourgeois values. Most of the other secondary sources on Aestheticism (both British and American) tend to be object based with an emphasis on formal description and artistic biography rather than an examination of historical or social trends, with the following exceptions: Elizabeth Aslin’s *The Aesthetic Movement: Prelude to Art Nouveau* (University of Michigan: Praeger, 1969), Anthea Callen’s *Women Artists of the Arts and Crafts Movement 1870-1914* (New York: Pantheon, 1979), and Mark Girouard’s *Sweetness and Light: the “Queen Anne” Movement. 1860 -1900* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977). In terms of the Centennial, Bruno Giberti’s *Designing the Centennial: A History of the 1876 International Exhibition in Philadelphia* (University of Kentucky Press, 2002), is a Foucaultian study on the fair’s organization and displays, but does not include any discussion of its role as a catalyst of the Aesthetic Movement. Kimberly Orcutt’s dissertation on the American art display, “‘Revising History’: Creating a Canon of American Art at the Centennial Exhibition,” (PhD diss., City University of New York, 2005) examines the art exhibition and its role in defining the course of American art, depicting a “conservative versus avant-guard” battleground. Susannah Gold’s “Imagining Memory: Re-Presentations of the Civil War at the 1876 Centennial Exhibition,” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2004), focuses on war-related artworks and is not relevant to my discussion. Most acclaimed studies on the fair tend to emphasize political and economic issues such as Paul Greenhalgh’s *Ephemeral Vistas: the Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions, and World’s Fairs, 1851-1939* (Manchester University Press, 1988), and Robert Rydell’s classic *All the World’s a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916,* (University of Chicago Press: 1987) which examines how the Centennial contributed to the ideological vision of progress as put forth by the nation’s capitalist powers.

⁹ Mancini.
was to represent the specific objects discussed, these illustrations produced by Gilder’s new group of artists also captured the style and flavor of the Aesthetic Movement as a whole in their decorative images; they greatly enhanced the overall tone of not just the series but the magazine itself, while appealing directly to *Scribner’s* target audience, America’s upwardly mobile middle class, and particularly the subset within that larger group, the young, domestic female.

**Scribner’s in 1876: Moving from Evangelism to Aestheticism**

During the first half of the decade Gilder had consistently proven his abilities to the *Scribner’s* senior partners and, as previously noted, by 1876 he was given responsibility for much of the day-to-day operations of the periodical. At this point Holland, who had successfully launched the magazine and insured that it would remain an on-going concern, began to relinquish more authority as his health began to decline, focusing on literary contributions and his “Topics of the Time” column. 10 Recognizing visual imagery as the key to the magazine’s success, Gilder continued to work on improving its illustrations, hiring Timothy Cole as the magazine’s premier engraver in 1875, and Theodore De Vinne in 1876 to oversee the printing process. 11 The expanding art department experimented with a variety of different types of reproduction processes and it was during this time that Alexander Drake began to perfect his “photoxylography” technique. When comparing illustrations found in *Scribner’s* in the 1876 volumes, such

11 On the importance of illustration in terms of *Scribner’s* success, Arthur John writes, “In its forceful social commentary and cultivation of American literature, *Scribner’s Monthly* made distinctive contributions to the development of the American periodical, but it was through its leadership in illustration that the magazine swept to popular success. …A surge in public interest in the graphic representation of events helped carry the new monthly to this height of recognition.” Johns, 76.
as the Cook articles on home decoration, to those of the early issues, the progress made in clarity of line, complexity of tone and originality in design is clear (see figure 1.3 versus figure 2.1). The very nature of the images of these decorative interiors called for them to not merely illustrate the text, but also to visually invite the viewer into their artistic spaces, encouraging him or her to experience the richness and overall style of the Aesthetic Movement; improved reproduction and printing techniques worked effectively to achieve this goal.

In addition to changes in the visual aspects of the magazine, Gilder also subtly began to redirect the tone of the periodical away from its earlier evangelist focus. *Scribner’s* significantly reduced the amount of space dedicated to religious subjects, with most non-fiction articles between 1875 and 1877 now devoted to the more escapist topics of foreign travel and historical accounts. The zeal associated with the earlier issues was redirected toward more secular concerns, with the arts now playing a greater role in addressing the ills of society.¹²

Indicative of the changing nature of the periodical is *Scribner’s* new openness toward “alternative” religious practices. In an 1876 article entitled “Protestant Vaticanism,” the author, Reverend Augustus Blauvelt, attacked the clergy of Protestant churches throughout America for their inability to accept and deal with the pressing issues of scientific and technological advances in a growing capitalist society.¹³ Blauvelt

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¹² Surprisingly very little coverage is given to current domestic affairs in the mid to late 1870s at *Scribner’s* outside of the commentary in its editorial columns.

called for a new theology based on the spiritual behavior of Christ, replacing Biblical authority with an humanitarian morality not necessarily based on explicitly Christian doctrine. The article and its supportive editorials proposed a socially conscious philosophy and mirrored many of the ideas of British reformers who sought to strip religion of its dogma, replacing long-held Protestant traditions of prayer and self-discipline with the idea of serving God through service to others. The goal of this new spiritualism was not focused on the afterlife, but on moral improvement in this life on earth. In its increasing coverage of the decorative arts, *Scribner’s* presented “art” as a means to improve social conditions and encouraged its readers to take advantage of all that it had to offer as a way to enhance the quality of their lives.

The dearth of religious topics was clearly offset by the expanding coverage of all things aesthetic in America, with *Scribner’s* serving as a site of interconnectedness of the “fine-arts” with the decorative arts, architectural interior design, and arts and crafts. In numerous articles devoted to the “aesthetic interior,” both in the main body of the magazine and on the editorial pages, Gilder and his staff described specific styles and objects while commenting on larger concepts such as “taste” and “beauty” in the discussions of these artistic spaces. The features on home design in *Scribner’s* not only heralded but also drove this new interest in “the house beautiful” in the United States.

A number of articles relating to the topic of household decorative objects appeared in the “Culture and Progress” column just prior to the opening of the Centennial. For example, a review of “An Exhibition of Decorative Art,” organized by

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1877): 560. Blauvelt was fired from his ministerial post at the Dutch Reformed Church of Kingston, New York shortly after the publication of the article.

14 Girouard, 7.
the Boston Society of Architects in the summer of 1875, commented on the widespread appropriation of English styles and the lack of any distinctly American design:

The thing, perhaps, which one noticed was the great deficiency of native design in most of the department; the popular demand for improvement having risen so recently that it will still be long before men educated to supply our wants can be found here. This recent change is the echo in this country of the reaction in England against the thoughtless and unintelligent work of past years, but one of its first effects has been imitation, and a fashion for anything called after Morris, Eastlake, or other teachers of decorative construction.\(^\text{15}\)

The superiority of British design was frequently alluded to and reviews recognized the progress made by firms such as Morris & Co. in improving its country’s decorative arts; critics hoped that the Centennial would be a site of shared learning in which not only the style, but also the ideology of the British Aesthetic Movement and its reformers/designers like Morris would have a substantial impact on American decorative artists.\(^\text{16}\)

During the early 1870s *Scribner’s* readers were introduced to English artists, primarily members of the Pre-Raphaelite movement, with short biographical essays on Ford Madox Brown and Edward Burne-Jones, as well as a longer two part feature on the British poetry of the period, featuring Morris, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and Algernon Swinburne.\(^\text{17}\) A piece in “Culture and Progress” entitled “The William Morris Window” described a stained glass window designed by Morris, Marshall & Co. which was


\(^{16}\) I am referring primarily to Morris’ work in the 1860s and 70s, during the initial years of Morris, Marshall Faulkner & Co., when Morris pursued aesthetic democracy in specifically artistic terms. The actual designers for the firm were Morris, the architect Philip Webb, Rossetti, Burne-Jones, and Ford Madox Brown. For more on Morris’ initial years see Dowling, 58.

\(^{17}\) Stillman, (June 1872): 157-161; Hillard, (October 1872): 748-753; Edmund C. Stedman, “Latter-Day British Poets,” *Scribner’s Monthly* 9 (February 1875):426- 38; (March 1875): 585-596. Morris’ poems including “Defense of Guenevere,” “Love is Enough,” “Aeneids of Virgil,” and “Story of Sigurd” were also reviewed in the “Culture and Progress” column during this period.
temporarily on exhibit in New York before its installation in an Episcopal church in Saugerties, New York. Celebrated as a furniture maker, a decorator and a prominent British poet, Morris was praised for having brought about “a silent but very important revolution in the field of what have been termed the Household Arts.” Noting the progression of the art reform movement from the earlier writings of A.W.N. Pugin and Charles Eastlake in the Gothic Revival to the current work of Morris, the author credits him for giving “craft” a new meaning within the realm of the fine arts. Morris and his colleagues were recognized for the wide range of their work, in poetry, painting, and design, and for their growing influence in America, in spite of its dearth of cultural capital: “owing to the fact that there are far fewer people among us who unite culture with wealth than there are in England, there has not been the same opportunity for new ideas to tell that is found on the other side of the water.” However, this “lack of opportunity” would be remedied shortly as the article reported that Morris’ work would soon be available for purchase for the first time in the United States.

Scribner’s seized the opportunity to influence aesthetic development at the same time that artists such as Morris began to realize there was a market for their work and an openness to their ideas in America. Gilder shared Morris’ ideology in terms of design reform and a desire to elevate the status of the decorative arts, not only in an effort to improve the standard of manufactured goods for the home and encourage independent artisans, but also in an attempt to attack a type of academic exclusiveness which he saw

19 *Ibid.*., 245. During that a time, a Boston import export firm recently became the overseas representative for Morris, Marshall & Co.
as stifling artistic development in the United States at the time. The Cook series, with its emphasis on decoration, pattern and stylization, and its promotion of directness and simplicity in household decoration as well as an appropriate use of materials, drew on many of Morris’ principles. The impact and influence of Morris and the British reformers is evident throughout the pages of *Scribner’s* in the years surrounding the Centennial, as Gilder promoted a similar type of movement in the United States.

Given his relationships with many of the originators of Aestheticism in America, Gilder also worked to support particular artists and institutions at the initial stages of their development. Articles suggested a “blurring” of artistic roles during this period as an “artist” might now be a painter, decorator, craftsman, artisan, architect or some combination of each. Uncertain as to the exact nature of these artists, taste-makers such as Clarence Cook stepped in to provide the “guidance” that *Scribner’s* readers were seeking in both interior decoration and a general understanding of the new Aestheticism. Cook noted in his series that “if a person does not feel that his own knowledge or instinct is all he needs to help him bring the business to a happy ending, he must get help from some artist, architect or professional decorator,” citing particular artists such as La Farge and Lathrop as “good guides [who] could solve one’s doubts.”

The periodical also publicized the so-called “museums of the interior,” Herter Brothers and Cottier and Company, which in addition to displaying and selling high end “art furniture” in their showrooms, also offered decorating services from their professional designers.

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20 For more on this subject see Chapter III.
21 Cook, (January 1876): 345.
Schibner’s used its position of power in the press to tell its readers, not only “what to do with their walls,” but who could help them to do it.

Thus, during the period of the Centennial, Schibner’s participated in the development of the “artful interior” of the Aesthetic Movement. However, no attempt was made to address the paradox of this interior; while filled with works of fine art and craftsmanship and conveying the sense that it allowed for a means of improving the character of its occupants, its cost was often well above what most Americans could afford. An article entitled “Concerning Furniture,” avoided any contradictions or concerns regarding affordability; encouraging the reader to act like an artist in developing an understanding and appreciation of beauty through home decoration, the author recommended frequent visits to high-end showrooms such as Herter Brothers and Cottier and Company:

The purchaser may have sufficient imagination to picture the room as it will appear when finished, and so be able to select with good sense and good taste. And it may happen that he distrusts himself. What is easier, then, than to trust to the good sense and the artistic culture of the house itself? Daily contact with art-work makes of even the unthinking mind something of the artist. To the really imaginative and cultured mind, such things give ever renewed strength and life….. So, in looking at the splendid collection of art-work [at Herter Brothers] it is safe to trust the skilled eyes and ready fancy of those who see them daily, and in selecting to abide by a judgment juster than our own. This desire for the true and beautiful in household goods, not so evident among our more sensible people, must spread, and nowhere can we learn faster or better than by such a visit as has been described to such a house as this.23

The passage captures many of the main ideas Schibner’s adopted and advanced in its promotion of the Aesthetic Movement to its readers: the importance of taste; the vitality of the new consumer culture and its ability to influence production; the role of the artist in home design and the elevated status of the decorative arts; and the notion of the “house

23 Ibid., 9-10
beautiful” as a place to improve the eye and the mind. One cannot ignore the spiritual connotations associated with being in daily contact with aesthetic objects on the intellect and soul, as well as the proselytizing tone of the author, who looks to these aesthetic interiors and their artists as sources for judgment, truth and beauty. This passage summarizes one of Gilder’s primary objectives during the period, to both instruct and construct notions of taste for the American middle class at a pivotal moment in the nation’s history; now Scribner’s readers from across the nation could visit the Centennial in order to actually experience first hand these decorative household objects and return to their homes to transform not only their interiors but also their personal tastes and perceptions.

“What the Centennial Ought to Accomplish:” Scribner’s Goals for the Fair

Examining a variety of articles written in the monthly columns between August of 1875 and the end of the fair in October of 1876, one senses a shift not only in what the magazine deemed to be the goals of the exhibition but also of the changes in Scribner’s coverage of the Fair, as its focus moved from the political to the aesthetic. In an 1875 editorial in “Topics of the Time” entitled “What the Centennial Ought to Accomplish,” Holland extolled the Centennial as an important political event whose primary purpose was to celebrate the United States, to restore national feeling and national pride, and to strengthen the bonds that tied North and South:

The great point is to recognize the fact that these United States constitute a nation; that we are to live, grow, prosper and suffer together united by bands that cannot be sundered. Unless this fact is fully recognized throughout the Union, our Centennial will be but a hollow mockery… to bring about this reunion of the two sections of the country should be the leading object of the approaching
Centennial… [it should serve as] a corner-stone over which shall be reared a new temple to national freedom, concord, peace and prosperity.  

Clearly Holland had no interest in the aesthetic opportunities offered by the Fair, but saw it entirely in political terms as a means of reuniting the country after the Civil War.

However, this viewpoint started to change as the Fair approached and Gilder used his smaller editorial columns to effectively shift the emphasis toward the Centennial’s aesthetic possibilities. In the “Home and Society” column of April 1876, an article on “The Home-uses of the Exposition,” presented the Centennial as a site for education and close looking: “it is not an occasion for a gush of patriotism, or a magnificent show to pass before them like a brilliant panorama, vague and unreal and to be speedily forgotten.” School children were urged to explore the Fair, to take in all of the knowledge that foreign countries could offer, and to gain a new awareness and appreciation for cultures beyond the United States, experiencing them as “living pictures.” The editorial encouraged the “enlightened” lady of the household to guide her children through the exhibits, allowing them to experience alternative societies and cultures. The July column’s “The Exhibition as a School,” called upon mothers to use these exhibits as teachable moments to inculcate their families about matters of taste. Following up in September of 1876, “Practical Hints about the Exhibition” implored readers to “make great sacrifice if necessary in order to see it. No such opportunity for an education of the

26 “The Exhibition as a School,” in “Home and Society,” *Scribner’s Monthly* 12 (July 1876): 438. While this mandate issued to the woman of the home was not atypical, I include it for its emphasis on the international and artistic aspects of the fair whose study it encouraged.
widest limits, combined with keen intellectual and physical enjoyment was ever offered to the American people.” Unlike its rivals, the *Atlantic* and *Harper’s*, the magazine emphasized edification over patriotism; *Scribner’s*, in its coverage of the Fair, sought to expand the provincial knowledge and taste of nineteenth century Americans rather than to celebrate the country’s industrial commerce and progress. This goal is evident in both *Scribner’s* shorter editorials as well as its main feature on the Centennial, with its focus on the arts rather than industry. 

**Covering the Centennial: Aesthetics over Spectacle**

In May of 1876 the Centennial Exhibition opened to throngs of visitors eager to experience the first world’s fair on American soil. With his hand on the pulse of the nation’s popular and fine arts, Gilder recognized the importance of presenting the Fair to his readers but also the need to differentiate *Scribner’s* coverage from that of its monthly and weekly competitors. As such, the three part series devoted to the Centennial entitled “In and About the Fair,” published in the September, October and November 1876 issues, emphasized the artistic aspects of the exhibition and sought to elucidate its readers as to all things cultural at the Fair. The series’ overreaching purpose was to “teach taste” to *Scribner’s* readers; rather than describing popular attractions, the series sought to inform them of particular exhibits that were deemed worthy by its author, Donald G. Mitchell. A journalist and editor of a small monthly periodical dedicated to domestic topics, Mitchell had a background in urban planning and landscape design, and was also the chairman of

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the judges of decorative arts for the entire Centennial Exhibition. What better authority to advise readers as to the quality and artistry of objects on display in an event which introduced the Aesthetic Movement to the American people?

The first of the three part series appeared in September of 1876, well after the opening of the Centennial as well as the popular weeklies’ summer-long coverage of the Fair and W.D. Howell’s comprehensive and patriotic discussion of its displays of American achievement and innovation in the July edition of the *Atlantic Monthly*. The late publication allowed Mitchell to have a more complete picture of the Fair, in contrast to the sense of incoherence and disarray noted in the other earlier accounts. As such, Mitchell was able to effectively critique the exhibition as a whole, using the Centennial as a means to instruct and edify American viewers about art, architecture and design, particularly that of foreign countries. There was no mention of any significant American contribution to the exhibitions in the Main Building and Mitchell failed to discuss any aspect of machinery or technology, areas in which the United States’ accomplishments generally surpassed those of other countries. This approach differed significantly from

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28 Between 1868 and 1875, Mitchell had been the co-editor along with Harriet Beecher Stowe of a periodical known as *Hearth and Home*; at the time, the publication was recognized as the most important weekly magazine for “home literary miscellany.” In addition to articles on agriculture and landscape design, Mitchell had also written on the arts, and may have been selected as chairman of the judges of Decorative arts at the Centennial because of his familiarity with the subject. A cousin of Louis Comfort Tiffany, Mitchell also designed the Connecticut building at the Centennial; the structure was recognized as one of the most successful of the state buildings. Mitchell was appointed as a commissioner for the U.S. to the Paris Universal Exposition in 1878 in recognition for his achievements in landscape design. For more on Mitchell see Waldo Dunn, *The Life of Donald G. Mitchell, Ik Marvel* (New York: C.Scribner’s and Sons, 1922).


30 Due to weather and shipping delays, the fair was still a work in progress when it opened in May; it was not until mid summer that all of the exhibits were fully in place.
the majority of the nation’s popular publications that focused on novelties, mechanics, and invention.  

Scribner’s did not celebrate the “grandeur of industry,” a prominent theme at the Centennial, and in fact chose not to address it in any significant manner; separating itself from the interests of the Fair’s organizers with their focus on industrial progress, the series emphasized close, careful looking in natural quiet settings such as the Japanese pavilion and the replica of the English country home. Joseph R. Hawley, president of the Centennial Commission urged Fair goers to “study the evidence of our resources and to measure the progress of a hundred years.” Instead, Scribner’s articles encouraged, through the adoption of a democratic aesthetic philosophy similar to that of the British reformers, the visitor to ignore the progress of the industrial revolution and its mundane products in favor of hand-made objects decorated in organic, flowing designs. Nowhere in the article did Mitchell discuss the overwhelming number of commercial exhibits, such as those featuring gas fixtures, chemicals, buttons and watches; the only commodities which were featured in Scribner’s were presented not so much as objects for use, but as objects of art; only those exhibits which, even though their wares may have been machine manufactured or mass produced, were able to convey a sense of authenticity, uniqueness or truth in design were included in the Scribner’s account.

It is important to note that the series contained no illustrations. It is unclear why Gilder made this choice, particularly given his dedication to visual imagery; possibly

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31 A number of journals, such as Scientific American Supplement, were created solely to describe industrial progress at the Centennial. For more on these journals see Mott,117. Throughout his account, Howells continually celebrates American inventions, particularly in his discussion of Agricultural Hall and its delightful avenues of “mowing and reaping machines,” and of the main feature of Machinery Hall and the fair’s greatest attraction, the great Corliss engine. Howells, 93.

32 Quotations in Rydell, 14.
because of its late publication Gilder may have thought that the public had been
inundated by the extensive illustrations that had already appeared in *Harper’s Weekly* and
*Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, or he was unable to reproduce quality images with
such a short turn around time. Further, Gilder was simultaneously publishing Clarence
Cook’s “Beds and Tables,” with the October and November issues containing
installments from both series in the same issue. Cook’s articles were lavishly and
extensively illustrated with numerous pictures of aesthetic interiors filled with decorative
objects that closely resembled many of the items discussed by Mitchell; Gilder may have
thought that these objects were sufficiently represented by the Cook illustrations (figure
2.2 and 2.3).

Mitchell’s series focused on his particular interests, interests that he believed the
American people must be exposed to during the Fair to improve the arts, and in turn, the
general quality of living in the United States: architecture and urban planning in Part I;
the decorative arts in Part II; and horticulture and the fine arts in Part III. In the first of
the three articles, Mitchell addressed the architectural aspects of the buildings
themselves, the role that urban planning played in the overall structure of the Fair as a
whole, and what Americans might learn from these examples in developing their own
homes, towns and cities. The second part of the series described the international exhibits
in the Main Hall and highlighted specific aspects of particular countries and their native
cultural artifacts. There was no attempt to report the sensational as in much of the other

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33 These periodicals did reproduce images of some of the exhibits and displays discussed
in the series, although more predominate were pictures of the spectacular aspects of the
fair such as the Corliss Engine, the Dreaming Ionlanthe in Butter, and “Old Abe” the bald
eagle.
popular periodicals’ coverage of these exhibitions, but rather to convey a sense of how each country’s unique qualities were revealed in the objects on display, and how Americans might develop a greater appreciation for foreign goods and incorporate some of these international influences in the decoration of their own homes. The series concluded with a discussion of the horticultural displays and the International Art Exhibition. The final article was devoted to larger aesthetic concerns, raising questions about the nature of beauty in landscape design and taking issue with the layout of the art exhibition itself in the newly constructed Memorial Hall. Mitchell privileged art over industry, England and Japan over America, and edification over spectacle as a premise for viewing the Centennial. A close analysis of the series on the Centennial and the choices Gilder made in presenting the Fair to *Scribner’s* readers tells us a great deal about his motivations for the magazine and what he thought it could accomplish, with its emphasis on the aesthetic rather than the technological or the spectacular.

Within Mitchell’s overall agenda to “teach taste” in his discussion of the Centennial, three particular themes run throughout the series. First, in his discussion of the decorative arts at the Fair, he wanted to familiarize his audience with recent advances in English design, highlighting examples from the British Aesthetic Movement, and describing these decorative objects as they were displayed in particular exhibits, model rooms and period architecture. Secondly, he promoted the unique over the conventional, the artisan over the machine, creative labor over mass production. Finally he wished to expand his readers’ awareness of the larger world; within this desire, he made clear the superiority of particular cultures and artistic styles, specifically those of England and Japan. A close reading of the series and the particular objects he selected for discussion
underscores these themes as well as his intent to view and present the fair aesthetically. Mitchell’s account of the fair was ideally suited to meet Gilder’s requirements, given his need to respond to readers’ demand for more information about the arts, their desire for all thing cultural, and their insecurities in terms of making their own aesthetic judgments.

Mitchell focused intensely and selectively on certain buildings and exhibits in order to provide his readers with a discerning commentary on what they might take away from the installation beyond the common feeling of bewilderment and confusion that often resulted from the overwhelming size of the Fair. Thus, over a third of the series was devoted to the decorative objects in the Main Hall, with Mitchell describing only those national exhibits whose content and appearance agreed with his notions of taste and beauty. In an effort to educate his audience about international styles and designs, and how they could be effectively studied to improve levels of taste in the United States, Mitchell privileged the English displays above all others. Mitchell recognized the success of England’s mission after the 1851 Crystal Palace Exhibition, which not only wedded the beautiful and the useful, but also led to substantial improvements in the British decorative arts, a goal to be emulated by the Americans. In terms of the Centennial’s role as a catalyst of Aestheticism, the English exhibits were seminal, and laid the groundwork for the development of the movement in the United States; they also had a profound effect on American manufacturers and consumers. The blurring of the distinctions between artist, decorator, craftsman, architect and artisan are clear in the passage describing the British contributions to the fair. The English displays of porcelain, stained

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34 Giberti discusses mass response to vastness of the Fair in his section entitled “Principles of Installation,” 96-101.
35 Yount, 86-90.
glass, and iron and brass work were all praised for their simplicity and for their efforts in improving home decoration (figures 2.2 and 2.4). Many of the items discussed were displayed in model rooms that included real women hired to occupy these lavish interiors and allowed viewers to experience objects in situ; these exhibits also closely resembled the inviting artful spaces illustrated in Clarence Cook’s series, which were printed in the same issue (figures 2.2 and 2.3).

Rejecting the baroque nature of the French and Italian designs, the article introduced the motifs commonly associated with the English Aesthetic Movement such as “apple-blossoms, sparrows, dragonflies, robin-redbreasts, and chanticleers;” in the British stained-glass exhibits Mitchell noted this tendency to “get away from the school of grid-ironed saints and cupids and to give color to the poetic aspect of everyday life.”

The article highlighted the iron pagoda of Barnard, Bishop & Barnard which incorporated a number of similar motifs; the structure was conceived by the British architect and designer, Thomas Jeckyll, an early devotee of the Anglo-Japonesque aesthetic in the decorative arts, and a member of Whistler’s artistic circle in London (figure 2.5). The pagoda’s assemblage of various objects, which according to Mitchell demonstrated “graceful design, and wondrous casting,” included a number of

37 Jeckyll was the original architect of Whistler’s Peacock Room, now installed in the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.. Whistler dramatically altered the original design, to the point that Jeckyll is rarely remembered for his involvement in the project and did not participate in the dispute between Whistler and his patron, Frederick Leyland; Jeckyll went mad that year (1877) and died insane in the Norwich Asylum four years later. Burke, 443.
recognizable aesthetic designs associated with the art movement in England. Entirely cast in wrought iron, the structure sported bas-reliefs of flying birds, chrysanthemum, narcissus, cranes and larks, rows of fans along the veranda roof embellished with roses, honeysuckles and hydrangeas, and roundels depicting butterflies, bees and birds, all of which Mitchell described in great detail. Wrought-iron sunflowers standing almost five feet high created a railing around the pagoda and were the basis of the design for andirons that the firm later manufactured for strong sales in America. An extremely popular attraction at the Fair, the display presented to the public a number of natural designs which would soon become a regular part of the vocabulary of motifs used by artists in the movement in America. Critical of the lack of educational institutions that might encourage aesthetic awareness and design in the United States, Mitchell stated firmly that these “British products in this art neighborhood” are all due to the development over the last decade of the Kensington School of Art, which resulted from the Crystal Palace exhibition; he hoped that the displays at the fair would have a similar impact on Philadelphia’s “newly developed School of Art,” established as part of the Centennial’s larger project, as well as the development of new decorative styles by designers across the nation.

In reviewing the various decorative displays, Mitchell called attention to work which had been finely crafted by skilled artisans, eschewing any objects that appeared to be machine made and mass produced. Attacking the “technique of more” displays, which deemed consumer items as worthy of the viewer’s attention, Mitchell promoted the integrity of the art object as separate and distinct from that of factory-made goods (figure 2.6). In spite of its intricate patterns and designs, the Chinese display of porcelain cups,
cloisonné teapots and decorative word-carvings was disparaged as “a triumph of industry, and of mechanical adroitness, but not an artistic triumph. Neither in form nor in adaptation of parts does it show those graces which captivate the artistic eye. There is curious intricacy about it, but no exuberance.”

While Mitchell dismissed the Chinese for their unimaginative commercialism, the Japanese however were highly applauded for the individual skill and disciplined detail found in their porcelain and metalwork; the Japanese exhibit was recommended for study “by the artisans of every competing nation” (figure 2.7). Again, the highest praise was reserved for the English decorative displays, which showed how “homely materials may be so wrought upon as to bring the products into the domain of art.” Concluding his article on the Main Exhibition Hall, Mitchell provided a detailed description of these exhibits and their objects including stained-glass screens, decorative panels, rare metal goblets, and marble mantels with tiled hearths, offering them as the highlight of the Centennial’s main building:

[These English displays] make a glittering and solid climax to all the adjacent exhibits. [The objects] are complete triumphs of the silversmith’s art; enamels that are something more than barbaric assemblage of colors; embossed figures that challenge closest scrutiny of their drawing and delicacy of their lines, with groups and processional array of figures which pique and charm by their poetic suggestiveness – all this to be seen in the little Elkington court, where hours may be spent most worthily.

The articles sought to educate *Scribner’s* readers as to the vast number of artistic styles displayed at the Centennial, and how the culture of individual countries impacted the nature of their indigenous design. Mitchell made this clear in his celebration of particular cultures as highly superior, most prominently England and Japan, while others

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38 Mitchell (October 1876): 890.
were deemed primitive and backward. South American countries were entirely dismissed, while China’s cultural objects and artifacts were “uncreative.” Mitchell praised Scandanavians for overcoming difficult environmental restrictions and achieving a type of “realism” in their basic displays. In terms of the Middle East, its nations had little to teach Americans; meanwhile the Russian exhibit was recognized only for its “barbaric splendor.” Mitchell’s account participated in the prejudices of empire, colonialism, and exploitation that have been frequently discussed in the analysis of world’s fairs.

As witnessed above, Mitchell was a staunch admirer of all things Japanese, and used the country’s displays in Horticultural Hall to explain the beauty of Japanese design; encouraging his readers to examine particular arrangements, he described how their “Eastern” beauty could be achieved and replicated. The Japanese bonsai was discussed in great detail as “tortured, crippled, quaint and picturesque by its years of struggle against the toils of the gardener,” and used as an example to critique the classical “Western” notion of beauty as formal and symmetrical. The article praised the Japanese custom of modeling interiors after nature, presenting the Japanese garden as a microcosm, an intimate yet natural interior landscape which took on anthropomorphnic qualities of suffering and passion: “[one is] struck by the easy and natural way in which they have adapted their approaches and their slight show of planning. There is no labored leveling, no pretentious terracing.” Mitchell applauded the Japanese people for their understanding of beauty as an appropriate use of simple elements which accommodated

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41 Ibid., 894.
42 Interestingly, while items in the national exhibits of particular African countries, Persia and China were looked upon essentially as raw material objects, once on display in the context of an English decorative firm, they took on new meaning as exotic works of art. See Rydell and Greenhalgh. For more on Asian stereotypes at the fair see Rydell, 29-31.
43 Ibid., 118.
the landscape rather than dominating its naturalness, a concept which should be heeded by Americans in cultivating their native land. Unlike any other periodical at this time, *Scribner’s* recognized the opportunity to craft a philosophy in which beauty, as opposed to utility, was of utmost importance, and sought to provide its readers with the necessary tools to understand and implement it.

*Scribner’s* account of the Centennial celebrated the English contribution to the fair throughout the series, applauding the country for the exhibitions it provided in architecture, the decorative and the fine arts. While, as discussed in subsequent chapters, the periodical’s preferences in the later 1870s were decidedly French, “In and About the Fair” continually praised all things English and encouraged Americans to learn from the British in their recent progress in the arts. In his introductory article on the State Houses and international buildings, Mitchell featured the English house, offering it as a model for American architects:

[its] subdued coloring, sense of charming completeness and fitness, its ample rooms, its open mouthed fireplaces, decorated with Stoke tiling and tasteful mantels….altogether it is a charming representative of a quiet and sufficient old English country house in which convenience and the comfort of the occupants are rated of more worth than any outside show. As such it is richly worth the study of our architects, and of those who are mediating homes in the country….the home expression, the simplicity of detail, the severe yet picturesque lines of its mass -all tell well as against the loudness, and petty ornamentation, and ambitious carpentry of our current practice.

As noted above in the discussion of the Main Exhibition Hall, this preference for English culture was prevalent throughout the series, with Mitchell saving his concluding remarks for the English paintings in the Fine Arts exhibition. Almost his entire review of the

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44 The French contribution to the fine arts exhibition at Memorial Hall was minimal at best.
45 Mitchell, (September 1876): 748.
exhibition was devoted to English painters, as Mitchell described works by a number of earlier British artists, such as Reynolds, Gainsborough, and Landseer, and lauded the country’s watercolor display, as “deserving of careful study.”\(^46\) Works by contemporary English painters such as Alma-Tadema and the PreRaphaelites, specifically John Everett Millais, were also highlighted. Viewers were encouraged to devote most of their time to this section for “the British, of all the nationalities, have most frankly and generously met the spirit of our endeavor to make exhibit of what the world was doing best.”\(^47\) Mitchell used the English example as a means to critique much of the American paintings on display:

A severe, but very decorous, exclusion of one-fourth of all the paintings shown in the various United States galleries would have made the exhibit one of which Americans might have been far more proud, and one which would have given a more assured basis to our art status as compared with the other nationalities. As it is, we have entered the race handicapped with a great burden of slovenly and pretentious and inartistic work.\(^48\)

In Mitchell’s intention to “teach taste” to the reader, British painting clearly trumped that of the United States as an example of art deemed worthy to elucidate the aesthetics endorsed by *Scribner’s*. Mitchell’s account substantiated the idea that America’s weak showing in the fine arts supported the move on the part of many young artists, some of whom would later become illustrators at the periodical, to study abroad.

In terms of its larger impact, the Centennial provided an impetus for the growth of American art and a native aesthetic for both artists and audiences. The Fair also had a substantial effect on Gilder, who realized the role that *Scribner’s* could play in that effort

\(^46\) Mitchell chose to ignore the most popular painting at the fair, Rothermel’s enormous canvas depicting *The Battle of Gettysburg*.

\(^47\) *Ibid.*, 121.

\(^48\) *Ibid.*, 123.
as it continued to support and promote the development of a national art world, aware of international cultures and influences, but with its own unique American style. Throughout the series, Mitchell offered a vision of how American culture might be improved, nurtured and developed by embracing the objects and ideas of other foreign nations. With its focus on international exhibits relating to architecture, decorative arts, landscape design, and painting, *Scribner’s* approach was unique within the publishing industry, to present the fair aesthetically, and to introduce ideas on the nature of beauty and taste to an uneducated public. It is telling that American public was willing to adopt *Scribner’s* point of view, particularly when reading its rivals’ more openly patriotic and spectacular accounts of the Centennial. But clearly, Gilder was responding to what he saw as a desire on the part of his upwardly mobile readership to “improve themselves” through cultural knowledge and experience. Anticipating the popular response to the Centennial, Gilder realized that a thorough, instructive, well-illustrated series of articles on household decoration would address the issues raised in “In and About the Fair,” and the exhibition itself. Gilder saw a need for an American aesthetic reformer, an American voice for many of the ideas generated by the Centennial, and found his American taste-maker in Clarence Cook.

**Clarence Cook’s “Beds and Tables, Stools and Candlesticks:” Constructing Taste in Middle Class America.**

Like the 1876 Centennial exhibition, Cook’s series on “Beds and Tables, Stools and Candlesticks: Some Chapters on House Furnishing” was a site of aesthetic transformation, as Cook urged his middle class American readers to think about how they actually lived in their homes, and how they could dramatically change their lives by
surrounding themselves with beautiful objects. These articles, with their detailed
discussions of tables, chairs, carpets, wallpaper and ceramic objects, were the perfect
complement to *Scribner’s* coverage of the Fair, as both raised similar issues about the
vital importance of the decorative arts in America and participated in Gilder’s larger
agenda to “teach taste” to his audience. Further, inspired by the periodical’s coverage,
*Scribner’s* readers could actually travel to the Centennial to examine for themselves the
decorative objects and interiors which were made so popular in the series; in fact, Cook
often cited specific displays where particular pieces could be seen, and some of the
illustrations in the early installments, such as “Much in Little Space” and “An Every-Day
Mantelpiece, Simply Treated” anticipated the actual exhibitions that included live models
seated in aesthetic spaces (figures 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3).\(^4^9\) Just as he had previously taken
advantage of increased interest and tourism in the Western regions of America, Gilder
was cognizant of the housing boom of the 1870s, particularly in metropolitan areas, and
recognized an opportunity to enhance his readership (which included many eastern young
women living in urban environments) by addressing their needs on how to decorate their
new homes.\(^5^0\) Again, Gilder anticipated an important trend in American society and,
through his editorial position, worked to make that trend a reality, publishing a
substantial series by a respected critic and extensively illustrated by artists whose work
he sought to support.

\(^{49}\) Cook (April 1876): 809, 812.

\(^{50}\) For a more detailed discussion on these trends in Western expansion and the urban
housing boom in America during the 1870s, see H.W. Brands’ comprehensive account of
the Gilded Age, *American Colossus: The Triumph of Capitalism, 1865-1900* (New York:
Doubleday, 2010), particularly “Frontiers of Enterprise” 123-288 and “The Spirit of ’76,”
331-348.
The series was a catalyst for the widespread popularity of aesthetic interiors in the late 1870s and served as a vehicle of the philosophy and design of the British Aesthetic Movement, adapted for an American audience. Like his reformer colleagues in England, Cook defined beauty as a synthesis of simplicity and utility and emphasized the need for this mutuality in all aspects of home design and decoration. In order for American children to properly absorb their family’s culture, taste and belief systems, the home must be appropriately outfitted to not only reflect these aspects of family life, but also to aid in their inculcation. Cook sought to explain to the American public how beauty could enrich their lives, and urged them at all cost to avoid the ugliness ushered in by the intense industrialism of the age. Communicating the latest aesthetic styles to *Scribner’s* readers, Cook called on up and coming American architects, artists and artisans to design pieces which would pictorially embody his philosophy; as such, *Scribner’s* not only instructed but also constructed notions of taste among its American audience. While Cook frequently addressed young couples looking to decorate their new homes on limited budgets, the series was geared toward the middle class domestic female homemaker, encouraging her involvement in and awareness of the artistic aspects of home decoration. An analysis of its text and illustrations, in which she played a central role, confirms *Scribner’s* increasing commitment to the philosophy of the British reformers and the elevation of the status of the decorative arts in America.

Anticipating the impact that the Centennial would have on the decorative arts, *Scribner’s* began publishing Cook’s series in June of 1875. Cook’s piece was groundbreaking at the time, as there was yet no widely read American counsel to establish aesthetic standards for the middle class home and to educate female consumers
as to what was available in the commercial marketplace. With its extensive illustrations and description of various styles of beds, fixtures, mantels, and chests, displayed individually and in aesthetic interiors, the series effectively changed the nature of home decoration in America. The articles mark a substantial shift from the approach of earlier authors on the subject, such as Catharine Beecher, whose books, which included *A Treatise in Domestic Economy* (1842) and, with her sister Harriet Beecher Stowe, *The American Woman’s Home* (1869), provided general housekeeping guidelines and acted primarily as instruction manuals; these books did include illustrations but they were more pragmatic than aesthetic in nature. Driven more by a moral materialism than a desire to educate young housewives about daily domestic duties, Cook preached the benefits of an aesthetic lifestyle for personal character. Cook’s work ushered in a new industry in home decoration publishing, as over twenty books and serial magazine articles, as well as numerous smaller pieces on the topic, were printed between 1878 and 1885. *Scribner’s* devoted substantial space to the series, which consisted of one hundred and twenty three pages in eleven installments and included an astonishing one hundred and nine illustrations. Recognizing its strong popularity, upon the printing of the final installment in May of 1877, Scribner’s and Co. negotiated with Cook to publish the series as a book.

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51 While “character” was important to both the Beechers and Cook, its improvement was achieved by very different means. Cook was more interested in “uplifting the soul” by surrounding oneself with beautiful, decorative (and manufactured) objects, while the Beechers encouraged character development by taking charge of one’s home and family through one’s own knowledge and initiative. For a detailed comparison of Cook to other contemporary writers on household decoration see Yount, 233-8. For an overview of household art literature in this period see Martha McClaugherty, “Household Art: Creating the Artistic Home, 1868-93,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 18 (Spring 1983): 1-26.
entitled *House Beautiful: Essays on Beds and Tables, Stools and Candlesticks* (figures 2.8 and 2.9).\(^{52}\)

A departure from the more practical writers of the period such as the Beecher sisters, Cook was more apt to tell his reader what to buy and where to buy it, rather than how to fix it. His series explained the most recent developments in the decorative arts in both England and America, and its accompanying images gave readers ideas as to how they might incorporate some of the objects or decorative styles into their own homes. The lavish images were not only a means of illustration and display, but also encouraged the production and consumption of specialized pieces of furniture, ceramics, glassware and other items that were just being introduced in the trend-setting showrooms of Herter Brothers and Cottier and Company. While encouraging his readers to surround themselves with the unique and the beautiful, Cook denounced mass produced furniture and its de-skilling of craftsman with its machine made commodities. Drawing on many ideas of the British reformers, Cook’s arguments for the importance of design and workmanship prefigure the socialist efforts of the Arts and Crafts Movement at the end of the nineteenth century in America.

Gilder respected Cook for his direct, authoritative voice and shared in his aesthetic preferences. Given Cook’s critical reputation, his background in the publishing industry as well as architecture and design, his relationship with American artists, and his exposure to the decorative arts both in London and Paris, Gilder selected him as the ideal

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\(^{52}\) Clarence Cook, *House Beautiful: Essays on Beds and Tables, Stools and Candlesticks* (New York: Scribner, Armstrong & Co., 1878). The book’s cover (figure 2.8) was designed by Daniel Cottier, and its introduction acknowledges him “as friend and artist, [to whom] the author has been constantly indebted for advice and practical help;” its frontispiece (figure 2.9) was a reproduction of Walter Crane’s illustration “My Lady’s Chamber.”
writer to introduce the American people to the current trends in the furniture and design of the Aesthetic Movement.\(^{53}\) Born a generation earlier than Gilder, Cook initially studied architecture and landscape design with Andrew Jackson Downing and Calvert Vaux.\(^{54}\) Cook began his career in journalism in 1854 as an art critic for the *Independent*, a weekly New York paper, and as mentioned above, in 1863 he helped found the Association for the Advancement of Truth in Art, serving as the first editor of its journal, the *New Path*, a vehicle for Ruskinian ideals in America. The following year he took a job as a critic for the prestigious *New York Daily Tribune* and in 1870 was dispatched to Paris, returning after a year to write for the paper in New York City. A member of Gilder’s circle, Cook was also an early supporter of the Society of American Artists.

Unique for his time and unlike most of his colleagues in this immature field, Cook saw it as his mission to privilege, judge and rank, rather than merely describe and discuss.\(^{55}\) Regarded as a “brilliant pioneer,” Cook represents a rupture in the style of American art criticism; Gilder, gambling that the American public would join in his appreciation of the critic’s frank opinions, assessments and declarations, published his work frequently in the

\(^{53}\) For a detailed summary of Cook’s life and work as well as a comprehensive list of his writing and bibliography, see Burke et.al., 412-414.

\(^{54}\) Downing’s ideas, many drawn from A.W.N. Pugin, had a lasting effect on Cook’s approach to architecture. For more on Cook’s early education see Barbara Jean Stephanic, “Clarence Cook’s Role as Art Critic, Advocate for Professionalism, Educator and Arbiter of Taste in America” (PhD diss., University of Maryland, 1997).

\(^{55}\) Mancini notes that Cook is paid more attention by today’s art historians as his bold and direct style most closely resembles that of contemporary critics. For an extensive discussion of Cook as critic see her chapter, “Professionalism and a New Aesthetic Order,” 99-131, particularly 102-109. For more on the immature nature of American art criticism and its straightforward journalistic style of reporting prior to the 1870s see Dearinger.
mid 1870s. Gilder and Cook shared a common desire to educate and expose middle class readers to the current tastes and trends popular in England, to support artists in their circle, and to encourage both the proper consumption and production of these aesthetic objects and environments in America.

Aware of the strong popularity of images and the need for a series of this type to provide numerous examples of particular pieces and styles, Gilder insured that the articles were packed with copious illustrations; often two pictures of particular objects were published on the same page, or an entire half of a page would contain an image of a densely rich interior, laden with decorative details. No other popular monthly had come close to devoting such extensive resources and space to the subject of home decoration. Cook worked side by side with his illustrators, often having them replicate objects on view at the New York City showrooms, or calling for them to create new designs that embodied particular ideas he put forth in the text. In addition to providing detailed information on these aesthetic interiors, the lavish illustrations set the tone for the entire series and created lasting images of the American Aesthetic Movement, inspiring a new generation of decorative artists. Its two most prominent illustrators, Lathrop and Maria

56 Writing Cook’s condensed biography in the “Dictionary of Architects, Artisans, Artists, and Manufacturers’ in In Pursuit of Beauty; Catherine Hoover Voorsanger states, “Clarence Chatham Cook is regarded as a brilliant pioneer in American art criticism. For a period of fifty years, his intelligent, frank and frequently scathing commentary on art and architecture was a refreshing antidote to the colorless verbiage characteristic of most nineteenth-century journalism on the subjects.” Burke, 412.

57 For example, Cook had Francis Lathrop design the table seen in Figure 2.10, “No. 8 Coffee Table, À la Turque” for his discussion of side-tables used in a dining-room as a dumb waiter. “The tops of these tables revolve and can be turned down so as to be set at one side, where they take up but little room..Cut No.8 is an example of one of these small tables, designed by Mr. Frank Lathrop on a Turkish theme, and drawn by him also.” Cook (October 1876): 807. Lathrop’s image “No. 5 Chair and Table from Cottier’s” represents one of many furniture pieces reproduced in the series from actual items at Cottiers and Herter Brothers (see figure 2.44).
Oakey, were frequent contributors to *Scribner’s* and participants in the formation and early exhibitions of the Society of American Artists. In his initial piece Cook introduced Lathrop as the artist who would be credited throughout the series as its primary illustrator and identified him with the “new men” of the 1870s: “Mr. Lathrop [is] taking a flying vacation from the company of the young men who are bringing back the golden days of art in England, to draw these things for us.”

Lathrop was well suited for the task of conveying new trends in aesthetic design as he had recently returned from three years in England (1870-73) where he had studied under Whistler, Ford Madox Brown, Burne-Jones, Spencer Stanhope and Morris; thus he was well acquainted with the decorative arts and the philosophical ideas of the British reformers, particularly those of Morris and his associates. Lathrop was also making his mark in American art at the time, as La Farge’s primary assistant for the interior decoration of Trinity Church, taking on the jobs of designer, decorator and mural painter. Along with La Farge, Lathrop helped to organize the “protest exhibition” at Cottier and Company in 1875, which ultimately led to the creation of the SAA, discussed in depth in Chapter III. The series is notable as Cook specifically referred to both Lathrop and Oakey by name on numerous occasions, a rare occurrence for illustrators, who, with the exception of *Scribner’s* earlier protégé, Thomas Moran, generally remained anonymous during the period.

Cook’s series supported the careers of many native decorative artists while serving as blatant advertisements for selected American furniture designers and their

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58 Cook (June 1875):182.
59 For more on Lathrop, La Farge and the work at Trinity Church, see Chapter VI.
60 The exhibitors in the show formed the initial group of artists who would go on to organize themselves as the Society of American Artists. For more on the SAA and *Scribner’s/Gilder’s* role in its establishment, see Chapter III.
showrooms. In preparation of his series, Cook frequently worked with particular designers associated with Cottier’s and Herter Brothers, and mentions them when discussing many of the illustrated objects: “Next to making simplicity charming, the Cottiers have done us the greatest service, in showing us how to unite usefulness and beauty. All that they manufacture is made for every-day use, and will stand service.” 61 “Mr. Herter has taken pains to prove how much he has in common with me in matters of taste by offering to execute a piece for me in which I might wish to illustrate my own notions.” 62 While Cook often recommended many of Morris’ textiles, carpets, and wallpapers as the standards for home decoration, he did remind readers that similar styles could be purchased through shops in New York. The series endorsed the use of decorative artists/designers/architects including Russell Sturgis, Alexander Sandier (Herter Brothers), George Babb, and James Inglis (Cottier’s), as well as La Farge and Lathrop, who could all be hired to solve the problem of “How to Present a Wall;” Lathrop and Sandier designed specific pieces for the text, including respectively “A Cupboard of To-day,” and “The Housekeeper’s Friend” (figure 2.11 and 2.12). 63

Lamenting on the poor state of the decorative arts in America, evidenced even in

61 Cook (January 1876): 354.
62 Cook (April 1876): 818.
63 Cook (January 1876): 346. Cook recommended a number of popular professionals for decorating purposes, citing, “good guides” such as Sturgis, Sandier, Babb, Inglis, La Farge, and Lathrop as “accomplished architects and artists [who]could solve his doubt, and make him glad he had had it.” With the exception of La Farge, the other “guides” are less familiar to modern audiences. Russell Sturgis was a well-known architect who studied under Leopold Eidlitz and designed a number of buildings for Yale University in the 1860s and 70s; later in his life he was a recognized art and architectural critic who wrote for Scribner’s. Alexander Sandier, a Frenchman, worked for Herter Brothers in the 1870s and many of his furniture designs were illustrated by Cook in his articles on home decoration. The architect George F. Babb designed a number of highly regarded churches during the 1870s. James Inglis, originally from Scotland, came to America to work with Daniel Cottier, owner of Cottier and Co. and managed the New York shop.
Scribner’s own coverage of the Fair and its exclusion of American objects, Cook laid the blame on dealers who found it cheaper to “‘convey’ foreign designs than to employ men who could invent fresh designs and patterns.” Cook believed that in order for the field to have an “American impulse,” artists outside of the decorative trades needed to make their own designs and get them executed. Cook took his role seriously, using American designers and illustrators to create objects and illustrations for his texts while encouraging native painters to expand their activities to include decorative tiles or painted furniture: “We have no painting or sculpture that can fairly be called ‘decorative’ and we never shall have, until our artists get down from their high-horses and condescend to paint our walls for us.”

These articles encouraged the development of a new type of American artist, one who blurred the roles of decorator, designer, and painter, and was concerned with the whole environment.

While Cook’s authoritative text in “Beds and Tables” clearly promoted the American decorative arts on a number of levels, I would argue that its illustrations were its most powerful asset in terms of their ability to speak directly to Scribner’s target audience for the series, the upwardly mobile, middle class American female. Page after page of images depicted this young woman in a variety of circumstances to which impressionable wives and mothers of the time could easily relate. Illustrations such as “You have Waked Me too Soon, I Must Slumber Again,” “French Bureau, with Fine Brass Mounts,” “And All Arabia Breathes From Yonder Box” and “A Half-Way House” made women the central subject of the image as they fully occupied decorative chairs, beds and dressing rooms, surrounded by feminine, aesthetic objects. They are portrayed

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64 Cook (April 1877): 818-9; (May 1877): 7.
to be “at home” in these spaces, with shoes placed strategically on the floor, drawers opening toward them and the flowing drapery of their clothing suggesting a sense of comfort and ease (figures 2.13, 2.14, 2.15, and 2.16). Many of the images also subtly imply that their female subjects are cultured and learned. For example, the young woman portrayed in “What Do You Read, My Lady?” is strategically placed at an angle to the shelves behind her laden with books and topped with artistic pieces, including a plaster cast of the Venus de Milo (figure 2.17). In “A Screen of Books” we find a similar setting with the female subject framed by bookshelves on either side topped with Japanese porcelains and casts of Michelangelo’s Night and Day (figure 2.18). Young children are also featured, playing games with each other or with their pets and surrounded by elaborate chairs, sideboards and decorative bric-a-brac in “A Jacobean Chair” and “The Children’s Quarter of an Hour” (figures 2.19 and 2.20). But it is the cultured and domestic female who is clearly the star attraction of the series as demonstrated in “But Soft! What Light Through Yonder Window Breaks!”; the image’s clear reference to Shakespeare’s Juliet literally sets off the young woman in a decorative frame of curtains, flowers and a well read book on a delicate antique table (figure 2.21). Cook and Gilder used the power of these illustrations not only to speak and appeal directly to their intended audience but also to mold and shape it.

An important aspect of many of these illustrations is their ability to create recessional space, visually inviting the reader into their decorative interiors. Almost all of the series’ pictures of living rooms, bedrooms, hearths and libraries are based on diagonal lines, creating a type of entry into the picture and a sense that these spaces could be inhabited. For example, in “A Bed is the Most Delightful Retreat Known to Man” and
“ Curtain for an Every-Day Window” the bedroom and living room are shown on an angle, with both the back and the side wall displayed (figures 2.22 and 2.23). Lathrop used this device frequently and effectively as in “The ‘Last Sweet Thing’ in Corners” which gives a hint at the piano in the next room behind the main hall; “A Corner Fire-Place” which draws the viewer into the hearth; and in “A Cozy Corner” whose use of diagonal placement for its featured chair, table and carpet keeps the eye in constant motion. These images encourage the viewer to visually explore and to “happen upon” unique aesthetic objects “hidden” in these rich interiors (figures 2.24, 2.25 and 2.26).

Even when depicting particular objects such as “Hanging Shelf and Cabinet,” and “A Bit of Regnault,” Lathrop uses strong angles to aid in visual entry; this is even more obvious when comparing these images to the illustrations of English decorative pieces at the Centennial as found in Harper’s Weekly (figures 2.27, 2.28 and 2.4). Depicted straight on and classically balanced, these images do not provide the spatial illusion found in Lathrop’s illustrations. While the primary subject of pictures such as “Chinese Etrargère with Cupboard” and “A Surprise Party” is similar to the those of the Japanese bronze and lacquer work in the images found in Harper’s Weekly, Lathrop’s depiction of these objects, set at an angle to entice the viewer to look inside the pieces, provides a sense of “living” with these objects (figure 2.29, 2.30 and 2.7). As such, through their ability to convey a sense of physical movement through a livable space, to visually encourage readers to enter these rooms, and to offer a sense of vitality and three dimensionality to particular objects, the series’ images were vital to Cook’s creation and promotion of an American aesthetic interior.
In the opening pages of his first installment, Cook directly stated his intentions for the series:

My purpose is not to recommend eccentricity, nor even a modified Bohemianism. I have no mission to preach a crusade against luxury and bad taste; nor have I a hope that anything I can say will bring back simplicity and good taste… I can only say that, after much tribulation, I have reached a point where simplicity seems to me a good part of beauty, and utility only beauty in a mask; and I have no prouder nor more pretending aim than to suggest how this truth may be expressed in the furniture and decoration of our homes.  

Throughout the text there are a number of underlying themes that Cook stressed to support his theory on beauty, simplicity and utility: the need to rethink the design of the home and the purpose of its rooms to respond to changes in modern life; the impact of new definitions of the beautiful derived from the British reformers and the Aesthetic Movement in England; the recent influence of Japanese design in the home, with its emphasis on asymmetry; the new interest in American antiques and vernacular architecture along with an anti-modern desire to reduce dependence on modern technology and machinery; and the importance of recognizing artistic excellence in craftsmanship, privileging objects made by hand rather than machine. These ideas, some of which were echoed in Mitchell’s coverage of the Centennial, formed the basis for much of the underlying philosophy of the American Aesthetic Movement, which Cook introduced through the series to many American readers for the first time. An analysis of these themes as they appeared throughout the articles demonstrates how “Beds and Tables” served not only as a means of demonstration and display of new aesthetic styles,

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65 Cook (June 1875): 172.
but also as a vehicle for the dissemination of the ideology of the British reformers. A close reading of the text also points out its inherent tensions and paradoxical nature in its attempt to democratize an aesthetic movement whose ideas and objects were not always accessible to or welcomed by the American middle class.

In the opening of his first installment, Cook asked the reader to examine how he lives now, and to decorate his house according to that lifestyle, rather than out-dated ways of living: “Just let us consult our own desires and needs…The best plan is to know first, as near as may be, how we ought to live externally, and then to surround ourselves with the things best suited for that mode of life, whatever it may be.”\textsuperscript{66} Cook addressed the modern reader in his attempt to encourage changes in home design to reflect new trends in daily life. With the male of the household working outside of the home, the house had transformed into a refuge for the middle class family; as such, its rooms and their purposes should reflect that change, and the desires and needs of children must now be taken into account. Accompanying these modern work and schooling habits, leisure also became a more integral aspect of American life, and Cook encouraged home-owners to incorporate the popularity of new pastimes into their daily lives. This is most evident in Cook’s discussion of the parlor, which he chose to rename “the living-room,” conveying a sense of informality and relaxation rather than the rigidity associated with more solemn, traditional occasions held, most often on Sundays and religious holidays, in the parlor. Due to the small size of urban homes, this type of room was generally given over to a more formal space and, as such, the happiness of domestic life was sacrificed for a society that existed outside of the home, for the benefit of strangers who had little to

\textsuperscript{66} Cook (June 1875):170.
do with the inner workings of the family. Cook took issue with the amount of money wasted for expensive parlor furnishings that would not be enjoyed by all who lived in the home: “These chapters are not written for rich people’s reading, as none but rich people can afford to have a room in their houses set apart for the pleasures of idleness.” In order that they might concentrate their leisure, in-door hours in one place, homeowners should not attempt to keep up a room in which “they themselves shall be strangers.”

Reflecting contemporary Victorian ideas of the value of children and domesticity, Cook endorsed a new type of home design that abandoned any type of “parlor,” and designated the largest room as an informal living space that celebrated the American family. He participated in the period’s cult-like attitude toward childhood as symbolic of a lost innocence that could not be recaptured in an industrial world.

A vital aspect of Cook’s overall plan and Gilder’s larger agenda, the living room was to serve not only as a place for family gatherings, but also as a site of education and instruction, in which the children of the household acquired an understanding and awareness of taste in an environment that lends itself to the task. Objects in the living room were to be both observed and utilized. Cook encouraged the reader to establish the living room as the foundation of the home, and to furnish it with the best designed and highest quality pieces, each purchased with a specific purpose in mind. Within the living room the fire-place, along with its mantel-piece, must represent the spiritual and intellectual center of the family life and should therefore display a “few beautiful and chosen things” that not only represented the family’s interests, but also “lift us up, to feed

67 Ibid., 172.
thought and feeling.” 69 Cook reinforced this with illustrations of mantel-pieces laden with decorative objects and surrounded by women and children, further promoting the notion of the aesthetic interior as a means by which to educate the family, elevate the self, and to rise above the mundane in a cultivation of the beautiful (figures 2.3, 2.31, 2.32, and 2.33). The series not only provided advice on the purchase of basic items of furniture, but also in both text and illustration demonstrated how the homeowner should incorporate “the ornaments of life – casts, pictures, engravings, bronzes, books. . . the nourishers of life’s feast” into the home as an essential aspect of room decoration. These objects “ought to represent the culture of the family,- what is their taste, what feeling they have for art; it should represent themselves, and not other people.” 70 The “culture of the family” appealed to the upwardly mobile middle class that desired to enrich their lives through aesthetic refinement, with Scribner’s and Cook guiding the way, playing an active role in this democratization of cultural access. 71 However, while Cook addressed the “common man,” it is clear throughout the series that most of the objects and furniture he recommended were extremely expensive; he often commented on letters he received complaining about the high cost of the illustrated pieces he endorsed. For Cook, these “ornaments of life” were subliminally associated with wealth and social station, and served as a means to confirm one’s status in an unstable time of growing immigration. The series asked the middle class reader to examine the conditions of contemporary, urban life, and to consider the moral, educational and aesthetic needs that resulted from that life; it underscored the importance of the arts as a vital part of modernity and the

69 Cook (January 1876): 352.
70 Cook (June 1875): 174.
71 For more on this notion of the middle class desire for culture, see Trachtenberg, Chapter Five, “The Politics of Culture,” 140-181.
need to surround oneself with decorative objects inscribed with cultivated taste. The economic realities of achieving this endeavor were not addressed.

Cook’s series on “Beds and Tables” encouraged and participated in the self-conscious support and promotion of the decorative arts in America, and frequently looked to its counterpart in England for inspiration. The movement was driven on both sides of the Atlantic by the social consciousness and the self-imposed mission of many artists and designers to improve the taste of their public and ultimately the actual conditions of their lives. It sought to stem the aesthetic decline of the industrial age by producing objects that were both useful and beautiful. In this effort, Cook’s series incorporated many of the motifs, designs and colors of the British Aesthetic Movement; emphasizing the pleasures of beauty, a vital aspect of the decorative arts revival in England, he encouraged Americans to recognize the importance of living in a “house beautiful.” 72

Cook frequently referred to the ideas and designs of the British reformers, particularly when citing specific objects by Morris, which he described throughout the series. Calling for truth in decoration, Cook’s ideology drew directly from Morris:

“The beauty of simplicity in form; the pleasure to be had from lines well thought out; the agreeableness of unbroken surfaces where there is no gain in breaking them; harmony in color, and, on the whole, the ministering to the satisfaction we all have in not seeing the whole of everything at once.” 73 He applied the Pre-Raphaelite notion against “the false” in painting to his belief that an object could derive elegance from its usefulness and need

72 The term “house beautiful,” while originally introduced by John Bunyan, was used widely throughout the Aesthetic Movement by writers as diverse as Charles Eastlake, Robert Louis Stevenson, Mark Twain, Walter Pater and Oscar Wilde. See Freedman (1986), 106.

73 Cook (February 1876): 499-500.
not be unnecessarily decorated with superfluous ornament merely for the sake of decoration itself. In his third installment entitled “Still More About the Living Room,” Cook warned against the popular habit of over-decoration, and eschewed the continual need of ornamentation, calling for a place to rest the “tired eye.” In order to provide examples of furniture that embodied this ornament-free simplicity, illustrations of particular pieces were based directly on Morris’ designs; for example, the image of a “Coffee-table with Chair, Both of Blackwood,” is a recognizable variation of his Sussex chair (figures 2.34 and 2.35). Cook privileged his fireplaces throughout the series with images conveying Morris’ call for beauty and utility in their simplicity; crediting Morris with a combination of efficiency and taste, the fireplaces are as “good as they are handsome, and give out as much heat as if they were ugly and clumsy (figures 2.36 and 2.37).”

In a discussion of color, Cook described the hues that were currently being introduced into America during the period, particularly the standard colors associated with Morris’ textiles and wallpapers. These subdued colors set the tone for aesthetic interior decoration, which embraced a range of muted greens and khakis and rarely allowed for pure white. These colors were clearly an acquired taste for the American public, and Cook sought to describe them as accurately as possible, given the lack of any color illustrations. Those who experienced the aesthetic palette for the first time at the Centennial would have been familiar with the greens and browns discussed in Cook’s text:

Cottier & Co. have serges in colors whose delightfulness we all recognize in the pictures that Alma Tadema, and Morris, and Burne-Jones and Rossetti paint,

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74 Ibid., 503.
colors that have been turning all the plain girls to beauties of late, and making the beauties more dangerous than ever – the mistletoe green, the bule-green, the ducks-egg, the rose-amber, the pomegranate-flower, and so forth, and so on, colors which we owe to the English poet-artists who are oddly lumped together as the Pre-Raphaelites, and who made the new rainbow to confound the scientific decorators who were so sure of what colors would go together, and what colors wouldn’t. Whoever would get a new sensation, and know for the first time what delicate or rich fancies of delightful color and softness of touch can be worked with silk and wool, must go to the Messrs. Cottiers’ shop and learn for himself.\(^{75}\)

The use of these secondary colors was a result of the aesthetic reaction to the bright harsh colors common in mid-century, which were popular in the United States if one considers interior portraits of the time (figure 2.38). Morris in particular advised against the use of basic primary colors, and the palette in his Green Dining-room at the South Kensington Museum became a standard for many architects, designers and artists associated with the Aesthetic Movement in both England and America (figure 2.39).\(^{76}\) Promoting the color scheme as a more natural, modern alternative, Cook encouraged readers to cover their walls with the “pomegranate-flower,” a well-known Morris design.

Throughout the series, the illustrations reinforced the reformers’ ideals of beauty, simplicity and utility and also conveyed the overall tone of the British Aesthetic Movement. Many of the images looked like they could be taken directly from contemporary English periodicals and the tall lean women featured resembled the sensuously dressed ladies who frequented the Grosvenor Gallery (figure 2.40). In fact, the female subject of “A Screen of Books” (see figure 2.18) looks as if she has just stepped out of a painting by Whistler. The illustrations captured the organic nature of British design as well as the luxurious decorative atmosphere of English interiors at the time, many of which could be witnessed first hand at the Centennial. Cook had a great

\(^{75}\) Cook (June 1875): 179.
\(^{76}\) Aslin, 63.
deal in common with the British reformers in his desire to establish “standards of beauty:"

It seems to me that by showing many handsome things more may be done to educate people’s taste than by deforming our page with ugly things. The objects figured in these articles are, in the writer’s esteem, beautiful, or handsome, or useful and as such he shows them. The reader is asked to accept them as standards, and to use them as such in fitting up his own house, or in judging the way in which other people have fitted up theirs.  

Like his British counterparts, Cook chose to overlook the difficulties in affording these standards, as his call for an aesthetic interior as an extension of a democratic America was often unattainable.  

Given Cook’s close ties with the Pre-Raphaelite Movement in the 1860s through his longstanding involvement with the New Path, it is not surprising that he should advocate the ideology of the British reformers and their designs to his American readers.  

During Cook’s time overseas in the early 1870s, he was able to experience first hand the impact and influence that Japanese prints, ceramics, and overall design were having on artists in France and England. Prior to the Civil War and the opening to the West of Japanese ports, few middle-class Americans had any contact with Japanese design.  

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77 Cook (April 1876): 81. (my emphasis).  
78 During his time as an overseas correspondent in Paris for the Tribune, Cook was friendly with James Jackson Jarves, author of the Art Idea (1864) and a recognized collector of Japanese artifacts; Jarves was living in Paris while Cook was working there, and Cook must have had access to his collection. Cook mentions Jarves’ recent book, Glimpse at the Art of Japan, (1876), as a helpful source for Japanese scrolls (April 1876: 818). Japanese art was seen on display for the first time by a British audience in the 1862 International Exhibition in London; this exposure led to the creation of an “Anglo Japanese” style of furniture, inspired by the work of the architect E.W. Godwin. The style was simpler and lighter than its “Eastlake” counterpart. In 1875, Arthur Liberty opened his shop in London, making Japanese artifacts available for the first time to a small and knowledgeable clientele, including Morris, the Pre-Raphaelite painters and Whistler. For more on the emergence of Japonisme in England see Aslin, Chapter Four, “The Japanese Taste,” 79-96.
Gilder shared Cook’s interest in Japanese art and recognized how it had radically transformed the nature of painting in Europe in the 1860s and 70s. Anticipating its impact on Americans, particularly with the approaching Centennial, Gilder sought to introduce his readers to Japanese style and design at this pivotal period in both Mitchell’s account and Cook’s discussion of the house beautiful, as well as in a number of articles dedicated solely to the art of Japan.

In keeping with his intent to expose his readers to current aesthetic trends that would be prominent at the Fair, Gilder published an article entitled “Some Pictures From Japan,” by Noah Brooks that appeared in the December 1875 issue (figures 2.41, 2.42, and 2.43). Extensively illustrated with reproductions of a variety of Japanese images, Brook’s article was one of the earliest on the subject to appear in a popular monthly journal. In its attempt to introduce the art of Japanese prints to Scribner’s readers, the article sought to convey the aesthetic value of non-Western artistic principles to the American public. With its substantial presentation of a wide variety of Japan prints, the illustrations were essential to the text’s presentation and explanation of fundamental aspects of Japanese art: its absence of linear perspective; its use of line and form to convey distance; and its ability to express both action and emotion with a few brief strokes of the pen. Reproducing Japanese landscapes, animal prints, images of birds and flowers, and caricatures of daily life, Scribner’s provided its readers with a thorough introduction to the work of well known printmakers such as Hokusai and Hiroshige as well as many anonymous artists; the text also captured the sense of Eastern humor and

beauty behind these images. Brooks enlightened his readers as to the qualities of these prints that so appealed to artists of the period, particularly their ability to discover artistic forms in seemingly common natural objects, and to reveal the essence of those objects through an economy of line and an awareness of texture on the printed page. The naturalness, simplicity and quality of these images were highly valued and the reader was encouraged to observe and appreciate this non-Western art form in both the article’s text and, more importantly, in its illustrations, which provided a comprehensive view of Japanese prints to many Americans for the first time.

Cook also used his articles as a means of explaining to his readers how and why Japan had had such a profound and inspiring impact on the contemporary decorative arts in the West. Effectively introducing and promoting Japanese design as an important part of American home decoration, the images throughout the series incorporate an eclectic mix of fans, screens, scrolls and blue and white ceramics. The illustrations in *Scribner’s*, both of popular Japanese prints and artistic objects, gave Americans a chance to see, many for the first time, the works of art that influenced Whistler, Tiffany, and La Farge, and provided an important context for the reception and translation of international influences. Like Brooks’ article on Japanese prints, Cook’s series represented one of the earliest attempts in a popular monthly to explain to American readers, in both text and illustration, the value of asymmetry, naturalism and simplicity of Japanese design. Through its extensive images that selectively placed Japanese objects in contemporary

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80 See Mancini, 12-14 on how art world institutions brought foreign styles, such as those from Japan, into the public eye, thus laying the foundations of modernism in the twentieth century.
interiors, the series also demonstrated how readers could easily assimilate Eastern aesthetics into their middle class homes.

In his discussion of Japanese asymmetry in design in “More about the Living Room,” Cook encouraged readers to disregard the confining laws of balance and artifice when decorating the home. Stating upfront his primary purpose of empowering the homeowner to break from convention, Cook warned his audience against following the fashions of the wealthy, whose rooms, while filled with beautifully ordered pictures, bric-a-brac, and other evidences of wealth and travel, seemed “unhappy” and “discordant.”

Cook suggests that the best way for modern homeowners to avoid this sense of discord, is to look at nature, or- if they can’t get into the country- to take the next best thing, and study the Japanese decoration on books and trays and tea-pots – with a view to ridding their minds of the belief that things ought to be in suites… that there must always be a middle and sides – laws [for] tradesmen and conservative, safe respectable furnishers, but not laws with which we are concerned.81

In his promotion of Japanese design, Cook endorsed a new style of naturalism and mixing of foreign influences, moving away from the traditional sense of a rigid symmetry and encouraging a more creative play between form, color and texture. Cook shared the English Aesthetic Movement’s distrust of dogma regarding beauty or proportion, preferring a discriminating eclecticism guided by artistic sensibility.82 Originality was highly valued and achieved not through precise imitation, but rather by combining elements from different styles. Cook’s emphasis on the asymmetry and naturalness of the Japanese aesthetic sought to redefine the way in which Scribner’s readers experienced space and also encouraged the adoption of a substantially more complex pattern of

81 Cook (January 1876): 345.
82 For more on the English Aesthetic Movement’s distrust of formal treatises and dogma, see Girouard, 4 – 7.
international styles into the American middle class home than had existed there up until this time.

In his discussion of “bric-à-brac,” Cook called on readers to surround themselves and their families with Japanese objects to enhance an awareness of their aesthetic qualities, and to improve the sense of touch and sight of all who encountered them. While the small ivory and wood carvings might resemble toys, a child’s taste and delicacy of perception will be more surely fed by the constant habit of seeing and playing with a few of the best bits of ivory carving his parents can procure – than by a room full of figures like those of Mr. Rogers…. [these objects] do nothing but help us in learning to know and admire the best art.83

Although Cook generally held bric-a-brac in high disdain, he did believe that Japanese carvings, such as the netsuke described above, had an inherent value in the development of children’s sense perceptions and taste.

Cook listed a number of stores in New York that had recently begun to sell decorative arts from the Far East and recommended the Anglo-Japanese furniture designed by E.W. Godwin that was extremely popular in England. The series included a number of illustrations of these Japanese-inspired furnishings (figures 2.34, 2.44, and 2.45). Cook shared Godwin’s admiration of Japanese art for its elements of understatement and restraint, and the images of numerous pieces derived directly from Godwin’s designs sought to convey these aesthetic ideas to American middle-class consumers.

In his discussion of these decorative objects, Cook explained to Scribner’s readers, in both text and image, the importance of the underlying visual and compositional qualities of Japanese art. According to Cook, the value of Eastern art was

83 Cook (April 1876): 819.
its ability to “rebuke” our internal desire for precision and symmetry and to encourage the appreciation of the charm of irregularity. This asymmetry was the essence of Japanese style and vital to the reform precepts of the Aesthetic Movement. Cook saw it as an essential principle of all the best decorative art, as “all such design is as far removed as possible from mechanical assistance and has no other rule or measure than the eye acting through the hand.”

Cook’s emphasis on naturalism and the non-mechanical, placed him squarely within Morris’ camp as both a tastemaker and a social reformer, spreading the style of the Aesthetic Movement, infused with the idea of natural organic design and the value of hand-crafted goods. The series also participated in the dilemma of the Movement’s reformers and designers, who sought to promote a décor inspired by the anti-technological; however, the popularity of this décor ultimately resulted in the mass production of lower quality reproductions of Japanese fans, scrolls and other “bric-a-brac” which Cook himself decried.

In addition to Cook’s emphasis on the need to incorporate the recently discovered styles of Japan and other Eastern designs, he also encouraged his readers to look to their own historical past, and to include early American objects in their homes. Similar to the British Aesthetic Movement’s re-evaluation of earlier English period styles, these articles taught Americans to appreciate and incorporate Colonial pieces into their current lifestyles; the series also helped to fuel the popularity of the Colonial exhibits and period rooms at the Centennial. With Cook’s promotion of the craftsmanship and “honesty” of these objects, the series acted as a major stimulus in the revival of early American furniture and profoundly influenced the first generation of serious antique collectors in

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These antiques were valued not only for their clean, simple designs, but also for their sense of romance and nostalgia, conjuring up memories of an earlier, more innocent pre-war period. Sentimental associations with an Arcadian age, while not entirely justified, led to a rapid rise in the popularity of American furniture in the late 1870s, and to the development of the commercial antique trade. Throughout the series, Cook instructed his readers to incorporate American objects into their homes as visual touchstones; given their historical ties, they did not look affected, strange or pretentious, but rather native and natural.

Cook admitted that it was no longer as easy to find early American furniture, and encouraged readers to value inherited pieces (a sign of his perceived readership) as a means for understanding a “shared past;” early Colonial and Revolutionary furniture could reveal enduring principles of art and taste to their owners, and also recall the unified nature of the country during its fight for independence. Living with these objects, one could absorb the values of one’s ancestors and Americans could come to recognize aspects of the Colonial era, an era unencumbered with national division, which had been previously unknown to them. When purchasing antiques, readers were urged to search out objects that have been weathered by age and use; as demonstrated in the illustration entitled “Old Colony Days,” “newness” was not an admirable trait (figure 2.46).

Explaining through text and image the importance of proportion and simplicity in Colonial antiques, Cook attempted to retrain his reader’s eyes to appreciate moderation in furniture design. Critical of the popular, ornate “massive” style of contemporary furniture, known as “Eastlake” after its original designer, Cook described its “clumsy”

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appearance in American parlors and bedrooms.” Widely available, Eastlake reproductions were generally mass-produced with cheaply made ornate moldings, purely for the sake of ornament. In contrast, Colonial furniture embodied a type of delicacy and elegance, and Cook was clear that it should not be directly copied, as the proportion and “spirit” of each unique piece could never be accurately reproduced.

Cook’s endorsement of early American furniture throughout “Beds and Tables” was a significant departure from the antebellum view of many Colonial furnishings as crude and unsophisticated. These articles taught Americans to appreciate and incorporate these Revolutionary pieces into their current lifestyles as Cook adopted the English Aesthetic Movement’s appropriation of earlier British historical styles and applied it to an American context. Just as Morris looked back to medieval England as the standard for all artistic production in a pre-machine era, Cook suggested that the anonymous carpenters, wood-workers, and silversmiths of the Colonial period should be held up as the ultimate standard in terms of their skilled, individualized workmanship and dedication to their craft. Both the articles’ text and illustrations encouraged Americans to revive and embellish Colonial renditions of eighteenth century styles.

Positioning himself as simultaneously progressive and nostalgic, Cook was quite vehement in his opposition to modern conveniences. Like his counterparts in England, where it became in vogue to be old-fashioned, Cook looked upon technology with suspicion. Gas fixtures were criticized for their inability to reflect their basic purpose or

86 Cook (October 1876): 801. Mentioned above for his book on household taste, Charles Eastlake was also the originator of this “modern-Gothic” style of furniture that was very popular in America until the 1880s; numerous factories mass-produced it in large quantities.
87 Girouard, 5.
material; rather than the rigid right angles of popular fixtures, appropriate designs should reflect “the use they are put to,” and incorporate “flowing, graceful lines,” to suggest the natural properties of the gas itself as well as the essence of light. His admiration of country homes in England, untainted by modern conveniences, mirrored that of his British colleagues who, eschewing modern Gothic, had come to rediscover the Queen Anne style of vernacular architecture in rural farmhouses, and country towns. ⁸⁸

In “Things New and Old,” Lathrop encouraged the adoption of eighteenth-century tastes and values in his illustration of a Colonial sea-side home in Newport restored by Charles McKim; Cook admired McKim’s respect for the original structure of the house and for his skill in subtly incorporating “modern comfort and elegance while keeping true to the spirit of the old time” (figure 2.47). ⁸⁹ Cook’s endorsement of American vernacular architecture and the preservation of Colonial architectural styles, mirrored the efforts of the democratic societies that proponents of the Aesthetic Movement were attempting to advance in England; British reformers spoke out frequently on these vernacular and democratic themes, preferring barns and cottages to castles and manors, and impacted the styles of contemporary architects working in America, such as McKim, H.H. Richardson, and Stanford White. Cook’s articles in Scribner’s sought to bring an appreciation and an awareness of this vernacular style to the American middle class.

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⁸⁸ For more on the appropriation of the “Queen Anne” style in America, see Girouard, 208-223.
⁸⁹ Cook (November 1876) 90. The home was from the early eighteenth century and known as the Thomas Robinson House. For more on the restoration see Antoinette Doving and Vincent Scully, The Architectural Heritage of Newport, Rhode Island, 1640-1918. 2nd edition rev., (C.N. Potter: New York, 1967) 57,167, and 452.
In these articles, Cook attempted to ensure that the Puritan revival was more than a passing fad, resulting from the Centennial and a sense of nostalgia during the time of Reconstruction, and that the popularity of American antiques might be an educational vehicle through which to improve the taste of middle class Americans:

A change is coming over the spirit of our time which has its origin partly, no doubt, in the memorial epoch through which we are passing, but which is also proof that our taste is getting a root in a healthier and more native soil. All this resuscitation of “old furniture” and revival of old simplicity is in reality much more sensible than its seems to be to those who look upon it as only another phase of the ‘Centennial mania.’ It is a fashion, so far as it is a fashion, that has been for working its way down from a circle of rich, cultivated people, to a wider circle of people who are educated, who have natural good taste, but who have not so much money as they could wish.  

Cook used American furniture as a platform to argue for greater access to art objects that had been previously reserved only for the upper classes, but were now being made available, through illustration, for study by Scribner’s readers. While Cook noted that, during the eighteenth century, quality pieces of furniture were owned by all classes of people, regardless of social or economic position, it was clear that in a period of changing social structure, collecting American antiques did connote a certain type of status; owning American antiques was frequently equated with having “taste.” Sparked by Cook’s encouragement, as well as the exposure provided by the Centennial, the general public began to seek out these pieces. This democratizing of the phenomenon led to rapid growth in the market for American antiques in the late 1870s, making actual ownership

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90 Cook (November 1876): 90.
91 For more on the Colonial Revival as an ideological statement of the Anglo-Saxon upper class seeking an antidote to increasing social displacement and its appeal as a nostalgic fiction void of social, class, ethnic or racial conflict see Alan Axelrod, ed., The Colonial Revival in America, (Norton: New York, 1985).
of many of these items out of reach for the average *Scribner’s* reader by the mid-1880s.\textsuperscript{92} The endorsement of American antiques and the need to assimilate their spirit reflected one of *Scribner’s* larger agendas, that of promoting, encouraging, and constructing an authentic American style, which in theory, would be available to all of its citizens. Cook’s desire for this democratization of the decorative arts recalls that of the British reformers’ in both its intent and its inherent paradox, by creating a fashion whose objects would ultimately be unavailable to those for whom they were intended.

Further, while Cook endorsed this democratic American interior, the value system associated with many of these objects was, in reality, markedly upper class and New England based. Here Cook clearly participated in what Roger Stein describes as the commodification of the visual image of old New England by a cultural elite of critics and editors within the publishing industry, who marketed images and texts that were reconstituted as memory.\textsuperscript{93} The series used its colonial images nostalgically to encode values for a lost way of life as Cook protested against present day conditions. An illustration such as Lathrop’s “Things New and Old,” whose upper class sitter is positioned in her colonial Newport home with her back to the viewer, embodied the claim of Northeastern moral and social predominance (figure 2.47). The illustration conjured up the idea of a “beautiful past,” a time when particular moral and aesthetic codes were accepted without question.\textsuperscript{94} In “Old Colony Days” Lathrop assimilates both colonial and

\textsuperscript{92} Marilynn Johnson, “Art Furniture: Wedding the Beautiful to the Useful, “ in Burke, 164.


\textsuperscript{94} In fact, the image prefigures the early twentieth century interior photographs of Wallace Nutting (see figure 2.48), the most active promoter of the colonial ideal; his
British heritage in a way that reclaims the bonds with the British tradition during a period when American Anglo Saxons were feeling themselves to be on the margins of society. These images reinforce the inherent conflict in the series: Was Cook’s program purely to revive American antiques or did he have a larger contemporary agenda as he selectively borrowed from the American past? Was he committed to the actual furniture or the social ideals behind it?

The emergence of standardization through industrial production and the accompanying lack of respect for design and craftsmanship motivated taste-makers throughout the late nineteenth century to take on social causes. Cook was a pioneer in the 1870s as one of the earliest of these American reformers to champion ideas that would ultimately result in the Arts and Crafts Movement of the 1880s and 90s. As Eileen Boris has argued, the history of the Arts and Crafts Movement is a part of the history of the middle class, with its fear of class conflict and its loss of autonomy and independence in the face of immigration and industrialization. 95 By providing *Scribner’s* readers with examples of how to decorate their homes “in good taste,” Cook encouraged his public to reclaim beauty as well as many of the ideas associated with Morris and his Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood; his articles served as a critique of contemporary Victorian taste in their promotion of good craftsmanship, simplicity and utility, and in their call for honesty and truth in materials. “Beds and Tables” reflected *Scribner’s* commitment to this reform movement, as it sought to generate a new respect for painters, artisans,


95 Eileen Boris in Kaplan ed., 216.
designers, and architects who cultivated art in everyday life. Cook’s encomium for John Miller, a sought-after carpenter, summarized this ideal:

the secret of his good workmanship is… that he loves his trade, believes in it, and puts all of his mind, and heart, and character into it. The wood of which my furniture is made has been chosen by him with as much knowledge and care as Van Eyck would have used in selecting a panel for a picture…The construction is as admirable as the material and in it one may see the carpentry of the times of our great grandfathers brought back, for here are no make-shifts, no nails, nor glue – the whole is held together by science and by conscience.\footnote{96}{Cook (January 1876): 355.}

Cook’s high praise for the integrity and sincerity of Miller’s work echoed the efforts of Morris, who campaigned against the poor standards of mass production and the resulting disappearance of honest craftsmanship. The detailed description of Miller’s traditional training also mirrored the guild mentality practiced at Morris and Co. and its disdain of industrial capitalism. Miller provided the model for Morris’ doctrine of “art made by the people for the people as a joy for the maker and the user.”\footnote{97}{Morris quoted in Boris,7.} And yet Cook’s discourse continued to raise the question – Was he truly concerned about the condition of the American craftsman or was he merely promoting a particular type of work which, by the very nature of the craftsmanship, was only accessible to a select few, thereby further reinforcing the class status associated with owning furniture made by artisans such as Miller?

The “missionary” aspect of the English Aesthetic Movement was conveyed throughout the \textit{Scribner’s} series, as Cook used examples of contemporary painters, carpenters, and decorators to convince his readers of the righteous aspect of living a life dedicated to beauty. Like Morris, Cook did not promote “art for art’s sake,” but saw it as a vehicle for the improvement of all classes:
The dirty people, too, who amuse themselves and make clean people miserable by squirting tobacco juice over their own and other people’s floors, must be touched now and then, for even they have sensibilities hid deep beneath their thick skins, by the perception that somebody cares even for them, when they see what taste is expended on the decoration of the spit-boxes which they are all the time engaged in making ineffectual effort to hit.... we see how good a thing it is to introduce Art into every-day life, and to disseminate it widely in order to elevate the masses.98

Cook was at his haughtiest here, not only encouraging a broad American public to reclaim some type of beauty in their lives but also imposing “taste” on those around him, regardless of their situation. The passage testifies to the fact that while the intent was for art to improve the lives of all people, the efforts of the Aesthetic Movement frequently appeared elitist and directed at the upper classes.

“Beds and Tables” stressed the responsibility of the home-owner as consumer, who must wisely select high quality, useful pieces as a means by which to improve not only the value of his home, but also to transform the nature of furniture production in America, which was frequently designed to sell because of its “show.” In an attempt to improve the overall standards of manufacturing, the series provided general guidelines to consumers. The purchase of objects that were slavish imitations, overly decorated without purpose or intent, or lacking any specific function within the home was openly discouraged. Cook shared Morris’ rejection of the bourgeois attitudes of the time and the degradation of craftsmanship under commercialization. Protesting against the mechanical nature of American decoration and calling for reform in design, Cook preached a type of moral aesthetic, attempting to challenge the contemporary devaluation of beauty. Cook’s attack on the commercialism of furniture production did not merely condemn the “ugliness” of mass-produced, tasteless objects, but also sought to democratize the home

98 Cook (February 1876): 500.
decoration industry, as its methods of production were a part of the developing consumer culture of the period. The text encouraged Scribner’s readers to challenge the existing economic system and to stem the decline in contemporary design by supporting the production of unique, beautiful and useful objects: “When a few people who have an educated taste will encourage the production of furniture that is worth admiring and keeping for its own sake, not merely because it is in the fashion, we shall see the turn of the tide.”99 Morris’s philosophy ran throughout these articles, as Cook instructed Scribner’s readers to decorate their homes with objects that were both useful and beautiful, to recognize quality in materials and design, to value craftsmen as artists, and to transform the system of production to improve the quality of life around them.

The period between 1875 and 1877 was a time of dramatic change for Scribner’s, and marked a turning point in the general direction of the periodical and its coverage of the arts. Now in charge of day-to-day operations, Gilder redirected the magazine, sizably increasing its coverage of aesthetic topics, communicating the ideas of British reformers, and publicizing many of the institutions and organizations that helped shape the Aesthetic Movement during its development in the United States. Scribner’s expanding commitment to the decorative arts both fueled and mirrored a rise in the interests of its public, as it became an active agent in the transmission of ideas and images of British Aestheticism to American readers, consumers and producers. Examining its coverage of the Centennial and, more substantially, Clarence Cook’s series on “Beds and Tables,”

99 Ibid.
one witnesses how *Scribner’s* instructed and encouraged Americans to appreciate the arts and to incorporate them into their daily lives as the country entered its second century.

Unlike other popular monthlies, Donald G Mitchell’s “In and About the Fair” presented the Centennial from an aesthetic point of view, with Mitchell suggesting ways in which Americans could draw from the arts of other nations in developing their own distinctive style and taste. Readers were eager to learn from critics such as Mitchell whose expertise in the decorative arts and landscape design gave him a unique perspective on what the Fair had to offer to the American public. Instead of focusing on the spectacular aspects of the Centennial, Mitchell educated his readers on topics of architecture, urban planning, horticulture and the fine and decorative arts; his account was remarkable in its approach, focusing on international influence and aesthetics, rather than national ambition and patriotism. Gilder’s selection of Mitchell, a landscape architect and judge for the Decorative Arts for the United States Centennial Commission, was ideal, given *Scribner’s* larger agenda of edifying its readers in matters of taste and encouraging the development of an American aesthetic through an awareness of all that Europe and Japan had to offer.

Clarence Cook’s series confirmed Gilder’s substantial commitment to the decorative arts as well as the introduction of the ideas of British reformers to the American public, specifically those of William Morris. While offering basic ideas on furnishing the American home, Cook also incorporated an aesthetic philosophy throughout the series, urging middle class consumers to improve their lives by improving their surroundings. Not only did these lavishly illustrated articles on the living room, the dining room and the hall provide an in-depth view of the new “artful interior” of the
period, but for many American readers, they constituted their first introduction to the primary ideals of the Aesthetic Movement: a need to incorporate contemporary lifestyles into home design; an adoption of the artistic styles of English painters and artisans and their new definitions of beauty; an understanding of the underlying principles of the arts of Japan; the importance of appropriating early American traditions into contemporary design practices; and an appreciation for quality craftsmanship. Emphasized throughout the series, these ideas reinforced many of the major themes in Mitchell’s account and in the actual displays at the Centennial, and would become central elements of the Aesthetic Movement in America. In both text and illustration, Cook constructed standards of taste that were widely accepted by his readers. Gilder’s publication of such an extensive series on home decoration confirmed *Scribner’s* role as a national spokesman of Aestheticism both materially and philosophically. Further, like his contemporaries in England, Gilder’s approach did have a somewhat paradoxical nature as the objects and ideas he promoted were often inaccessible in practical economic terms to the middle class readers whose lives he sought to improve.

*Scribner’s* presented “art” as a means to achieve this new spiritual life, in its ability to enlighten, elucidate and uplift. During these years, the periodical itself moved away from proselytizing editorials on Christianity and transformed itself into a vehicle of Aestheticism. Articles on the decorative arts took on a spiritual tone, with greater aesthetic awareness seen as a means by which to improve one’s soul; critics sermonized on the spiritual necessity of surrounding oneself with beauty and heralded artists as proponents of truth in their creation of these objects of reverence. As American society began to question the value of traditional Protestant worship and ritual, *Scribner’s* offered
the socially conscious, spiritual aspects of art, as preached by aesthetic reformers such as Clarence Cook, to its readers as a means to respond to the conditions of contemporary life in post Civil War America. During this time, Gilder recognized the power in his position to make change, and began to develop his “voice” to directly address these issues in his own editorial column in the pages of *Scribner’s*. 
Chapter III. Gilder Finds His Voice, 1875-1878: Developing a New Art Criticism and Aesthetic Philosophy for *Scribner’s*

“It is evidently one thing to interest people in an exhibition of pictures, and another, and a slower process, to educate their taste in art…. No; it is a long and subtile process this of educating the taste either of the individual or of the public in art. It is like the building up of character in the man; the quickening of spiritual instincts. You can teach the knowledge of art by rote, (and some of the most pitiable art critics we ever knew had enjoyed extraordinary advantages of home and foreign instruction), but you cannot convey the skill in comparison, the insight, the taste – at which the teacher himself has arrived through a life-time of experience and study added to fortunate natural sympathies and capacities.”


The large crowds in Philadelphia at the Centennial’s art exhibits in Memorial Hall as well as the increasing popularity of the new Metropolitan Museum, recently opened on 14th Street in New York City, may have caused Richard Watson Gilder to pause, wondering about the ample amounts of new art recently put before the American public – who was explaining it to them and how were they expected to understand and appreciate it? Unlike France, where Parisians regularly visited museums and galleries, exhibitions were frequently reviewed and widely discussed, and most citizens saw the arts as an integral part of daily life, no such type of general artistic awareness had existed in the United States during the first hundred years of the country’s existence. Someone needed to step in and fill the void, address the need, regulate the process, set down standards and teach the people how to recognize great art. At the close of the Centennial celebration, it seems clear that Gilder had decided that he was the man for the job and *Scribner’s* was the vehicle.

A landmark in the development of art awareness and taste, The Centennial provided Gilder with a forum to discuss the importance of the arts in America, and the
response to the Fair underscored the need to support American artists in establishing new organizations to exhibit their work. During this pivotal moment after the Fair, Gilder began to use his monthly column, “The Old Cabinet,” as a platform to promote a new American art world, and to set the tone for his crusade of “criticism reform.” From Gilder’s perspective, the time had arrived to improve the level of exposure, education and coverage of the arts in American periodicals, and to mirror the artistic engagement in everyday life found in Europe, and, most specifically, in France.

Summarizing his thoughts of the late 1870s in his editorial entitled “Art Criticism,” Gilder directly stated the need for the critic to enhance the awareness and understanding of his audience with clear and critical writing; this new criticism should seek to rise above mere description and to explain the ideas behind the art. The critic’s role was three fold: first, to inform the audience of the unique methods and characteristics that applied to painting and sculpture; second, to explain how, in their examination, to recognize artistic talent, merit and imagination; and third, through a critical discussion of the work, the critic’s comments should cause the artist to recognize how he might improve his methods, redirect his ideas or recast his style to meet particular standards that were being developed in this new criticism.¹ Ultimately Gilder wanted to change the way art was discussed in print in America and he was, above all others, in a unique position to do so. He stood at the helm of an extremely popular monthly magazine that was widely read by a growing middle class audience, who were eager to learn as much as they could about the art world. The timing was ideal for Gilder given the Centennial and the new widespread interest in the arts it had generated, an interest which Scribner’s had both

thrive from and fueled. In addition, he had been in a relationship for over five years with Helena de Kay who had thoroughly indoctrinated him into the artistic society of New York. By 1876 he had come to share her desire to more fully develop an American art world by adopting French models of art schools, art academies, art associations and avant-garde societies.

With an emphasis on text over image, this chapter serves two purposes. First, the chapter focuses on Gilder’s editorials for *Scribner’s* in the pivotal years between 1875 and 1878, when he realized that the popular periodical offered a vital means of advancing his ideas on aesthetics, ideas which arose from his interaction with the emerging art world in New York City. His words in the “Old Cabinet” column reflect and record the conversations he was having within that world that directly resulted in his call for a new art criticism based on his own developing aesthetic philosophy. The chapter also points out the importance of illustration in the development of this aesthetic and Gilder’s defense of it as a vital and important art form that had significantly impacted his understanding of art; Gilder felt so strongly about the subject that he used his editorial column to highlight an aesthetic controversy over the nature of illustration and encourage a discussion about its aesthetic value. He wanted his readers to share in his recognition that, in addition to its role as educator and informer in its articles, *Scribner’s*, through its illustrations, was, in itself, an *aesthetic experience*. Secondly, within that discussion and expanding in emphasis beyond the pages of the periodical, the chapter provides important background information on the individuals and institutions that Gilder supported in his

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2 Although she did officially take Gilder’s name, throughout the dissertation, I will refer to Helena de Kay Gilder as Helena de Kay, as some events took place prior to her marriage and she also signed her work as both an artist and a translator as Helena de Kay. This distinction should also help to avoid confusion between her and Gilder.
column and who helped him to form that aesthetic ideology. Gilder’s crusade for reform was driven by this developing philosophy, as he responded to French academic influences made aware to him by a new generation of artists returning from study overseas, and by a desire to support these young painters and sculptors, whose new artistic style would ultimately result in the formation of the Society of American Artists.

In developing his own ideas, Gilder learned about and drew from the critical system associated with the French Academy and the École des Beaux Arts. In this system, the evaluation of an art object, both its subject matter and its technique, was based on specific, objective criteria proffered by a generation of the institution’s writers, teachers and critics. The École’s curriculum stressed the importance of a wide variety of knowledge gained during one’s time there in order to critique one’s own work as well as that of other artists. Gilder was particularly interested in the writings of two French critics: Eugene Fromentin, a painter introduced to him by La Farge; and Hippolyte Taine, a frequent lecturer at the École whose critical essays on art history and aesthetics were widely known by those who had studied in Paris and were published in America in 1875.

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3 American artists flocked to the École, stimulated by the 1863 reforms to its curriculum, which required students to attend classes on anatomy, history, aesthetics, literature, the decorative arts, and ornamental design in addition to the standard courses on drawing and painting. In addition to calling for more areas of academic study, the École also added three studios for painting to the facilities and consolidated drawing instruction under a single teacher. Still tuition-free and open to male artists of any nationality, the École became more fully professional, attracting students from American and serving as the international model in artistic pedagogy. For more on Americans at the École see Barbara H. Weinberg, “Cosmopolitan Attitudes: The Coming of Age of American Art,” in Annette Blaugrund, et.al., Paris 1889: American Artists at the Universal Exposition (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc.: 1989), 33-51.

4 Taine in particular had wide appeal among American art students returning from Paris. For example, Earl Shinn, one of Gilder’s writers and the co-author of the Tile Club series discussed below, wrote home about his “magnificent course of lectures on art subjects,
Gilder was exposed to many of the ideas of these and other French critics through his marriage to Helena de Kay. De Kay not only worked to form important artistic institutions in the New York art world, such as the Arts Students League and the SAA, but she also held weekly Friday night gatherings in their home, creating a Parisian salon environment which allowed Gilder to become entirely ensconced in the New York contemporary art scene. As a result he developed close relationships with the city’s

including….Critical Aesthetics by Taine, the great art-critic: how I shall revel in the latter!”Earl Shinn to Anna Shipley, 10 November 1866, Richard Tapper Cadbury Collection, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, quoted in Daniel Lenehan, “Fashioning Taste: Earl Shinn, Art Culture and National identity in Gilded Age America,” (Masters Thesis, Haverford College, April 2005), 28. Taine’s model for interpreting art as a social phenomenon, and that the social and intellectual condition of a community controls its artistic production, called for a scientific approach to art criticism with specific laws governing the creation and evaluation of works of art. Hippolyte Taine, Lectures on Art: Vol I trans John Durand (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1875). Taine’s ideas on criticism as an objective act were part of the larger move toward scientific approaches in other field of social sciences and were discussed early on in Scribner’s. In fact the first article on the arts in Culture and Progress was entitled “Taine’s Art Lecturers,” which reviewed the cited publication of Taine’s The Philosophy of Art, The Ideal in Art, Art In Italy, Art in the Netherlands, &c. Translated by John Durand. Holt & Williams, Publishers. Scribner’s Monthly 2 (September 1871),666. While Gilder did take offense to Taine’s view of the secondary importance of personal expression and creative genius, Taine’s thoughts on the role of events in particular nations and particular periods must have stuck with him. Further, the critics whom Gilder began to cull in the late 1870s, such as Shinn and Russell Sturgis (discussed in Chapter IV) shared Taine’s scientific theories of art criticism and formula of race, milieu and moment. For more on Taine’s ideas and how they influenced American writers and artists, many of whom were featured in Scribner’s, see Alan C. Braddock, Thomas Eakins and the Cultures of Modernity (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), particularly in his discussion of “local color” pp. 106-112.

5 After their marriage on June 3, 1874, the Gilders moved to 103 East Fifteenth Street, an old stable that they hired Stanford White to renovate. White’s plans called for a large living room to occupy the entire ground floor. Christened “The Studio,” it was in this space that de Kay painted and also held her Friday night salons, lively and inclusive gatherings for writers, artists and actors. Numerous accounts describe the Gilders’ home as “an oasis” in a cerebral desert, a refuge where artists returning from overseas could meet regularly. Frequenters included artists Will Low, Wyatt Eaton, J.Alden Weir, Walter Shirlaw, and La Farge, sculptors Saint-Gaudens and Daniel Chester French, and writers Walt Whitman and W.D. Howells. According to Low, “‘The Studio’ was an oasis
young painters and sculptors, both socially as well as professionally; recently returned home from study abroad, many of these artists were hired by Gilder as illustrators for *Scribner’s*. He acknowledged in an 1878 letter to Holland that in terms of his position at the magazine he was recognized as standing for “the art side” because “I am in the movement.”  

Discussions concerning the art world in America and abroad clearly made their way from the home of the Gilders’ into the pages of *Scribner’s*. Adopting many of these ideas, Gilder formed his own aesthetic philosophy, which he then discussed in a unique dialogue with the American public in “The Old Cabinet”; he also used the column to promote the artists who helped him develop these ideas and from whom he, in turn, commissioned illustrations.

Gilder is often regarded as a leading member of the “genteel tradition,” a tradition strongly maligned by intellectual leaders in the early twentieth century, such as George Santayana, who painted him and his colleagues as reactionary, conservative and narrow-minded. I believe that in terms of his role in the development of the American art world in the 1870s, Gilder was actually quite the opposite, pushing against an earlier, antebellum social structure whose aesthetic ideology was lodged in mimetic...
representation and spectacle. Further, through his devotion to illustration and improved reproduction techniques, he encouraged the development and appreciation of a new art form, the art of mass-produced engravings. With the broad changes in technology and communication that took place between America and Europe, especially France, as well as an emerging new aesthetic formed by these international influences, Gilder both anticipated and encouraged the creation of a new artistic direction in American art. The aesthetic philosophy that he developed during these years and consistently promoted to his expanding readership was clearly more progressive than reactionary.

Gilder responded to his middle class audience’s call for authority and professionalism in the face of a rise in the number of cultural institutions in the late 1870s, mirroring the larger industrialization of the country. Gilder recognized the role that *Scribner’s* could play to instruct the public regarding these new institutions, by calling for professional art criticism in America, by seeking to establish standards by which works of art could be judged on style, form and technique, and by reproducing these works of art, allowing for an improved visual literacy on the part of the reader. Gilder acknowledged that currently in the New York art world there was no consensus on criticism, and as such, there was no confidence in the sources of criticism available at the time. Hiring opinionated journalists such as Clarence Cook, Gilder was a leading force

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7 The rise in professionalism during the 1870s and 1880s has been described at length by numerous historians, see for example, Magali Sarfatti Larson, *The Rise of Professionalism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977). In terms of the impact of professionalism on American art see, Mancini, Chapter 3, “Professionalism and a New Aesthetic Order,” 99-131 and Burns, 31-34.

8 On the topic, Gilder wrote “The great end of criticism is popular and professional improvement, and in order that this double end may be secured there must be popular and professional confidence in the sources of criticism…[lacking any guiding principles, the
in the rise of professional art criticism in the 1870s, as he cultivated a number of journalists, eager to write about art, and attempted to systematize their production by calling for a specialized, structured model of criticism. In his formulation of guidelines and standards that would be implemented in the periodical’s art criticism going forward, Gilder was an active participant in what Sarah Burns has described as the “incorporation of the American art world.” 9

In his editorials on art criticism and aesthetics, Gilder emerged as an important player in this developing art world of the Gilded Age. As outlined by Alan Trachtenberg, during the period “culture” was viewed as a hopeful social and political force, as a means to enrich one’s life by cultivation of the non-material. The popularity of this new “culture” was in many ways a direct response to the issues facing middle class Americans during the period: industrialization, immigration, mechanization of daily life, the rise of urbanism, the invasion of the marketplace into human relations, and the corruption and scandal of American politics driven by enormous wealth. 10 Anticipating his readership’s need to separate themselves from the “uncultured masses,” Gilder responded to his audience’s desire to assimilate as quickly as possible the ideas of “the cultured,” topics such as art, taste, and refinement, in order set themselves apart from the lower echelons of American society. Gilder was an enthusiastic instructor, ready to discuss and debate aesthetic ideas with his readers and to convey the “healing properties” identified with

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10 Trachtenberg, 144.
high culture to an anxious middle class.\(^{11}\) Endorsing taste as a social necessity, Gilder sought to change the way Americans understood and incorporated art into their daily lives. The aesthetic ideas that he promoted as “true” and “sincere” were both shared and shaped by artists who were working to form alternative artistic institutions in America to promote these aesthetic ideals. During this formative period, these same artists, commissioned by Gilder, were transforming *Scribner’s* with their illustrations into a “magazine of art” for the American middle class.

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\(^{11}\) According to Trachtenberg, the notion of popularizing culture also had important political ramifications: “The conjunction of culture with wealth and property on one hand, with surrender, self-denial, and subordination to something larger on the other, gave it a cardinal place among instruments of social control and reform. Moreover, by offering a middle ground presumably secure from aggressions of the marketplace, culture would offer an alternative to class hostility. It would disarm potential revolution, and embrace all classes.” Trachtenberg, 147.
as he endorsed its particular styles and subjects, presenting them to his American readers as art of the highest quality, which they should acknowledge and embrace. Intimately involved with the SAA, Gilder made *Scribner’s* the unofficial mouthpiece of the new movement, not only promoting particular SAA artists in articles and criticism, but also employing them as illustrators. Assimilating SAA ideals, Gilder used *Scribner’s* as a vehicle by which to encourage reforms in the methods of teaching and exhibiting in the New York art world. Influenced by de Kay and her SAA colleagues, Gilder, as editor in chief, transformed his monthly magazine into an aesthetic journal whose criticism and illustrations encouraged Americans to change the way they looked at art. These developments at *Scribner’s* both reflected and encouraged those of the Society. One can trace this evolution in the late 1870s through a careful examination of Gilder’s monthly essays in “The Old Cabinet,” which was his exclusive domain, and witness his adoption of many of the SAA’s ideas on the nature of art in America.

Prior to 1874 and his marriage to de Kay, Gilder’s pieces in “The Old Cabinet” on art were anecdotal and conversational. Between 1874 and 1876, his years of courtship and early marriage to de Kay, there was not a great deal of discussion of painting in his column. However, this began to change with two somewhat combative editorials that appeared during the formation of the SAA in 1875 and 1876. These essays were quite dogmatic in their call for reform at the Academy, for a reversal of the “deplorable condition” of painting in the United States, with its emphasis on commerce rather than
aesthetics. Gilder recognized the importance of supporting American artists working in more European styles:

Without the amusing cleverness, the spring and spontaneity of the foreign contemporary painters, we have only men who paint with the same showy thoughtlessness, finding in this new World neither a new spirit of man or nature, nor any place for deep and genuine living, whose artistic fruit should be individual, and full of charm and suggestion.

Gilder’s editorial appeared shortly after de Kay had organized a group of disgruntled artists and supporters, many of whom had been fellow students of hers, to protest the rejection of work by their mentor, John La Farge, as well as the unfair hanging practices of the NAD which privileged the works of older, conservative academicians.

Frustrated by the Academy’s exhibition practices, its conservative membership and its mismanaged schools, de Kay wanted to stir things up, to begin some type of avant-garde movement. Looking to Parisian models, de Kay sought to establish her own type of “Salon des Refusés,” and organized an alternative exhibition. In a letter that has

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12 “The Old Cabinet,” in *Scribner’s Monthly* 10 (July 1875): 382. This initial editorial was probably written in response to the Cottier show.
14 The origins of the Society of American Artists and its subsequent development have been recounted in detail by Jennifer Biesenstock, whose work stands as the recognized account of the society, which she presents as a revolutionary, avant-garde institution reacting against the confines of the NAD. See Jennifer A. Martin Biesenstock, “The Formation and Early Years of the Society of American Artists, 1877-1884,” (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 1983); Saul Zalesch’s dissertation sought to overturn Biesenstock’s assumptions, presenting the SAA as more of an alternative association organized by de Kay in order to exhibit work which was more in line with her aesthetic taste. See Saul E. Zalesch, “Ryder Among the Writers: Friendship and Patronage in the New York Art World, 1875-1884,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Delaware, 1992) and more succinctly, Saul E. Zalesch, “Competition and Conflict in the New York Art World, 1874-1879,” in *Winterthur Portfolio* 29:2/3 Autumn 1994: 103-120.
15 One can sense de Kay’s thrill at the possibility of creating a counter attack on the Academy as she commented on the discord among her colleagues whose work was poorly hung at the annual NAD exhibit, noting that “it was quite exciting on Tuesday to see everybody’s disgust.” Archives of American Art, Journal of Richard Watson Gilder and Helena Gilder, 1874-1878.
historically been seen as identifying the beginning of the SAA, de Kay wrote to Mary
Hallock [Foote]:

“It [the rejection of La Farge as well as her other colleagues] was so wholesale—
Lathrop, Ryder, Mrs. [Susan] Carter, MRO [Maria Richards Oakey] and me. So
we are conspiring! Cottier through F.[rancis] Lathrop, has offered his room. Mr.
La Farge who was very angry, will countenance and admit. Lathrop will execute.
R.[ichard Watson Gilder] will send the press… In a week probably we will have a
jolly little “new school” collection at Cottiers.”

De Kay’s post Civil War world with its fractured, unstable society, seemed to
require in her mind a new type of artistic expression, one that resembled European
models in their appeal to sensual pleasure, turning away from the traditional mimetic
styles associated with earlier American art. This idea was shared by her mentors and
peers, most prominently by La Farge, and encouraged by Gilder in his editorial
promoting “the young art of the nation.” The movement was organized in response to a
particular moment in the history of art in America and, more specifically, in New York
City; it was conceived by artists like de Kay who sought to promote a style of painting in
which the work of art was valued for its intrinsic, relational qualities rather than as
imitation of an ideal or natural world. De Kay was reacting against the Academy’s
commitment, as defined by its more established members, to art as an illustration of a

16 University of Berkeley, Huntington Library, Papers of Mary Hallock Foote, Letter of
Helena de Kay Gilder to Mary Foote, date April 12, 1875, reprinted in Biesenstock,. 32.
The other individuals referenced in the letter are Francis Lathrop, Albert Pinkham Ryder,
Susan Carter and Maria Oakey. Of those listed above, all were practicing artists at the
time, although Susan Carter would go on to be recognized for her role as a prominent art
critic, writing for *Appleton’s* from 1873-1896 and *The Art Journal* from 1875-1879, as
well as the head of the Women’s Art School of Cooper Union Institute (1875-6, 1878,
1885-87, 1889) where she implemented many of the ideas she received as a student of
William Morris Hunt from 1871-1877. While Carter was a close friend of de Kay’s, she
was never a member of the SAA, unlike the others included in the letter. Foote, a life-
long friend of de Kay’s, was also a featured artist in *Scribner’s* who would go on to
provide images of the West for the magazine after she relocated there with her husband.
Her illustrations were among *Scribner’s* most popular.
divine narrative or landscape, or a re-creation of historical events. Further, she was looking to previous avant-garde traditions, particularly those in France, in order to prepare the ground for a more European style of art. At a time when new venues for artistic exhibition were beginning to emerge, such as the Metropolitan Museum, the SAA provided additional access to works of art that conformed to the tastes of de Kay and her colleagues for an expanding American public sphere. These new exhibition spaces had a symbiotic relationship with the art critical press, which responded to the anxiety over standards of taste in a time when a relatively uneducated audience was coming into contact with new cultures and new art forms. That anxiety increased the public’s desire for judgments that could be relied on and referred to. This larger relationship is mirrored in the interaction between the SAA and Scribner’s, as dictated by Gilder and de Kay.

For my purposes, de Kay’s letter to Hallock is of primary interest in its comments about “R.,” who “will send the press.” As such, this excerpt not only signals the inception of the SAA, but also Gilder’s role as the conduit of the new movement to the publishing industry, as directed by de Kay. The passage underscores the need that de Kay recognized upon founding the SAA for official art criticism in a widely read periodical to support and validate the movement. Gilder was able and willing to generate “press,” providing the necessary publicity to keep the Society, although in its infancy, in the public eye.

While there were few sales, the “conspirator’s show,” which was held at Cottier’s, was hailed as a success by its organizers for its exhibition of more European styles of painting, as well as for the publicity that it generated. In addition to providing

17 The Cottier show consisted of approximately forty Barbizon and Japanese inspired paintings by a number of students of William Morris Hunt and LaFarge, including Maria Oakey, de Kay and other artists in New York who were a part of the Gilder circle, such as
credibility through his participation, La Farge set the tone as the curator of the show, selecting only decorative paintings over landscapes or portraits in order to distinguish the exhibit from that of the National Academy; works generally shared an “unfinished” quality with broad treatment, loose brushwork, and modulated tonal values. Critics from both the daily and periodic press recognized the show as “the new-school exhibition,” “a new and fresh development of American art,” and “the prosperity of Art in America.”; the fact that reviews could be found in *The New York Evening Post, Boston’s Saturday Evening Gazette* and *Appleton’s Journal* suggests that the goal of greater public awareness of the “new movement” was achieved.\footnote{18}

Ryder, Thayer and Lathrop. It is also important to note that the exhibition was held at Cottier’s, and on very short notice; the show opened in mid April 1875, just weeks after the “conspirators” had met at the Gilders’ Studio. Eight months prior to the exhibit, the lead paragraph for the August 1874 column of “Culture and Progress” entitled “Cottier and Co.” announced that, “for the great majority of people, who are bent on being in the fashion and up to the times - the place for them is Cottiers, [whose extensive holdings] are of a character to please an artist’s eye of a layman’s cultivated taste.” *Scribner’s Monthly* 8 (August 1874): 500-1.Gilder continued to promote the showroom/gallery throughout the remainder of the 1870s in Cook’s series on home decoration, keeping it continuously in the public eye. A personal friend of the Gilders, Daniel Cottier was an English dealer who established his business in New York in 1873 and was recognized for his support of American artists, a support which was however limited to those “Barbizon and European inspired” painters. For example, Ryder was hired by Cottier’s as a decorative painter (primarily of furniture). For more on Cottier’s relationship with particular SAA artists see Albert Boime, “Newman, Ryder, Couture, and Hero-worship in Art History,” *American Art Journal*, 3 (1971):5-22. Cottier had also worked with La Farge on Trinity Church. With free publicity such as this, along with his connections with many of the artists in Gilder’s circle, it is not surprising that Cottier was willing to comply with de Kay’s request. This example of interconnectedness between Gilder and the artists and dealers of the soon to be formed SAA, confirms the substantial impact *Scribner’s* had on the art world of New York City.

\footnote{18} Saul Zalesch has argued that only critic-friends and publications whose staffs had close ties to the participants wrote about the show, however these citations suggest otherwise. Zalesch (1994), 109. “Fine Arts: American Pictures at Cottier’s,” *New York Daily Tribune*, May 17, 1875, p.2,c.4; “A Remarkable Exhibition,” *New York Evening Post*, April 29, 1875; “A New School Exhibition, “*Boston Saturday Evening Gazette*,
Gilder provided the necessary coverage in *Scribner’s* with “Some Other Pictures,” which was published in the June 1875 column of “Culture and Progress.”

Directly following a discussion of the Academy exhibition and the article mentioned above on Moran’s *Mountain of the Holy Cross*, the review highlighted these predominantly unknown artists in the same critical space as the premier painters in America at that time.¹⁹ The piece supported the alternative exhibition, encouraging the idea of providing an additional venue for the work of younger American painters influenced by European practices, work which varied dramatically from that of the previous generation:

> [the show] was designedly made up in such a way as to represent only a certain style, or several kindred styles, of painting (especially those with which the Academy has little sympathy); and the circumstance suggests that it would be interesting to have frequent exhibitions on some such plan, in order to keep fully before our eyes what is going on in different directions among these artists. The character of this exhibition was grave, sincere, and soothing.²⁰

With this review, *Scribner’s* became the unofficial mouthpiece of the new younger painters of America.

In Gilder’s editorial on the exhibition in “The Old Cabinet,” printed just one month after the review, he began to promote an expressive style that conveyed a sense of genuine, lived experience, rather than literal representation; positive adjectives such as “pure,” “sincere,” “ideal,” “spiritual,” and “humble” are incorporated into his discussion of this new style, with the more pejorative terms used to describe the paintings of Academy members, including “aggressive,” and “false.” Gilder labeled these older

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painters and their supporters as non-cerebral, complaining of their lack of “intellectual substance,” while promoting his preferred aesthetic, a style much more in line with the work of La Farge:

There is no mistake more common among painters and their public than to suppose that thought in art means allegory, literature, or what not. How few there are among the public or the painters who recognize the thought that goes to the right portrayal of a simple flower; who know the analysis, the mental mastery, the intense, refined application, the brooding imagination, the realization of character, that bring about the living presentment of some graceful, sturdy, wayside growth.²¹

Endorsing an expressionistic style whose work could be described in romantic phrases such as “brooding imagination,” “refined application,” and “realization of character,” Gilder was applying terms from the shared aesthetic of the younger painters into his own critical writing. Further, Gilder’s example of a “simple flower” referred directly to the work of La Farge. La Farge’s still lives, as well as those of his student, Helena de Kay, were almost exclusively flower paintings that emphasized beauty, transience and fragility, painted not as botanical specimens but as evokers of mood and of complex poetic and lyrical associations (figure 3.1).²²

²¹ “The Old Cabinet,” *Scribner’s Monthly* 10 (July 1875): 382.
²² La Farge’s influence during de Kay’s impressionable years is clear as she developed a taste for more intimate still lives and figures over more popular literal narratives, grand landscapes or historical pieces. The impact of La Farge on de Kay was significant, not just stylistically, but also in terms of La Farge’s aesthetic philosophy and his endorsement of more avant-garde principles of painting. La Farge’s exposure to French literary and artistic circles, to the art of Paris, both classical and contemporary, and to French academic instruction had a significant impact on his approach to painting and his own methods of teaching. With him as her informal tutor in her early days in New York, de Kay absorbed much of La Farge’s intimate, nuanced style of painting as well as his ideas about the socially redeeming function of the arts, and how this mission might be carried out in late nineteenth-century America. Throughout his career, La Farge sought to educate the taste of the public by creating a finer and more sensuous environment. For more on his mission to develop that environment in America see Kathleen Pyne, *Art and the Higher Life: Paintings and Evolutionary Thought in Late Nineteenth-Century*
brushwork and *japoniste* composition heavily influenced both the paintings and illustrations of de Kay and her colleagues, as they adopted his use of color-light relationships in order to “invest ordinary objects with beauty by mere direct observation” (figure 3.2).²³

This preference for the expressive, the sensuous, and the intuitive would be the unifying factor for the new painters, whom de Kay would help bring together into a type of avant-garde community under the encouraging eye of La Farge. La Farge played a pivotal part in the formation of the Society and, in his role as curator of the initial exhibitions, gave precedence to images that conformed to his own artistic (and often times decorative) principles. The style of these intimate still lives was privileged in Gilder’s “Old Cabinet” discussions of aesthetics over the vast allegorical landscapes of the painters of the National Academy, as he deemed it more intellectual, more refined, more cultured. Gilder’s editorials suggest a clear division between the two traditions, with *Scribner’s* endorsing the aesthetic generally shared by the painters who formed the Society and promoting it to a public eager to understand the new style. While some scholars have argued that the Society was established as a non-oppositional movement, I would argue that Gilder’s editorials, in both content and specific language, suggest a more combative stance.²⁴

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The “conspirators’ show” at Cottier’s set the stage for the actual formation of the SAA in 1877. Most historians credit the creation of the Society to further controversy over the selection and hanging practices of the Academy as well as the specific rejection of a piece by Saint-Gaudens; however, evidence shows that the Gilders had been planning to organize an alternative to the Academy somewhat earlier, having been encouraged by the Cottier show and also having witnessed the European art exhibits at the Centennial, the most comprehensive showing of recent European art in America. In a letter to Saint-Gaudens reminiscing over the development of the SAA, Gilder wrote, “my recollection is that I had been talking to you on the subject; that, having breathed the spirit of our independence through Helena, yourself and a lot of fellows, I talked to you about starting a new society.”

Gilder had begun to incorporate more articles on art in America in the pages of *Scribner’s* since the Cottier show and also was able, with his connections in the publishing world, to help procure the position of art critic to *The New York Times* for Charles de Kay in 1877, effectively providing a vehicle to promote the Gilder artistic circle in the daily press. With Charles de Kay and Cook (at *The Tribune*) well positioned to promote a new artistic alternative organization in the daily newspapers and *Scribner’s* prepared to provide positive criticism as well as featured articles on the “new young men” (and women), Gilder had effectively generated the publicity to support the European inspired organization that he and his wife had been planning; the necessary press was in place to propagate and publicize the launching of the SAA.

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25 See Biesenstock.
Given the antagonistic nature of Gilder’s editorials, I would argue that the Gilders were looking for a reason to separate and to establish their circle as an avant-garde alternative, and that the rejection provided the situation for which the group was hoping. Saint-Gaudens himself later stated that the rejected piece, a plaster sketch of a young girl, was not necessarily one of his best works, and that “the rejection of the sketch was justifiable. It was entirely too unfinished to be exhibited, particularly considering the general attitude of artists at the time.” 27 In his “The Old Cabinet” editorial of March 1876, Gilder set the combative tone in his discussion of “institutions such as the National Academy of Design [where] the young art of a nation cannot hope for generous and intelligent support.” 28 Gilder constructed an avant-garde paradigm for an alternative association, warning of the
tendency of Academies as institutions - the influence of the class of artists who give the tone to the official action - seems to be inevitably in the direction of monopoly and obstruction. The new man, if he is subservient to the reigning influences need not be kept down. The new man, with his own strong, creative individuality is an offense – for his success means death to the powers that be. Between Academic precedent and stupidity and error, and young originality, and genius and truth, there can be no compromise. 29


29 Ibid. During this period Cook and Charles de Kay also kept up the confrontation in the daily press (and to a certain extent generated it), writing disparagingly of the Academy, portraying its members as corrupt, greedy, old-fashioned and openly dismissive of the younger artists of America. In an article on May 6, 1877, Charles de Kay called for younger artists to band together and “to look elsewhere for encouragement and appreciation.” Charles De Kay, “Art or Business?” The New York Times, May 6, 1877, 6,c.5.
During 1877, the official year of the formation of the Society, “The Old Cabinet” became a platform for Gilder’s ideas on the improvement of the arts in America, in terms of the art itself, the criticism of that art, and its reception by the American public. The monthly piece evolved from a rather light-hearted, ‘tongue in cheek’ rapport to a critical, purpose-driven column calling for change and reform. Gilder was also clearly aware of a growing “art public,” which included a large number of his readers, and he commented on his responsibilities to his new audience extensively:

A great deal has been said about the extraordinary interest shown by the public in the Art Department of the great Exhibition, as well as in the Loan Collections on view in New York. The fact that Memorial Hall and its annex and the Academy and the Fourteenth Street Museum, have proved such “popular attractions” during the Centennial summer, has been regarded as a most encouraging augury for “American art.” It certainly is a good and hopeful sign. It shows, perhaps, among other things, that “the public” understands when it is handsomely dealt by – when it is likely to get its money’s worth and its times worth…But there are other reflections that will occur to the thoughtful. It is evidently one thing to interest people in an exhibition of pictures, and another, and a slower process, to educate their taste in art…. No; it is a long and subtle process this of educating the taste either of the individual or of the public in art. It is like the building up of character in the man; the quickening of spiritual instincts. You can teach the knowledge of art by rote, (and some of the most pitiable art critics we ever knew had enjoyed extraordinary advantages of home and foreign instruction), but you cannot convey the skill in comparison, the insight, the taste – at which the teacher himself has arrived through a life-time of experience and study added to fortunate natural sympathies and capacities.30

The passage in the opening piece of “The Old Cabinet” for 1877 conveys Gilder’s awareness of his role as educator of the public and underscores his mission behind the editorials, which played out over the next eighteen months. During this period one can witness Gilder promoting an expressionist mode of painting, tirelessly endorsing his

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30 “The Old Cabinet,” *Scribner’s Monthly* 13 (January 1877): 418-9. The Loan Collections on view in New York were additional exhibitions by artists who wanted to take advantage of the increased tourism in New York resulting from the Centennial. The Fourteenth Street Museum was another term used to identify the Metropolitan Museum when it was at its original location on 14th Street in the 1870s.
artistic circle, incorporating French artists and critics into his column, and exposing the public to particular genres that had been less popular to American audiences, such as that of the human form.

In his January editorial he used terms, such as “thoughtful” and “spiritual” to describe those critics who were encouraging the “public” to appreciate the new aesthetic, as well as derogatory language regarding writers who neither understood nor accepted paintings that appeared “unfinished.” Distraught that the most popular work of art at the Centennial, Frith’s *Marriage of the Prince of Wales*, had attracted large crowds because of its showy and striking quality as well as its minute attention to detail, Gilder described the painting as “valueless;” he encouraged his audience to disregard the work, even though judges who were appointed because of their “supposed” knowledge of painting awarded it a medal. Gilder was critical of these judges who were “no more gifted with good taste and discrimination than the uncultured multitude.”

In his use of language, Gilder associated those who admired Frith’s style of detail and spectacle with the masses, thus encouraging his readers to separate, to elevate themselves from this “uncultured multitude” by appreciating an aesthetic style more in line with that of the artists in his circle.

Gilder gained a new confidence in his writing and spoke with authority on art education, alternative exhibition opportunities, art criticism, and aesthetic taste. Over the course of 1877, Gilder blatantly used the column to promote his artistic circle, and began to incorporate critical reviews of its exhibitions. In his February column, Gilder included a brief discussion of an exhibition at the Arts Students League, which included images by

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31 Ibid., 419.
ASL students on one side and Academy members on the opposite wall. For Gilder, the “principal interest was in the work of the Leaguers” as he subtly disparaged the Academy painters by the structure of the review, setting them up as the “old school” versus the “new men.” He praised the students’ efforts, their teachers and the “fellowship” inspired by the organization; one cannot read the review without recalling de Kay’s high level of involvement at the ASL and the knowledge that many of these students would go on to exhibit with the SAA.³²

Alerting the public in his April 1877 review to works on view by the young painters at the Water-Color exhibition, Gilder praised the “new men,” including Swain Gifford, Samuel Colman, E.A. Abbey and Winslow Homer, while denouncing the “sentimentalism” in the work of older artists; works by artists such as Eastman Johnson were described as “dangerously bad pictures.” Gilder estimated Johnson’s painting to

³²Enrolled in the NAD’s Antique School from 1869 to 1875, de Kay experienced the growth of the school in size and popularity but also witnessed its short-comings. In early 1875 financial difficulties led the NAD to suspend its classes and close the Life School for the remainder of the year. De Kay was one of seventy students, all of whom had studied at the Academy, who gathered in June of that year to form the Art Students League. An alternative to the Academy, the ASL was organized to provide a systematic curriculum and a consistent program of study. Lemuel Wilmarth was chosen to “take charge and conduct these [studies] on the principle of the Parisian ateliers.” Edward Prescott, “Art Students League,” in Marchal Landgren, *Years of Art: The Story of the Art Students League* (New York: R.M. McBride and Co., 1940), 18-19. The League was managed entirely by its students with a Board of Control, and de Kay held the position of Women’s Vice-President, the highest position at the League available to women, during the pivotal years of 1875 and 1879. De Kay’s election in the League’s initial year and re-election four years later confirms her integral involvement in the creation and development of the ASL as well as her high status within the New York art world. Given her background and association with numerous foreign trained artists, it is not surprising that de Kay would organize an educational institution based on Parisian models. Fulfilling the need for a program that mirrored the École des Beaux Art’s traditions, the League was quite successful upon its inception, throughout the 1880s and beyond, with many of the artists in de Kay’s circle in attendance; as a result, its tenets complemented those of the Society of American Artists.
have the “value of a mere photograph,” a bold statement reaffirming Gilder’s preference for the “imaginative” and the “expressive.” \(^{33}\)

For the first time, his April column also included a rare and lengthy letter to the editor, written in support of La Farge’s work on the interior of Trinity church. The letter, signed H.E., was, in all probability, from “Henry Eckford,” the pen name of Charles de Kay. The author praised the beauty of La Farge’s tones and effects and also cited the assistant artists who helped him in the effort, including Lathrop, Saint-Gaudens and Frank Millet. Supporting the church’s unique decoration in spite of the public criticism of the art work from both an aesthetic and a religious point of view, the author encouraged more churches to “follow the example of Trinity, [so that] we will have really beautiful works of art in the place of blank walls or tiresome stucco.” \(^{34}\) The letter described the church as a “theatre” and praised it for its “richly decorated look,” addressing the structure more as a work of art than as a house of God, and dismissing those critical of a “decorative” place of worship: [there is] “another class of objectors to these decorations, but not from questions of taste. Theirs are religious objections, for they consider such things merely distracting to the mind when it ought to be fixed on higher subjects of spiritual interest. But this is a matter which can only be decided by individual experience.” \(^{35}\) Here again we see an emphasis on a personal, individual response to the work of art, as well as Gilder’s promotion of the idea that works of art offer a variety of


\(^{34}\) *Ibid.*., 869. La Farge’s work at Trinity Church would be described in greater detail in *Scribner’s* in a full scale article by Clarence Cook entitled “Recent Church Decoration,” *Scribner’s Monthly* 15 (February 1878): 569-577.

spiritual associations, a concept which he would continue to explore and pursue more fully (see Chapter VI).

In his March 1877 column Gilder gave an account of the framing and reception of Eugene Delacroix’s La Barque du Dante (1822) at the Salon. While the article allowed Gilder to digress on certain unfair practices of American dealers regarding the hanging and framing of paintings, the passage is notable for Gilder’s direct reference to Charles Le Blanc, whose recently published Les Artistes de mon Temps had told the story of Delacroix’s painting and was the source for the piece. Clearly it was important to Gilder to keep abreast of current French criticism and writing on contemporary French art. In the following year, Gilder began to incorporate quarterly summaries in “Culture and Progress” of the artistic periodical L’Art, edited by Le Blanc, further underscoring the importance of French models to art criticism in Scribner’s.

Gilder had addressed the subject of Delacroix a month earlier, in a discussion of a picture by the romantic artist in a New York collection with the intent of educating his readers on the importance of painting the human form in an expressive style. Gilder provided a detailed explanation of how the human form should be painted in such a way that was both “lifelike” yet “imaginative.” Contrasting Delacroix with the example of Gérôme, Gilder explained that while the academic realist had an “important permanent quality of line,” he lacked the “imaginative grasp” of a truly great artist. Gilder went on to list the pre-eminent “linear” figure painters of Modern France, including Ingres, Delaroche, Decamps, and Meissonier, while explaining why Delacroix was the more

successful and stood above the group. In terms of living American painters who had mastered the human form, Gilder announced “that none have it in anything like the degree of John La Farge,” whose figures were “drawn under the guidance of an eye which, like Raphael’s, Durer’s, Delacroix’s, not only sees, but imagines.” The passage is striking not only in the bold and rather presumptuous equation of La Farge with the Old Masters, but also as an example of Gilder working out his own aesthetic philosophy with an emphasis on the “imaginative” versus the “literal” and the importance of the human form.

In a later editorial in “The Old Cabinet” of February 1878, Gilder returned to the topic of the human form, relaying the experience of a young American painter, recently returned from studying art in Paris, who showed his work to “friends who had dropped by the studio.” These “friends,” who essentially represented the American public, failed to appreciate the experimental design of the figure, but insisted on knowing “who is it? What is the story?” They were unable to admire the painting in any way, until the artist randomly assigned an identity to the figure (The Vision of Ezekiel), at which point the group was highly complimentary of both artist and painting: “‘Very interesting picture – fine conception – the Vision of Ezekiel, to be sure,’ and they go away with an idea that

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37 This assertion underscores the substantial influence on Gilder’s aesthetic ideology by LaFarge, who saw Delacroix as the most important painter in France during the first half of the nineteenth century. Along with Millet, Delacroix is the hero of LaFarge’s The higher life in art. The primary subject of the first two of the six lectures that make up the book, Delacroix is hailed by LaFarge as “a stupendous composer. Studied as a mere arrangement of lines his pictures are valuable lessons, but this fundamental quality is covered up, as in the works of Rubens, by so much drama and external movement that one does not discover easily the laws by which no great work lives in plastic art that has not those qualities of proportion and balance….The dramatic expression of Delacroix was lyrical; it is an expression of personal mood, of desire, of sentiment, perhaps only momentary, and the story or image depicted is the method of implying this.” John La Farge, The higher life in art (General Books LLC, 2009), 24, 28.
that young artist is, as they say in Paris, *arrivé!* – one of our young painters who have ideas!”38 Gilder sought to explain and justify the group’s behavior, arguing that if the painted image of the human figure was done by a true master, “if it is not only great technically, but also spiritually,” it is only natural for the untrained viewer to wish to associate it with an important historical figure, a saint or even a god. As such, when done by a talented artist, the genre of the human form could be extremely powerful given that the viewer “sees not only the individual character; he sees the deeper traits which belong to a common humanity. He sees not merely the human being before him, but he sees in this human being something which is reflected from the painter’s own mind, human emotion and human thought.” Here Gilder not only encouraged a genre which had not been popular with American audiences in the past, but also attempted to explain its value to the public in its ability to uniquely comment on the human condition. In both his terminology and his examinations of particular artistic genres, such as the human form, to explain his ideas on art directly to the American people, we see Gilder’s aesthetic philosophy emerging in the pages of “The Old Cabinet.”39 His aesthetic preferences also mirrored those of the SAA, whose official formation and development occurred during the same time period that he struggled with these aesthetic questions; given his constant interaction with the ideas and images of this circle of artists and illustrators, it is clear that the Society greatly impacted the discussion that appeared in his column.

On June 1, 1877 one day prior to the closing of the annual NAD exhibit, artists close to the Gilders gathered at their home, commonly referred to as “The Studio,” and agreed to create an association with the “object of advancing the interest of Art in

America.” Gilder’s description in a later letter to Saint-Gaudens of his role in the society is telling:

My recollection is that I had been talking to you on the subject…. But one day – at noon, I think it was – you, on June 1st 1877, came to the iron gate at 103 East 15th Street, with your mad up. They had just fired out that statue of the Indian girl of yours. You said you were ready for the new society, and I told you to come around that night, and we sent for Walter Shirlaw, Wyatt Eaton (and for Clarence Cook by way of sympathy). I got the minutes of the first meeting into shape for Eaton, but of course, did not appear in the proceedings at all, not being an artist.40

At this meeting Shirlaw was elected president, Saint-Gaudens as Vice President, and Eaton as secretary, with de Kay recognized as a founding board member. Two of the six individuals present, Gilder and Cook, not being artists themselves, declined to have any formal role in the Society, although Gilder was clearly a driving force behind the organization. In addition to providing the venue for the Society’s early gatherings, he prepared the minutes of the first meeting to ensure the SAA was regarded as an official institution.41 The fact that his letter describing the events is misleading (Saint-Gaudens’ sculpture was not rejected in June, but rather in early April), suggests that the Society was not a spontaneous event resulting from the rejection but rather that plans for the organization had been in process over a longer period.

The Society went on to enlist additional members including a select number of Academicians, most of whom had trained overseas and painted in a more “expressionist” style. American artists currently living and working abroad were also encouraged to join. From the summer of 1877 up until the time of the first exhibition in March of 1878 the

40 Dartmouth College, Papers of Augustus Saint-Gaudens, Reel 7, frames 430-1. Quoted in Biesenstock, 30.
41 He also procured the involvement of Cook (and later of Charles de Kay) to secure the necessary publicity in the daily press, and frequent articles by both critics appeared prior to the official public announcement of the Society.
following members were elected: Olin Warner, Robert Swain Giffor, John La Farge, Louis Comfort Tiffany, Francis Lathrop, Homer Dodge Martin, Alexander Wyant, J. Alden Weir, Will Low, William Sartain, Thomas Eakins and Albert P. Ryder, all of whom had studied overseas (with the exception of Ryder) and were working in New York City (with the exception of Eakins in Philadelphia). Artists recruited by Saint-Gaudens in Paris for the initial exhibit as well as membership in the society included John Singer Sargent, Mary Cassatt, William Merritt Chase, James M. Whistler, Frank Duveneck, Charles Sprague Pearce, Abbot Thayer, Theodore Robinson, Frederick Bridgman, Francis Millet, Edwin Howland Blashfield and John Twachtman. These individuals would be hailed in the pages of *Scribner’s* as the future of American art, singled out as the “new men [who] have fairly carried the world by storm;”

*Scribner’s* review of the 1877 annual NAD exhibition featured many artists who would soon become SAA members such as Duveneck, Shirlaw, Weir, Thayer, Eaton, Chase, and Low, and sought to defend these young artists and their overseas training:

> We do not see any reason in the condemnation which has been lavished upon these cunning youths. That they *have* learned the methods is event enough: that they *have* acquired the language so far as their masters could teach it to them, is beyond dispute… these young Americans are painting as well to-day in Paris and Munich and New York as any students of their age; and this although having spent but a few years in an “art atmosphere” instead of a life-time. The fact that so many of our young men have gone to work with such keen enthusiasm to get the best art education available, and that they have shown so much aptness and ability, and have succeeded so admirably- we say that this is full of interest and encouragement, and should be greeted with applause, and not with disparagement.

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While the Society of American Artists was officially formed and governed by artists, Gilder’s role in the conception, formation and promotion of the SAA was unparalleled; never in the history of any art movement in America up until that time had a member of the press played such a critical role. As a respected player in the publishing industry, Gilder used all of his powers to advance the Society and its aesthetic ideals, ideals which he adopted as his own and, during the late 1870s, continuously explained, validated, and publicized to the American public in both text and image on the pages of *Scribner’s*. A close reading his “Old Cabinet” columns reveals how his ideas on aesthetics mirrored those of the artists of the SAA, and how, in his repeated discussion on “the Philistine” in art, he creatively found a way to promote and defend them.

**Defending the SAA while Establishing a Dialogue on Aesthetics: “The Philistine” in “The Old Cabinet”**

Throughout “The Old Cabinet” editorials of 1877, Gilder continued to develop his aesthetic philosophy and work out issues related to criticism in his own mind. Over the course of these editorials it appears that, for Gilder, aesthetics had more to do with the education of taste than the development of a rigid philosophical system. This viewpoint becomes clear in his comments on what he called the “Philistine” question, a leitmotif which ran through “The Old Cabinet” editorials and that Gilder used to establish a unique dialogue with his audience regarding questions of taste, aesthetics, art and imagination. The “Philistine” could be an artist, a critic, or a viewer, but in whatever role, the “Philistine” represented an individual who was conservative, traditional and non-cerebral; Gilder used the devise effectively to attack those who opposed his artistic circle. The term first appeared in his May 1877 editorial in which he derided the “artist-Philistine”
whose paintings could not be admired because, although he was technically proficient, the work itself lacked any true emotion and was essentially “dull.” These “artist-Philistines” lorded their precise knowledge of the “technicalities of art, of drawing, light and shade, and composition, and values, and harmony, and tone, and breadth, and perspective,” over the uneducated viewer, but essentially their pictures were “uninteresting” and lacked creativity.\textsuperscript{44} Gilder’s use of language testifies to his deep awareness and knowledge of the artistic tools needed to create good paintings, as well as his emphasis on the expressive and the imaginative. In his discussions of the Philistine question it is clear that he was responding to the French critic Eugene Fromentin’s recent critical work, \textit{Les maîtres d’Autrefois}, published in Paris in 1876 and most likely introduced to him by La Farge, who greatly admired the critic and his work; Gilder adopted Fromentin’s dictum from the book that “any work of art which has been deeply felt by its maker is also naturally well painted.”\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{44} “The Old Cabinet,” \textit{Scribner’s Monthly} 13 (May 1877):112.

\textsuperscript{45} Eugene Fromentin, \textit{Les Maîtres d’Autrefois}, Paris: E. Plon et Cie 1876, quoted in John La Farge, \textit{Considerations of Painting: Lectures given in the Year 1893 at the Metropolitan Museum of New York} (New York: MacMillan and Co., 1895.), 22. Recognized as an Academic painter of Orientalism, Fromentin produced numerous images of Arab life along the lines of Gérôme. But it was his work as a critic which most interested Gilder, who was introduced to Fromentin by La Farge at around the time that he was writing these “Old Cabinet” essays. La Farge considered Fromentin his chief model, as he highly admired his professional but also personal critiques of paintings. La Farge wrote of \textit{Les maîtres d’autrefois} (Masters of the Past, 1876), “it is by far the most perfect of essays in the criticism of the art of painting. The secret of Fromentin is accessible to everyone. We cannot all have the special eye and the poetic temper which belonged to him but the main basis of his thought is sincerity accessible to all men; a sincerity so great that it is possible to disagree almost entirely with some of his remarks, but at the same time, to consider them as necessary and valuable, and to feel all the more sure of the accuracy of the critic.” John La Farge, “Art and Artists,” \textit{International Monthly} 4 (1901): 336, reprinted in Adams, 68. According to La Farge, Fromentin’s book originated the practice of strictly “artistic” criticism, in that he questions the significance, value and beauty of a painting based entirely on the work itself, its style and
For Gilder, Fromentin’s definition of a good painting also applied to good criticism, “the result of powerful conviction, where the aesthetic processes are intimately connected with a personal sentiment.” In his June column, Gilder warned of the Philistine critic, who, while quite educated as to the mechanical aspects of painting, lacked any aesthetic insight. This critic admired established works of art, discussing them with formulaic, learned responses, previously established by other writers; when asked opinions on a “fresh subject” the Philistine critic generally responded negatively, in order to hide his lack of aesthetic awareness: “It is when the educated Philistine becomes a public and professional critic that his Philistinism is most painfully conspicuous…. he falls to condemning with great heartiness; but the trouble is that he condemns among the bad also the really good pictures, having no real insight or task to guide him.” In these pieces on Philistinism, Gilder called for critics to ask themselves difficult questions regarding their own backgrounds, prejudices, artistic knowledge and training. He cited the importance of practical knowledge of the technical aspects of art, but emphasized the essential innate notion of “taste.” According to Gilder, the true critic must have an inborn aesthetic awareness and an ability to appreciate the imaginative.

In another effective use of the “letter to the editor” format to create an open dialogue with the public on the viewer as Philistine and the larger question of teaching taste, “The Old Cabinet’s” September 1877 column began with a letter from a “J.T.” attacking Gilder for his elitist approach. “J.T.” excused the public for its Philistinism and saw “the populace [as] a great child which takes its pleasure childishly.” The letter

its execution. Rather than providing biographical information, it is through the work that the personality and the moral characteristics of the artist are determined.

46 Ibid., 27.
opened up the debate regarding the need to enlighten the public about “culture,” and the difficulties that can arise in the attempt to cultivate Americans:

The thing I hate is the stupidity and complacence of so-called *culture*. The ignorance and assurance and bad taste that go by that name have made the word odious to me…. Of course taste, like anything else, can be trained and enriched, but can it be planted in the individual, if not there originally?... I don’t deprecate education: we want a great deal more and especially a great deal better. But even education originates nothing before the second generation.\(^48\)

While the identity of “J.T.” is unclear, the issues that he raised must have been on Gilder’s mind in formulating his plan for *Scribner’s* to educate his readers on the subject of taste. The letter called into question the very ideas around which Gilder had been developing his aesthetic philosophy: Could “taste” be taught, or was it rather an innate trait that only certain individuals were born with? Was *Scribner’s* /Gilder’s call to inculcate the middle class, which “thinks art is photography in colors as well as forms and takes pleasure in seeing familiar things reflected and framed,” a valid pursuit?

In Gilder’s response to the letter, one sees him answering the question in his own mind, and committing himself and the magazine to what he viewed as a type of moral crusade. In a time of emerging professionalism, Gilder regarded this “education of taste” as his official calling, his duty to the rising middle class of Americans, to improve their lives; one can watch the argument play out as Gilder responds to the letter. Supporting his editorials on “Philistinism” as an attempt to expose false artists and critics, Gilder asserted upfront that as far as the accusation that he “despises the ‘uncultured multitude,’…. far from our souls be all such snobbishness and affectation!” Gilder believed that his was the “duty of those who know better to keep their eyes dry and to do or say something which will awake these good people to an appreciation of the true.”

\(^48\) “The Old Cabinet,” *Scribner’s Monthly* 13 (September 1877): 716.
Here Gilder felt the need to defend his position as expert, and his intention of professionalizing writing about art at a critical moment in the development of art criticism in *Scribner’s* and America:

> It is the still more the duty all of those who write, to fight Philistinism in high places. When trained or untrained mediocrity, through the ignorance or complacence of the community is elevated into authority: when the ignorant taste of the populace is reflected back from the canvases of painters of reputation: is this the time for the critic to be complimentary or evasive?

Gilder went on to pose the questions that, in his opinion, all critics should ask themselves:

> Have I held my mind open in every direction? Do I speak at second hand, or do I wait days, months or years until I see and feel for myself? Have my eyes been gradually opened to the great qualities of the old masters? Can I recollect that where as I once used their names as mere countries, their names now each have a definite and a deep meaning and individuality? Do I find myself year by year gradually changing my feelings and opinions with regard especially to the modern masters? Do I weak-mindedly make a point of “being consistent?” Do I find my thoughts unduly subservient to the dictum of some one artist, or other person of my acquaintance?

The September column was a clear indication of Gilder’s commitment to improved art journalism and it was approximately at this time that he began to enlist writers who shared his vision and would translate his ideas into the numerous articles on art in America and abroad that began to frequent the pages of *Scribner’s*. (See Chapter IV)

The column’s exploration of Philistinism reflected Gilder’s frequent discussions on the education of “taste” with his wife and her colleagues, such as La Farge and Saint-Gaudens, which led him to appropriate aspects of French criticism ranging from Fromentin to Taine into his own aesthetic philosophy; through his contact with foreign

49 Ibid.
50 Ibid. The word *feel* is italicized for emphasis in the text, which I believe is appropriate given Gilder’s emphasis on the personal involvement of the critic.
trained artists, Gilder came to adopt many ideas from contemporary French critics. However, while he might have been looking to French models, it is clear that he was careful not to convey too much “snobbishness and affectation.” Rather, he spoke directly to his readers, encouraging them to find an important place for art in their daily lives as existed in French society during the time period. Comfortable with his new voice and assured of his mission, Gilder began to use his column and its discussions not only to improve criticism but also to openly promote SAA artists, whom he saw as representative of a more correct, a more “tasteful” aesthetic. Throughout his “Old Cabinet” editorials, Gilder set up a type of dialectic between these younger artists and the older generation of American painters, generally members of the NAD, and their admirers who were also labeled as “Philistines.” Further, the unique dialogue that Gilder established with his readers on such a relatively esoteric subject as aesthetics was unprecedented in periodic journalism, with Gilder openly discussing his very personal views and his dilemma as an editor with his public. Gilder originally named his column “The Old Cabinet” to convey its “old-fashioned discursive style;” that style allowed him in this instance to have a type of “fireside chat” with the public about issues of culture and taste, and why, in his opinion, these issues were of vital importance to all Americans. One can witness a new sense of urgency in “The Old Cabinet” editorials between January and September of 1877, the formative period of both Gilder’s aesthetic philosophy and, not co-incidentally, the Society of American Artists.

“The Old Cabinet” in 1878: Promoting the Society of American Artists

51 Rosamund Gilder, 53.
While the SAA was actually organized in June of 1877, its existence was not officially announced in the press until October 30, 1877. In his article in *The New York Times*, Charles de Kay described the new Society as an alternative to the National Academy and alerted the public to its upcoming exhibition in March of 1878.\(^52\) In March of 1878, just prior to the initial SAA show, Gilder began to earnestly promote the Society, and in the next four issues he feverishly supported its artists in columns that defended their work in painting and sculpture as well as illustration. In fact, with very little space devoted that year to the fine arts in “Culture and Progress,” the column which had historically reviewed the Academy exhibitions as well as those of other galleries and specific painters, “The Old Cabinet” became an even stronger voice for the new movement, calling for reform in criticism as well as in the practices of the Academy. In March of 1878, Gilder raised concerns over critics who “start out to do their part in reforming criticism in general,” but whose ideas and abilities are not refined enough to discriminate adequately between good and bad works of art. He chastised writers who demanded that all artists must “go to nature,” or judged a work based on smoothness and finish.\(^53\) Those who wished to separate themselves from the Philistine critics and to understand the idea of “progress in art” were encouraged to examine closely the work of the Society of American Artists.

In his review in his April 1878 column of American Water-Color Society Exhibition, Gilder privileged the work of SAA artists, calling attention to images by R.S. Gifford, Coleman, Tiffany, Wyant, Eakins, Abbey and Rinehart. Concluding, he

\(^52\) Originally the exhibition was to take place at the NAD but was moved to the Kurtz Gallery.

described La Farge’s sketch of a “figure with iridescent butterfly wings,” most likely his *Spirit of the Water-Lily* (see Figure 6.26), as an imaginative experiment, and placed it on par with an image of *A Ballet* by Degas, also included in the show.  

The review featured the small “Black and White exhibition” which consisted of a smaller room within the Water-Color Society show, dedicated to displaying engravings, etchings and drawings that had not been seen before. The artists mentioned, such as Eaton, Rinehart, Abbey, Dielman, Foote, and Oakey were frequent contributors of illustrations to *Scribner’s*, and many were members of the SAA; the show also included some of the magazine’s top engravers including Henry Marsh and Timothy Cole.  

Celebrating their work as “art” rather than mere illustration, Gilder was in effect promoting *Scribner’s* as a “magazine of art,” as an aesthetic experience. In his discussion he commented that the “marked feature of the development of art in this country is the increasing excellence of our popular illustrated literature. The public demands, and artists and publishers now supply, better pictures than formerly, both in periodicals and in books.”

While Gilder stated the need

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54 “The Old Cabinet,” *Scribner’s Monthly* 14 (April 1878): 888-9. Gilder recommended the opportunity to see the work of “one of the strongest members of the French ‘Impressionist’ school, so called,” and while he found the image “light and in parts vague, in touch,” Gilder re-assured his readers that Degas can, if he wishes, “draw with the sharpness and firmness of Holbein.” Here Gilder justified the more impressionistic aspects of the water-color with the underlying notion that the painter is technically capable, revealing his sense of unease with the more radical aspects of this new school, which had had few original works shown in America. The “watercolor” (in actuality a gouache and pastel over a monotype now known as *Ballet Rehearsal (A Ballet)* c. 1874) was lent by Louise Elder. The image was the first work ever purchased by Elder in 1875 with the advice of her close friend Mary Cassatt. Elder would go on to marry Harry Havemeyer in 1883 and amass what was arguably the world’s largest private collection of Impressionism.

55 Oakey and Hallock Foote were also close personal friends of de Kay’s from her early training days in New York, at the NAD Life School and the Free School of Art for Women at the Cooper Union, respectively. Neither woman was a member of the SAA.

for more exhibitions of this nature as a means for healthy competition among artists, the Black and White show was clearly an effective vehicle by which to further promote the most popular aspect of his magazine, illustrations. Given *Scribner’s* status as the most widely read, illustrated monthly in America, the glowing review of the exhibition’s artists and their drawings is not surprising.\(^5^7\)

Following this review, Gilder highly praised the show on view at the Art Students League, which featured life-studies of “our younger artists, as well as those of some of the young foreign painters, their fellow students, made in European schools. This was, without doubt, the fullest and most interesting exhibition of the kind ever made in this country.” Here artists of his circle provided images of the human figure, a genre that Gilder had been strongly encouraging in his earlier editorials. The life-studies of SAA members Weir, Low, Eaton, Shirlaw, Dielman, Chase and Duveneck were recognized as representative of works made under teachers at the leading schools in France and Germany; close examination of these works would greatly behoove artists who were unable to go abroad as well as viewers who wished to have a stronger appreciation of current trends in the European art world: “The value of such an opportunity for observation and comparison of the studies made under the living masters of France, Germany and Italy, every painter and everyone interested in painting will understand.” Gilder surely knew that paintings by these artists whom he called attention to in his column would all be on view at the SAA’s first exhibition, scheduled to open when the

\(^{57}\) The fact that readers were concerned with quality as well as quantity in terms of illustrations was made clear in the success of *A portfolio of proof impressions, selected from Scribner’s Monthly and St. Nicholas* (New York: Scribner & Co. [1879]), the popular publication cited above which brought together the highest quality images in the magazine, as selected by the art editors. For more on that portfolio and the subsequent one that followed it, see Chapter IV and VI.
edition went to print. In his use of language, he continuously described the SAA artists as “young,” “new,” and “international,” ascribing to them and to their art a certain vitality, vigor and sophistication vis-à-vis their older, more traditional counterparts at the National Academy.  

Concluding his April column, Gilder used his editorial position to speak out against the practice of the powerful “picture-dealers” who virtually ignored American artists. While Gilder acknowledged that most of these dealers were foreigners, who naturally took “little interest in American artists or American art as a simple matter of business,” as they could make more money on imported paintings, he believed that “one of these days there will be a change.” Gilder predicted that the change would occur “as the public taste improves, the demand for the clever, shallow European work now so popular here will be followed by a demand for the good and sincere work of both foreign and native artists.” Here again we see Gilder’s commitment to improving the public taste to recognize quality works of art as a means to energize the market for American artists (specifically those artists in his circle) and his use of the term “sincere,” echoing the words of Eugene Fromentin, to define quality art, both foreign and domestic. As if to validate his ongoing efforts, Gilder noted that “the chances for the substantial recognition of merit are improving and will continue to improve.”

58 Ibid.
59 Ibid., 889. Gilder does note the “we can think of one exception to the above rule: that of a foreign born dealer who does take a lively and intelligent interest in American painting and sculpture.” Readers “in the know” would immediately recognize this dealer as Daniel Cottier, who (as discussed above) championed many of the artists in Gilder’s circle.
60 Ibid.
Having effectively used his column to provide national exposure and recognition to individual artists of the SAA, in May of 1878 Gilder officially introduced the organization itself for the first time to his readers, stating that “anyone interested in the progress of art in American must have been gratified with it formation.”61 The introduction was timed in conjunction with the reviews of the Society’s first exhibition, held in March of 1878. Praising the “dignified manner in which it has been conducted,” and describing the movement behind the “new organization” in terms such as “natural” and “healthful,” Gilder again set up a comparison with the previous generation of painters whose work was deemed old, tired, and “stagnating.” Reviewing the initial SAA exhibition in the most glowing of terms, he stated that it remains a fact that there was never before made a representative exhibition of paintings by Americans of such a high grade of excellence…It is a fact still more significant and encouraging that the exhibition revealed, not only an amount of training and skill among both our old and young artists, but also a mastership in qualities rare and unteachable, which must before long place American art at least on a par with contemporary art of any other country.62

Reinforcing his earlier comments, Gilder noted that an “art atmosphere” had begun to develop, which was inspiring a marked improvement in painting in America and a new sense of “comradeship,” encouraging American artists to remain at home, rather than returning to live and work abroad. This “comradeship” was supported by an emerging academic system resembling the Parisian model that was developing in New York, through organizations such as the ASL. This new atmosphere was particularly apparent in

61 “The Old Cabinet,” *Scribner’s Monthly* 15 (May 1878), p.147. In a footnote to the column Gilder adds the following: “Officers of the society: Walter Shirlaw, President; Augustus St. Gaudens, Vice-President; Wyatt Eaton, Secretary; Louis C. Tiffany, Treasurer. Founded June 1st 1877.” Although she was one of the four founding members (the other three being Shirlaw, Saint-Gaudens and Eaton) de Kay was probably not listed because she was not an officer.

the formation of the Society, which “is not a foreign thing, but rather an augury of the
ture sort of nationality in our art, which has been recognized by the most intelligent part
of the public and press” and a signal that “art is to have a congenial home in this new
world.” Gilder emphasized that the SAA, along with improved opportunities for artistic
education, (and here one can assume he is referring to the Art Students League), can be
directly credited for this new environment; anyone reading the article who was familiar
with the Gilders would have immediately recognized their intimate involvement in these
organizations, and their role as one of the driving forces behind this “new atmosphere.”
“The Old Cabinet” columns also reveal how vitally important this concept was to Gilder,
who sought to change the cultural life of Americans by having art play as integral a role
in daily life and society in America as it did in France, where artists were supported by a
large general interest and involvement, a public which looked at art, talked about art, read
about art and purchased art. Gilder stated,

hitherto it has been necessary to go abroad, not only for proper instruction; not
only for the opportunity of visiting the great galleries; not only because living is
cheaper there and the artist finds his path smoothed in every direction; not only
on account of these advantages, but also because of the comradeship to be had
there, the mutual criticism and the indefinable and indispensable “art
atmosphere,” without which he cannot breathe.

The first large-scale display of works by American artists trained in Europe, the
SAA show was considered eclectic by many critics as compared to the more homogenous
shows at the National Academy. The exhibition reflected the impact of European
training as it contained a number of works that were deemed “unfinished” and appeared
to disregard a need for uplifting subject matter. In fact, Gilder’s May column opened

63 Ibid.
64 Ibid., my emphasis.
65 Biesenstock, 48.
with a brief paragraph about the ignorant “Philistine critic,” derided here again for his unflinching commitment to works of art that were “smooth” and “finished” and his criticism of certain pictures in the SAA exhibition as “niggling” and lacking “conscientiousness.” To please the “untrained eye” of this Philistine critic, “a picture must not only be level to the touch and sleek to the eye; it must have those traits of insipidity and shallowness and empty prettiness which appeal to his sympathies and his understanding.” In Gilder’s comments on the ignorance of Philistine critics in their requirements for finish and literal reproductions of nature, as well as his emphasis on the national aspect of the movement, he was responding to critical concerns over the predominately ‘sketch-like” quality of most of the works, and the general sense that the SAA did not represent a purely American art. Here Gilder sought to defend the “unfinished style,” as well as the show’s international flavor as a stimulus to the development of art in the United States.

The column presented the SAA as an avant-garde organization, which, while standing in opposition to the Academy, represented the means for American art to move forward and compete with its European counterparts. The article mentioned an American artist studying in Paris who recently returned home to join in the “new atmosphere” for encouragement and inspiration: “‘In New York,’ he [the artist] said, ‘it is like taking part in a revolution.’ That is the ring of the true metal.” Gilder credited the Society with the resurrection of art in America, improving not only the art itself but also art criticism, art

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66 “The Old Cabinet,” *Scribner’s Monthly* 15 (May 1878): 147. It should be noted that neither Gilder nor *Scribner’s* was supporting any type of revolutionary French activity in a political sense, but rather, suggesting that the fact that Americans were beginning to develop an artistic academic system for the education, sale and promotion of art based on French models was in itself somewhat revolutionary.
instruction, and the general art environment, high praise for a relatively small and fledgling institution. Further, the Society was expected to improve the market conditions for sales of American art, as well as that issue so vital to Gilder’s work, the general level of public taste.

Having effectively introduced and promoted the work and the ideals of the Society to his readers in his spring columns, Gilder dedicated his June column to the cultivation of “good taste” through knowledgeable discussions of art, as well as the support of his artists and illustrators. In what would be his final essay on art criticism in “The Old Cabinet,” Gilder asked the rhetorical question, “But what is the difference between a good picture and a bad picture, and how dare any one assume to know?” He appeared to have worked out the answer to this question in his own mind over the course of the last year, writing his editorial column, commissioning illustrations and discussing his ideas with the artists in his circle. Responding that one need not be an artist to recognize a great work of art, Gilder stated that an “ideally good” critic must have the ability to see the important quality of timelessness in any image, and to discern a level of depth, sincerity, and originality in the work: “For it becomes more and more apparent, notwithstanding all the gossip about this and that school, this and the other method, that, given a certain amount of training and of taste, the question becomes one of individuality – of power in the artist himself… of [his] own immortal soul.” Gilder also noted that “literary men” were not always capable of grasping and conveying unique aspects of the fine arts that could not be expressed in words, implying that he struggled with these issues in developing his own aesthetic philosophy through the actual writing of the

column. Not a rigid system, Gilder’s aesthetic philosophy drew from his exposure to the artists in his circle as well as a variety of French critical approaches including the historical focus of Taine as well as the painterly romantic view of Fromentin. Through the development of his aesthetic philosophy, Gilder crafted a style of criticism that was ideally suited to discuss the work of “the new movement,” in its frequent use of terms such as “sincere,” “ethereal,” “unfinished,” “expressive” and “subjective.”

For the first time, Scribner’s essentially ignored the annual NAD show in its June edition, including only a brief paragraph in “The Old Cabinet” discussing the poor hanging practices of the Academy, which displayed works by La Farge and other SAA members in undesirable spaces. Gilder noted “that this sort of skying was done, was a matter to be expected, as the result of the standard of taste which exists at the Academy, and which is likely to exist there for some time to come.” 69 Clearly when it came to “taste,” Gilder deemed the older academicians as “lacking,” and their work no longer worthy of mention in his critical column.

In the final portion of the editorial, Gilder chose to involve Scribner’s in an aesthetic dispute, calling attention to a controversy over the value of illustrators and engravers, while highlighting the aesthetic qualities that he associated with the art of illustration. Initiated by La Farge and recently played out in the daily press, the dispute related to the decision to allow wood engravings to be exhibited in the American division of the Fine Arts Department at the Paris Exhibition held in 1878. Urging the Fine Arts Committee to include engravings on wood and arguing that Americans had excelled in this area and would be able to compete favorably with European nations, La Farge had

his letter to the Committee on the subject published in the local New York papers. The letter set off a controversy in the press over the definition of “art,” the position of the wood engraver in the art world, and the distinction between wood engraving as mimetic (low art) versus its creative (high art) counterparts, painting and sculpture. Both the president of the NAD, Worthington Whittredge, and the painter George Inness responded, publishing statements in the daily press regarding the status of the engraver, with Whittredge recognizing the engraver as an artist in his own right, and Inness denying the claim. Although the issue was no longer relevant, (the decision was not made in time to send the works to Paris for display at the exhibition), “The Old Cabinet” reignited the controversy, using it as a platform for Gilder to discuss the nature of creativity, and citing similar conflicts in the history of art. Taking up two full pages of text to discuss the issues involved, the passage demonstrates Gilder inserting himself as an important voice in the art world in a conflict between two of America’s most recognized and highly regarded artists, La Farge and Inness. As discussed above, in the development of his approach to aesthetic thought and artistic criticism, Gilder has been strongly influenced by his relationship with La Farge, adopting a number of La Farge’s

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70 The letter dated March 15, 1878 was published in the World, The New York Times and the Nation, all of which endorsed La Farge’s ideas; The Evening Post however held that wood- engravers were “imitators and plodders” whose business was to copy not to create, to interpret and not to meddle with the text. The artist on the other hand was seen distinctively as a creator whose absence could not be compensated for by the presence of an engraver, particularly in a Fine Arts exhibit. The controversy was ultimately mute as the discussion came too late and there was not enough time to include wood engravings in the works selected for the Fine Arts Department. Some wood engravings were included in the more general department of American products and manufacturing.

71 Gilder likened the controversy to the argument over the value of history versus landscape painting, pointing out that the later was less highly appreciated until critics endorsed it and encouraged popular interest in the mid-nineteenth century. “The Old Cabinet,” Scribner’s Monthly 16 (June 1878): 291.
ideas on art as his own. Further, La Farge was representative of the new movement, while “the elder Inness,” as he is called by Gilder, remained a prominent member and exhibitor at the NAD.\(^{72}\) As such, it is not surprising that Gilder would resurrect the controversy in order to publicly support La Farge as well as the engravers, who were vital to the success and popularity of *Scribner’s*. Gilder had effectively crafted a reputation through his column as a cultural spokesperson, fit to address the public on the major aesthetic issues of the day.

In his support of the engravers, Gilder pointed out the work of Timothy Cole, one of the magazine’s top producers. Cole’s image of Saint-Gaudens’ *Adoration of the Cross by Angels* in St. Thomas’s Church (figure 3.3) was cited as an example of the highly trained, technical expertise required to reproduce a piece of sculpture on the printed page.\(^{73}\) Further, Gilder suggested that truly talented engravers, such as Cole, also shared in the aesthetic beauty and spirit of the original work in creating its reproduction.

According to Gilder, Cole was only able to render such an “accurate and valuable copy” because he had been “inspired by and done his work in the same spirit in which St. Gaudens had done his.”\(^{74}\) Championing the engravers as the heroes of print media, Gilder encouraged his readers to not only appreciate the artistic challenges of translating a three dimensional object onto a two dimensional surface, but also the fact that

\(^{72}\) While Gilder may have called George Inness “the elder Inness,” because his son, George Inness Jr. was also an artist and, in fact, a member of the Society, I would also argue that Gilder uses the term “elder” to suggest that Inness was part of the older, more conservative generation of painters, in spite of the changes taking place in his work during the late 1870s which shared many of the same expressive traits as those of the SAA members.

\(^{73}\) The engraving appeared in Cook’s article “Recent Church Decoration,” *Scribner’s Monthly* 15 (February 1878): 576.

\(^{74}\) “The Old Cabinet,” *Scribner’s Monthly* 16 (June 1878): 292.
Scribner’s high quality of engraved illustrations afforded its audience a level of aesthetic appreciation and judgement that had not been possible in the past. 75 Gilder’s involvement with illustration had substantially impacted his own aesthetic philosophy and his defense of engraving as a “high art form” further underscores the vital role it played in Gilder’s ideas on art, reproduction and the improvement of public taste.

75 In his position as editor, Gilder further supported his argument by including a full article, appearing on the pages just prior to the monthly columns, entitled “The Engraver: His Function and Status,” by William James Linton. Linton was a highly regarded English engraver who had worked for Scribner’s and would go on to write a number of volumes on Wood Engraving. Scribner’s Monthly 16 (June 1878): 237-42. Gilder also mentioned the “thoughtful and eloquent paper by Mr. Linton” in his “Old Cabinet” piece that followed. Among Linton’s works were Practical Hints on Wood-Engraving (1879), A History of Wood-Engraving in America (1882), Wood-Engraving, a Manual of Instruction (1884) and The Masters of Wood-Engraving (1890). The article asked the question, “Is an engraver an Artist?” to which the response is “not necessarily so…which as an excellent painter and critic observes, is true of painters and sculptors likewise.” Linton, (June 1878): 237. The “excellent painter and critic” referred to was La Farge. Linton went on to describe in-depth the role of engravers in the history of art, the process of wood and copper engraving, and challenges which face the engraver, who must translate colors into black and white, and “render the vague in positive lines”. Ibid., 240. Linton spoke to questions regarding “copying” and “imitation,” discussing these issues in terms of painters who work from nature, Ruskinian doctrine, and the methods of photographers. Arguing on behalf of the engraver, Linton placed him on par with painters, sculptors and critics, all of whom, in order to be recognized as “Artists,” must have an in depth knowledge of the subject matter, the technical aspects of not only engraving, but also those of the medium he was copying such as color, line, and materials, as well as an awareness of the history of art. His ideas recall those of Gilder’s regarding the need for knowledge on the part of the art critic. Finally, he addressed concepts of Beauty, Truth and Imagination in his defense of the engraver as “Artist,” again mirroring many of Gilder’s ideas on aesthetics. The piece was noteworthy for the fact that its discussion of larger issues relating to engraving had much in common with Gilder’s aesthetic philosophy. This shared ideology, the vital importance of the art of illustration to Scribner’s, and the commitment on the part of Gilder to value the illustration aesthetically in its own right, explains why he would devote a full-scale article on the subject in his popular monthly magazine. At this pivotal moment in his own development as editor and critic, we see Gilder encouraging the American people to engage in discussions on the nature of Beauty, Truth, high versus commercial art, and issues of reproduction. The article also provides a window onto the direction in which Gilder was driving Scribner’s, as a vehicle by which to express the aesthetic ideas of his artistic circles, both personal and professional.
Moving on from “The Old Cabinet”

For the remainder of the summer of 1878, Gilder continued to write more abbreviated editorials for “The Old Cabinet,” including brief passages discussing ideas about taste, the nature of looking at art with trained and unsophisticated eyes, and the need for more professional criticism. While his ideas may have been directly drawn from discussions with La Farge, Saint-Gaudens, de Kay and other members of the SAA circle, he appeared at this point to be speaking his mind directly, proud of his role in developing the “new art public” that was emerging in America. Although he complained of the onslaught of “modern babble about the subject [of Art],” in one of his final columns he defended the current

art affectation of these days….it is worth while to stand it, for it means, here and there and as by accident, opportunity for the genuine artist - and the greater his individual opportunity for the education and for the display of his genius, the stronger and wider will be the reaction upon the public of genuine appreciation and good taste. 76

Secure in the notion that through his column he had improved the “art atmosphere” in America, and poised to not only take over the magazine but also make a positive impact on what the public read and thought about the arts, Gilder decided it was time to end “The Old Cabinet.” While substantially more sophisticated since its origins in the early 1870s, the “O.C.” was not originally intended as a critical column, and Gilder was now prepared to put into practice his call for improved art criticism in the periodic press. The column had served him well as a means to develop his own aesthetic ideology and to establish a unique dialogue with his readers, while also operating as a vehicle to publicize the organization of and the ideas behind the SAA. Now the time had come for Gilder to

promote these artists more widely throughout the pages of *Scribner’s*, in full-scale articles, critical reviews and extensive illustrations. As such, he decided to stop writing the column in order to devote his energies to this larger cause. In a letter dated “Summer of 1878,” Gilder commented on his desire to give up “The Old Cabinet” in order to focus on his work as an editor, and wrote of his discussion on the subject with Josiah Holland:

I talked with Dr. Holland about my “Old Cabinet” writings the other day. He liked what I wrote about engravers, but thinks I am in danger of being limited. I tried to make him understand that I was interested in [fine] art as a part of life, a part of all art and a part of my own general culture. That I was not interested in it to the extent of making a speciality of it – that I never expected to write of it except incidentally and paragraphically, and that I wrote about art in the ‘Old Cabinet’ because by hard thinking, observation and study I cracked the shell and was beginning to get at the kernel of it, and therefore could write more intelligently about it than could most people in the country – whereas on other subjects I felt there were many men who could write much better; - that if I were editor I would be the last man to neglect public, economic, etc. questions in the magazine, but would get specialists to write about them. That I was interested in other things and deeply moved by other things – and always had been…that so far as the magazine was concerned I stand for the art side especially in his mind, merely because I am ‘in the movement.’

In his response to Gilder’s request, Holland recognized his new level of maturity and confidence in his critical writing, as well as his desire to move on from “The Old Cabinet,” and to take greater control of the arts (and other aspects of the magazine) at the editorial level:

In regard to relinquishing the “Old Cabinet” I make no objection. In the main, and lately particularly, it has been a very attractive feature of the magazine. I can see that it has been a good thing for you too, and that its office in that regard is practically finished. You can and should do larger work, when you do any and make more of your better thought.

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77 Rosamond Gilder, 85-86.
78 Ibid.
At this point, Holland essentially turned over the day-to-day responsibilities at the magazine to Gilder, whose words would entirely replace Holland’s on the editorial page by 1881.

This close examination of Gilder’s editorials in “The Old Cabinet” during 1877 and 1878 allows one to witness his evolution as an art critic and the development of his voice as a spokesman for the ideas of young artists trained overseas who were driving the movement against the Academy in America after the Civil War. Gilder discussed his ideas about aesthetics and the arts in an unprecedented dialogue with a general public who had previously had little interest in these subjects, and, in the process, also introduced a new generation of artists to a new generation of Americans. Aware of the rising power of the illustrated press, Gilder recognized the opportunity that *Scribner’s* afforded him to create a “new art atmosphere” and took advantage of his role to become promoter and spokesman for the “new men” (and women). He took up the job in earnest and the increase in the number of articles, illustrations and sheer pages of text devoted to the contemporary art world in the remaining years of *Scribner’s* was astounding. Looking at the substantial rise in the coverage of the arts in *Scribner’s* (and the publishing industry at large), in relation to the growth of a mass audience for art, it is clear that each positively impacted the other, with more middle class citizens attending art exhibitions, art schools and newly established museums than ever before in the history of the country. Garnering a group of cultivated professional journalists to present, discuss and advise the public on the rapid changes that were occurring in this new art world, Gilder insured that his goals to improve criticism and to move American art in a new direction would be realized in *Scribner’s* unparalleled commitment to art journalism.
“Ten years ago there was very little attention paid to aesthetics upon the part of what is known as the general public. And now if any one were to mention the one thing which popular feeling is deeply stirred about, it would be art.” – W.C. Brownell “The Art-Schools of New York,” *Scribner’s Monthly* October 1878.

At the close of the decade of the 1870s, readers of *Scribner’s Monthly* found themselves inundated with the subject of art. Every issue contained extensive articles on every possible aspect of the art world: art schools, artist life, art exhibitions, expatriate artists, and art associations; art criticism, art history and art gossip; and all of it filled with lavish illustrations by new young artists returning from study overseas. There was art fever among the American public, an eager desire to learn about all things artistic, and *Scribner’s* stood ready to not only meet the demand but also to fuel it.

As a popular monthly magazine, *Scribner’s* extensive coverage of this “art craze” was unique within the publishing industry and truly remarkable within the history of American art. Gilder implemented a variety of methods and approaches in his extensive coverage and promotion of this new American art world. The period between 1878 and 1880 also represents a unique moment at *Scribner’s* when art became its central focus, evidenced by the sheer number of pages in each issue devoted to artistic topics, as well as the increased use of illustrations to support that effort. Arguably the most popular magazine of its time with a readership in excess of one hundred thousand and distributed in every region of the country, *Scribner’s* played a pivotal role in creating a new importance for aesthetics that had not previously existed in America. This period of intensive engagement and prodigious output is unequalled in the history of the popular
American magazine, and it was driven by Gilder and his circle of artists, critics and illustrators.

The time at *Scribner’s* was ideal for Gilder to make his mark, with Josiah Holland encouraging him to take on “larger work” while all but relinquishing control of the day-to-day operations of the magazine. The change allowed Gilder to develop a more aesthetic publication, in both appearance and content. By the end of the decade, Alexander Drake, head of the art department, along with Theodore De Vinne, the master printer at *Scribner’s*, had made substantial innovations in terms of the quality of the illustrations, providing a greater sense of texture and contour than that found in earlier methods of basic engraving. As a result, articles were profusely illustrated, attracting new readers and, in terms of the “art literature,” providing them with a greater ability to understand, appreciate, and become familiar with the art that was discussed. The function of the image was no longer solely illustrative; engraved illustrations were also recognized for their own sake, as works of art, or as a means to recognize a particular painter, sculptor or an artistic style. The stars had aligned for Gilder. In the beginning of 1878, with an eager audience, a retinue of critics and artists, a wide network of connections within the art world of New York, and a position of authority at a periodical primed for artistic reproductions, Gilder aggressively took control of the magazine and steered it in an aesthetic direction, attempting to reform and re-inform art criticism in America.

Gilder was aware that in order to promote the type of art and artists that he sought to support and encourage to the American public, he would have to be creative in his approach. As part of his goal to extend the reaches of art criticism and broaden the ways in which Americans received their information about the art world, Gilder began to
selectively cull a number of young journalists to help further his cause;¹ many of these young writers had been directly exposed to French attitudes and aesthetic theories, and worked to stimulate a taste among viewers for modern French approaches. In his desire to improve the quality of art criticism during this time, as outlined in “The Old Cabinet” editorials, Gilder chose critics who, while recognized as professional journalists, were also trained artists, exhibition curators, and teachers who brought first hand knowledge to their critical reviews.² Their selective background and training, and their expectations for

¹ Interestingly, the three most prominent critics whom he brought into the fold during these years, W.C. Brownell, Earl Shinn and Russell Sturgis, all had full time jobs as writers at The Nation. Founded after the Civil War as an “intellectual weekly,” The Nation was led by E.L. Godkin, who edited the paper between 1865 and 1880. In its prospectus The Nation’s statement of purpose outlined its intentions: to discuss current affairs with more moderation than the party press, to maintain true democratic principles, to fix public attention on issues of reconstruction, freedman’s aid and conditions in southern states, and to “criticize books and works of art soundly and impartially.” Rollo Ogden, Life and Letters of Edwin Lawrence Godkin (New York, 1907), 1, 237, reprinted in Mott, 3, 333. While its principal objective in terms of criticism was to develop a higher standard beyond the “primeval newspaper notice,” The Nation’s larger mission was to counteract the prevailing vices in journalism at the time – inaccuracy and exaggeration. At The Nation, critics were required to include criticism of the scholarship, the philosophy, and the larger issues of the time period; in order to achieve this, Godkin hired a staff of highly respected writers and thinkers, unlike any that had ever been assembled for an American periodical. Contributors included recognized academics and experts in a variety of disciplines, with the primary staff writers, in terms of the art world, including Earl Shinn, Russell Sturgis, and W.C. Brownell; Prof Charles Moore was also a regular contributor while Charles Eliot Norton served as art editor. Ibid., 335-8. See also Carey McWilliams, “One Hundred Years of the Nation,” Journalism Quarterly 42 (1965):189-97. Holding the position of art editor from 1865 to 1908, Norton was a strong presence and also a frequent contributor, although his reviews focused on literature and poetry. The Nation was recognized as “a publication that readers can actually judge by [its reviews] whether a book or work of art was good or not.” Harper’s Weekly 12 (July 11, 1868): 35. For more on The Nation, see Thomas Bender, New York Intellect: A History of Intellectual Life in New York City, from 1750 to the Beginnings of our Own Time (New York: Knopf, 1987), 181-84. Functioning as a platform for a post-Civil War, emerging American intellectual elite, The Nation was respected for its informed, objective reviews. As such, it is not surprising that, given Gilder’s mission, he would cull from its staff.

² For example, David Maitland Armstrong who wrote “Art at the Paris Exposition. By a Painter,” Scribner’s Monthly 17 (December 1878): 737-50, was, in addition to being a
the future of the arts in America structured and defined their conception and methods of criticism. Further, these critics had no apparent ties or loyalties to the Academy.

Although Gilder was promoting objective criticism, the multiple effects of their activities clearly influenced their support of the artists in Gilder’s circle, many of whom were foreign trained and whose work derived from French styles and traditions. The authors Gilder gathered around him shared the standards and opinions he had expressed in his “Old Cabinet” editorials, and their criticism also highly valued the subjective, the figurative and the expressive.

By the late 1870s, Gilder and his new group of cosmopolitan writers were poised to develop art criticism in *Scribner’s*, and did so through two channels: art criticism in a limited sense, defined as commentary on a contemporary or past work of art, usually with an intent to pass judgment on that work; and, what has been referred to as *Kunstliteratur*, or “art literature.”3 In his methodological study of the relationship between art and literature, Jean-Paul Bouillon determined provisional categories of texts that are included in this notion of “art literature” and which are helpful in my analysis of *Scribner’s* art criticism; these categories of “art writing” include press articles, the art chronicle, the exhibition review, the museum guide, the travel account, the monograph, the historical study, the polemical text, the manifesto, the collection of aphorisms, the novel on art, the painter and an artist in stained glass, the Commissioner of the American Fine Arts section at the Paris Exposition. Along with Saint-Gaudens, he solicited and selected works by Americans working in Paris and also installed the American galleries. Earl Shinn, author of the Tile Club series, studied with Gérôme in the 1860s.

art novel and art correspondence. In Bouillon’s model the definition of art criticism is permeable, with these different genres often overlapping. In addition to this distinction, criticism could also be divided by intent. Some well-known critics of the Salon, among them Hippolyte Taine, who published in periodicals sanctioned by the Academy such as *Gazette des Beaux Arts* and *L’Art*, were recognized for their “scientific” approach to criticism, calling for objectivity and precision; others, including literary critics like Baudelaire and Zola, who published in small self-financed journals, emphasized the importance of subjective expression. Gilder incorporated a variety of categories of “art literature” and also sought to bring the scientific and the literary models together in the pages of *Scribner’s*. Neither pure objective fact nor pure fiction, Gilder sought to publish genres that drew from a variety of categories of art criticism to create a type of journalistic “art writing” which would value, instruct and entertain. During the late 1870s, Gilder began to incorporate a wide variety of “art literature” into the pages of *Scribner’s*, publishing reviews of individual and group exhibitions, including the SAA, the National Academy and international shows, alongside interviews, inquiries into current methods of artistic training, monographs, retrospective examinations of the work.

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4 Bouillon provides examples of particular French art critics, including professional journalists as well as novelists and artists themselves and the types of criticism for which they were recognized: Burty and Geffroy – the art chronicle; Champfleury and the Goncourt brothers – the monograph; Thoré and Chesneau – the historical study; Silvestre and Mirbeau – the polemical text; Duranty, Courbet, and Manet – the manifesto; Dolent – the collection of aphorisms; Burty, the Goncourt brothers, and Zola – the novel on art; Pissarro, Van Gogh, and Cézanne – the art correspondence; and Huysmans – the art novel. Jean-Paul Bouillon, ‘Mise au point theorique et methodologique,’ in *Revue d’histoire litteraire de la France* (November-December 1980): 880-99.

5 This genre is similar to the journalistic mode that emerged in France in the nineteenth century. For more on the subject see Gamboni, and Martha Ward “From art criticism to art news: journalistic reviewing in late-nineteenth-century Paris” in Orwicz, 162-177.
of one or a group of artists, and articles that contributed to the development of aestheticism or art history.

Thus, criticism at Scribner’s created value in a collaborative effort that required not just artists, but also writers who could discuss and interpret their work, providing a venue for the words of the critic and the images of the artist. Gilder’s critics and Gilder’s artistic circle were mutually dependent and mutually supportive. Each validated the other and enhanced the level of importance of art and art criticism in America. The “art literature” in Scribner’s gave the works by artists in the Gilder circle a dominant position in the magazine and in the minds of his readers. Further, both Gilder and his “art writers” had a central connection to the literary life in America, fiction and non-fiction, and participated in the controversy between the emerging realists and those who preferred the earlier romantic tradition with its dependence on idealism. Unlike their contemporaries at the daily press, these critics took part in the debates over the definition of a national literature and a national school of art, and their relation to European traditions. As a result, their work had a depth and breadth that was unique to Scribner’s at this moment in time.

Culling from a number of genres of art criticism that appeared in Scribner’s during this period - and here I am referring to art criticism with the larger notion of “art literature” in mind – I have selected four types as a means to explore how Gilder creatively utilized these genres to increase his audience’s awareness and his artists’

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7 Not surprisingly, Brownell and Sturgis would go on to become two of America’s most prominent literary critics at the turn of the century.
exposure. These four types include: polemical text and manifesto; chronicle and anecdote; monograph; and literary art criticism and the novel of art. These genres appear respectively, in the following articles: “The Art-Schools of New York,” and its follow-up “The Art Schools of Philadelphia;” “Young Artists’ Life in New York;” “Whistler in Painting and Etching;” and the three part series on the adventures and antics of the Tile Club. A close reading of these various forms of “art literature” will demonstrate how Gilder responded to his readers’ demands and worked to expand the art critical press and the ways in which Americans learned about their emerging art world. Scribner’s wide variety of art literature allowed readers to participate in the lives of the artists, offering an inside view into their particular clubs, schools and other associations. The public was also introduced and exposed to institutions that would require widespread support if a substantial artistic culture was ever going to take hold in the country. While Scribner’s continued to publish exhibition reviews of the NAD, the SAA and other smaller shows in its monthly “Culture and Progress” column, it was through these new forms of “art literature” that Gilder set about changing the nature of art criticism and generating a new found celebrity for young American artists. Invaluable to the artists themselves, Scribner’s employed them as illustrators, reproduced their paintings on its pages, and glamorized their lifestyles, providing them with much needed income and publicity.

Many of these artists used *Scribner’s* as a type of virtual gallery to show their work; their images, primarily figurative and intimate, reflected their international academic training over the panoramic landscapes privileged in the earlier issues of the periodical (see figures 1.16 and 1.21). This exposure through *Scribner’s* extensive “art literature,” coupled with Gilder’s earlier discussions in “The Old Cabinet” on how to look at art, prepared readers for the more straight forward account (and promotion) of his selected group of contemporary artists which would follow in the three-part series entitled “The Younger Painters of America,” published in 1880/81. The subject of Chapter V, the series introduced particular painters in a more critical manner to an audience who was already relatively familiar with them through these anecdotal and observational articles and who had received Gilder’s instruction on critical looking in his editorials.\(^9\) While the substantial expansion of space dedicated to the arts in *Scribner’s* mirrored a similar rise in the general level of critical attention to issues surrounding the question of art in America, I would argue that *Scribner’s* unparalleled coverage worked to fuel this interest in the daily newspapers and other monthly periodicals, and also encouraged the publication of more specialized art journals.\(^10\)

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10 In looking specifically at one periodical’s criticism, my approach differs from that of other scholars on the topic. In her book, Conrads focuses on the criticism of Winslow Homer in the daily and monthly press, and how that criticism intersected with the commentary on pressing critical issues regarding the definition, status and progress of American art and its relationship to European art. Although we share a common time period and address many similar issues regarding art criticism in the 1870s, Conrads’ work deals entirely with Homer criticism taken from a number of sources. I approach the subject of American art criticism from a different perspective, however, through an
October of 1878 was an important moment for Gilder both in his personal and professional life. In an attempt to redirect his efforts as publisher, he had given up “The Old Cabinet” as a means of discourse on the role of art criticism in America. Moreover, his wife and her colleagues were officially announcing the formation of the Society of American Artists, in whose success he had a substantial interest and which he had heavily supported. As such, it is not surprising that *Scribner’s* published an article during that month which, while ostensibly discussing art education, subtly conveyed the ideas and principles of the Society, while promoting its artists. Aware of the possible response by the art community if *Scribner’s* brazenly placed an article directly promoting the SAA, Gilder chose instead to feature a piece on New York City’s art schools. However, while the subject of the “The Art-Schools of New York,” written by William Crary Brownell for the October 1878 issue, may superficially have appeared to be a comparison of the examination of the single most influential periodical at the time and the integral part it played in defining the position and role of the art critic, while driving many of these questions regarding a national art. Although Conrads’ ultimate aim is to analyze the press in order to place Winslow Homer within a critical context, her work is invaluable to mine, providing detailed background information on competing periodicals and writers. In addition to her book, see also Margaret C. Conrads, “Winslow Homer and His Critics in the 1870s” (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 1999). For more on general art criticism during the period see also Conrads’ discussion of American critics in her “‘In the Midst of an Era of Revolution’: The New York Art Press and the Annual Exhibitions of the National Academy of Design in the 1870s,” in *Rave Reviews: American Art and Its Critics, 1826-1925*, ed. David B. Dearinger (National Academy of Design: New York, 2000), 93-107. Linda Docherty’s work on American art critics and their interest in both the “native and national,” is also relevant, although the majority of her study is beyond my time frame. Linda Jones Docherty, “A Search for Identity: American Art Criticism and the Concept of the ‘Native School,’ 1876-1893” (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1985). Still useful is the original study of criticism in America by John P. Simoni, “Art Critics and Criticism in Nineteenth Century America” (Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 1952).
three schools available to artists studying in New York, in fact the article reads as a
critique of the National Academy and its principles.\textsuperscript{11}

“The Art-Schools of New York” represents the first of many important pieces of
“art literature” by Brownell in \textit{Scribner’s} during the late 1870s and early 1880s.\textsuperscript{12} While
Brownell had experience as an art critic for the daily press during the 1870s, Gilder, in all
likelihood, approached him to write the article because of Brownell’s personal contacts in
the New York art world. Brownell, who allied himself strongly with the “new men” at the
beginning of his career, in many ways exemplified the younger, more professional,
learned critic whose writing on art was not merely reporting but also quite literary.
Drawing from the work of Taine, Brownell’s critical writing emphasized the differences
among cultures and sought out certain characteristics he could identify as American; he
was also attuned to the differences between the old and new generations in American art,
a leitmotif for much of his work for \textit{Scribner’s}.\textsuperscript{13} Born in 1851, Brownell had come to
New York in 1871 where he got a job as a reporter for the newspaper \textit{The New York
World}, and later worked his way into a staff position at \textit{The Nation} from 1879-1881.
During his time at \textit{The World}, Brownell met Montgomery Schuyler, another journalist
who would go on to be an architectural critic for \textit{Scribner’s} and other periodicals.\textsuperscript{14}
Schuyler introduced him to Homer Martin who became Brownell’s lifelong friend; with

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{11} Brownell (October 1878).
  \item \textsuperscript{12} Other articles include: “Whistler in Printing and Etching,” (August 1879), “The Art
     Schools of Philadelphia,” (September 1879), the series on “The Younger Painters of
     America,” (May 1880, July 1880, July 1881), and “Decorations in the Seventh Regiment
  \item \textsuperscript{13} Conrads (2001), 27-28 and Docherty, 216-218.
  \item \textsuperscript{14} Schuyler founded the \textit{Architectural Record} in 1891, which promoted modern
     architecture in the US and wrote on recent buildings in Albany in “The Capitol of New
\end{itemize}
Martin, Brownell frequented the Tenth Street Studio Building where he “became a part of its life, its mental force and welcome companionship.”

Through Martin, who was one of the original ten members of the SAA, Brownell became well acquainted with the artists of the Society, their mission and their French models, and formed close personal friendships with La Farge, Eakins and Olin Warner. A painter who knew Brownell at the time remarked, “It is not strange, therefore, that when Brownell went to Europe he, so to speak, annexed himself to the commanding French School and that in his matchless volume on French Art he has written a classic so luminous, yet concise, that one may tell why French painters and sculptors dominate all European methods and results.” It was Gilder who gave Brownell his first chance at literary art criticism, based on his journalist background and his “fascination with art and artists.”

While Brownell’s article was entitled “The Art-Schools of New York,” its leitmotif was the “aesthetic awakening” that had taken place in the United States during the 1870s and how essential it was to “quicken that aesthetic spirit.” In his opening paragraphs, Brownell warned against the affectation of those who may have some general

15 Gertrude Hall Brownell, *William Crary Brownell: An anthology of his writings together with Biographical Notes and Impressions of the later years*, (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1933), 295. There is a substantial record of correspondence between Brownell and Martin at Princeton University Archives and Special Collections.

16 Warner made a bust of Brownell in 1887.

17 In 1881 he left New York for Paris were he remained for over three years, and developed close relationships with a number of “men of French letters, among these Taine.” *Ibid.*, p.305. He returned to New York for a job at Charles Scribner’s Sons as a literary adviser and book-editor. In response to his time in France he wrote *French Traits: A study in Comparative Criticism* (1889) and *French Art, classic and contemporary Painting and Sculpture* (1892). Brownell was a highly and widely regarded art critic in the late-nineteenth/early-twentieth century and rose to become an extremely successful editor at Scribner’s and Co..


19 Brownell (October 1878): 763.
knowledge of the arts; in light of the fact that the environment in America was generally “hostile to aesthetic matters” with a public that “has not thought very well of art,” those who fashionably appeared to be connoisseurs should not be trusted given their lack of experience or exposure. To make matters more difficult, no single institution existed in the United States that was capable of making official judgments or pronouncements about art in this country. Brownell took issue with the National Academy’s presumption of its authority to provide rules and guidelines concerning material forms, methods and schools in America, as if it were equivalent to the French Academy: “The [National] Academy never has seen – it does not see now – that its mission for a long time to come must consist in quickening whatever aesthetic spirit already exists, and not in offering material guidance of any strictness for it.”

According to Brownell, neither art in America nor the American viewing public were “ripe” enough for an Academic influence that imposed any kind of material strictness, and the “provincial” NAD was not in a position to provide it.

While its stated premise was to “quicken the aesthetic awakening” in America and to support the development of art schools in New York, I see this article, to use Bouillon’s terms, as a “polemical text/manifesto,” given that the first five pages, or more than a quarter of the entire text, were devoted to highly negative criticism of the National Academy. Although Brownell stated that “it is not at all the purpose of this essay to suggest the framing of a resolution to be presented to the Academy council,” and presented himself as a layman, who stood outside of artistic practices, the article conveyed his substantial knowledge regarding the methods of artistic instruction both in

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New York and at the École des Beaux Arts. This type of journalistic criticism allowed Brownell to critique the Academy as an outsider, but its polemical nature was intended to provoke some type of response. Brownell took issue with specific Academy policies by describing its exhibitions as impediments to the real needs of American art. Its annual shows had thwarted the true mission of a national academy by organizing exhibitions of “rancor – such as the violent hostility to such a hanging committee as that of 1877,” exhibitions of “provincialism – such as an order that every Academician should have eight feet of the line whereon to display his wares with advantage,” and exhibitions of “exclusiveness - such as giving the best show to pictures by certain artists because they are by certain artists.”

While the Society of American Artists was never mentioned by name, Brownell did list the SAA’s chief complaints against the NAD and the larger issues that led to its organization. As a public declaration of the Society’s complaints with the Academy and of the intentions and motives behind its formation, the text shared the spirit of the manifesto of the “Refusés” and their critical supporters in Paris in the 1863. While Gilder did not wish to directly publicize the Society when it was officially announced in October of 1877 to the public, for fear of conflict of interest, his use of Brownell’s journalistic criticism one year later ultimately achieved the same goal in a way that did not appear self-serving to Gilder, de Kay and their artistic circle. The polemical text highlighted the arguments while calling for the Academy to focus on improving and supporting the art-schools.

22 Brownell’s article appeared in October of 1878, approximately one year after the Society was officially announced in the daily press on October 30, 1877 and six months after the brief announcement in the pages of *Scribner’s* in May of 1878.
The remainder of the article described the three schools of art that were currently enrolling students in New York: the National Academy, the Cooper Union, and the Art Students’ League. While Brownell acknowledged the fact that most of “today’s artists of importance are being educated or just returning from Paris,” he did believe that a more rigorous program of art training at home would lead to more talented artists in the next generation. The recent opening of the ASL in 1875, as well as the new faculty of foreign-trained teachers hired for the Cooper Union in the late 1870s, attested to this demand for more intensive artistic instruction. Brownell was also encouraged that these institutions would improve the quality of exhibitions in New York, insuring “the impossibility of a recurrence of such a hanging as last spring’s Academy exhibition,” a rather oblique reference to the NAD/SAA conflict.  

The discussion of the NAD school is in keeping with the earlier tone of the article, as Brownell used both text and illustration to convey a sense of backwardness at the institution. Prior to 1870 the National Academy School consisted of old academicians whose “slipshod and accidental system of teaching” provided inconsistent instruction; as a result, little improvement was seen in the students’ work at the annual exhibitions. Although L.E. Wilmarth was hired specifically for the job in 1870, there was no “revolutionary change,” but rather a slow improvement in the consistency of instruction. Brownell commented on the gloomy surroundings of the classrooms that were relegated to the basement of the new building. Further, the illustrations that were included in the text appear to have been selected to portray a more dreary, antiquated environment than that at the other schools (figure 4.1). Comparing the images depicting the NAD class

room to those of the Cooper Union and the Arts Students’ League, the illustration of the Academy is very predictable, with a standard perspectival space containing students who do not appear terribly engaged, an instructor who is placed in a background corner and a model whose pose is clearly not as inspiring as that of the male nude heroically holding his staff in the Art Students’ League image (figure 4.2). Here the artists actively participate in the art of drawing and painting and the diagonal composition of the more complex illustration conveys a sense of the movement, excitement and activity in the room. It is interesting to note that the image depicting the Art Students’ League was made by Shirlaw, the primary teacher at the League (and president of the SAA), while the image of the NAD was drawn by a pupil. The article effectively used its illustrations to support its larger mission visually, suggesting that the school and the overall approach of the Academy was conservative and conventional with a somewhat dim outlook for the future.

Brownell was complimentary of the all female Cooper Union art school and its foreign-trained staff, whose classes were co-taught by Wyatt Eaton (drawing) and Robert Swain Gifford (painting). A founding member of the SAA, Eaton had studied in Paris with Gérôme and, more importantly in his evolution as an artist, lived and worked in Barbizon with Jean-François Millet before returning to New York in 1877 to take the job at the Cooper Union; Eaton was also one of Scribner’s most popular illustrators in the late 1870s. In co-ordination with his studio curriculum, Eaton offered a series of art images of well-known American authors commissioned by Gilder; these portraits served as frontispieces to many of Scribner’s volumes in the late 1870s (figure 4.3). This series of portraits, which included likenesses of William Cullen Bryant, John Greenleaf Whittier, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Oliver Wendell Holmes

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24 He established his reputation as both an illustrator and a portraitist with his series of images of well-known American authors commissioned by Gilder; these portraits served as frontispieces to many of Scribner’s volumes in the late 1870s (figure 4.3). This series of portraits, which included likenesses of William Cullen Bryant, John Greenleaf Whittier, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Oliver Wendell Holmes
historical lectures that primarily focused on Millet, which, while designed for his students, were also open to the public. Emphasizing the “variety and individuality” of Eaton’s students, Brownell commended his more relaxed, French teaching methods, which would “be gratifying to South Kensington instruction, whose standard has the credit of being absolute and perfect to that extent that approximation to it is the sole measure of merit.” Unlike the British system, Eaton “stimulated” his students’ individuality while maintaining the importance of “fidelity.” In terms of his approach to teaching, it was Eaton’s time with Millet, rather than Gérôme, that guided his instruction, as he preferred “aesthetic over mechanical accuracy”:

That the exact impression which the model made upon the pupil may be conveyed in the drawing is what he tries to secure in each instance. Then he endeavors to secure that the impression shall be a pictorial one – shall be the impression of an effect, not of physical phenomena; for example, that the fingers shall be treated as part of the hand, and not portrayed in a microscopic, mechanical way…. And the effect of its inculcation is manifestly good.

Brownell praised Eaton’s approach of capturing “the effect of the impression of the model” in his life drawing class, and noted that the emphasis at the Cooper Union on French training methods would continue as J. Alden Weir, another early member of the Society who had recently returned from study in Paris, would be joining the faculty and James Russell Lowell, not only confirmed Eaton’s status as a respected illustrator, but also afforded him the opportunity to meet the major literary figures of the United States, befriending many of them through a mutual association with and respect for Gilder. For a full account of the commission see Wyatt Eaton, “Recollections of American Poets,” *Century Illustrated Magazine* 42 (September, 1902): 842-50.

Through these lectures he became extremely close to Gilder, corresponding with him frequently on a variety of aesthetic issues ranging from the art of Millet to the need for improved academic art education in America and the development of the SAA. (For more on this subject see Chapter VII). As a result of their friendship, Eaton became a regular contributor to *Scribner’s*.

Brownell (October 1878): 772-4.
during the upcoming year: Weir “is in entire sympathy with Mr. Eaton’s method of instruction, for which the school [is] to be congratulated.”  

Another frequent illustrator of *Scribner’s*, Robert Swain Gifford was one of the first to join the SAA, just three days after its initial conception on June 4, 1877. Interviewed by Brownell for the article, Gifford explained his method of teaching his painting class:

You can do a good deal by instruction, even for the pupils of the most talent and best feeling. You can help them to help themselves. Beyond teaching the technicalities you cannot go off course directly. But reflect how much technicalities mean. No European artist thinks of neglecting the most apparently trivial of them; he has them all at his fingertips….After technicalities in their widest sense, I don’t know what can be taught. After that success with a pupil depends very much upon the instructor’s personality, not upon his theories of painting. If he is himself interested and earnest and can inspire [these things], of course, his success is likely to be greater.  

Gifford had traveled widely in France, and while he had not actually trained there, he appropriated many of the French Academic ideas practiced in the ateliers of the École on teaching and stressed the importance of basic skills. Brownell suggested that the work of the Cooper Union students indicated Gifford’s ability to stimulate successful painting. To underscore this idea, Brownell opened the article with a “Still-Life study in Oil” by a student of Gifford’s, Mary Cook (figure 4.4). The image introduced not only the article, but also the October issue, and its byline gave as much credit to Gifford as teacher as it did to Cook as artist. In contrast to the rather staid and classical image, “Drawing of Dancing Faun,” by an Academy student (figure 4.5), the illustrated painting by the Cooper Union artist had much in common with the works by members of the SAA in its intimate size, its use of light and shade and its more overall sensual style. Opening the

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article, the image was valued purely as a work of art, without any illustrative function other than to signal the more contemporary style of work being done by students at the Cooper Union. In addition, the illustrations depicting the female artists at work both in the classroom and the studio drawn by Francis Lathrop, who was recognized for his images of females in aesthetic interiors in the Cook series, may have appealed to many of *Scribner’s* female readers (figure 4.6).

Brownell applauded the Arts Students’ League as the most progressive of the three institutions, a school where the “advance in art” is highly encouraged. While the article recounted the history of the League’s formation, it did not specifically mention the particular artists who led the succession from the National Academy school; however, any reader with inside knowledge of the New York art world would have known of de Kay’s involvement. Although the League at this point was only three years old, the influence of its practices had become widespread among American artists. For example, the League’s addition of a sketch class to the curriculum was later taken up by the Academy, and sketch classes were organized by a number of American artists working in Paris. In 1876, Walter Shirlaw was selected as the primary instructor for the League; one year later, Shirlaw would be elected president of the Society of American Artists. The article noted that William Merritt Chase, also an SAA member, would take over the drawing and painting classes at the League in 1879, with Shirlaw focusing on the composition class. Many of the artists who worked there were already seasoned professionals; in fact, most of *Scribner’s* illustrators, as well as those from other monthly illustrated periodicals, used the studio space at the League to prepare their drawings for their respective magazines. The League was also presented as forward thinking in its
forging of relationships with new institutions emerging in the American art world, such as the Metropolitan Museum, which gave ASL students access to its gallery space on 14th Street.  

Brownell was clear in his request that Americans recognize the importance of these institutions and the need to support them in order for the arts in the United States to advance:

It is possible to offer a practical suggestion, not only to the Academy, but also to all American painters and all Americans interested in the progress of plastic art in America. It is this: Take care of the art-schools. It is to these schools that one looks, both for accomplishment of good work and for the dissemination of aesthetic taste. Out of these schools should come not only artists, but aesthetic evangelists.  

Comparing the three schools and their instructors, Brownell contrasted their different methods of teaching and the theories behind them. While he did not suggest that he could predict future success, he did note that at a recent exhibition of paintings by students at the League there was a true sense of “vitality and vigor and a genuine impulse toward artistic expression, it was impossible not to notice.” Although he encouraged the reader

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29 Brownell used this connection to describe the mixed quality of the Metropolitan’s holdings and to praise the collection of the New York Historical Society. He also mentioned the Lenox gallery as a place where ASL students studied British painting of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Ultimately ASL students would have access to the Metropolitan’s new building on Central Park in 1880.

30 Brownell (October 1878), 765.

31 According to Brownell, the works there could be criticized for lack of technical expertise, specifically in terms of creating an exact likeness, and he was unwilling to make a judgment as to the greater importance of “fidelity” over “feeling,” although he suggested a preference for the latter, upon which greater emphasis is placed at the League than at the Academy: “Gradation, light and shade, color and so on, absolute fidelity, elements to which Mr. Wilmarth attaches great value – upon these qualities Mr. Shirlaw does not, I take it, place an exalted estimate.” Shirlaw’s method called for the artist to “help out” an object, “to let its defects alone, to focus on its merits, to take nature as a suggester, not as an absolute model… How it should be, you can tell if you have any artistic sense.” Ibid., 779-80.
to draw his own conclusions, based in part on an examination of the illustrations, Brownell commended Shirlaw’s teaching methods, as they promoted the painterly style of the artists affiliated with the SAA. While recognizing the vital contribution of the Cooper Union in its talented staff and incorporation of French methods into its teaching curriculum, Brownell saw the League, which “displays more life and enthusiasm,” as the organization that could promote and sustain the aesthetic awakening in the United States. Further, a comparison of the illustrations included for the three institutions confirms Brownell’s critical conclusions; the more contemporary, nuanced images of a “Character Head,” “A One Hour Sketch,” and “The Vision” representing the League recall popular styles and subject matter on view at the Salon in France versus the static antique drawings such as “Dancing Faun” provided by the Academy (figures 4.7, 4.8, 4.9 and 4.5). The article’s critique of the National Academy and its strong endorsement of the League, an institution which was closely connected with Gilder’s goals for a new direction in art, de Kay’s personal artistic style, and the philosophical ideas of the other leaders of the Society of American Artists, made it a clear endorsement for the “new men” (and women), and, as such, a manifesto for the recently formed SAA. While presumably writing about the nation’s art schools, the article stood as a means to publicize the SAA; it also worked to create an environment in which SAA exhibitions

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32 Eaton’s methods were recognized as a type of compromise between the NAD and the ASL. While he put the knowledge of basic artistic principles first as the essential aspect of artistic training, he also encouraged the artist to go beyond mere imitation; he “inspires enthusiasm while at the same time that, as a teacher of drawing, he is insisting on fidelity.” *Ibid.*

33 While there is no information regarding how Brownell selected these images, and the selection from which he was able to choose them, clearly the antique illustrations used to represent the NAD would have been less appealing to a general audience.
would be well received by a public who had already been exposed to the society’s underlying ideas as the true and proper direction for art in the United States.

In a follow up to this article, Brownell wrote “The Art Schools of Philadelphia,” which was published six months later in April of 1879 and featured the controversial artistic methods and instruction of their director, Thomas Eakins. While Brownell admitted that the Philadelphia art world was somewhat provincial in comparison to that of the “metropolis,” he did suggest that the schools of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts were, in many ways, superior to those in New York. More closely resembling the French academic system, the schools of the Pennsylvania Academy, led by Eakins, provided students with more advantages, including better casts and studio spaces, more models, and unique opportunities for human and animal dissection. The article contained ten illustrations by PAFA students, including Thomas Anshutz and Susan Macdowell, which offered intimate access to the variety of classrooms: the antique class, the life classes (male and female), the modeling classes, the dissections and the anatomical lectures. Although Eakins himself did contribute illustrations to *Scribner’s*, the images for this article were done entirely by his students, and revealed the intensity of the program in comparison to those of the New York schools.

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34 Brownell (April 1879).
35 Eakins provided illustrations for two *Scribner’s* articles including “On the Harlem” for Clarence Cook’s “Spring Hereabouts,” *Scribner’s Monthly* 20 (June 1880):165, essentially an engraving of *The Biglin Brothers Turning the Stake Boat* (1873), renamed to suit the article, which also included some of the few illustrations in the periodical by Winslow Homer. “Rail-Shooting” and “A Pusher,” for reproduced for Maurice Egan’s “A Day in the Ma’sh” *Scribner’s Monthly* 22 (July 1881): 345, 348, which followed the opening article for the magazine, Brownell’s third installment on the “Younger Painters of America.” (See Chapter V). Eakins’ engravings for the Egan article were also recyclings of his oil paintings, with *Rail Shooting* (1876) reproduced in its entirety, while *Pushing for Rail* (1874) was cropped, using only the African American at the far left to
discussion about art schools in Philadelphia, the article differed from its predecessor as more of a monograph than a polemic, in that it consisted primarily of an in-depth interview with Eakins regarding his radical teaching methods and his aesthetic philosophy. Many of the illustrations of the various life and modeling classes strongly conveyed Eakins’ devotion to the human form and, in fact, the poses of the models resembled those in some of his works, such as *William Rush Carving his Allegorical Figure of the Schuylkill River* (figures 4.11, 4.12, and 4.13).

After a detailed description of his process, Brownell questioned Eakins about his obsession with the practice of dissection, which he defended as a means for students to fully understand the beauty of the human form and to achieve improved powers of observation. Numerous illustrations including “The Dissecting Room,” and “Differentiating the Muscles of the Face by Electricity,” revealed the more graphic, gruesome aspects of the dissection process and the school’s dedication to the understanding of human anatomy (figures 4.14 and 4.15). Eakins himself had modeled much of his program after the curriculum at the École and made revisions based on his own experience with Gérôme and Bonnat, adapting their practices to local conditions. However, the commitment to dissection was driven by Eakins himself, who appeared to illustrate the pusher. For more on Eakins’ foray into the commercial publishing world and his lack of realistic description of the more destitute aspects of Philadelphia’s marshlands see Alan Braddock, Chapter 2, “‘What Kind of People Are There:’ Local Color, Cosmopolitanism, and the Limits of Civic Realism,” 93-148. In terms of the illustrations by his students, the only one in the article that does not directly relate to PAFA’s classes was that of Susan Macdowell entitled, “Portrait of a Gentleman and Dog” (figure 4.10), which closely resembles her portrait of Eakins, *Portrait of Gentleman and Dog* (1778), as well as his portrait of her, *The Artist’s Wife and His Setter Dog* (1884-89). Brownell’s article, which included two illustrations by Macdowell, (more than any other student), was published three years before she and Eakins were engaged in September of 1882.
take French realism to the extreme.\textsuperscript{36} Quoting directly from Eakins, the article debated the positive aspects of this “artistic anatomy” with the danger of loosing one’s sense of the poetic and the beautiful in search of the scientific; if an artist focused entirely on structure, his work might lack an awareness of color or the nuances of character, aesthetic aspects of painting that relied less on exact knowledge and more on intuitive perception. Brownell wondered whether the work of more “expressive” artists such as La Farge would suffer from such intense attention to detail and scientific inquiry. At the end of the text Brownell asked the reader to ponder these aesthetic questions, although he prefaced the question with the statement that, “It is of course of no interest to the reader whether the present writer sympathizes with the art of teaching of Mr. Eakins.” While Brownell had a close personal relationship with Eakins and admired his skill as a painter, his account was more open-ended than his conclusions regarding the art schools in New York City.

Both Eakins and the Pennsylvania Academy had close ties with the Society of American Artists in its early years. Eakins had exhibited with the SAA since its inception, participating in the opening exhibition in March of 1878 as well as that of the following year, just prior to the publication of this article.\textsuperscript{37} In the 1879 show he chose to exhibit his already controversial \textit{Gross Clinic}. An image of a medical procedure that showcased a professor among students, as well as an example of French naturalism taken to an extreme, the painting embodied many of the ideas discussed in Brownell’s article.

\textsuperscript{36} See Kathleen Foster, “Eakins and the Academy,” in Darrel Sewell et.al., \textit{Thomas Eakins} (Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2002), 97-103.

\textsuperscript{37} Like many other SAA members, his work had been rejected by the NAD until 1878. Eakins joined the Society in May of 1880 and continued to be a regular contributor up until 1883.
In 1879 the Society sought forcefully to be recognized as an artistically progressive organization, and the *Gross Clinic* certainly participated in this effort to appear more radical. In fact, the harshest criticism of the show was directed at Eakins’ single contribution; the painting was criticized as a “degradation of Art,” “a trench on the limits of the aesthetic.” Even critics supportive of the Society voiced their disapproval in terms that mirrored those in Brownell’s article; Charles de Kay wrote of the work, “Power it has, but very little art.”

In its adoption of the methods of the French Academy and acceptance of the work of European-trained American artists, the Pennsylvania Academy also had much in common with Gilder’s aesthetic approach. As part of its mission to encourage the reception of works by artists trained overseas, PAFA offered to hold an additional SAA exhibition in Philadelphia in the spring of 1879. While the show closely resembled the Society’s annual exhibition held a month earlier in New York, it also included a few paintings that had recently returned from the Paris Exposition. Given the shared ideals between the SAA and PAFA, the upcoming event, and the role Eakins played in the early SAA exhibits, the article on the Philadelphia Schools of Art was aptly timed. Further, while Brownell did not provide an unequivocal endorsement of Eakins’ methods, the exposure provided by the article as well as the positioning of the school as radical and

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38 Its initial show of 1878 was deemed too “inclusive of more traditional artists” by some members recently returning from overseas.
40 Biesenstock, 82. In 1878 Eakins was also criticized for his un-idealized nude in William Rush, *Carving his Allegorical Statue of the Schuylkill*, one of two works that he submitted to the first exhibition and a painting that recalled the illustrations in the article (See Figure 4.13); Charles de Kay took issue with the fact that the woman’s clothes were placed on a chair, reminding him that she was not an ideal nude, but rather a naked model.
progressive versus its New York academic counterpart added to the polemical nature of the texts on art schools in America.

**Chronicle and Anecdote: “Young Artists’ Life in New York,” Constructing Bohemia and Publicizing the Salmagundi**

With the publication in January 1880 of W.H. Bishop’s article, “Young Artists’ Life in New York. Illustrated by the Salmagundi Club,” *Scribner’s* participated in the construction of an American version of the bohemianism that was widely popular in French culture during the mid-nineteenth century.\(^{41}\) The article’s text, along with its images drawn by members of the Salmagundi Club (a relatively informal artistic club formed for drawing and etching), conveyed a life of youthful innocence, camaraderie and romantic penury adopted from literary types found in Henri Murger’s *Scenes de la Vie de Boheme*. Although the notion of bohemianism had not yet truly taken hold in America in the 1870s, Gilder recognized a popular theme that could be utilized not only to increase his audience, but also to intrigue readers to want to learn more about the particular artists in his circle. Many of these artists, having trained in France and lived in “garrets with mansard roofs” in Paris, conformed to romanticized notions of Bohemianism.\(^{42}\) As such, Gilder wanted to bring the bohemian home, establishing a New York bohemian artist

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\(^{41}\) Bishop, (January 1880).

\(^{42}\) Published originally as a play in 1849 and later as a book in 1851, Murger’s *Bohemians of the Latin Quarter* was not translated into English until 1888, by which time most French artists regarded the idea as a “good story that doesn’t hold true anymore;” Americans, however, clung to the idea. See Kathleen Adler “‘We’ll Always have Paris:’ Paris as Training Ground and Proving Ground” in Kathleen Adler, Erica Hirshler, H. Barbara Weinberg, *Americans in Paris 1860-1900*. (London: National Gallery Company Limited, 2006),11-56. Quote from 16. Bohemianism reached its peak in America with the publication of George DuMaurier’s *Trilby* in 1894. For more on the subject see Sarah Burns “Performing Bohemia,” in Burns, 1996, 247-273. Puccini produced the operatic version of *La Boheme* in 1896 which is what most in contemporary society currently associate with Bohemianism.
who would appeal to the public with glimpses of his glorified poverty and his devotion to his art. The article offered an insider’s look into the mysterious lives and society of New York’s young artists: their studios, their clubs, and their youthful sense of optimism and revelry. Conveying a type of privileged intimacy, the illustrations that accompanied the article provided a window into this closed society and visually underscored the non-threatening presentation of artistic life. All of the images were drawn by members of the Salmagundi Club, which was presented as an important player in New York bohemian life. Not only did the article titillate the reader with its inside view of this world, but it simultaneously publicized the artists of the Salmagundi, with artistic credits listed directly below each illustration. Gilder effectively combined text and image to publicly promote the artists of the Salmagundi, many of whom were already employed as illustrators for *Scribner’s*.

While by the late 1870s the notion of Bohemia was regarded by Parisians as pure fiction, Gilder sensed that the time was ripe to introduce an Americanized version of the concept to his readers. Between 1878 and 1880, *Scribner’s* published a variety of “art literature” on the subject, culminating with the Bishop article. An earlier piece published in November 1878 entitled “Bohemian Days,” satirically followed the trip of a young American woman named “Philistina” who left Montmartre for the forest of Fontainebleau, in search of “a region of Bohemia that even Bohemia’s historians knew nothing about… where staunch men and good women possess Bohemian instincts for which our complex and many mannered civilization affords opportunities of sane and
decorous expression.” Satirizing the numerous foreigners who posed as artists and dressed in “Turkish fezzes, fishermen’s barrettes, Phrygian caps, rakish berets and knee-breeches,” the article gently poked fun at the pretensions of these dilettantes and aesthetes, who enjoyed the Bohemian life, painting out of doors and living in the damp cellars and dilapidated cottages filled with picturesque accessories (figures 4.16 and 4.17). The following year Gilder opened the November 1879 issue with a lavishly illustrated piece on “The French Quarter of New York,” which described the cafes, shops and homes of the “lowest and poorest classes.” Images of New York’s own Bohemia, now known as Greenwich Village, were picturesquely constructed by Robert Blum, whose illustrations recalled Parisian streets on the left bank (figures 4.18 and 4.19). The article presented the neighborhood as quaint and picturesque and celebrated its Bohemian denizens: young mademoiselles, seamstresses living in “sky-parlors” with little money and in extremely poor conditions; the gloomy basement of the Taverne Alsacienne where outsiders, who are “likely to be a spy or a detective,” watch locals of a “lower and more vicious class drink wine, vermouth and draughts of absinthe, who resume their ‘routine of play’ each night; and poor professors and other devotees of literature and art living in

43 Margaret Wright, “Bohemian Days,” *Scribner’s Monthly* 17 (November 1878): 121-129. Quote from 121. Readers of Gilder’s “The Old Cabinet” would clearly have picked up on the choice of the protagonist’s name, “Philistina.”
46 Robert Blum was a frequent illustrator for *Scribner’s* and completed these images just prior to leaving for Paris in 1880 where he studied at the École des Beaux Arts. While in Europe, Blum became a close friend of Frank Duveneck and spent much time with a group of Americans in Venice, that centered around Whistler. Blum joined the Society of American Artists in 1882.
penury but held in high esteem.” 47 Readers were encouraged to “slum” with the newly arrived immigrants and to enjoy the charming foreign aspects of the scene, while safely distancing themselves from its realities. The article romanticized the very dangerous and difficult life led in the area while ignoring its high level of poverty and low standard of living. Particularly in its appealing, picturesque illustrations, *Scribner’s* glamorized the region to construct a form of Bohemia in its very own backyard, taking advantage of the concept to promote its artists as well as its authors.

Not coincidentally, the appearance of these articles coincided with the arrival of Charles de Kay’s first novel, *The Bohemian, A Tragedy of Modern Life*, published by Scribner and Co. in 1878. 48 While *The Bohemian* received little attention from other critics, it was hailed by *Scribner’s* in the “Culture and Progress” column as an important move forward in American literature: “very little has been done in the representation of metropolitan life. To those who are at all familiar with the resources and the contrasts of New York, this poverty of literary outcome has seemed inexplicable.” 49 The book was applauded for its “intense realism,” and de Kay was hailed as “master of such a mature and unconscious style.” The protagonist of de Kay’s novel, the naive DeConrey Lee, left his job as a cashier to join an exotic group of young artists known as “The Expressionists.” The group met in a picturesquely squalid back room of a restaurant in the French (or Latin) Quarter of New York, where members denounced the bourgeoisie and the wealthy men of Wall Street, and praised the works of unsung artistic heroes such as Millet and Whistler. Ultimately, the leader of the Expressionists, Harpallion Bagger,

47 Ibid., 7.
49 “Culture and Progress,” *Scribner’s Monthly* 17 (February 1879): 610.
proved to be a fraud, who stole the innocent Bohemians’ money and caused the suicide of
a young naïf. De Kay’s book had the classic constructs of Bohemian literature:
impoverished artists, an innocent youth, a young coquette, unrequited love and a corrupt
and evil villain. In his first literary work, de Kay modeled himself after Émile Zola,
attempting to write a realistic novel that depicted “modern life.” However, according to
Albert Parry, “De Kay claimed that his piece of fiction was a picture of contemporary
times. This claim finds no proofs. We do not know of any native American Murgeria of
this type actually existing in the New York of the late Seventies.” Through his
publication and promotion of de Kay’s book as well as the earlier fictional articles
appearing on the subject, Gilder set the stage for an anecdotal account of young
American artists who conformed to the Bohemian model. Anticipating a craze that did
not effectively reach New York until the late 1880s, Gilder appropriated French models
in order to publish his own type of bohemian “art literature” on the rising painters of New
York.

Published in January of 1880, the Bishop article came on the heels of these texts,
and constructed a scene of young artists working in New York with all the trappings of a

50 Parry’s book Garrets and Pretenders, although highly anecdotal and at often times
chatty, has historically been viewed as an accurate early account of the rise of Bohemia in
America, and remains the standard on early Bohemianism in New York. Albert Parry,
Garrets and Pretenders: A History of Bohemianism in America (New York: Dover
Publications Inc., originally published 1933, later edition 1960). According to Parry,
“DeKay’s effort reminds us of earlier Pfaffian days, altered and modernized by the
author. In the late ‘Seventies, as the author [DeKay] himself confessed, ‘Bohemians in
New York were so few and so scattered that their existence was sometimes denied.’...In
fact, at that time there seemed to be no one-hundred-percent Anglo Saxon Bohemia in the
city. Beginning with the late ‘Seventies, for about ten or fifteen years, the chief
Bohemians of New York were German, French and Italian.” Quote from 63-64. Pfaff’s
was a local bar and gathering place located at 653 Broadway, just above Bleecker Street.
The bar was popular with a number of writers in the 1850s including Walt Whitman.
somewhat sanitized Bohemian lifestyle. Like these earlier articles, the Bishop piece provided readers with an entertaining glimpse of a type of life they associated with mystery and romance, with Paris more than New York. Bishop took the reader through the lives of these painters, highlighting their communal living and working conditions, as well as their pursuit of artistic ideas at the expense of professional concerns and financial well-being. Young women at the Cooper Union “copy manuscripts at night in order to draw by day,” as a “cold boarding house existence takes the place of a pleasant home.” Meanwhile, men are described as living three to a room in order to keep expenses down and yet “still be able to entertain and hold sessions of a flourishing glee-club.”

Recalling the mixing of social classes in *La Vie de Boheme* as well as the artist colonies in Paris, such as the Batignolles, Bishop presented the New York art world as an open community where “social distinctions are not rigidly drawn.” Although “fashionable circles do come down to the schools and studios and form friendships,” this is attributed to a desire for “hopeless bohemianism on their part.” While Bishop’s bohemian “art literature” sought to portray a classless society of artists, reveling in their poor conditions, this utopian environment was belied by an actual drawing of the current members at a “modern meeting” of the Salmagundi Club, who were finely dressed in evening attire. (figure 4.20). Young artists did in fact join these clubs for their confraternity, but also for the financial gain and artistic exposure they could receive through personal connections and public exhibitions.

The article highlighted the importance to American artists of the trip to Europe:

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51 Bishop, 355.
52 Ibid., 357.
“for study in the great schools, [it] is an almost universal ideal.” Bishop recounted tales of young men realizing their dreams, boarding ships as they headed off to Paris, leaving as innocent young artists “full of promise,” whose letters home provided “accounts of the Ecole des Beaux Arts and the studios of its great masters in which [they] have found a place.”53 While Bishop suggested that the adventure to Paris was part of the normal course for artists in New York, in reality most could not afford to make the trip. Further, among those fortunate enough to go Paris, relatively few matriculated at the École or enrolled in any of its three ateliers for painting.54 However, Bishop’s comments did anticipate the substantial influx of artists from across the United States to Paris in the 1880s and 90s, when Americans studied with a number of French masters, and, by that time, had come to represent the largest and most organized foreign artistic community in the city.55

Upon their return, the successful expatriates attempted to seek out “romantic and original” American experiences and discovered the “picturesque capabilities” of modern life in New York. Bishop described these artists returning from overseas as the metropolis’ new creative force, versus those of the previous generation who, although the leading members of the NAD, received little attention in the city’s artistic haunts: “the older men of the Academy are no longer an active social factor of artist life.” Those now overheard in the city’s popular gathering places were the “young men of the new movement: they are the graduates of Paris and Munich and are the main supporters of the new ‘American Art Association,’ ” (the original name of the Society of American

53 Ibid.,358.
54 Adler, 27.
55 Rodolphe Rapetti “Assimilation and Resistance 1880-1900” in Adler et.al., 181.
These previously naive artists had transformed into mature painters and Bishop described their evenings in restaurants discussing erudite topics including artistic theory and technique, the “American subject,” the “simple,” the nude, the historical in art, and new “propositions in perspective.” These sophisticated expatriates, who now occupied positions of authority in the New York art schools, were depicted here as “pioneers in a new period of art development.” As such, Gilder’s circle of internationally trained artists were portrayed as the new romantic leaders of the contemporary New York art world.

The studios of these successful professionals were contrasted to those of the “beginners – a great obscure body, full of aspirations, recognized failures and whimsical vicissitudes of fortune, between the student class and that of established reputation.” Here Bishop provided his insiders’ version of Bohemian New York; the article described in both text and illustration a variety of squalid, broken-down studios where “coffee is drunk from a tomato can…the collection of dust-covered clothing, old boots and shoes, half dry sketches, plaster busts, groceries, books, and oil cans is presided over by a battered lay figure in a Roman toga and slouch hat…It is a veritable vie de Boheme that goes on.” The reader learned of artists, so impoverished that they lived on bread and water, exchanging paintings for meat from the butcher and clothing from the tailor. The illustration of a somewhat decrepit studio whose only light source is the slanting skylight from the garret appealed directly to the reader’s expectations of a typical “bohemian” environment (figure 4.21). Stories of commercial artists who, in order to pay their rent,

56 Bishop, 360.
57 Ibid., 361.
58 Ibid., 362-3.
are reduced to practicing rather plebian forms of artistic employment, were enhanced by amusing illustrations poking fun at “artistes” in the midst of some of the more low brow aspects of the profession. These artists were gently satirized as they veered from the course of true art during the day in their practical and typically American jobs of painters in the lower sense, in order to continue pursuing their bohemian lives as painters committed to high artistic ideals at night (figure 4.22). As Sarah Burns has pointed out, far from demoralizing these artists, this satirical tone allowed readers to appreciate them in a non-threatening, friendly manner; the light-hearted, playful illustrations worked to visually encourage a type of fraternal, nostalgic connection.\textsuperscript{59}

The article provided a detailed account of artistic clubs, which were presented as Bohemian establishments engendering fraternity, youthful mischief, and camaraderie.\textsuperscript{60} Bishop highlighted the Salmagundi Club (whose members illustrated the article), as readers learned of the club’s lowly origins in the studio of a “confrere,” now a successful sculptor, where a group of artists gathered for a sketch class in 1872. The original plan of the group was to prepare designs on a given subject, which were then displayed and critiqued at each meeting; Bishop did confess, however, that the meetings were often

\textsuperscript{59} To quote Burns on the subject, “The extreme discrepancy between the younger and older Smith [an artist discussed in an 1899 article] embodies the contrast between ‘bohemian’ as a nostalgically viewed stage of life associated with youth, pleasure, unconventionality, and theatrical display, and the figure of the artist – the ‘real’ artist in the present day – as worker and professional. This distinction was fundamental to the image and idea of bohemia….In the media, the art world of real New York and imagined bohemia most vividly resembled each other during the decades encompassing the early professional strivings of the postwar cosmopolitan generation.” Burns (1996), 251.

\textsuperscript{60} For more information on these clubs see Burns and Linda Skalet, “Bohemians and Businessmen: American Artists’ Organizations of the Late Nineteenth Century,” in Ronald Pisano’s The Tile Club and the Aesthetic Movement in America, (New York: Harry Abrams, Inc. and The Museums at Stony Brook, New York: 1999) 85-96. Both Skalet and Burns rely heavily on Bishop’s article in their discussions of the commercial nature of Bohemianism in the New York art world of the late nineteenth century.
reduced to fencing and boxing and other male communal activities (figure 4.23). Again, the illustration of the club’s fraternizing in a squalid studio filled with pictures and plaster casts, and lit solely by the skylight of the garret, appealed to viewers’ “bohemian” expectations and provided an insider’s view of “artistic life.” The club disbanded with many of the main members traveling to Europe, but, upon their return in the late 1870s, it was reorganized by some of the leaders who sought to bring the Salmangundi back into the public eye with its recent “Black and White” exhibitions. The original members returned from overseas study to more prosperous careers, as made clear in the illustration of the “modern meeting” (figure 4.20). An image of “The Illustrator Illustrated” also underscores how vital the illustrating profession was to many of the Salmagundi who were able to continue their higher artistic endeavors, which included illustration as well as painting, because of their employment by the major monthlies, particularly *Scribner’s* (figure 4.24). However, the article suggested that in spite of its individual members more commercial and “high-brow” pursuits, the club as a whole continued to hold onto its Bohemian roots, still meeting communally in dingy, crowded studios (figure 4.25) where members from a wide variety of artistic backgrounds – thus the origin of the name, “salmagundi,” which is defined as a mixed dish, a medley, a potpourri - still gathered in the “mellow atmosphere of a smoke-filled room.”

The club’s “easy traditions of the past are continued in an absence of formality,” with a subject selected by all and submitted designs done in a variety of mediums, (but all in black and white), which were collectively tacked on a wall for viewing and critique. The article included a number of the club members’ images of a recent meeting’s chosen theme of “Silence,” with some accompanied by their own bylines (figures 4.26 and 4.27).
Expressive in tone and suggesting a mood rather than a specific subject, the images were representative of the SAA’s style of painting and sculpture. Grouping eight illustrations together on one page, the magazine’s art editors created a type of virtual gallery space on the printed page, *Scribner’s* own curated version of a “black and white” exhibition. While keeping the Bohemian flavor of the piece intact, Bishop concluded with an emphasis on the new found role of the club in the New York art world: “With all this the once happy-go-lucky Salmagundi Club may well flatter itself on having become one of the most improving agencies in the whole artistic community.”

What Bishop did not mention in the article was the role of Gilder and *Scribner’s* in publicizing and professionalizing the Salmagundi Club. Gilder opened his April 1878 column of “The Old Cabinet” with the question, “Shall we have a ‘Black and White Exhibition’ in New York?” As discussed in Chapter III, Gilder described the “black and white” room at the Water Color Society Exhibition as one of the most intriguing features of that year’s show: “it was interesting in itself, and it was interesting also as suggestive of what could be done in an exhibition devoted entirely to black and white.” Gilder stated that, given the high quality of work being done by American illustrators, an annual exhibition of this type would benefit the public as well as American art and artists, as evidenced by the earlier debate over illustrators and engravers at the 1878 Paris Exposition. In the following April of 1879, the Salmagundi Club held an independent show at the Kurtz Gallery (the same site as that of the SAA exhibit) entitled “The Black-and White” Exhibition, which was hailed by the critic in the June 1879 column of “Culture and Progress” as

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second to none in importance, for it was practically a new impulse in art. The club has existed heretofore, but comparatively unknown. Instead of holding its exhibition at a smaller gallery down town, where little was to be seen but work by the members of the club, it has taken a new departure and has begun to exhibit at the Kurtz gallery, where contributions are received from outsiders. For this large and interesting collection the weekly and monthly illustrated press is in great part responsible.\textsuperscript{63}

Not only did Gilder initiate the idea of a “Black and White” exhibition on the pages of \textit{Scribner’s}, but he also provided effective advertising for the Salmagundi show when it officially opened. Because the show was organized to allow for drawings from non-members, it included and promoted the work of \textit{Scribner’s} illustrators, including Abbey, R.S. Gifford, Blum and F.S. Church, many of whom were also members of the SAA.

Further, it is important to note the vital role played by the illustrations in Bishop’s article (as well as all of those discussed throughout the dissertation) as a means by which these artists could use \textit{Scribner’s} as a unique type of exhibition space in which their work could be seen by readers across the country. Bishop’s article featuring the Salmagundi as an essential part of the Bohemian life of the New York art world worked to capture the attention of the magazine’s readership in order to gain further support of these exhibitions, whose contributors were primarily the illustrators of \textit{Scribner’s} and the artists in Gilder’s circle. The article is a testament to Gilder’s anticipation and recognition of the upcoming interest in all things Bohemian as well as the use of anecdotal “art literature” to subtly support and promote his own interests. Sharing the playfulness of the “Tile Club” series discussed below, Bishop’s article offered a friendly, non-threatening window into the (fictitiously) simple and leisurely life of the artist in a time of increased concern about work, labor and immigration. Rather than challenging middle class readers

\textsuperscript{63}“Culture and Progress,” \textit{Scribner’s Monthly} 18 (June 1879): 311.
in terms of these contemporary issues, the article, in its soft, satirical tone with its comic and appealing illustrations, encouraged readers to connect with and appreciate these artists, inviting them to safely enter their aesthetic bohemian world.

The Monograph: “Whistler in Painting and Etching”

Although the monograph was one of the most common forms of “art literature,” made popular in France by critics such as the Goncourt brothers and Champfleury, up until 1879 *Scribner’s* had yet to publish a substantial illustrated article on a living artist. Why did Gilder choose to open his August 1879 issue with a fifteen page, fully-illustrated monograph devoted to James McNeil Whistler? The obvious answer is that Gilder wanted to capitalize on the publicity from the recent Whistler-Ruskin case, which had gone to trial in November of 1878. But, based on a close reading of the article, I argue that there were other, possibly more important reasons behind the decision not only to publicize but also to explain Whistler’s work to the American public, reasons that related directly to the development and promotion of the Society of American Artists.

Whistler received scant exposure in America during the early and mid 1870s. Although he planned to attend and to send four or five painting to the Centennial, neither he nor the paintings ever made it to the exhibition. However, five works by Whistler were displayed in 1876 at a somewhat provincial exhibition in Baltimore. The previous year, Clarence Cook did publish an extensive article on Leonardo that included thirty illustrations of paintings, drawings, sculpture and inventions; the piece appeared in the January 1879 issue, seven months prior to the Whistler article. Clarence Cook, “Leonardo da Vinci,” *Scribner’s Monthly* 17 (January 1879): 337-362. The show at the Charity Art Exhibition included two paintings, *The White Girl* (1863) and *Harmony in Green and Rose: The Music Room* (1860-61), as well as some etchings.
Whistler’s *Coast of Brittany* (1861) was exhibited at the National Academy show, but was skied “inconspicuously and ignominiously,” above a door. According to Linda Merrill, La Farge and Saint-Gaudens were so furious about its placement that they resolved to secede from the Academy and ultimately formed the Society of American Artists. Both David Huntington and Nicolai Cikovsky have pointed out how receptive the SAA’s foreign-trained artists were to Whistler’s aestheticism; in 1879 Whistler was described as the society’s “demiurge, the deity who fashioned it.” As if to underscore his influence, the Society procured Whistler’s *Coast of Brittany* for its opening exhibition in 1878 and hung it in a prominent position in the gallery.

However, *Coast of Brittany* was a relatively conservative choice for the Society; an early image of Whistler’s painted in France during his time with Courbet in 1861, the painting did not reflect any of Whistler’s recent work, which embodied his new technique and aesthetic. While the American public may have heard about the scandalous abstraction of Whistler’s symphonies and nocturnes through reports of the trial, they had never actually seen these works or anything like them; it must have been difficult to truly grasp the nature of these images and the controversy that surrounded them. The trial was covered by the New York daily newspaper reporters as well as other critics, such as

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66 I would submit that the situation surrounding the formation of the SAA was a bit more complex than suggested by Merrill, but the point I wish to make here is the substantial impact of Whistler on the SAA. Linda Merrill, “Whistler in America,” in Linda Merrill et.al., *After Whistler: The Artist and His Influence on American Painting*, (High Museum of Art, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003). 10-31, quote from 14.
Henry James, who attempted to explain the issues of the conflict, but failed to describe the paintings.  

Gilder recognized an opportunity, realizing that the American public had no clear understanding of Whistler’s ideas on painting and aesthetics. In that Whistler had much in common with the SAA artists, Gilder reasoned that a serious, well-illustrated monograph discussing Whistler’s theories and technique would effectively explain not only the controversy behind the trial, but also many of the new artistic ideas which the Gilder circle had adopted as their own. This emphasis on a more cerebral, aesthetic explanation of Whistler’s work rather than popular anecdotes about his infamously eccentric personality was pronounced throughout the article. Gilder choose to deliberately separate the two, placing a brief piece entitled “Mr. Whistler’s Personality” in the monthly “Bric-à-Brac” section that appeared at the end of each issue and contained whimsical poems and amusing sketches; that this rather gossipy account was placed in the periodical’s final pages which were generally earmarked for levity and humor, while the serious text, along with a self portrait of Whistler, opened the August issue, was a statement in itself (figure 4.28).  

Gilder chose Brownell as the author for the Whistler article in spite of the fact that Brownell had yet to see Whistler’s current work in person. However, given his familiarity

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68 In an earlier article from 1877, James had dismissed Whistler’s work, which he likened to “ghosts of Velasquezes,” that did not “amuse” him. His objection was that “Whistler’s experiments have no relation whatever to life; they have only a relation to painting.” Henry James, “The Picture Season in London,” *Galaxy* (August 1877) and “On Whistler and Ruskin,” *The Nation*, December 19, 1878. For coverage of the Whistler/Ruskin trial in the daily press see “Current Topics Abroad,” *The New York Times*, November 27, 1878.

and sympathy with the issues surrounding the SAA artists and contemporary painting, Brownell was clearly the most qualified critic for the job. Recent improvements in the engraving process allowed for an extensive number of images to accompany the article; these illustrations included four paintings, an early *Self Portrait*, *Whistler’s Mother: Arrangement in Black and Gray*, *At the Piano*, *The White Girl*, and *Symphony in White III*, and five etchings. At the close of the article, the editor acknowledged the “courtesy” of S.P. Avery, Esq. for loaning originals from his “large and choice collection of Mr. Whistler’s paintings and etchings” in order for them to be reproduced. However, the article did not include any illustrations of the controversial nocturnes, which would have allowed the public to actually see what the basic argument of the trial was about. This was probably due to the fact that Avery did not have access to these paintings. Even if he had, their subtle gradations in color and tone were simply not reproducible with the current level of technology. The article did, however, provide illustrations of a substantial number of his early works.

In his opening remarks, Brownell explained the underlying goal of the piece, to attempt to separate Whistler’s work from the “amateur aestheticism” that had arisen from the trial and the publicity, distorting the public’s appreciation of his paintings. Contrasting Whistler’s paintings with those of the Impressionists, another artistic group about whom the American public were generally misinformed, Brownell warned against misguided attempts by viewers of Whistler’s Nocturnes to “make them out,” as they examined his relatively abstract images and tried to identify washes and daubs of color as

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70 The fact that the article was commissioned, and that Brownell had not seen the work, is based on a letter by John C. Van Dyke, to Joseph Pennell from Rutgers College on December 1, 1919, in the Pennell Whistler Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Manuscript Division., as stated in Merrill, 29, n. 46.
specific objects. The text quoted the British critic, Philip Hamerton, as a means to compare these new phenomena in contemporary art:

“The Impressionists,” he says, “are a new sect, composed of young men who have not yet definitively formed their styles. The principle of their work is not, in itself either inartistic or unphilosophical, but involves the sacrifice of very much which has hitherto helped to make the strength of art. They go to nature and receive an impression, and the purpose of their art is to render the impression as a whole, without either the painful study of parts or any scientific arrangement of material.”

Brownell vehemently objected to the amateur aesthete’s misguided association of Whistler with the Impressionists, stating that, not only was Whistler a mature artist who would eschew participating in a “new sect,” but that his work had a clear sense of composition, form, arrangement, and color. Although the British public may have labeled him an “Impressionist” based on the speed with which he worked - in the trial he famously stated that he painted the Nocturne in Black and Gold in “a couple of days” – Brownell wanted his American readers to refrain from judging a painting based on the time actually spent working on the canvas, and instead, to value the ideas behind it: “Upon the whole, then the first step toward an understanding of Mr. Whistler’s genius- toward a recognition that not how he paints but what he means is the important point to determine.” According to Brownell, once the viewer grasped this concept he would immediately abandon the idea that, in a technical sense, Whistler was part of the Impressionist movement.

Within the context of the trial, the article sought to explain to its readers the abstract quality of Whistler’s work, using language that was quite sophisticated relative to most American criticism of the day. Brownell attempted to describe its effect on the

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71 Brownell quoting Philip Hamerton (August 1879):482.
72 Ibid., 482-3.
viewer, dismissing the need for some type of narrative behind its subject matter; he attributed Whistler’s originality to the artist’s concern about the environment of an effect. His impression is manifestly always distinct, single and pictorial. It is so far from sophistication that it seems almost unreflective. It is indeed absolutely spontaneous, but it has the air of spontaneity unrevised by any after-thought… It would be difficult to find a better example of a pure painter, a painter to whom art is so distinct a thing in itself, and so unrelated to anything else.

Brownell’s criticism owed much to French models, as his discussion of abstraction and the essence of painting had more in common with that of Émile Zola and Joris-Karl Huysmans’ reviews of French painting than that of any American critics at the time. Brownell described how Whistler sought to emphasize the actual art of painting, to vindicate the unliterary character of pictorial art…to convey an impression, without referring the observer to any analogue in nature for the grounds of it...this is because - and of how many painters can the same thing be said? –this is because Whistler is not so much enamored of his material as possessed by his ideal. That is at bottom, perhaps his distinguishing trait…his art is self-dependent and is not to be referred to nature for its excuse or its justification.

The text cited a number of Nocturnes, such as Nocturne in Blue and Silver, describing it as representing Battersea Bridge by moonlight, while emphasizing the fact that the underlying purpose of the work was not to present a realistic likeness of the bridge but rather to capture its beauty. In that Whistler prized “the ideal,” his work did not concern itself with rendering the “superficies of natural objects.” Brownell tried to explain to the reader that the most important part of the work was the harmony of its color, which was only achieved through the artist’s perception and intuition. The article was ambitious in its attempt to describe and elucidate the qualities of abstraction in the nocturnes, particularly without any type of reproductions, as no American reader had ever actually

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73 Ibid., 486-7.
74 Ibid., 487.
“experienced” them in person. The text prepared American viewers to appreciate the style of many American SAA members whose work may not have been quite as abstract as Whistler’s, but still moved away from a detailed mimetic representation of an object.

Brownell used the works that were reproduced for the article to explain how Whistler differed from other contemporary artists, such as the Pre-Raphaelites and French Academic painters. Regarding “The White Girl” (figure 4.29), Brownell cited the girl’s marked individuality and her sense of character in comparison to the “saccharine” element that prevailed in much of the popular current figure painting of the period, from Bouguereau to Burne-Jones. “The White Girl” demonstrated Whistler’s ability to develop an idea of absolute beauty rather than distort it. “Symphony in White III” (figure 4.30) was also praised for its atmospheric effects and distinct character, avoiding that “sickly sweet” quality of the day; here Whistler was favorably compared to Couture in his courage to shun sentimentality, unafraid to explore the prosaic, the ugly. In his discussion of Whistler’s ideas behind the portrait of his mother (figure 4.32), Brownell explained that it should not be viewed as a likeness or portrayal, but rather as a pictorial arrangement. Comparing the work to a number of portraits by popular British painters such as Frederick Leighton, Brownell emphasized how far removed Whistler’s image was from pure portraiture and pointed out its closer relation to the more abstract nocturnes and the symphonies discussed above. Whistler’s etchings were presented as further extensions of his paintings; although they were generally pictorial, their use of space and form was similar to that in The White Girl and Whistler’s Mother.

Ironically, Brownell also mentions the etching Joe (figure 4.31), which he incorrectly identifies as a portrait of Whistler’s brother, “Joe;” in reality the image was of his mistress Joanna Hiffernan, who was the model for The White Girl, confirming the fact that Brownell had not interviewed or corresponded directly with Whistler for the article.
Finally, in terms of Whistler’s place in the history of art, Brownell concluded that because of Whistler’s refusal to either fully engage with the nineteenth century, or “resort entirely to a pagan retreat,” he would never produce a truly “grand” work of art, like “Velasquez...[or that of] our own introspective Mr. La Farge.” Whistler was criticized for his lack of “the perfect grace, the subtle compromise between blitheness and melancholy, the chaste sweetness, or spiritual quality” and was negatively compared to La Farge, who, while they “may share many qualities,” was recognized to “represent the best in the tendencies of to-day.” It is interesting that Brownell’s final assessment of Whistler used La Farge as the ultimate standard; here again he was preparing an American audience to accept the work of many SAA exhibitors, artists who saw Whistler as their “demiurge.” Further, it should be noted that the language introduced here by Brownell and the concepts he presented were relatively sophisticated, and would be used going forward to discuss contemporary American artists, as we will see in the discussion of his series on “The Younger Painters of America.” Publishing a critical article of this type on Whistler was quite a risky prospect, given the lack of awareness of the American public of his paintings, particularly his nocturnes, as well as that of abstraction in general. Introducing these ideas to Scribner’s readers was clearly of high importance to Gilder, as the article chose not to focus on the more popular topic of Whistler’s eccentric personality and the notoriety he had achieved in the English press; Brownell’s emphasis was entirely on his painting and etching, and on the role of the art critic in explaining the ideas behind the work. In its attempt to elucidate the ideas of abstraction to the American public in the late

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76 Ibid., 495.
1870s, the piece is a milestone for criticism in both the pages of *Scribner’s* and the history of art in the United States.

**Satire and Art: Combining Fact, Fiction, and Publicity in the series on The Tile Club**

The series on the Tile Club represented *Scribner’s* most popular and perplexing account of contemporary artists in America. To this day, scholars often read the series looking for information about specific members of the club or its overall mission and are frustrated in their attempts. The series is frequently discussed vis-à-vis the formation of artistic groups and organizations in late-nineteenth-century American art, but with little critical analysis of the implication of the articles or their original purpose. Historically specific work on the Tile Club has focused on an effort to identify the artists, document the group’s travels, and to formally discuss the role of tile making in both their careers and the time period; while providing helpful background information, I would (respectfully) argue that these scholars have missed the point. The Tile Club was not an organized institution whose sole purpose was the painting of tiles, but was, rather, an extremely informal club, which, like numerous others at the time, was a means for young artists and their friends to gather together for convivial fraternizing, and, within that

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77 To date, the only scholarly publication regarding the Tile Club is Ronald Pisano’s *The Tile Club and the Aesthetic Movement in America* (cited above). Pisano’s essay, “Decorative Age or Decorative Craze? The Art and Antics of the Tile Club (1877-1887)” thoroughly discusses the group’s origins, tiling and travels, while Mary Ann Apicella’s piece on “The Art in Manufacture: English Painted Tiles of the Nineteenth Century” deals essentially with the art of tiling. The final essay, Linda Skalet’s “Bohemians and Businessmen: American Artists’ organizations of the Late Nineteenth Century” is essentially a synthesized version of her dissertation, “The Market for American Painting in New York: 1870-1915” (Ph.D. diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1980).
context, exchange artistic ideas. The notion of membership in a “club,” the proclivity to organize into special interest groups, was highly prevalent in the late-nineteenth century, as American artists, like many others in society seeking personal and professional self-definition, founded hundreds of these organizations. With no official charter, membership, or meeting place, the Tile Club, like many other artists’ clubs, was more social than professional, although important contacts and interchanges did take place at their weekly gatherings. I would suggest that what made the Tile Club unique and the reason we are familiar with its activities today is solely a result of the publicity and exposure afforded it by *Scribner’s Monthly*. Further, recognizing the value of this publicity, members were encouraged to continue to meet and plan annual excursions; this publicity held the club together during the 1880s, when many of its members returned to Europe to continue their careers overseas. While funds from *Scribner’s* financed the Tile Club trips and paid for the club’s annual expenses, more importantly, the magazine provided these artists with their own virtual gallery space in the pages of arguably the most popular monthly in America. The fact that most of the images are not replications of tiles, but are more representative of their primary work, further supports the idea that tiling was not the essential part of the club; the artists wished to be represented by images that resembled their “higher” art forms. In its popular series on the Tile Club, *Scribner’s* effectively constructed a new space for artists to promote and exhibit not only their work but also themselves.

Adding to his repertoire of “art literature” in *Scribner’s* during the late 1870s, Gilder used this form of fictional/non-fictional satire to further expose his readers to the

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78 For more on the numerous organizations see Skalet, 1980.
artists in his circle. In choosing to publish a series on a number of young and relatively unknown painters and sculptors in tales filled with code names and inside jokes, Gilder toyed with his readers, encouraging them to become more familiar with the contemporary art world in order to gain an insider’s appreciation of the stories. It is far from coincidental that many members of the Tile Club were also members of the SAA - both were organized in 1877 – and often frequented the Gilders’ Friday night salons. Through a co-mingling of fact and fiction, the Tile Club sought to capture the imagination of the American public, piquing its interest with glimpses of the artistic world, similar to today’s obsession with celebrity. Offering a window into the private “Bohemian” lives of these artists, Scribner’s responded to its readers’ desires to have access to that world, with the fraternal activities of the club appealing to the communal nature of society and the fiction of social mobility. The series subtly encouraged the lay reader to desire to “be on the inside,” to get the private jokes; however, without a certain level of knowledge he could not achieve that insider status and was often not entirely sure what the point of the story was or who its main characters were. While the Tile Club series shared with the Bishop piece discussed above an interest in the “Bohemian” and an intimate glimpse of artistic life, it differed in its story line. Here particular individuals reappeared throughout, allowing readers to follow their “favorites” through a somewhat thinly veiled “plot” from article to article. In this series, Gilder used “art literature” in the form of an illustrated satirical novel, with the author intriguingly recounting the formation and travels of a group of artists whose story would not be of great interest if it were told in a critical, descriptive form, or in the more synoptic format of the Bishop piece. Offering the reader a chance to experience its travels and travails, the series engendered a feeling of fraternity
with the club and its individual members, appealing to a sense of community and mystique surrounding its artistic mission.

In developing this format, Gilder recognized the popularity in France of the Barbizon school, the art colony at Pont Aven, and the myths that had arisen around these artistic groups. He was also aware of the popularity of traveling to these artistic haunts, as seen in the earlier articles on Bohemianism, and sought to exploit these concepts in an American setting. As discussed above, Scribner’s & Co. had recently published Charles de Kay’s book *The Bohemian*, and Gilder may have seen the possibilities of a comic response to an artistic group similar to that of de Kay’s “Expressionists.” Further, Gilder was clearly aware of the recent popularity of *Punch*’s satirical pieces on the Aesthetic Movement. According to Elizabeth Aslin, “in 1877, Art made its appearance as a subject of mirth;” during the late 1870s, George du Maurier produced a number of cartoons on aesthetic topics, particularly the idea of “art for art’s sake.” The humor of his cartoons presupposed a familiarity on the part of *Punch* readers, which must have also been shared in the United States, as most of his drawings were pirated or appropriated by a number of American illustrated papers, particularly the *New York Daily Graphic*. This “pre-supposition” drove the popularity of du Maurier’s images. It is not a coincidence

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79 De Kay’s book was reviewed in the same issue as “Tile Club at Play” in Volume 17 (February 1879) and the critic applauded its comic aspects. “The intense realism is, moreover, abundantly relieved by humor. Indeed in humorous characterization Mr. de Kay has created impersonations [which are] irresistibly human and real with great charm.” “Culture and Progress” (February 1879): 610.

80 It is important to note the somewhat paradoxical situation that arose with the publication of the Tile Club series. While one of Gilder’s primary missions at *Scribner’s* was to improve taste and the level of exposure to the arts in America and he considered himself a member of the cultural elite, part of the series’ charm resulted from its satirical approach to the notion of aesthetic exclusiveness.

81 Aslin, 112.

that the initial articles on the Tile Club series appeared at the same time as du Maurier’s famous artistic family, the Cimabue Browns and their aesthetic comrades, the poet, Jellaby Postwaite, and the painter, Maudle, were introduced in the pages of *Punch* (figure 4.33). Both the Tilers and the Browns participated in an ongoing satire about aesthetic exclusiveness that required a certain level of knowledge of contemporary culture on the part of the reader in order to “get the joke.” Henry James’ description of du Maurier’s caricatures of aestheticism in the late 1870s recalled that of the Tile Club stories: “There was something irritating, fascinating, mystifying in the light thrown on the subject by ‘Punch.’ It seemed to many persons to be desired that we too should have a gospel of joy; American life was not particularly ‘gracious,’ and if only the wind could be made to blow from the aesthetic quarter, a great many dry places would be refreshed.”

Clearly aware of the appeal of these cartoons to Americans, Gilder attempted to adopt the trend directly in his “Bric-à-Brac” section at the end of each issue, in which cartoons such as “Arabella’s Reception Room” and “A Flank Movement on the Hanging Committee” (figures 4.34 and 4.35) sought to comment satirically on issues of aesthetics and politics in the art world. The Tile Club articles shared a similar mix of personal jokes, code names, puns and innuendos intended to both bewilder and amuse the general public as well as those “in the know.”

The series was written by two members of the club, chosen possibly for their previous experience as reporters: William McKay Laffan, called Polyphemus in light of his glass eye; and Earl Shinn, who wrote under the pseudonym of Edward Strahan and

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was known as the “Bone,” or “Funnybone.” Laffan penned the first and the last article by himself, while Shinn collaborated on “The Tile Club at Play,” and “The Tile Club Afloat.” During the years of the Tile Club articles, Laffan held a job as a passenger agent for the Long Island Railroad, leaving the position in 1882 to become the art editor for Harper’s Monthly; he was well connected with friends influential in the art world such as Henry Walters and J.P. Morgan. Shinn had studied painting in Paris under Gérôme in the 1860s and during his time in France spent two summers at the recently formed American art colony in Pont-Aven, a small town located on the coast in Brittany, which he wrote about in The Nation. Shinn was the author of important books on the Philadelphia Centennial and a three-volume catalogue of the prominent collections of foreign artists in America entitled The Art Treasures of the United States. While working on the Tile Club articles in the late 1870s, Shinn was also writing the text for a collection of photogravure plates illustrating works by Gérôme, and editing an English

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84 Both had experience as reporters; in the early 1870s, Laffan wrote for and was later managing editor of the Baltimore Evening Bulletin, while Shinn worked for The Nation, covering a variety of subjects including art criticism, art history and travel.
85 Constance Eleanore Koppelman, “Nature in Art and Culture: The Tile Club Artists 1870–1900, (PhD. Dissertation, State University of New York at Sony Brook, 1985), 99. Koppelman’s dissertation is essentially a compilation of biographical facts of the members of the Tile Club, with little analysis regarding its origins or its mission. Laffan would go on to assemble catalogues of Walters and Morgan’s collections of Chinese ceramics. When Morgan became president of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, he brought Laffan on as a trustee involved in acquisitions in 1905.
86 Earl Shinn, “At Study Abroad” in The Nation 3 (September 1866). Made famous twenty years later by Gauguin and other Post Impressionists, Pont-Aven had never been home to any artists until Robert Wylie arrived there in 1864 and established an artists’ colony consisting of American painters studying in Paris. A painter and former curator of the Pennsylvania Academy, Wylie came to France in 1863 and was supportive of American expatriates new to the city.
87 Earl Shinn [Edward Strahan], Art treasures of America: being the choicest works of art in the public and private collections of North America (Philadelphia: Barrie, 1879), and Masterpieces of the Centennial International Exhibition illustrated, (Philadelphia: Gebbie & Barrie, 1876-78).
version of a French catalogue of Parisian watercolorists. Thus, both writers were well aware of the contemporary art world in the United States and abroad.

Most of the other members of the original Tile Club were frequent illustrators for *Scribner’s* including Edwin Austin Abbey, Charles S. Reinhart, J. Alden Weir, R. Swain Gifford, and Arthur Quarterly; of these artists, all, with the exception of Abbey, were members of the Society of American Artists.\(^88\) The Tile Club members were closely connected with Gilder and his staff. According to a letter from Shinn describing a Tile Club dinner in honor of Abbey in 1878, “My own idea would have been that a little private meal among friends would have been the enjoyable thing. But it occurred to Laffan and Smith that it was a good occasion to make a distinct assertion of the Tile Club as a social power. So the literary and art editors of Scribner’s [were] there.”\(^89\) Invited by William Merritt Chase to join the group, Elihu Vedder attended a Tile Club gathering in December of 1879, where he met Gilder’s associate editor, Robert Underwood Johnson; their meeting resulted in a thirteen-page, fully-illustrated article on Vedder written by Charles de Kay and published in the November issue of 1880, directly following an important serial piece on Jean-François Millet (see Chapter VI).\(^90\) The connections between Tile Club members and *Scribner’s* were wide and deep.

The first article of the series, “The Tile Club at Work” established the theme and the tone for the remainder of the series in its satirical comments on the aesthetic movement and the difficulties of life as a struggling young artist in New York. The

\(^{88}\) Winslow Homer was an early member of the Tile Club, although he did not join or exhibit with the SAA and was a relatively infrequent contributor to *Scribner’s*.

\(^{89}\) Earl Shinn to Elizabeth Haines, December 13, 1878, Morris-Shinn Maier Collection, Quaker Collection, Haverford College, Haverford, Pennsylvania, quoted in Lenehan, 43.

The article began with a young artist proclaiming, “This is a decorative age...We should do something decorative, if we would not be behind the times.” Fueled by the Centennial and articles such as Cook’s series on “Beds and Tables,” the increased interest in interior decoration was in many ways negatively impacting the ability of artists to sell their paintings.

The dialogue continued between various artists, who critiqued the Aesthetic Movement in the United States, and discussed its impact on native artists and the American public: “It will all be over soon. It is only a temporary craze, of popular insanity that will wear itself out. Of course it has interfered with the sale of our pictures. I don’t dispute that.” In rebuttal, another erudite artist, who satirically mimicked the cerebral tone of contemporary art critics’ support of aestheticism, attacked the earlier comment as uncalled for, proclaiming the recent interest in the decorative arts as “a healthy outgrowth of the artistic tendency of our time, and an encouraging evidence of the growing influence of our methods of art education and of the public disposition to take an active, practical interest in things that are more or less nearly allied to art itself.” The artists bantered back and forth, poking fun at these lofty opinions, particularly at “criticism among persons who call themselves artists that misleads people of ordinarily

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91 In fact, the image resembles Winslow Homer’s mantelpiece *Shepherd and Shepherdess* (figure 4.37) in its composition as well as the use of a young maiden as the primary figure; while Homer’s shepherdess looks outward, Abbey’s invites the reader into the story.
wholesome tendencies.” Ultimately, the artists decided collectively that they had no choice; in order to remain at the forefront (and financially secure) they must be “decorative,” a telling adjective in that one is uncertain as to whether the artists were speaking about their work, or themselves. 

The final outcome of the discussion regarding how struggling American artists could remain current and competitive led to the decision on the part of the debaters to band together to form a club that would meet weekly, with each member making a tile per session. Tiles were agreed upon as the collective medium given their decorative elements and the success of artistic tiles in England. The remainder of the article discussed in a tongue and cheek manner the various rules and regulations (or lack thereof) set up by the club regarding food and supplies. The reader also learned of the early, disappointing meetings in the fall of 1877, in which artists spent the evening throwing tiles at each other. Laffan described regular gatherings at studios filled with artistic “litter and confusion”; owing to the emphasis on the “decorative disposition” of the group, the meetings also included musical entertainment. Readers were introduced to the original members of the club by their code names: the Owl, the Griffin, the Marine, Cadmium, the Chestnut, Sirius, the Gaul, Grasshopper, the Bone, the Obtuse Bard, O’Donoghue, and Polyphemus. The author rarely gave an explanation for the code names, and never divulged the Tilers’ true identities; however, for the more discerning reader or “those in the know,” the illustrations were generally signed by the artists and likenesses of the group made individuals recognizable. It is clear that the Tile Club

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92 Laffan (January 1879): 401-2.
93 J.B. Millet lists of all the Tile Club members along with their code names and their professions in an essay included in a commemorative publication at the death of J. Alden
members were all white, Anglo-Saxon males, given the satirical comments on their refusal to associate themselves with the female aspect of the decorative art movement and the suggestion that they appear in evening dress and call themselves the “Anglo-American-Hibernian Association of Painters on Tiles, limited.” This request, which was suppressed given the “unwholesome ambition and inflammatory character” of the title, does suggest that on the surface, the nature of the group was artistic and Bohemian, but could also be described as elitist, homogenous, outwardly masculine and closed to the ever-growing immigrant population of New York.  

These characteristics, however, made the Tilers all the more appealing to the reader who sought to participate in the art world, but in a safe and familiar venue comparable to their own middle class. The club was presented as a place where “the right men meet each other.. [allowing for] wholesome associations that have in them no elements of merely social emulation or ambition, but which afford the opportunities of constant and profitable discussion, and for the interchange of opinions that are new and valuable.” The statement belies the selectivity of the club as well as one of its unifying factors, professional advancement through personal connections and free publicity in a widely read periodical.

“The Tile Club at Work,” concluded with the confession that although the original raison d’etre of the group was to “do something decorative,” after a few initial meetings this idea was not generally “kept in view.” Apparently the club was more interested in discussing the theories behind the Aesthetic Movement than in creating decorative

Weir. The publication recalls the early days of the club, with anecdotes about the members and their lighthearted friendships. J.B. Millet, “The Tile Club,” in Julian Alden Weir: An Appreciation of his Life and Works (New York: The Century Club, 1921), 75-87. The list of the Tile Club members is on page 78.

94 Laffan, (January 1879): 404.
95 Ibid.,407.
objects. “Indeed, as far as the discussion of the art – of its condition in this country, its tendency and its purposes – was concerned, the subject was as nearly exhausted as could be.” After a year of weekly meetings, the group collectively decided that to maintain the momentum of the club it would be more profitable to “take a tramp…to go on a journey in search of the picturesque.” After much bantering back and forth, with satirical references to the various scenic locations visited by the Hudson River School, the club agreed to travel to Long Island, as no group of American artists had previously gone there. It was further proposed that they “make an article about the journey and illustrate it ourselves…and sell it to a grasping publisher!” This suggestion was made by Sirius, in reality Charles S. Reinhart, a frequent illustrator for *Scribner’s*. The article concluded “with many apologies to Scribner’s Monthly that [that] is precisely what the Tile Club proposes to do,” thus setting up the plot for the follow-up article which appeared in the next month’s issue. In addition to enticing the reader to come back for more, the closing sentence also revealed the integral role *Scribner’s* played in the formation, the activities and the dynamics of the Tile Club.

There was a greater adherence to the motifs and general style of the Aesthetic Movement in the illustrations in the opening article than in the remaining segments (figures 4.38 and 4.39). Relative to the rest of the series, the first piece included many more tile images; in addition to Abbey’s illustration of a tiled mantelpiece, images of tiles can be found throughout, with an entire page devoted to a variety of tiles, including a sculptural relief of a tile Man, a Japanese floral motive, a roughly sketched image of a cockatoo, and a profile portrait of a female “Maud” (figure 4.40). Even when actual tiles

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96 Ibid., 408.
97 Ibid., 409.
were not being represented, images were placed in a square format that captured the essence of the tile; beachscapes that looked forward to the next issue were made square, such as Homer’s “A Littoral Tile” (figure 4.41). A tile within a tile in “Ho! For Long Island” presented Abbey’s work as both landscape and still life, with differing textures for each genre (figure 4.43). Other illustrations set the Bohemian scene for the Tile Club meetings including “Tilers Tiling” and “Studio of a Tile Man” (figures 4.44 and 4.45). While the text never mentioned actual names of artists, the images are clearly signed by Smith and Abbey, each of whom also received credits in the volume’s Table of Contents.

While the initial article on the Tile Club placed the group squarely within the Aesthetic Movement, the second installment, “The Tile Club at Play,” conveyed a substantially stronger American flavor. In this article the reader traveled to Long Island with the club on its first artistic “jaunt.” There was little discussion about the need to be decorative, or issues of aesthetic thought, but rather a determination on the part of the members to work collectively to change the nature of American art, and, in its collectivity, to provide an impetus for a new direction by creating images of a region not previously explored or exploited by earlier generations. This notion of a new school of American Art was captured in the drawing which opened the article as well as the February 1879 issue; “The Tile Club and the Milliner of Bridgehampton” bore a striking resemblance to Fantin-Latour’s painting *A Studio of les Batignolles* (1870) (figures 4.46 and 4.47). Both Shinn, the author of the piece, and Reinhart, the illustrator, having studied in Paris in the 1860s, must have been aware of Manet and his followers and may have seen the painting when it received a third-class medal at the Salon of 1870.

98 The image prefigures Homer’s oil painting *Promenade on the Beach* (1880) (figure 4.42).
Reinhart’s illustration was clearly in the same vein as the homage to Manet, which was praised at the time for the veracity of the postures and its depiction of a new school of modern painters. Reinhart presented a similar picture, a unified “guild” which sought to change the nature of American painting. The seated figures implied that Abbey and Gifford (seated to the left and in the middle) formed the central core of the artistic group with Laffan (seated on the right) in the place of Zacharie Astruc, the writer, poet and critic who was highly supportive of the École des Batignolles group early on. Just as Zola, also featured in the painting, and Astruc provided critical exposure to Manet and his followers, so too did the authors of the Tile Club. The image conveyed the solidarity of the Tilers and also allowed those “in the know” to easily identify the artists. (Standing left to right are Earl Shinn, F. Hopkinson Smith, Charles S. Reinhart, Walter Paris, Edward Wimbridge, William O’Donovan, William Baird, and Arthur Quartley).

The trip to Long Island, with its ultimate destination of East Hampton, provided the club members with material to depict American scenery and historical characters. The actual story line was somewhat long-winded, with anecdotes of the Tilers boarding a boat to a small village in a storm, purchasing straw hats at Lake Ronkonkoma, exploring shops in Bridgehampton, searching for the birthplace of a local celebrity in East Hampton and visiting the head of a dying tribe of Montauk Indians. Essentially the narrative provided the artists with an opportunity for picturesque illustrations, most of them

99 In his review of Fantin-LaTour’s painting, Philippe Burty commended the work: “All these young, intelligent men – artists, writers, or art lovers – have the exact gestures and bearing of their professions or characters. This is a very contemporary gathering, living a life of its own as well as the general life of its time.” Maurius Chaumelin hoped that “all the young painters of the guild of Batignolles would produce this kind of realism.” Quoted in Gary Tinterow, Henri Loyrette, et.al., Origins of Impressionism (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1994), 384.
relating to the Long Island landscape. With the exception of William O’Donovan’s reliefs, there was only one drawing of an actual tile, although the text creatively allowed for a wide variety of images in terms of size and shape. This variety created a lively visual composition on each page, enhancing the notion of a creative, non-traditional art form while reinforcing the playful nature of the group (Figures 4.48, 4.49, and 4.50).

Each page was dominated by illustrations, suggesting that the image was more important than the text. While some pictures did feature individuals encountered during the trip, the emphasis was on the painters themselves working (and playing) in the landscape.

“The Tile Club at Play” looked to popular French artist colonies, particularly that of the Barbizon school, for its inspiration; the illustrations for this article were clearly conservative, celebrating the past over the present, in its images of picturesque fishing villages, windmills, lighthouses, and old colonial homes. It was not until the next segment that the Tilers were willing to depict modern subjects; this piece was in a sense transitional from the initial segment, whose images were generally flat, decorative and figural with a nod to the Pre-Raphaelites and the Aesthetic Movement, to the next installment, where the Tilers more boldly addressed the modern landscape. Rather than exploring the popular attractions closer to New York City, such as Winslow Homer did at Long Branch, the Tilers desired a more unspoiled setting. The illustrations in this text were not those of La Grenouillère or Argenteuil, but were more in line with Barbizon landscapes; these images were made popular at this time in the United States by select dealers, specifically Daniel Cottier, whose gallery exhibited works in that style by artists including Corot and Daubigny. Images such as “Morning at Jesse Conklin’s” and “Flat Top Tree,” with their simple, familiar scenes captured the Long Island landscape in an
approach similar to the French Barbizon School, with an emphasis on the artist’s interpretive power rather than on any inherent interest in a special subject (figures 4.51, 4.52, 4.53 and 4.54).  In particular, East Hampton lent itself to a similar interpretation as the Forest at Fountainbleau; describing the town as a “painter’s goldmine,” the Marine explained that “some neighborhoods are very strongly marked with the artistic consciousness. They combine well. They set out their milk-pans to drain in beautiful compositions. They are all the time posing for effect. Easthampton is one of them...like a vignette perpetuated in electrotype.”  In an article on “The Summer Haunts of Artists” written for the Century in 1885, Lizzie Champney, described the artists who had located there in the early 1880s, shortly after the enthusiastic endorsement of the Tile Club. These American painters were attracted to East Hampton for its “resemblance of the locality to Brittany…[many] are carried straight to Pont Aven by the hay-ricks and the poultry-yards, the winding sheep, the returning herds lost in a maze of soft gray atmosphere so like their beloved Barbizon.”

Longing to create an American model of a French artistic community, Shinn and Laffan selected Long Island’s more remote towns, specifically East Hampton, as an area similar to those French artist colonies that offered inexpensive lodging, picturesque countryside, and accessible local types. The article sought to create this sense of artistic fraternity as captured in Abbey’s illustration of “Sketching at East Hampton” (figure

101 Laffan and Shinn (February 1879), 471-2.
102 Lizzie Champney, “Summer Haunts of American Artists,” Century Illustrated Magazine 30 (October 1885):849-859, quote from 850-1. The author was the wife of Benjamin Champney, an artist who had summered at Pont Aven with Shinn and was a frequent contributor to Scribner’s, particularly in its early series on the Great South, discussed in Chapter I.
4.55). In “The Tile Club at Play,” *Scribner’s* picked up on the French model and offered an Americanized version, associating the club with rural and folklore traditions that had been well preserved, allowing the artists to participate in a type of revival of national culture while creating popular images of the local landscape. Shinn, Laffan, and Gilder recognized the pictorial and cultural possibilities of the expedition. These landscapes along with the text citing comical stories of artists attempting to recapture an American antebellum past, appealed to a sentimental audience, with illustrations like “An Old Whaling Station” and “Old Wind-Mill at Bridgehampton” (figures 4.56 and 4.57) offering nostalgic relief from the industrialized world of New York City and its environs.

Responding to this popular nostalgia, witnessed by the colonial revival at the Centennial, Shinn and Laffan carefully crafted their trip in Long Island, searching for venues that had retained their aura of colonial times and were relatively unscathed by the ever increasing number of tourists looking for leisure environs. In that Winslow Homer, one of their original members, had visited there in 1874, the club must have been aware of the pictorial opportunities East Hampton had to offer; shortly after the publication of the *Scribner’s* article, Laffan wrote a booklet for the Long Island Railroad, *The New Long Island: A Handbook of Summer Travel*, which borrowed both text and illustrations directly from the magazine.103 “The Tile Club at Play” resembled a travelogue in its creation of the picturesque, selectively embellishing tales of Montauk Indian Chiefs and “documenting” the early childhood haunts of John Howard Payne, a local author of the sentimental popular song “Home, Sweet Home” to effectively create tourist attractions.

As with his earlier forays into Western tourism, Gilder used the Tile Club images such as “Home Sweet Home” (Figure 4.58) to create new destinations for vacationing Americans.

While the Tile Club originally sought to differentiate itself by painting tiles, the actual practice appears to have lost its allure by the time of this trip. With the exception of William O’Donovan’s reliefs, there was only one specifically painted “tile” image (figure 4.59). However, the square format of the tiles themselves seems to have liberated the artists and the publisher from the standard rectilinear dimensions and horizontal format associated with landscape painting. The panoramic format usually associated with unbroken beach scenes by artists such as John Kensett and Martin Johnson Heade, was replaced here with a square landscape (figures 4.60 and 4.61). While the flat, decorative tiles in the first segment were more in keeping with English prototypes in that they were figurative, here the artists depicted panoramic beaches and seascapes, which generally lent themselves to the rectangular form, in a compressed square, thereby substantially reducing the breadth and recessive space generally found in American landscapes prior to this time. William Gerdts has pointed out that Tile Club members, such as Weir, Twatchman, and Chase, would go on to adopt the flat, decorative and square nature of tile painting in their oil canvases.\(^{104}\) I believe that while the original idea of the square format may have resulted from the reproduction of the square shape of the tile, its actual use by Tile Club illustrators led to changes in the way *Scribner’s* was visually constructed. The format led to a new awareness on the part of *Scribner’s* art publishers as

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\(^{104}\) For more on the square format as a precursor to modernism and the impact of foreign artists such as Whistler and Bastien-Lepage, see William Gerdts, “The Square Format and Proto-Modernism in American Painting,” in *Arts Magazine* 50 (June 1976):70-75.
to the possibilities it offered in terms of the visual appeal of varying the shapes of images (and their textures as seen in the popularity of the Donoghue reliefs) on the printed page. The illustrations of the Tile Club resulted in a creative license encouraged by Scribner’s art editors, who, through the square format, came to realize how to exploit the entertainment factor of these new types of layouts, which produced a visually enticing page. These artists, having worked as illustrators and contributors to the Tile Club articles, were exposed to this experimentation by varying the formats of their compositions. The square format allowed for an image to be directly inserted into the text, significantly impacting the overall design of the article and the way in which it was read (see figure 4.40). The Tile Club articles also manipulated illustrations by curving, cropping, and overlapping images, creating a lively eye-popping visual composition on the page, which enhanced the notion of a creative, non-traditional art form and reinforced the playful nature of the group (see figures 4.43, 4.49 and 4.50). The Tile Club articles led Scribner’s to exercise a boldness and artistic license in terms of publishing illustrations that blurred the lines between text and image, changing the way late nineteenth century readers looked at periodicals.

While in terms of its artistic subject and the style of its images, “The Tile Club at Play” looked to European models, in terms of its actual writing, it seems to have responded to a purely American phenomenon, that of Mark Twain, whose humorous travelogues, such as Innocents Abroad (1869) and Roughing It (1872), were extremely popular during the 1870s. As noted above, Gilder’s writers including, Shinn and

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105 While Gilder and Twain had developed a very close relationship by the 1890s - The Century published excerpts of Huckleberry Finn in 1885 as well as a biographical sketch
Laffan, had a central connection to the literary life in America.\textsuperscript{106} In its spinning of adventurous tales with local characters, haunted ponds, pirates, and Indian burial grounds as well as its use of code names and ironic banter, one cannot help but think of Tom Sawyer, particularly his time with Huck Finn and Joe Harper on Jackson Island. While now viewed as one of history’s most popular children’s books, \textit{The Adventures of Tom Sawyer}, when it was originally published in 1875, was intended for adults, and appealed in its ability to reconnect the reader with an earlier, more innocent time in both American history and his or her own childhood.\textsuperscript{107} The antics of the Tile Club in Long Island - being shipwrecked in a wild storm, purchasing large straw hats and decorating them with ribbons at a milliner’s, witnessing the near-death corpse of “King David Pharaoh” - participated in the same genre as \textit{The Adventures of Tom Sawyer}, with their homogenized, reassuring environments and their offering of a means of “safe play.” As seen in images such as Abby’s “Procession of Ye Tilers,” and “From the Sublime to the – --- ” (see figures 4.50 and 4.62), “The Tile Club at Play” responded to the popularity of this type of literature, taking advantage of this desire by late-nineteenth century adults to recapture childhood memories, responding to these artists through the fictionalized account of their adventures in Long Island. There was no serious discussion of artistic theories or aesthetic ideas and, further, there was no mention of money or work; here the focus was entirely on “play” and pure escapism, belying the true purpose of the trip, to provide publicity for the members by marketing their art work and their “artistic

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\textsuperscript{106} Conrads, 39.
\textsuperscript{107} Mark Twain, \textit{The Adventures of Tom Sawyer} (Hartford: The American Pub.Co., 1897 [c1875]).
personalities.” That the reader could participate in this escape with these artists, who were real people, and whose antics nostalgically recalled his or her own youthful days, made them all the more appealing. The fact that the images from this article were recognized as some of the periodical’s most popular illustrations reaffirms the popularity and beloved status of the Tilers at Play. When compiling *Scribner’s portfolio of proofs*, the editors chose seven images from “The Tile Club at Play,” more than twice that of any other article. The selection of images in the *portfolio*, including five of the more intimate landscapes of the Tile Club, versus only one of Moran’s panoramic scenes, “The Grand Cañon of the Colorado” (see figure 1.32), also confirmed the changing nature of American landscape painting and the role that *Scribner’s* played in its transformation.

“The Tile Club Afloat,” was published one year after “The Tile Club at Play,” in March of 1880. The piece was clearly self-conscious in its awareness of the publicity afforded by the earlier two articles. The nature of the club, in terms of its membership as well as its intentions, had matured from the early days of innocent tile painting (and throwing), with its members now much more aware of what was at stake. The entire article appears scripted to appeal to the bohemian expectations of its readers, more Oscar Wilde than Mark Twain. In recounting the club’s trip up the Hudson River, the piece was carefully constructed to critique the famous school of landscape painters. With subtle references to the past, the text placed this new generation of artists within the history of American Art, while simultaneously carving out a place for itself within that tradition, as

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108 The images selected were: “Author of Home Sweet Home- when a Boy”; “Home, Sweet Home” (figure 4.58); “The “Griffin” at Work”; “Tyle Man – the Chestnut”; “Ho! for Long Island” (figure 4.43); “The Tile Club in Easthampton”; and “Morning at Jessie Conklin’s” (figure 4.51). *A portfolio of proof impressions, selected from Scribner’s Monthly and St. Nicholas* (New York, Scribner & Co. [c1879]).

109 Laffan and Shinn (March 1880).
the new young movement of its time. Here the club planned a summer trip on a canal boat, up the Hudson, through the Erie Canal ending in Lake Champlain, with the knowledge that the excursion would be fully documented the following year in the pages of *Scribner’s*, which paid for the cost of the trip. In its illustrations and its antics, the article was decidedly commercial, reading more like a publicity stunt, crafted for *Scribner’s* readers who looked forward to the next segment on the Tile Club.

In the third part of the series, the authors contrived to conjure a notion of these artists as “different.” Unlike the childlike antics of the early segment, this group appeared to be more aesthetically sophisticated in its membership, its lodgings, and its activities. Illustrations now self-consciously represented the actual club members, presenting them in ways that the audience would immediately recognize them as “artists,” in a more Bohemian, European context. Depictions of the artists, such as “Posing on Deck” and “Shadow Painting” (figures 4.63 and 4.64), conveyed this sense of self-awareness, as the tile members seem more like actors in a docu-drama. Even the local characters they encountered along the way were more “cultured,” challenging them on issues relating to decoration, aestheticism, and art criticism: “Aesthetic Teas became possible. The ladies in these places proved to possess an erudition in bric-a-brac surpassing all belief.”

At this point three of the more conservative Tile Club members had left New York: the original instigator of the club, the architect Wimbridge, Paris (the Gaul), and Abbey (the Chestnut). The new members all shared European training; William Merritt Chase, Napoleon Sarony, Frederick Dielman and John Twatchman had recently returned from

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overseas and were familiar with the wide-spread popularity of the Tile Club series.Both Chase and Sarony fully participated in the “cult of artistic celebrity,” and sought to increase their own publicity by joining in the Tile Club’s next voyage. Chase was well known for cultivating a flamboyant, aesthetic appearance and flaunting his artistic identity. An eccentric lithographer-photographer, Sarony’s trademark was a tasseled Turkish Fez. Illustrations of the two during the trip captured their carefully crafted personas (figures 4.65 and 4.66). As the “Committee on Decoration and Home Comforts,” Chase and Sarony lavishly decorated the barge with artistic trappings taken from their notoriously exotic studios: “the Committee covered itself with glory. With unlimited bric-a-brac and tapestry, and stuffs oriental and domestic, at its disposal, the interior of the John C. Earle underwent an amazing transformation. If it erred at all, it was in the direction of positive luxury; but the artistic and decorative effect that was produced was excellent.” The two men sought to create an aesthetic “wonderland,” with divans, cushions, hammocks, fine glassware, Chinese lanterns, a piano and exotic costumes filling the cabin below deck, now deemed “the salon” (figure 4.67). The article described the “certain grace in the profusion and a quality of ease in the disposition that

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111 The exposure afforded by these articles was significant and greater than most art historians recognize. In response to the series, an article appeared in the September 1881 edition of *L’Art*, the French publication which *Scribner’s* frequently summarized in its own pages. The article focused on the publicity the club had received through the *Scribner’s* series: “This unique organization peaked curiosity. From the outset, the Tile Club was in vogue. The stories which circulated, and illustrated journals which published exotic article after article, led the public to come to know the remarkable talent and appealing nature of the group.” *L’Art* 25, 1881, Septieme Annee, 70., quoted and translated in Pisano, 54. In fact, Vincent Van Gogh wrote to his brother Theo in 1883 about the work of Tile Club as evidence that, “not all Americans are bad.” *The Complete Letters of Vincent van Gogh* (Greenwich, Conn.: New York Graphic Society, 1958), Vol. II, Letter No. 277, 20, cited in Pisano, 98, n.127.
were extremely alluring.”

To further add to the overall ambiance, the club hired a cook who was selected for his “splendid impression.” Daniel, a “colored gentleman…black as original sin,” was attired in a “snowy linen cap and jacket;” later in the trip, the members also hired a waiter whom they dubbed “Priam,” a pun on the fact that he came from Troy (New York), and dressed him in North African garb. Chase captured the image in his illustration entitled “Priam, the Nubian Ganymede” (figure 4.68). In the mornings, the club was awakened by an “original reveille,” as one of its members swung a mallet on a huge Japanese bronze bell that was hung at the bow; the bell was also struck “when any remarkable vessel passed by.”

The barge was a veritable floating “show” studio resembling the era’s commercial department stores whose sumptuous arrangements of goods worked to entice prospective buyers. Providing an insider’s view of the club’s Bohemian artistic life, images such as “North End of the Salon” depicted the decorative accoutrements in the barge’s interior and visually appealed to readers who had been conditioned to expect lavish display (figure 4.69).

The trip also offered the artists opportunities to represent “modern life.” At the end of the 1870s, the activities of the Impressionists were beginning to be discussed in the press, and French realist novels, such as Zola’s L’Assomoir, were translated and published in the United States. Laura Meixner comments on the “transitive state of American aesthetics” during this year as captured in the reviews of Manet’s Execution of Maximilian, which was exhibited in New York in the fall of 1879, and in an article in Lippincott’s Magazine in 1878 that (albeit negatively) described Impressionists’

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112 Ibid., 644.
113 Ibid., 644,650.
114 Ibid., 647.
The artists on the Tile Club trip, particularly Chase, Weir, and Twachtman, would go on to champion progressive tendencies in European art in the early 1880s. Unlike “The Tile Club at Play,” with its picturesque landscapes of secluded beaches, “The Tile Club Afloat” afforded a number of urban harbor views, which the artists actively recorded. The opening image for the article, “In the Mist of the Early Morning,” showed the barge at the Battery in New York being pulled by a tugboat away from the urban wharf (figure 4.70). Other images, such as “Parting Company with the Tow,” “The Community Afloat,” and “Coming Home” openly depicted the commercial environs, with smoke from the steamers and tugs clearly visible in the background (figures 4.71, 4.72, and 4.73). The article called attention to the fact that the Tilers’ barge was not romantically isolated on the river, but rather was hitched to a “community” of forty-two vessels being pulled and pushed up the Hudson by tugboats. Illustrations were also made of the Erie Canal with images such as “A Lock near Troy,” recalling Monet’s images of railroads and river traffic, and “A Decorative Notion,” depicting industrial sites with Japanese compositional elements, in what might have been a nod to Whistler’s work, such as Symphony in Grey and Green: The Ocean, of 1866 (figures 4.74, 4.75, 4.76, and 4.77). The Tilers were clearly aware of these contemporary “modern” painters, as evidenced by a passage in “The Tile Club at Play” where the text satirically described the group depicting a sunset: “[The Gaul] began a

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116 Chase and Weir provided major exhibition space for paintings then considered radical in America for the 1883 Pedestal Fund Art Loan Exhibition, organized in connection with construction of the Statue of Liberty; as members of the selection committee they prominently displayed Manet’s Boy with a Sword, and Woman with a Parrot, as well as Degas’ Rehearsal Before the Ballet. Weir would later be instrumental in acquiring the two Manets for the Metropolitan.
study of severe minuteness, in the pre-Raphaelite way, but night surprised him and he finished with a few smeary daubs, declaring himself an impressionist…. Sirius, selecting the evening sky, produced a ‘Nocturne in black and blue,’ – not in the least like. The ‘Marine’ attended to the sun, and did a ‘Hallucination in purple and prisms.’ ”

As the 1880s arrived, the Tile club artists sought to associate themselves with progressive tendencies in European art, distorting themselves from older American traditions.

Given their desire to ally themselves with “modern life,” the trip up the Hudson afforded ample discussion of earlier American painters and provided a means to differentiate themselves as the next movement in American art. I would argue that the trip was selected with this in mind, to critique previous schools of painting, allowing these new “young men” to demonstrate how differently they could depict the scenery of the Hudson River and the Adirondacks than previous generations. During their time on Lake Champlain, they recalled the heroic deeds of General Wolfe and visit the grave of “Janey McCrea, whom the Indians scalped as she was trying to join her British soldier-lover,” making reference to the paintings of acclaimed American artists, Benjamin West and John Vanderlyn, whose works were exhibited and awarded prizes overseas by Academies in London and Paris (figures 4.78 and 4.79). While moving up the river Shinn recounted the satirical discussions of the Hudson River School of Art and the work of its members, and of the good old mossy, geographical landscapes which used to crowd the holy precincts of the National Academy… “In wrestling with this Hudson river business,” said the Griffin, “American art has been badly thrown. I think that nine-tenths of our backwardness has been due to the overwhelming embarrassment of picturesque material that has all along been at our very door –

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118 Laffan and Shinn (March 1880):657,667.
material which, by reason of its grandeur and sublimity, in no sort of fashion would do to make pictures of. Simplicity alone has evaded us all along.”  

The importance of simplicity was apparent in the illustrations of landscapes, such as “Spirit of a Normandy Day,” “A Diversion in Payne’s Grey” and “Prowlings of the Owl,” which forcibly denied any type of panoramic view (figures 4.80, 4.81, 4.82 and 4.83). “Under the Willows” adopted a Whistlerian approach in its blurry and muted tonality and in its emphasis on dissolution of form (figures 4.84 and 4.85). To further set the Tilers apart, the article included many more figure subjects than landscapes. The images of local inhabitants and of hired servants recalled many of the recurrent themes of Salon paintings, including primitive and exotic peoples from the Orient, the Middle East, and Africa as well as Biblical Subjects. Images and their satirical titles such as “Daniel in the Tiler’s Den,” “A Daughter of the Tow,” and “Priam, the Nubian Ganymede” directly responded to the popular paintings on view at the French Salon (figures 4.86, 4.87 and 4.68). Both the text and illustrations worked together to effectively pronounce that a new generation of artists, many trained on foreign soil like their earlier colleagues in the Colonial era, had officially arrived to replace the older, “mossy” Academy members, as they now laid claim to the scenery of the Hudson River.

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119 Ibid., 647-8.
120 Interestingly, “The Tile Club Afloat” may have inspired members of the Academy who painted in the earlier, more traditional style to plan their own excursion, possibly in response to either the publicity achieved by the Tilers, the desire to recreate a similar “artistic voyage,” or as a reaction against the attacks made in the article. On June 21, 1880 (over two months after the publication of “The Tile Club Afloat,”), twenty-four members of the Artists’ Fund Society, a group of Academy members formed to support the widows and family of any members who had died, left for a two week trip along the shores of the Hudson and the Erie Canal, ending at Niagara Falls. While the trip was mentioned briefly in two accounts in the New York Evening Post, the excursion failed to achieve anything comparable to the publicity achieved by the Tile Club. See the “The Artists’ Canal Trip,” New York Evening Post, 19 June 1880, 4 and “The Artists’ Fund
The final episode of the Tile Club series appeared in 1882, in what was now the *Century Illustrated Magazine* (figure 4.88). This segment does not concern my study as not only does it fall outside the time period I am focusing on but, more importantly, the article itself did not have the same vitality as its predecessors. In this final piece, which recounted a trip to Long Island, the narrative was formulaic and the artists, many now established and interested in the club for purely social reasons, appeared less invested in the entire concept. The sense of adventure and innocence seems contrived, and tales of mosquitoes and sea serpents no longer carry the same sense of humor or mystery that characterized the earlier pieces. The Tilers themselves were uncertain as to how to “top” the glamorous barge trip and the result seems uninspiring to the artists and the readers, particularly in terms of the illustrations, which lack the brio and playfulness of the earlier images. The dynamics of the group had changed, and while still eager for publicity, the group had less at stake than it did during the late 1870s. 

Scribner’s had

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Society Excursion,” *New York Evening Post* 21 June 1880, 4. The newspaper accounts as well as those found in a monograph of the Hudson River School artist Edward Gay, a landscape painter who organized the trip, are relatively brief, straightforward accounts of the trip and, as such, do not divulge any incentives for the voyage other than the obvious desire for subject matter. See Chapter 6, “The Voyage,” in Richard G. Cooker, *Portrait of An American Painter: Edward Gay, 1837-1928* (New York: Vantage Press Inc., 1973). I am indebted to Kenneth Maddox for calling this material to my attention. 


Apparently the Tilers gathered infrequently in the mid 1880s and the club was relatively inactive as an organization. In 1887 Shinn along with F. Hopkinson Smith organized a commemorative collection entitled *A Book of the Tile Club*. A large publication, measuring 15 by 12 ½ inches with 105 pages, the book was designed by Stanford White, with an introductory essay by Shinn and other accounts contributed by Smith. The Tilers contributed a wide variety of images, ranging from informal sketches to full-page phototype plates of major recent paintings. The publication marks the end of the Tile Club as no additional correspondence regarding its activities can be found after 1887. F. Hopkinson Smith and Earl Shinn [Edward Strahan], *A Book of the Tile Club*, (New York: Houghton Mifflin & Co., 1887).
done its job, by making the club and its members household names, bordering on the cliché. In the process, the series also created a new type of “art literature,” a fictionalized/real-life account of artists at work and at play, which allowed readers to participate in their adventures, their thoughts and their lives. The series, one of the most popular in the history of Scribner’s, would immortalize these artists as beloved characters and expose their work to thousands of readers.

*Scribner’s* “art literature” of the late 1870s had thoroughly enlightened, educated and entertained its readers, who could not get enough of its articles and its illustrations on artistic topics. In the process, Gilder continued to focus on his primary agendas of improving public taste and art criticism, while promoting the artists of his circle. Now it was up to Gilder, using his various genres of “art literature” as a base, to offer a final serious critical account of the “new men,” which, following the variety of the articles highlighted in the chapter as well as many others published in *Scribner’s* during those years, would effectively evaluate the work of the period, the progress made in laying a new foundation, and the expectations for the future of art in the United States. With that in mind, he selected Brownell to author the three part series, “The Young Painters of America” which appeared between May of 1880 and July of 1881, as a culmination of his efforts at *Scribner’s* to change the nature and direction of American art and American criticism in late nineteenth century America.
Chapter V. “The Younger Painters of America,” 1880-1881: Extolling the Art Ideas of Scribner’s

“We are beginning to paint as other people paint. If we are to have a new American ‘school’ hereafter, it is certain that it will be very different from its once popular predecessor; but at present it is quite evident that we are but accumulating and perfecting the material for such a national expression, and even to the taking of so initial a step as this, the destruction of our old canons and standards was necessary.” – William Crary Brownell, “The Younger Painters of America. First Paper,” Scribner’s Monthly May 1880.

Although the Society of American Artists had successfully mounted three exhibitions, critics and the general public still seemed perplexed by aspects of the organization and confused about its mission. Richard Watson Gilder would have been justifiably worried about the reception of the Society in 1879. While the painters in the Society were recognized as artistically progressive, with works that were broadly and loosely painted, critics noted that their exhibitions were of little interest to the ordinary viewer, with their images “appealing to artists, amateurs and connoisseurs rather than to the wider public.”1 Many were uncomfortable with the Society’s dependence on international influences, including both French contemporary trends and Old Master affectations, as well as its emphasis on individual subjective expression; unlike the previous generation who dedicated itself to landscape, the public couldn’t recognize a collective bond amongst the group. Of greatest concern to Gilder, their work was negatively described by some in the press as “sketchy,” suggesting a lack of artistic ability; the SAA painters were said to participate in the “cult of unfinish.” or “study.” A critic writing for the Art Amateur seemed to sum up Gilder’s fears, noting that while the Society “represents the new tendencies and intentions of a cosmopolitan art-education,”

the public’s eyes would be “necessarily sealed” to much of its “promise and achievement.”

Gilder could not risk an uneducated public, led by the dreaded “philistine” critics, turning against his artistic circle. After all of his efforts over the previous decade to promote and support this group, it is unlikely that he would ignore these attacks against the Society; instead he chose to confront these issues head on in a critical response, fully illustrated with images by the Society’s artists. The timing was opportune, as by 1880, Scribner’s readers had a high level of familiarity with many of the “new young artists” through the extensive “art literature” published in the periodical in the last three years, and were becoming increasingly receptive to art criticism in a variety of forms. Gilder recognized the need for a sweeping critical review of these “younger painters” to validate them as a serious artistic movement beyond the popular appeal of its members achieved through Scribner’s articles, to address the concerns of the critics and the general public, and to further promote their work through criticism and illustration in his popular monthly magazine.

Just after the closing of the third annual exhibition of the Society of the American Artists on April 16, 1880, Scribner’s published the first of the three articles by William Crary Brownell entitled “The Younger Painters of America.” Brownell’s articles, which

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3 Brownell (May 1880), (July 1880), (July 1881). The artists featured in the series with illustrations of their work are as follows, listed in order of appearance: Frank Duveneck, Thomas Eakins, William Merritt Chase, J. Alden Weir, Wyatt Eaton, Walter Shirlaw, Albert Pinkham Ryder, Frank Currier, John Singer Sargent, Robert Swain Gifford, Frank S. Church, George Inness Jr., Francis Dielman, George Fuller, Abbott Thayer, Henry Muhrman, Will H. Low, John Twachtman, Frederic Vinton, R.S. Macy, George deForest Brush, George Maynard, Louis Comfort Tiffany, Francis Lathrop, Douglas Volk and the
were and continue to be regarded as a seminal discussion of advanced American painting of the time, represented the first major series ushering in a new era of critical attention, and marked the establishment of a professional art press for the general public in the 1880s. With the exception of brief reviews in the New York daily newspapers and in small arts journals with limited readerships, no magazine with the distribution and public acclaim of *Scribner’s* had previously devoted such a lengthy and lavishly illustrated, critical discussion of the new, young artists. The series is remarkable for the depth and breadth of its analysis, reviewing thirty painters working in local (New York City), Northeastern (Philadelphia and Boston) and international (Paris and Munich) venues, both male and female, and covering a range of artistic categories including landscape, portraiture, genre, and still-life painting. Presented in three parts (May, 1880; July 1880; and, July 1881), “The Younger Painters” series totaled forty-four pages and included thirty one reproductions of recent paintings, most of which took up at least half of the page of the text; of the new artists discussed, only one, John Singer Sargent, was represented twice. Brownell structured the three installments in the series (each was approximately fifteen pages long with ten engravings) around particular arguments that

female artists Elizabeth Bartol, Sarah Whitman, Helen Knowlton, Maria Oakey and Mary Cassatt.

4 The only comparable article to Brownell’s was that by S.G.W. Benjamin whose “Present Tendencies in American Art” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 58 (March 1879): 481-496, did highlight some of the artists featured in Brownell’s series. Benjamin approached the group in a relatively conservative fashion, describing the new movement as “a preliminary step” and conveying a type of defense of the old guard: “It behooves us to examine very carefully into its claims on our approval, and not hastily to depreciate the great school of landscape painting which has already existed among us for these many years…..It is rather as a school of promise than one of achievement that we propose to speak of it.” The article provided a cautious glance at some of the new painters, but also saw much of their work as a continuation of familiar American artists such as George Inness and W.M. Hunt, rather than a break from the past inspired by foreign instruction and influence.
he sought to make regarding the SAA as a whole as well as the artists featured in each article’s illustrations. In addition to its length and extensive imagery, the text served as a manifesto, a defense of the Society and a declaration of a new style of art in America that superceded earlier landscape traditions. As such, Brownell’s series marked the highpoint of Gilder’s efforts during the previous ten years to position, promote, and publicize the artists of his circle who had been prominently featured throughout his magazine. Serving as a vehicle to legitimize the Society of American Artists, the series also reinforced Gilder’s ideas on criticism and on the importance of French art and theory on American painting. Its discussion of the “new style of painting,” its full-scale rejection of older painters associated with the National Academy, and its selection of artists, all of whom were SAA members, made the underlying premise of the series clear: to establish the Society of American Artists as the premier artistic organization and creative force in American art in 1880. In his series, Brownell provided critical explanations and reproductions of specific, recently exhibited paintings, taking advantage of Scribner’s improved engraving methods to discuss detailed aspects of particular works through the illustrations provided, and resulting in a level of criticism not possible a decade earlier in print media. Supporting many of the critical descriptions of the SAA artists, the illustrations confirmed their preference for the painterly and the figurative, the formal signs of their academic training overseas, and their emulation of Old Master painting, contemporary French Realism and the Barbizon school. Illustrations were carefully selected to address critical issues and respond to public confusion about the SAA’s

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5 For a complete discussion of the critical commentary and description of the SAA exhibitions see Biesenstock, particularly for my purposes here Chapter II, “The Exhibitions of 1879 and 1880,” 73-118.
mission and its “Americanness.” While “The Younger Painters” is frequently cited in many art historical studies of the late-nineteenth-century, no critical examination of the series itself exists, surprising given the seminal nature of the piece. While previous scholarship has noted the connection between *Scribner’s* and the SAA, an in-depth analysis of the articles and the promotion of their primary subject strongly contributes to an understanding of the impact of *Scribner’s*, as well as the publishing industry at large, on painting in the post-Civil War era. Gilder selected this moment, the beginning of a new decade, a time when the Society had become an established institution within the American art world, to present its members to the public in such a wholesale fashion. In this series, Gilder made major advances in his agenda to redirect the nature of American art while improving American art criticism in the pages of *Scribner’s*.

“The Younger Painters of America” built on the “art literature” previously published in *Scribner’s*, as well as Gilder’s commentary in “The Old Cabinet,” the critical reviews in “Culture and Progress,” and the plethora of illustrated articles featuring the artists of the “new movement.” Readers would in all likelihood have recognized the

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7 The appearance of a full page cartoon entitled “The Society of American Artists” in the March 27, 1878 edition of *Puck*, a satirical weekly modeled somewhat on its English predecessor, *Punch*, confirmed the level of recognition among the press of the Society (figure 5.1). The cartoonist drew a re-creation of a wall in an exhibition space, filled with images that were numbered with a key at the bottom of the page naming the artists and supposed titles of their paintings, all of which poked fun at the new movement. Examples include: Frank Currier: “The Beggarly Bohemian” (or, “The Deaf Mother-in-law”); W.M. Hunt: “Finishers Wanted”; and Helena de Kay: “Very Still Life.”
names of these “younger painters,” as many had been mentioned and discussed in the numerous articles and series discussed in Chapter IV. By the time the first segment of “The Younger Painters of America” was published in May of 1880, Scribner’s audience had been exposed to many of the “new men” (and women) of American art who were the subject of the series. In addition to reading about many of these artists in the “art literature” mentioned above, Scribner’s readers would also have seen quite a bit of their work, as the periodical had employed a number of them as illustrators for a wide variety of articles throughout the late 1870s. Now, Gilder believed that the time was ripe for a full-scale, critical discussion of these artists, reproducing one image by each painter, accompanied by a detailed discussion of the work. These critiques, coupled with a larger discourse on the new trends in painting itself, would thoroughly educate the reader about the contemporary art world in a manner that coincided with Gilder’s approach to effective art criticism while endorsing and defending his artistic circle.

Introducing the New Movement

“The Art-Schools of New York” (October 1878) featured a number of the “young painters” including R. Swain Gifford, Wyatt Eaton, and Walter Shirlaw as the city’s leading instructors (along with J. Alden Weir and William Merritt Chase who were also affiliated with these institutions), while “The Art Schools of Philadelphia” (September 1879) essentially promoted the work of Eakins. The Tile Club also included images by Weir and Chase as well as Twatchman. Additional articles not specifically discussed in Chapter IV also exposed readers to the new painters. The coverage of the Fine Arts at the Paris Exposition by D.M. Armstrong and Russell Sturgis (December 1878 and June 1879) highlighted the styles and theories coming out of the French Academic tradition that had impacted the work of the new generation, many of whom had trained in Paris, and also featured some SAA members in its illustrations. Those whose interest in the Paris Exposition was peaked by the coverage in Scribner’s would have been aware that some of the featured young painters, including Eaton, Vinton, Shirlaw, Gifford, Weir, Bunce and Tiffany, had been chosen to exhibit in the American section.
Brownell’s primary mission in the first of the three part series was to announce the arrival of the “new” painters as the ruling class in American art, and to legitimize their work as an important and permanent movement, a true break from the art of the nation’s past. Brownell constructed the article around the development of the Society of American Artists, emphatically stating that over the last decade we are beginning to paint as other people paint. If we are to have a new American ‘school’ hereafter, it is certain that it will be very different from its once popular predecessor; but at present it is quite evident that we are but accumulating and perfecting the material for such a national expression, and even to the taking of so initial a step as this, the destruction of our old canons and standards was necessary.  

Brownell marked the year of 1876 as the beginning of a new epoch in American art in which the tide began to turn and established artists such as La Farge, Vedder, and Hunt came to be recognized as leading figures in the new style of the time, as painters of “the real truth.” That style, marked in the text and emphasized by words such as “the essential,” “the spiritual,” and “the vital,” stood in direct opposition to the earlier generation whose work was driven by an all-consuming interest in fidelity to the natural world. This “fidelity,” according to Brownell, was a result of the “benign mother” of that generation, the Dusseldorf school, whose declining influence was hailed as a “note of progress.” “Fidelity” was an important issue to the public, who were not yet fully comfortable with the SAA’s painterly style. While Brownell did not state it outright, virtually all of the new young artists featured in the series had received some form of art instruction in Paris (along with a few in Munich) and the impact of this international

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9 Brownell (May 1880):1.
10 Articles featuring these established artists were also published in tandem with Brownell’s article (see Chapter VI, particularly for a discussion of articles on La Farge and Vedder).
exposure was substantial, given the emphasis on the “étude/study” in these programs. The work of these foreign trained artists was first exhibited *en masse* in 1877 at the annual National Academy exhibition. Recognized as the “beginning of the new order, the Renaissance,” the presence of these artists caused a major rift with the older academicians (see Chapter III). In 1878 the newcomers (now the SAA) “overflowed” from the Academy into the Kurtz gallery, where, according to the text, they “have held successful shows for the previous two years,” displaying a sense of progress and improvement.

Brownell credited the period after the opening of the Centennial, with the exhibition in Philadelphia leading, in turn, to those in New York and “all over the country,” for awakening the public interest in art, engendering a renewed commitment to the development of art-schools, and encouraging a greater acceptance of new artistic styles. *Scribner’s* played a major role in the pivotal years Brownell described, years in which the “soil seemed to have been prepared for the seed which the new ‘Society of American Artists’ evidently felt it to be its mission to sow.”

Seeking to legitimize the “new movement,” Brownell differentiated the SAA from earlier generations of painters, emphasizing the organization’s overall hostility to anything “mechanical” and its enthusiasm for “everything genuinely artistic,” i.e. that which adhered to more foreign-based styles of painting. Responding to comments that the

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11 *Ibid.*, 2. This rift was intensified with the hanging of the American gallery at the Paris Exposition in 1878. Saint-Gaudens and D.M. Armstrong, in charge of the American gallery, chose to highlight SAA artists at the expense of the more traditional Academy members who had been featured in the 1867 show. This infuriated leaders of the Academy, angry that the traditional landscape painters had been “skied,” and added to the tensions between the two groups. See figure 5.2 for Saint-Gaudens’ detailed layout of the American Gallery.

group appealed mainly to other artists and connoisseurs, Brownell asserted that these painters had made a “popular impression” and had come to be generally accepted. The article sought to underscore their newly affirmed status; no longer considered merely avant-garde painters of the 1870s, the group, with its more international style, was now to be regarded within the mainstream of American art in the new decade. According to Brownell, this new position entitled them to “a candid discussion without apology,” introducing the critical review of the movement as a whole, as well as its individual artists. While Brownell recognized that the organization did not consist entirely of “new men,” it did represent a break from past artistic traditions; although more established artists associated with the SAA such as La Farge, Hunt and Martin were a major force within the group, the article’s emphasis would be on the younger painters of America (hence the title).

Following Gilder’s mantra for improved art criticism, Brownell utilized sophisticated aesthetic terms and criteria, which he deemed necessary in order to discuss the new movement and its style in an effective and informative manner:

In a general way, it is true that beside the new leaven which is unquestionably working, there are different ideas going upon the whole subject of art. The most conservative must admit that at least a higher order of cant is prevalent. For example, it is more generally understood that when one talks about the advantages of those two preeminent elements of a landscape, light and air, he may still be serious; that such phrases as “large masses,” “broad values,” “fluent movement,” “color as distinct from colors, and tone from either,” really have a meaning, despite much current and glib abuse of them in art chatter; and that, whether or not painting is pure illusion and an independent interpreter of nature, to be judged by its own beauty without too strict insistence on “imitation,” the ability to draw natural forms accurately is only a small part of a painter’s equipment, instead of his whole stock in trade.  

The quotation affirms the artistic vocabulary to which Scribner’s readers had been introduced over the previous years; Brownell described the new artists specifically in an “aesthetic” and “cultured” language, rather than the more biographical, anecdotal narrative censured by Gilder. Further, in its mandate that works of art should be judged by their overall beauty in terms of composition and color rather than merely their ability to imitate, Brownell was legitimizing the new aesthetic for American painting that had been put in place by Scribner’s earlier art literature. This aesthetic emphasized the essence of painting itself rather than the painted object. As such, the text favored expressive and ethereal terms, such as “poetic,” “fluid,” and “imaginative,” contrasting with negative adjectives applied to the traditional landscape painters such as “literal” “imitative” and “photographic.” Throughout the series Brownell employed this preferred critical language to evaluate the young painters, underscoring the importance of this new approach in appraising contemporary works of art while also critiquing the style of the older generation. As a result, Scribner’s validated not only these new artists but also a new critical aesthetic to an American audience, establishing a relatively sophisticated criterion with which to understand and talk about art. Such validation of new art and art criticism was quite extraordinary for a general monthly magazine at that time.

In terms of the distinctive aspects of the movement, Brownell complimented the artists on the strength of their technique, defending them against critics who found their “sketchiness” a sign of inferiority. Their technique was not due to a lack of ability, but rather a result of their foreign training in the appropriate venues:

They were fresh from studios where real painting was done and its principles were understood; to say-as was so often said- that they painted in the Munich manner or the Paris manner was, except for its obvious qualification, merely to
say that they painted as good painters paint; with the logical inference that is was not as, in general, they paint in Dusseldorf.  

Using specific illustrations included in the article while citing others which, although not reproduced for the series had recently been exhibited, Brownell encouraged the reader to look for technical excellence in the images’ composition and color through a careful examination of the effective renderings, contrast, and placement of incongruous materials.  For example, the text explains the difficulties faced by Eakins in his intensely realistic *Gross Clinic*, which was characterized by a complex perspectival system and minute attention to detail within a large painting of a surgical procedure.  William Merritt Chase’s *Portrait of Frank Duveneck*, which was reproduced for the article, was presented as the operative standard for portraiture. Brownell emphasized Chase’s ability to realistically paint exterior flesh as well as convey interior character; the illustration captures these points, with the brightest portion of the engraving emphasizing Duveneck’s round, fleshy face, and somewhat arrogant expression (figure 5.3). Brownell noted that, collectively, the young men had a strong command of the basic aspects of painting and an ability to “artistically play with their tools,” rising above mere imitation of forms while using learned “tricks of the trade” in a creative manner.

Beyond their technical skill and foreign-based artistic training, the artists shared in a “genuine impulse to paint.” The group’s collective painterly style was a cause of

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15 Brownell discussed the contrast between the fez’s wool, the basin’s brass, the pitcher’s copper, and the bird’s plumage in Duveneck’s *Turkish Page*, which, while not reproduced for the article, had been on view at the National Academy show in 1877, and whose reception there, along with other images by foreign trained artists, led to the formation of the SAA (see Chapter III).
16 While the painting was referred to as *Operation in Practical Surgery* in the article, I will use its current name of the *Gross Clinic* throughout to avoid confusion.
concern for the public, and Brownell worked to assure readers of the expressive beauty of this “painterliness,” a quality to be embraced rather than feared. For example, the reproduction of Ryder’s painting, *Spring*, worked to convey this painterly style, which appears light and ethereal on the page (figure 5.4). It should also be noted that while the article is dedicated to the “Younger Painters,” the series implicitly celebrated the engravers who were able to capture the tone and texture of these paintings in their reproductions. Interestingly, an innovative aspect of the Society exhibitions was their inclusion of the “New School of Wood Engraving,” displaying engraved images that imitated brushwork rather than “legitimate line.” Like their fellow “younger painters,” the wood-engravers were also strongly influenced by the European emphasis on technique and color, and it was deemed appropriate by the SAA’s exhibition committee and its Vice-President La Farge that work by high quality engravers such as Timothy Cole and Frederick Juengling (both of whom worked for *Scribner’s*) should be recognized and displayed as part of the “new movement.”

Ryder’s image, which captured the sensual emergence of spring as a lone figure wanders in a lush field, embodied the new movement’s interest in the expression of feeling, rather than the imitation of nature. With the introduction of photography, the earlier tradition of mimetic renderings had given way to a greater concern that painting be “alive instead of only life-

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17 According to Sylvester Koehler, engravers were influenced by the French emphasis on individualism, which was “the real factor of importance in the development of painter-etching here.” Noting how wood engraving, under the influence of SAA artists, began to adjust itself to this painterly style, Timothy Cole stated, “At last it became apparent that the old conventions were inadequate….The line had to be tampered with in order faithfully to render the qualities characteristic of the artist’s painting….All the old conception of reproducing textures – a certain sort of line for this and another for that – had to go.” Both Koehler and Cole are quoted in Frank Weitenkampf, *American Graphic Art*, (New York, 1912), 7 and 157. For more on the engravers in the SAA exhibitions, see Biesenstock, 103-4.
like,” and the engraving “Spring” illustrated that trend. Here Brownell spoke directly against Ruskin, who, in his opinion, has been clearly eclipsed by the gospel of “art for art.” He stated that without exception, all of the new men shared this outlook, privileging feeling, beauty and illusion over logic, literalness and representation; these artists looked to nature as a “material rather than a model,” and in order to participate in this cultured society, the reader must share in these idealized values.18

Attempting to speak to recent reviews, Brownell addressed one of the primary criticisms of the new movement, its “absence of style.” While admitting that “style” is frequently associated with a suppression of creativity and artistic expression, Brownell allowed that it was important in tying the art of the present to the art of the past. The article constructed a rather lengthy argument regarding the concept of style, citing the opinions of French critics, such as Charles le Blanc, Eugene Veron, and Émile Zola as well as the British writer Philip Hamerton.19 After a discussion of these critics’ views on style, Brownell attempted to define the concept to his readers, describing it as the “rhetoric rather than the grammar of painting,” and suggesting that style was a result of

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18 Ibid., 7.
19 Frequently cited in Scribner’s, Le Blanc was recognized for his work on color theory outlined in his *Grammaire des arts du dessin* of 1867, and was highly critical of British painting for its lack of style. Eugene Veron, the editor of *L’Art*, which was now regularly summarized in *Scribner’s*, had recently published his book, *Aesthetics* (1879). The text stressed the fundamental idea of “sincerity in art,” which resulted from the “spontaneous manifestation of the personality of the artist” as opposed to a more artificial style that frequently resulted from academic training. For contemporary commentary on Veron’s argument for the individual over academic style as well as his support for Viollet-le-Duc’s theories on architecture see “The Latest Literature of Art,” *Atlantic Monthly*, 44/262 (August 1879):161-63. A recognized expatriate English poet and art critic, Hamerton frequently reviewed the Salon for English journals and his work was also published in America. Zola was mentioned in connection with his affiliation with the *avant garde*. We know of Brownell’s in-depth knowledge of these critics as he addressed their theories in his own work in the 1880s and 1890s on criticism and French art.
the artist’s educated “intelligence which indicates that he has an intimate acquaintance 
with and deference for the methods of the great artists, as it distinguishes barbaric from 
civilized art.” The article included illustrations that resembled Old Master paintings, such 
as the opening image by J.Alden Weir, a portrait that appropriated the style of Velasquez; 
Weir’s use of dramatic lights and darks, which was reinforced in the engraver’s 
reproduction, recalled the Spanish painter’s chiaroscuro and underscored the notion that 
he and his colleagues had a strong sense of the past and incorporated it into their work 
whenever possible. Referencing Frans Hals, Chase portrayed Duveneck wearing 
seventeenth century Dutch costume along with a signature wide-brimmed hat and long 
pipe, holding an engraving of Malle Babbe. The selection of the Dutch inspired portrait 
for the article to represent Chase also participated in this effort of validation, tying the 
“new men” to Old Masters (figures 5.3 and 5.5).

Brownell took issue with critics who associated “style” solely with “finish.” He 
argued that new younger contemporary American painters might be seen to lack “style” 
because of the absence of discernment on the part of the public and the provincial nature 
of the professional critics. Further, unrestrained by any clear checks and balances, 
American artists were not prevented from sending paintings for exhibition which often 
contained “rapid and hasty” work. However, in some cases, artists such as Weir and 
Chase, used this sketchiness to their advantage, creating works that were described in 
positive terms as “fresh,” “individual” and “creative;” he commended these artists for 
disregarding standard conventions and lauded their paintings as the hallmarks of the new
movement. Ultimately Brownell concluded that the origin of the movement was “of feeling, [rather] than of mind” and that therefore its “crudity is refreshing.”

In his discussion of style Brownell called attention to the work of Ryder, an artist who had been previously and frequently championed by *Scribner’s* in earlier reviews, but essentially ignored by the other major monthly magazines. Although Brownell was critical of some of the younger painters for their lack of style, he praised this indistinctness in the work of Ryder as his greatest strength:

If Ryder should attempt more than he does, it is odds that it would be disastrous, to a degree. His pictures are marked by an almost contempt for form; they assume an attitude of almost hostility to the observer bent on ‘making them out;” they seem to take it for granted that a picture is a simple rather than a complex thing, and to assert directly that a suggestive hint is as good as a complete expression. But if he should suddenly realize their short-comings in these respects and attempt to correct them out of hand, we should fear for their poetic feeling, their engaging color, and the softness and tenderness; even to lose their fragmentariness would one feels, be risky.

Here Brownell positioned Ryder as a leader in the new movement, not entirely surprising given his Barbizon mode as well as his close ties to the Gilders. The engraving of

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20 Brownell (May 1880): 9-12
21 Ryder was never mentioned in any of *Harper’s Monthly*’s exhibition reviews or in its larger article on the new movement, S.G.W. Benjamin (March 1879). His work was however regularly discussed in *Scribner’s* reviews of the SAA shows as well as the early show at Cottier’s. See *Scribner’s Monthly* 10 (June 1875): 253, *Scribner’s Monthly* 18 (June 1879): 312 and *Scribner’s Monthly* 20 (June 1880): 313-16.
22 Brownell (May 1880):10.
23 Ryder was an integral member of the Gilder circle, having met Helena de Kay during their years as students in the early 1870s at the National Academy and attended many of the Friday night gatherings at The Studio. In 1879 Charles de Kay commissioned Ryder to paint the *The Culprit Fay*, a mirror frame that was a gift to his and Helena’s mother, Janet Halleck Drake de Kay. De Kay described the commission in detail to his sister in a letter dated 11/29/79: “Ryder is doing lovely work. I have a group of dancing maenads which is exquisite in tone and full of lovely lines in the figures. He has orders from Cottier, and is working more than ever before. I am going to give mother at Christmas a square mirror with broad cherry frame, 19 panels all painted by Ryder with decorative allusions to the “Culprit Fay” – Mums the word!” And later upon its completion he wrote
Ryder’s *Spring*, which was exhibited in the 1879 SAA exhibition, captured this sense of “indistinctness” in the blurring and fading of the lines of the engraving, mimicking the tone and texture of the painting in which the leaves and branches of the trees seem to merge with their surroundings. This image represents the first time a painting by Ryder was reproduced, thus providing him his first exposure to a wide audience (figure 5.4). Unlike most of the artists reviewed in the series, Brownell did not refer specifically to Ryder’s painting or discuss any aspects of the work in detail, but rather emphasized his “poetic sensibility,” allowing the illustration to speak for itself in this regard. Saul Zalesch has claimed that Brownell’s praise for Ryder’s lack of training and educated “sensibility” was purely a veiled critique of the National Academy, and that Brownell was ill-equipped to critically discuss Ryder’s paintings, as they defied the norms of traditional techniques. I believe that it was not due to an inability on the part of Brownell to discuss the work specifically, but rather to the difficulties in mimetically transferring the nature of Ryder’s color effects onto the printed page; it had to have been challenging for engravers to fully capture the nuances of Ryder’s unique painterly style, and as such, the reproduction did not look as radical as the original. While Brownell’s praise of Ryder, the only featured artist who had not received any overseas instruction, may appear confusing given his earlier discussion regarding the advances of technique in March of 1880, “Did I tell you that Ryder made a sketch of you from memory for the mirror? You have no idea how well Ryder’s picture of you stands the fire of his own tall work and with Diaz and Corot alongside. He tells me that the artists all go up to it and admire it.” See Gilder MSS Lilly Library Manuscript Collection - Box 3. The sixteen miniature paintings that make up the square frame refer to episodes in de Kay’s grandfather’s poem of the same name, and include a portrait of Helena as the fay’s earthly love. For more on Ryder’s *The Culprit Fay*, see Broun, 215-6. For a Marxist interpretation of the Ryder/Gilder relationship, see Albert Boime, “Ryder on a Gilded Horse,” in *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* (1993): 564-575.

24 Zalesch (1992), 137-42.
the European trained American artists, Ryder was a special case. As an early member of the SAA, one of the Cottier gallery artists, and a close friend of the Gilders, it is not surprising that he was supported and endorsed in the pages of *Scribner’s*.  

Ryder’s paintings, as seen in the reproduced image “Spring,” also closely resembled the work of the French landscape painters, particularly Millet, whom Gilder so

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25 The discussion of Ryder in this series also calls for me at this point to address Zalesch’s larger argument, which examines the responses to Ryder’s art as a means to discard prevailing art-historical assumptions regarding the art world in New York during the 1870s and 1880s. Central to Zalesch’s thesis is the claim of the National Academy’s status at the time as the dominant institution in the New York art world; Zalesch contends that Helena de Kay and her circle of patrician, “old New York” friends reacted against what he describes as its democratic, inclusive policies and sought to present the SAA as stylistic progressives battling the Academy for artistic freedom. The SAA’s reputation was carefully crafted by de Kay’s close friends and associates whose articles in *The New York Times* by her brother Charles, in *The Tribune*, by close friend Clarence Cook, and in *Scribner’s* by Brownell (and ostensibly blessed by Gilder) sought to create an antagonistic relationship that in reality did not exist, but has come to be widely accepted by art historians. These critics supported Ryder and placed him in the public eye not necessarily because they found his art to be of high quality, but rather because his crudely finished pictures would never have been accepted by the Academy at that time. By endorsing his expressive, sketchy paintings they were able to attack the Academy’s emphasis on craft, finish and verisimilitude. I find Zalesch’s argument is worthwhile in its reconsideration of the nature of the Society of American Artists, which has been portrayed as a radical organization, ground-breaking in its separation from the Academy. As he notes, members of the SAA displayed their works regularly at the Academy shows, so the notion of a full-scale separatist movement is somewhat misleading, although I believe that the SAA represented a stronger challenge to the traditional institution than Zalesch suggests. I would argue that Zalesch’s Marxist approach in which he portrays the de Kay/Gilder families as obsessed with maintaining their “old New York” patrician status threatened by the nouveau riche is a bit extreme, and not necessarily their prime reason for promoting and purchasing Ryder’s work. I believe that their motivation for creating and supporting the SAA was driven more by their interest in international (primarily French), artistic activities, and in an effort to formulate New York art institutions that would emulate French models. The Gilders also sought to achieve a similar situation in their personal lives, holding Friday night Salons dominated by foreign trained artists and actors whose topics of conversation dwelt on the international art world. (See Chapter III) I do appreciate Zalesch’s scholarship, as it is engaged with one of the primary aspects of my dissertation, to expose the far-reaching influence of *Scribner’s* on the art world, the general public and current day art historians in terms of the creation, development and support of particular artists and artistic movements favored by the Gilders.
highly favored; Ryder came the closest of any American painter of his generation to creating a uniquely American version of Barbizon painting. As discussed in Chapter VII, Gilder was also committed to promoting the work of Millet to the American public and vital to that effort was an appreciation on the part of his readers of the Barbizon style. Although the SAA’s general preference was for figurative painting over landscape, the intimate landscapes that did appear in their exhibitions and were engraved in the series, such as R.S. Gifford’s *New England Cedars*, Thayer’s *Autumn Afternoon in Berkshire*, and W.S. Macy’s *Early Spring*, had strong affinities with those of the Barbizon painters (figures 5.6, 5.7 and 5.8). These engravings, along with Ryder’s “Spring,” in their emphasis on texture and tone, further underscored the differences with the grand

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26 Two other members of the SAA painted landscapes in the Barbizon style, Alexander Wyant and Homer Dodge Martin. While both joined the SAA early on—Martin was one of the first ten members, joining on June 11, 1877, and Wyant joined shortly thereafter on January 28, 1878—these men were older, more established artists than Ryder, were both members of the NAD, and had originally painted in the Hudson River mode. Brownell mentioned Martin in the opening of his piece as a painter of “long-since-established reputation.” A member of the Century Club and an extremely close personal friend of Brownell’s, Martin introduced him to many of the artists about whom he wrote. Martin was a part of the Gilder circle and a close associate of Helena de Kay as evidenced by a letter written to her on Dec.2, 1878 in which he compliments her on one of her still lives: “The tulips are a great success – you will know how proud I am of passing the picture: by successful I mean that all the good people liked it.” In Helena de Kay’s journal she notes in an entry in late 1877, that “Homer Martin I have learned to like very much. He is a man..” Gilder MSS in Lilly Library Manuscript Collection, Box 12 (letters) and Box 21 (journal). Martin was also employed by *Scribner’s*, having illustrated articles on the homes of Emerson, “The Homes and Haunts of Emerson,” 17 (February 1879):496-511 and Whittier, “John Greenleaf Whittier,” 18 (August 1879):569-576. Martin’s image of Whittier’s *Birthplace* was included in the second portfolio of *Proofs from Scribner’s Monthly and St. Nicholas Second Series* (New York: Scribner and Co., 1881), Engraving XLV). One might also include George Inness in this Barbizon tradition, but again he was an established artist at this point and never exhibited with the SAA. William Morris Hunt, recognized as the original promoter of the Barbizon style in America had died in 1879. For more on these “American Barbizon” artists see Peter Birmingham, *American Art in a Barbizon Mood*, (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1975) and more recently Estelle Riback, *The Intimate Landscape: A New Look at the Origins of the American Barbizon Movement*, (Fort Bragg, California: Lost Coast Press, 2004.)
landscapes of the previous generation, whose images were generally reproduced with a greater emphasis on linear outline (see figure 1.21).

In addition to the concern over stylistic affinities, Brownell also addressed the issue critics had raised over the new movement’s “lack of poetry.” This lack of expressive idealism “does not apply to Mr. Ryder, who has possibly a proportional excess of poetry,” nor John Singer Sargent whose “distinctly poetic bent” was seen in the reproduction of Fishing for Oysters at Cancale (figure 5.7). Both images appeared next to each other and stood out for their painterly qualities, which were successfully reproduced in the engravings. Brownell compared these works to the images that followed by Eakins, Chase, and Currier, some of the strongest painters in the group who engaged in intense realism. While it was not reproduced for the article, Brownell cited, as an example of this realism, Eakins’ Gross Clinic, exhibited at the second annual SAA show in New York in 1879, and shortly thereafter at the third show at the Philadelphia Academy. Scribner’s must have deemed the painting too unsettling, and chose to represent Eakins with an engraving of The Chess Players (figure 5.8), which was not even described in the text. Brownell praised the Gross Clinic as a “masterpiece of dramatic realism” that created an increased level of intensity in its depiction of a familiar scene of everyday life in American hospitals and its ability to convey vivid and strong emotion. Recognizing the generally negative reception of the painting at the SAA and Centennial exhibitions, Brownell explained that the critics’ unfavorable reaction was a result of the unpoetic nature of the Gross Clinic and of Eakins’ lack of interest in depicting beauty. He encouraged the reader in this instance to put aside this natural preference for “pretty pictures,” so that he might appreciate the work of this and other
“realistic” painters, who rebelled against the general desire for “the sentimental.”

Brownell provided the example of Frank Currier, whose realistic and somewhat disturbing image of a young boy with a threatening gaze was made more intense by the illustration’s dramatic lightening and thick brushstrokes (figure 5.9). Currier’s paintings caused a division within artistic circles over the importance of poetry in technique:

It was contended on the one hand that they were wonderful examples of the way in which an impressionist, nobly careless of details and bent only on the representation of the spirit of nature rather than of her botanical forms, can succeed in the truest fidelity. On the other it was argued that nothing could be made out of them, that they were mere daubs...The ayes “had it” very clearly, in our view. Mr. Currier’s “impressions” were masterly in technical qualities and very real at a proper distance. The fatal trouble with them was that they were horribly ugly.  

The article endeavored to change the public taste, encouraging it to expand its natural propensities to include paintings that might violate the viewer’s accepted idea of what constituted “good art.”

As noted above, Weir and Chase were recognized for their affinities with some of the “intensely real” and “superficially ugly” paintings of Velazquez and Frans Hals. However, unlike Currier’s Whistling Boy, the intensity of these portraits was offset by the inclusion of picturesque elements (see figures 5.3 and 5.5). According to Brownell, these artists did not rely solely on beauty, and in order to understand their work, the viewer must learn to appreciate their technique, their straightforward directness, and their avoidance of sentimentality. In addition to the Harlem genre painter, Chase’s portrait of Duveneck also seemed to be responding to the highly popular image by Manet, Le Bon Bock, his break-through painting at the Salon of 1873, which was widely reproduced;

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28 The Chase portrait of Duveneck is now lost.
Manet’s beer drinker, who sits smoking a pipe in a wide brimmed hat, was also modeled after Hals’ merry cavaliers (figure 5.10). Further, Brownell may have been familiar with the writings of the French critic Marie-Amélie de Montifaud, who, in a widely-read review of Manet’s painting, encouraged viewers to focus on his technique, with its loose brushwork and broad patches of pigment, which, in her words, resulted in a “new type of visual experience.”

Brownell sought to explain the aesthetic effects of the new style of painting in American art in a similar manner. Images by a number of young artists were discussed with these tenets as standards by which to evaluate their work; ultimately Brownell concluded that these painters atoned for their deficiencies in style and poetry by injecting a feeling for character and a sense of the picturesque, and he provided a detailed discussion of reproduced works to support his argument. In this manner, Brownell instructed *Scribner’s* readers to understand and appreciate images that might not have naturally appealed to them, thereby educating them to admire and accept the artists endorsed by Gilder and his circle.

**Defending the New Tradition**

Introducing his second installment of the series, which appeared two months later in July of 1880, Brownell recognized the difficulties of legitimizing the new movement, with its stylistic ties to Europe, to a conservative middle class American audience. He responded to negative letters sent from readers and critics objecting to his earlier article,

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29 *L’Artiste*, June 1, 1873. Reprinted in Ross King, *The Judgement of Paris*, (New York: Walker & Company, 2006), 341. For more on Montifaud, see Laurence Brogniez, “Marc de Montifaud: une femme en procès avec son siècle,” *Sextant*, 6 (1996): 55-80. Brownell was quite conversant in French criticism from early on, as evidenced in his life long interest in French art (See Chapter IV), so it is highly likely that he was aware of the review.
effectively incorporating their attacks into the second installment. Brownell used this part of the series to underscore the differences between the two generations and to critique the traditional landscape painters while favorably comparing the work of his new young artists. Feigning “shock” that the old school continued to maintain a wide-spread loyal following, he admitted that supporters of the earlier “literalism” still existed in America, and had yet to “take the first step toward understanding the aims, to say nothing of appreciating the accomplishment of the new men.” He rather haughtily recognized their strong convictions, while subtly shaming his readers into recognizing the backwardness of these stalwart followers:

If it is a little disconcerting to find an objecting laudatory temporis acti when we had fancied the debris substantially cleared away and that the question now concerned the best means of progression, there is still consolation in the reflection that the danger of overconfidence, of having the thing all one’s own way, heretofore pointed out is not, after all, so imminent.\(^{30}\)

Brownell confessed that while those who were involved with the contemporary art world had accepted the current “vogue” of the new men, many Americans were unfamiliar with them, particularly the more conservative members of the viewing public. Such viewers felt more comfortable with the “theatricality” of Frederic Church, whose main goal of producing “wonder” through technical imitation had “never been of service to the best interests of American art.”\(^{31}\) By comparing the nature of Church’s spectacular pictures in both his subject matter and his dramatic means of exhibiting his work, to the more intimate, expressive images of the new movement, Brownell associated the older artist with a type of crass commercialism. Now that Americans had become more sophisticated in terms of “taste,” they should be able to recognize the lack of feeling in Church’s

\(^{30}\) Brownell (July 1880):322.
\(^{31}\) Ibid., 323.
mechanically precise images, which could just as easily have been achieved with a camera. Aligning the new men with French academic traditions and suggesting that the American public still had a great deal to learn about high art, Brownell discussed the nature of landscape painting in France, as defined by Eugene Veron, the editor of *L’Art*:

> One of the most un-compromising realists among living writers upon art, calls landscape-painting “the expression of one’s emotions in the presence of nature.” This is addressed to Frenchmen, however, and in France there is a great fund of criticism upon these matters which renders it unnecessary to make minute explanations at every step.  

In his argument for the importance of personal expression and interpretation, Brownell attempted to change the way the American public valued its art, stating that it was “manifest that literal reproduction is satirically insufficient.” The artist must now bring to bear his own personal interpretation of the landscape, in order to compete with the photographic realism of the camera. According to Brownell, Church’s work, with its emphasis on detailed tropical specimens, its ever-present reflections from a blazing sun, and its general “keying up” of contrasts, was essentially the art of a scene painter; as Brownell saw it, the work of the Hudson River school “is simply not painting.”

The landscape artists selected for discussion in the second paper appeared to have been those most interested in personal expression, underscoring the difference between the young men and the previous generation. Again, the text employed specific aesthetic language to further define the gap between the two. For example, Abbott Thayer’s *Autumn Afternoon in the Berkshire* (see figure 5.7) was acclaimed for its “simplicity.”

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32 *Ibid.*.. Brownell’s reference to Veron is appropriate, as the two shared a similar approach in terms of the promotion of a more expressionist style of art, and also recalls an earlier generation of French critics of the 1860s, including Emile Zola and Zacharie Astruc, in their condemnation of the academic artists such as Gérôme and Messonier, whose work was deemed cold-blooded and phenomenal.

and “directness.” Presented as “the opposite of artifice,” Brownell applauded Thayer’s subject choice with its lack of disturbing emotions that might complicate our perception. The article noted that when this “intimate” work was recently exhibited at the NAD it was hung among many of the older members’ “bravura” landscapes, making it appear even more powerful and, not to mention, more European; Brownell likened Thayer’s picturesque cows to those of the French Barbizon painter Constant Troyon. The younger painter John Twachtman was also featured with a reproduction of Oyster Boats, North River (figure 5.11), whose composition was quite unlike that of any other landscapes included in the series, with its cropped image of commercial fishing boats and its high horizon line tilted toward the viewer; readers might also have recalled similar images from “The Tile Club Afloat” (see figures 4.72 and 4.73). Brownell discussed Twatchman’s composition in detail, describing it as direct, strong, and pictorial; the accompanying illustration allowed the reader to closely examine the work, and obtain a better understanding of the artist’s style. In his discussion of Thayer and Twatchman as well as in his selection of specific illustrations reproduced to convey larger ideas about landscape painting, Brownell aligned these artists with popular movements in European painting and with the ideas of French critics who supported them.

In terms of the figural artists featured in the second article, Brownell appeared to be responding to his initial concern about the “poetic,” and focused on painters whose work was more expressive and subjective, rendering this new type of painting as the pre-eminent representation of modern art. The article opened with an engraving of George Fuller’s Romany Girl, an image of a young gypsy; the painting’s dark background and

34 Constant Tryon was a leading animalier in the nineteenth century and his work was exhibited at Cottier’s along with other SAA artists.
thick brushstrokes recalled the popular French and American Barbizon painters, the portraits of Gustave Courbet, and the figures of William Morris Hunt (figure 5.12). Brownell used this image along with Fuller’s *And She Was a Witch*, a narrative landscape (not reproduced for the article) that closely resembled Corot’s misty, dreamlike fields with figures, as a means to explain “modern realism” to the reader. Responding to critics who took issue with the fact that SAA painters privileged figure painting and portraits, Brownell made the important distinction to the reader that narrative was no longer the sole purpose of painting, as the main subject or sitter and his or her natural surroundings were given an equal or even dominant emphasis: “a complexity of moral elements has taken the place of the old simplicity whose multifariousness was almost wholly pictorial. This seems the direction which the artistic tendency of the time has taken.” Brownell compared Fuller directly to Corot, whose work was currently on view in New York, and whom he cited as “the greatest painter of our time”; he suggested that Fuller had fully assimilated the techniques and moods of French modern realism. The

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35 For more on George Fuller and his associations with French and American Barbizon painters see Sarah Burns, “A Study of the Life and Poetic Vision of George Fuller (1822-1884),” *American Art Journal* 13, No. 4 (Autumn, 1981):11-37. During the early 1900s, Fuller had an established reputation as one of the principle artists of his time and was often associated with George Inness as a leading American painter. While that status declined over the course of the course of the twentieth century, recently he has been affiliated with Whistler and other tonalist painters, and his work has been cited as an early example of Symbolist art in America. Fuller’s *And She was a Witch* as well as his affinities with Nathaniel Hawthorne and the Colonial Revival are discussed in detail in Burn’s “George Fuller: The Hawthorne of Our Art,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 18, No 2/3 (Summer – Autumn, 1983):123-145

36 Fuller’s image of a female victim of Puritan superstition being led from her home in the New England woods by two colonial officials was described as a natural scene, although refined and heightened, that “stimulates the imagination instead of satisfying the sensibility.” Brownell (July 1880):326.

37 *Ibid.* The new “materialism” called for the viewer to find aspects of the supernatural *in* nature itself rather than *through* it, as with the transcendentalists of an earlier generation.
engraving of *The Romany Girl*, which captured the subtle nuances of tone in the painting, particularly in the gypsy’s intriguing face, embodied the type of figure paintings preferred by the SAA, as it eschewed traditional gestures and arrangements, and focused directly and intensely on the individual character of the sitter.

The series reproduced images by realist figure painters whose work also looked for this revelation of character, but with an even more distinctively abstract pictorial language. This intense realism was apparent in the illustrations of Henry Muhrman’s *Bather*, described as an “impression,” and Frederick Vinton’s *Head of Old French Peasant Woman*, which allowed the viewer to “feel” the sitter’s humanity; both images were made even more bold by the engravers’ use of strong lights and darks (figures 5.13 and 5.14). These intimate portraits of bathers, gypsies and peasants resembled popular images frequently found in the French Salon and Brownell encouraged his viewers, through his general praise as well as his aesthetic language, to recognize and accept these types of figurative images and styles as genuinely modern painting.

In this second piece, Brownell returned to the issue of greatest concern regarding the new movement, that of the nature of “the sketch.” Frequently criticized for their lack of finish, many of the young painters displayed a preference for freer handling and more “spiritual qualities,” paying less attention to more formal aspects of painting such as structural composition. Their emphasis on “the study” appeared to be a result of their foreign training, which often encouraged smaller sketches rather than larger works. Brownell suggested that in order to be taken seriously the young artists must exhibit a “larger proportion of *pictures*” that had greater pictorial significance.\(^38\) *The Coming Man*

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\(^{38}\) Brownell (July 1880): 331.
by Frank Duveneck and *Reverie* by Wyatt Eaton are described in detail to reveal these differences, as Brownell demonstrated to the viewer why Duveneck’s image, with its quick brushstrokes and lack of distinct modeling, particularly in the face, was more of a study than a completed painting with an underlying structure (figure 5.15). He went on to instruct the reader about how to look closely and analyze an image, and also explained how a talented, mature artist such as Duveneck was able to produce more complex juxtapositions of line, mass, and color in order to heighten and re-enforce the viewer’s impressions, ultimately resulting in an aesthetic response.

An engraving of Wyatt Eaton’s *Reverie*, which was printed opposite of Duveneck’s “sketch,” was presented as an “excellent opportunity to illustrate by a striking contrast the difference between a ‘picture’ and a ‘study’ ” (figure 5.16). Eaton’s painting was showcased as one of the best by the new young men and as a model of the highest quality in terms of the new style of painting. The image, which was exhibited at the 1879 SAA show, was described as a perfect example of a “graceful and felicitous composition,” and was representative of an artist who had a strong understanding of technique and structure, yet whose work was “untainted by formality.”39 This was the direction in which Brownell wished to steer the course of contemporary art. An image of inner contemplation, *Reverie’s* sole figure is a young woman who stares in profile beyond a mirror while her face is reflected in three quarter view; her fully formed and elegant features compared favorably to the lack of definition found in Duveneck’s pudgy child’s face as he leans toward the viewer. Captured in the illustration, the clarity of her expression, accompanied by a more blurred reflection, would have appealed to viewers

Looking both for “inner character” and a somewhat more finished look. Although the woman looks to her right and is not seen in full length, the striking similarities between the image and Whistler’s *Symphony in White #2: The Little White Girl* (figure 5.17) could not have been lost on Brownell, who had earlier championed Whistler’s symphonies as an important contribution to the progress of contemporary art.40 Further, Eaton’s artistic connections, which he made while studying abroad with Whistler (as well as Gérôme and Millet), would have impressed Brownell.41 A close personal friend of the Gilders, Eaton’s work was extensively featured throughout the pages of *Scribner’s*, with three of his portraits of famous Americans selected not only as frontispieces but also for publication in *A portfolio of proof impressions, selected from Scribner’s monthly and St. Nicholas;*42 The second portfolio published after Brownell’s article included *Reverie* among its top fifty images.43 Moreover, the 1881 article on “Wood Engraving and the Scribner Prizes,”

40 While Whistler’s *The White Girl, Symphony #1* and *Symphony in White #3* were reproduced for Brownell’s article, *The Little White Girl Symphony #2* was not included. See Brownell (August 1879).
41 In 1872 Eaton went abroad; while in London he met and received advice from Whistler. Leaving for Paris, he studied under Gérôme at the Academy and, between 1872 and 1877, divided his time between Paris and Barbizon where he became a type of protégé of Millet. As highlighted in Chapter VI, Eaton played a major role in the publication of Millet’s biography, and would later go on to write an article for *The Century* entitled, “Recollections of Jean Francois Millet: With Some Account of his Drawings for his Children and Grandchildren,” *Century Illustrated Magazine* 38 (May 1889): 90-104. For more on Eaton see Birmingham, 137-38.
42 *A portfolio of proof impressions, selected from Scribner’s monthly and St. Nicholas.* (New York: Scribner & Co., [c1879]). Of all of the artists included in that selection, only Mary Hallock Foote had more images reproduced than Eaton. His portraits of great American literary and political figures, including Emerson, Bryant, Lincoln and Longfellow were extremely popular frontispieces during the 1870s. (See Figure 4.3)
43 Eaton was mentioned frequently in the Gilder journals throughout the 1870s. Their correspondence was extensive, with Eaton writing to de Kay in September of 1880 during their time in Europe to discuss the Millet reproductions which he was involved in procuring (See Chapter VI) as well as the reproduction of *Reverie* for this article: “I feel quite indifferent about the reproduction of the “Reverie,” I would not have Mr. Gilder
acknowledged Eaton’s “personal counsel” to both engravers and printers to ensure that the reproduced images represented the highest quality possible. So it is not surprising that of all of the “new, young men” Brownell would select a work by the relatively unknown Eaton to illustrate the movement at its best, and to inculcate his readers as to how to appreciate this new type of painting.

Promoting Expatriates, “Art for Art’s Sake,” and Modern Female Artists

Featured as the lead piece for the July 1881 issue and introduced by a reproduction of Sargent’s Capri Peasant on the opening page, the third installment for the series appeared exactly one year later (figure 5.18). While Sargent was the only artist in “The Younger Painters” whose work appeared twice, (Oyster Gatherers of Cancale was reproduced in the first part of the series), he was only briefly mentioned in one sentence in the first paper, which merely noted the poetic charm of his paintings. The final piece ended with an editor’s note that “the accomplished young painter” had exhibited the Capri Peasant in the 1881 SAA exhibition, and that the finished picture relating to the drawing, Capri Girl, had been shown at a previous exhibition. Changes regarding expatriate artists in the SAA were put into place in its constitution in 1880 in

make use of it simply out of kindness to me – but if he really wants to use it I have no objections.” Eaton to Helena de Kay. (September 1, 1880) Gilder MSS, Lilly Library Manuscript Collection, Box 4. In the second portfolio of proofs which highlighted the top fifty engravings published between 1879 and 1881, two of Eaton’s images were featured, Reverie and the Portrait of John Greenleaf Whittier. Proofs from Scribner’s Monthly and St. Nicholas (Second Series, New York: Scribner and Co., and London: Frederick Warne & Co. 1881) Plate VI and XXI.

45 Brownell (July 1881): 333.
46 Brownell (May 1880): 12.
47 Brownell (July 1881): 334.
order to more firmly define its position toward Americans living and working in Europe, expressly allowing space for their work in future exhibitions; in response, thirty one new members, including Sargent and Cassatt, joined the Society. It was likely that Sargent was featured so prominently in the third article not only because of this general show of support for American artists living abroad, but also for his strong reputation in Paris, where he had received a medal at the Salon of 1878 for *Oysters Gatherers of Cancale* and an honorable mention at the 1879 Salon for his *Portrait of Carolus-Duran*, and well as his support of and involvement with the SAA overseas (figure 5.19). While critics were concerned about the level of the SAA’s dependence on artists living outside of the US, Sargent was an ideal example of one who received acclaim not only for himself, but for his country as well. As such, Sargent was the perfect “poster child” for the new movement as an American artist who had exhibited prominently at the Paris Salon, was awarded commissions internationally, and who aligned himself with the Society rather than the National Academy. During the initial years of the SAA, Sargent lent a number of these celebrated images, in many ways legitimizing the Society in its infancy as a member whose work had been officially recognized by the highest authority of the arts, the French Academy. While his paintings were discussed in the daily press

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48 At the initial SAA exhibition in 1878, Sargent lent the *Oysters Gatherers of Cancale*, which had been previously recognized at the Salon earlier in the year; he sent *A Capriote*, in 1879 and one year later lent the award winning *Portrait of Carolus-Duran*, which then traveled to the St. Botolph club in Boston. In 1881 Sargent provided the Society with two pictures, the Capri Peasant Study, now known as *Rosina*, and a *Portrait of Edwin Burckhardt*, neither of which received much attention. However in the SAA exhibition of 1883 he sent the *Lady with the Rose* (Charlotte Louise Burckhardt), now in the Metropolitan Museum. For more on Sargent’s early reception in America, see Meg Robertson, “John Singer Sargent: His Early Success in America, 1878-1879,” in *Archives of American Art Journal* 22, No.4 (1982): 21-26 and Trevor Fairbrother, *John Singer Sargent and America* (New York: Garland Publishers, 1986).
reviews of the SAA shows, it was Brownell who introduced Sargent to a national audience, with his images given pride of place in the “Young Painters” series. The reproduction of his Capri Peasant captured the nuances of his painting, conveying the tone of her skin, the texture of her hair and the overall lightness of her head floating in profile; like the images of gypsies and peasants that had preceded her in the earlier articles, she was representative of the Society’s interest in subjective interior portraits as well as its continued support of painters living and working abroad. Further, while the image itself is identical to Sargent’s painting entitled Head of Ana-Capri Girl, which consists entirely of the young girl’s head in profile, floating rather austerely against a neutral beige canvas, I believe that it was the engraver who chose to add the abstract frame around the girl’s head (figure 5.20). This rapid outline, which simulates drips of paint in the upper left corner, was included to accentuate the “sketch-like” freshness and spontaneity of Sargent’s picture as well as the style of the new movement as a whole.

As the series was meant to comment on developments in the current art world, Brownell spoke directly about contemporary trends and concerns, such as “art for art’s sake” and the “value of nocturnes,” that had received much notoriety with the recent the Whistler-Ruskin trial. Brownell addressed these controversial issues upfront; he opened the third article with a discussion of the “expressive use of color,” which he had explored in his earlier article on Whistler and deemed a rarity in American art. Brownell used the work of W. Gedney Bunce, another expatriate painter, to make important distinctions between his more figurative images of Venice in moonlight and Whistler’s

unconventional nocturnes. Bunce, whose painting of Venice had been previously reproduced in *Scribner’s* article on the Paris Exposition but was not included here, was recognized as a colorist whose work was neither theatrical or sentimental, but a painter who used color in a modern approach, “as material, instead of as an end” (figure 5.21). Emphasizing color itself, as something worth consideration on its own rather than as a means of depicting an object or heightening a mood, Bunce’s paintings shared much in common with the theoretical ideas behind Whistler’s blurry, misty canvases; however, the image of a Venetian moonlight scene was still recognizable in Bunce’s image, and, as a result, he avoided many of the issues of legitimacy raised by critics who objected to the more abstract nocturnes as acceptable works of art. Brownell seems to have privileged Bunce over Whistler for achieving this level of abstraction through color while still holding on to form in “pictures that are beautifully painted in respect of quality and serious, contained expression.” While Brownell used Whistler’s work to address the complex subject of color and abstraction, no images by either artist were included, due, in all probability, to the fact that no illustration could capture the nuances and tones necessary to fully convey the issues involved.

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50 Brownell (July 1881): 322.
51 As discussed in Chapter IV, Whistler’s nocturnes became objects of great critical discussion after the Whistler-Ruskin trial of 1877. It should be noted again, that no one living in America who had not traveled to England had actually ever seen a nocturne and none were reproduced as engravings. Brownell was himself fairly equivocal on the subject of nocturnes; he wrote, “no one can have a greater respect for ‘nocturnes’ than we have. There are many who have ineradicable *a priori* objections to them, but we cherish no illusions of the sort, and are free to like what seems on its face likable without inquiring too curiously into its legitimacy.” (July 1881): 322. Ryder was also mentioned here as an excellent colorist, but was seen as more naive, lacking the intelligence and sophistication of Bunce.
Covering other categories, Brownell discussed young artists excelling in genre, portraiture and decorative painting. The article featured a reproduction of Douglas Volk’s genre scene, *Puritan Maiden*, which, with its large blocks of color against an austere white background, was highlighted as the new style for representing the early days of America. Both the subject matter and the setting of Volk’s image called for a direct comparison with Boughton’s popular *Pilgrims Going to Church* of 1867: “The subject is treated pictorially rather than in a literary fashion. It loses thus naturally the quality which Mr. Boughton’s literary insistence, for example, would secure-a sentimental refinement” (figures 5.22 and 5.23). In his expressive treatment of genre subjects as well as the textural quality of his paint, Volk’s painting had more in common with French realism than the genre scenes of Boughton or Eastman Johnson; in fact readers might have recognized its affinities with Bastien-Lepage’s *Joan of Arc*, also a young maiden with religious connotations, standing isolated in the landscape (see figure 6.1). As discussed in Chapter VI, Bastien-Lepage had a strong influence on many SAA painters and his *Joan of Arc* had been exhibited in the 1881 SAA exhibition, a few months prior to the publication of this image. Volk’s maiden may also have been included to respond to critics’ concerns about the “Americanness” of the SAA and the absence of national subject matter in its exhibitions. In addition to the *Puritan Maiden*, Brownell included a reproduction of *Miggles*, a painting by George de Forest Brush (figure 5.24). Not the strongest example of Brush’s work, it did however illustrate a scene from a popular story by Brett Harte about life in the Western territories. Americans responded to the image, as they were familiar with the tale, although reviews were mixed with critics citing the bear

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as the weakest part of the picture (and also the most difficult to make out in the reproduction). While it was true that the majority of the SAA painters relied heavily on European subject matter, the inclusion of these illustrations reveals Brownell’s larger agenda of defending the SAA against its critics, not only in his text, but also in his selection of images.

Brownell featured George Maynard as representative of the new level of cosmopolitanism in the portraits by the “younger painters.” An engraving of his Portrait of Francis Millet as a War Correspondent depicted his artist friend wearing his recently received Russian and Romanian medals and conveyed a sense of foreign exoticism in both his pose and his dress, as compared to the more conventional portraits seen at the NAD exhibitions (Figure 5.25). Further, the image bore a close resemblance to Sargent’s extremely popular Portrait of Carolus-Duran (see figure 5.19) which had been on view at the SAA’s 1880 annual exhibition. Both sitters, heads tilted slightly to the right, gaze directly out at the viewer with crops in hand and medals on view. Maynard’s illustration pays detailed attention to these military accoutrements as well as to the interior character of Millet, also an SAA member, who received the medals for bravery under fire.

Addressing the subject of decorative painting, Brownell commented on the new trend among younger painters to participate in the “decorative craze” of the period. The

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55 Both Millet and Maynard were members of the SAA and worked together on La Farge’s interior of Trinity Church. Millet covered the Russo-Turkish War for The New York Herald in 1877 and 1878. After spending a year in Italy as the director of the American Academy in Rome in 1911, Millet booked his return to America on the Titanic and was one of 1,500 passengers lost at sea.
article made note of Francis Lathrop’s frequent illustrations of the decorative arts in *Scribner’s*, particularly for the Clarence Cook articles, and it also claimed that Lathrop was La Farge’s “main reliance” for the decoration of Trinity Church. Louis C. Tiffany was characterized as a talented painter who had moved beyond mere orientalism to “professional decoration,” and as one who brought much of the style of the new movement to projects such as the interior of the Union League. In fact, Brownell featured Tiffany’s work as an “artist-decorator” and defended the various aspects of his profession and that of his “Associated Artists,” in his lavishly illustrated article on the “Decoration in the Seventh Regiment Armory,” published in the same issue as the final segment on the younger painters (figure 5.26).56 Possibly in response to criticism of paintings by Tiffany in the SAA exhibits as “merely decorative,” Brownell alternatively chose to reproduce a picturesque scene of *Market Day by the Cathedral Steps, Morlain, Brittany* to represent the “younger painter,” emphasizing his strong sense of design and composition (figure 5.27). Selecting a variety of illustrations, Brownell sought to counter critical comments on the figurative and decorative nature of the SAA. In addition to defending the Society, he also provided exposure to numerous American artists, some more well known than others, while continually reaffirming their status as the leading painters of the day.

In the somewhat surprising final passage of the piece, Brownell devoted a substantial portion of the text (eight pages including individual illustrations) to five

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56 In his conclusion, Brownell writes: “[Based on the interiors at the Seventh Regiment Armory] we may be sure that the [future] work of the “Associated Artists” will not differ substantially from this decoration. That is to say, it will be intelligently conceived, it will have various unquestionable excellences, and it will be harmonious. That it will have the impressiveness which proceeds only from the spontaneity and completeness of a single as well as a comprehensive conception, can hardly be expected.” Brownell (July 1881), 380.
contemporary female painters: Elizabeth Bartol, Sarah Whitman, Helen Knowlton, Mary Cassatt and Maria Oakey. This segment was in many ways a tribute to William Morris Hunt, who was the instructor of most of these women. Hunt had died tragically in September of 1879 and was considered one of the “founding fathers” of the new movement. While Hunt’s influence was widely felt, his more immediate impact was on his students, most of whom were women and who were highly devoted to his methods of teaching and painting. Brownell not only underscored Hunt’s legacy, but also the rising reputations of women artists who had begun, after a decade spent in the art schools of Boston, Philadelphia and New York, to develop sustained careers that transcended earlier female stereotypes of flower painters and dilettantes. Published in 1881, the final installment of “The Younger Painters” series was representative of an important moment in time for the recognition of female artists, and the vital role played by *Scribner’s* in their new found status. However, this status was somewhat unstable, as evidenced not only by the Tile Club series, in which the painting profession operated within a closed male world, but also by the fact that, with the exception of Helena de Kay, only two other female artists were actual members of the SAA at the close of 1881, Mary Cassatt and

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57 The rise and importance of female artists as a powerful constituency was extensively covered during the late 1870s in *Scribner’s*. The topic was discussed at length in Brownell’s “The Art Schools of New York,” (October 1878) and also touched on in “The Art Schools of Philadelphia,” (September 1879). William Bishop’s piece on “Young Artists Life in New York,” addressed the issue and commented on the acceptance of women in the art world of New York: “The association of the sexes on terms of perfect equality gives American art-student life one of its distinctive aspects; it is gentle and courteous, perhaps even tame according to some way of thinking, but free, at any rate from the wild and brutal excesses too well authenticated of famous foreign ateliers.” Bishop (January 1880):355. Issues of professionalism are evidenced in Bishop’s discussion of a young female student at the Arts Students’ League. When questioned about her roles as wife, mother and painter, she replied, “But it is precisely as a married lady with pretty children and an agreeable house-hold, and not as an artist, that I consider myself an amateur.” Ibid.,357.
Sarah Whitman.\footnote{According to de Kay’s diary, Maria Oakey was blocked from the society by John La Farge.: “MRO is quite distressed that she should not be a member. The Society refused Maria because L.F. did not second her,” entry in Helena de Kay Gilder Journal from “October-November-December” of 1877. Copy of journal in Archives of American Art, Journal of Richard Watson Gilder and Helena Gilder, 1874-1878. Original journal is located in Gilder MSS, Lilly Library Manuscript Collection, Box 21. While the three other women highlighted above had all exhibited with the SAA, (Bartol in 1878 and 1880, Knowlton in 1879, and Oakey in 1878, 1879 and 1880) none of them were granted membership in the organization.} The article in many aspects marked the moment during which, as Kirsten Swinth has argued, a heightened interest in refinement and professionalism resulted in a relaxation of gender roles as male and female artists had similar aims and goals, as well as a common project to promote civilized, refined culture.\footnote{For more on women artists in the period see Kirsten Swinth, \textit{Painting Professionals: Women Artists and the Development of Modern American Art, 1870-1930} (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).} Swinth argues that this moment of “fluidity in gendered ideologies of art” came to an end in the 1890s as male artists, concerned by the rising competition of their female colleagues, sought to reorder the institutions of the American art world, privileging the male role in defining and producing high art. Further, the move from genteel and academic art to more avant-garde styles in the early twentieth century allowed men to reclaim “culture” for themselves, rewriting it as a heroic, but masculine enterprise of liberation from the Victorian past.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, 8-9.} While Swinth cites Brownell as an example to support her general argument, I would argue that Brownell/Scribner’s were more progressive than other critics/monthly magazines of the period in terms of actively promoting and supporting female artists in the media, and therefore more of a driving force than merely representative of the trend. While difficult to directly assess, it is clear that Helena de Kay also had a substantial impact on that effort.
In the opening paragraph, Brownell wrote that any article discussing current trends in modern painting must address the new role of female artists. Crediting this rise to the popularity of decoration in the 1870s, Brownell emphasized the importance of Boston, which, as a metropolis, encouraged the work of women more prominently than other American cities, as well as its leading artist/teacher William Morris Hunt.\(^61\) While his untimely death prevented him from joining the SAA, his legacy was clearly significant, and, in a sense, the portion of the article devoted to his students in many ways pays homage to Hunt.\(^62\) Describing his free-form teaching methods, his emphasis on individual creativity, and his willingness to endorse female students, Brownell depicted Hunt as a “prophet and a sage” to women artists. Freed from the conventions of more traditional art schools, he encouraged his female students to immediately begin painting “real and serious work.”\(^63\) While Hunt distrusted any type of academic formalism, continually stressing “originality,” Brownell, somewhat contradictorily, expressed his doubts that his students actually benefited from this free-form style, and his belief that

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\(^{61}\) Hunt’s Harvard education and marriage into a prominent Boston family assured his success in the city, while his French training under Thomas Couture, his close relationship with Millet, and his stylistic affinities with the Barbizon school secured his status as a leading influence on the new movement. For more on Hunt see Sally Webster, *William Morris Hunt 1824-1879* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), and also *W.M. Hunt’s Talks on Art*, comp. by Helen Knowlton (Boston: H.O. Houghton and Co., 1884).

\(^{62}\) Surprisingly, a posthumous article written as a tribute to Hunt in *Harper’s Monthly* by Maria Oakey entitled “William Morris Hunt,” *Harper’s Monthly* 61 (July 1880): 161-166 essentially ignored his role as teacher, focusing on a biographical account including reproductions of three of his paintings as well as his portrait by Helen Knowlton, which was not credited to the artist.

\(^{63}\) Brownell (July 1881): 327. Hunt began teaching women in 1869 and according to a colleague, “He thought there was a vast deal of talent among [the ladies] that only required to be directed… he considered it his duty, and that of every artist, to do all he could to lighten the path of those groping in the dark.” Quote by sculptor Thomas Ball reprinted in Erica E, Hirshler, *A Studio of Her Own: Women Artists in Boston 1870-1940* (Boston: MFA Publications, 2001), 23.
those who rose to the top had done so because of their own innate talent and self-discipline. Given Hunt’s emphasis on “imagination and suggestion,” most of the work by his pupils tended to be, according to Brownell, insubstantial studies or impressions; he argued that the feminine personality might have been more attracted to this less vigorous method of instruction. Clearly Brownell had some rather harsh criticisms of Hunt’s methods and the women artists who tended to worship his “genius,” a genius that male students might have rejected in favor of more technical training. With that qualification made, Brownell turned to those women whom he identified as having emerged “out of the crowd of aimless aspirants.”

Of the three Boston female painters, Elizabeth Bartol was most strongly identified with the aesthetic of the new movement. The language that Brownell used to describe her image, Portrait of a Boy, with terms such as “expressive,” “imaginative” and “poetic,” as well as the illustration itself, aligned her with the Society artists, although she herself was not an actual member (figure 5.28). While Brownell attempted to critique

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64 Brownell (July 1881): 329.
65 Bartol’s fellow student and close friend, Sarah Whitman, apparently suffered from Hunt’s instruction, with “her mind fixed too intently on richness of tone,” and, in comparison Bartol’s portrait had a “spiritual interest which [Whitman’s Portrait] is entirely without.” The ultimate dismissal, Brownell suggested that in terms of Whitman’s painting, “a photograph might show as much.” Ibid., 332. Helen Knowlton was acknowledged more as Mr. Hunt’s “lieutenant” than an accomplished painter, although her work was also noted for its “charm.” Having taken over Hunt’s position at the Boston school, Knowlton’s career as a teacher tended to obscure her reputation as an artist in her own right. She was well known for her publication of W.M. Hunt’s Talks on Art, cited above, a book that was essentially a compilation of the notes she took during Hunt’s classes, providing a means of recording his teaching method for posterity.
her work in his discussion, he placed equal emphasis on Hunt’s legacy, further
underscoring the complex situation of female artists in America. 66

Brownell also featured the work of Maria Oakey, who, although she studied with
Hunt and was close to some of his students, was generally considered a New York artist,
given her exhibition history at the Academy and the SAA as well as her training at the
Cooper Union, the NAD and the Arts Students’ League. Already a recognized illustrator
for *Scribner’s*, Oakey was given high praise by Brownell for her innovative work in the
1870s. 67 Seen by Brownell as “one of the very few who can be termed the pioneers of the
movement in painting which only yesterday every one was calling ‘the new movement,’ ”
Oakey, a close friend of de Kay’s, was associated with the original “irreconcilables” of
the SAA: “Long before the return of the Argonauts in 1877, the prevailing character of
academy Exhibitions used to be accentuated by, among a few others, a canvas or two by
Miss Oakey, which, what ever its short-comings, the love of beauty agreeably

66 For more detailed discussion and biographies of these three artists, see Hirschler
67 Just after the publication of the second part of the series in July of 1880, Oakey was
commissioned to illustrate an article on “Tableaux,” that appeared in the November 1880
issue, and her images appeared directly before those of Millet and Vedder. The article by
Philip O’Sullivan entitled “A Chapter on Tableaux,” *Scribner’s Monthly* 21 (November
1880): 91-104, sought to provide guidance for the popular pastime in which amateurs
attempted to recreate stage productions, and included seven illustrations by Oakey,
including “Ophelia at the Brook,” “Memory,” “A Monk in his Cell by Moonlight,”
“Pandora,” “A Nun at her Devotions,” and “The Masquers,” as well as the final image,
“The Harvesters” (figure 5.29), which very closely resembles Millet’s young French
female peasants. Of the seven illustrations for the article, *Memory* was selected for
reproduction in the second portfolio of proofs of 1881. *Proofs from Scribner’s Monthly
and St. Nicholas Second Series* (New York: Scribner and Co., 1881), Illustration XXVII.
The article on Tableaux appeared on pages 91-103 of the November 1880 issue, and was
directly followed by the third installment of “Jean-François Millet - Peasant and
Painter,” on pages 104-110 and “Elihu Vedder” on pages 111-124. For more on these
articles see Chapter VI. As mentioned in Chapter II, Clarence Cook also directly cited
Oakey, crediting her for her work in his series on home decoration for *Scribner’s* for
which she provided numerous illustrations.
predominated [and] the influence of the more delicate of the Italian colorists was marked enough.” Oakey was represented here by a portrait, which she exhibited as a *Study of a Life Size Portrait of a Gentleman* in the 1879 SAA show (figure 5.30); closely resembling the opening reproduction of J. Alden Weir’s *Portrait* (see figure 5.5), the image tied her to the predominantly male realist painters discussed earlier and their desire to reveal “inner character.” While Brownell compared her directly to Mary Cassatt as a major talent in the “new movement,” the article was published at a specific moment in Oakey’s career when she met and married Thomas Dewing, and began to redirect her artistic vision, primarily painting floral still lives which were deemed more appropriate for a married female painter at the time.  

In his discussion of women artists, Brownell was most impressed with the work of Mary Cassatt, regretting the fact that Americans had had such little exposure to her  

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68 Brownell (July 1881): 334. This direct association of Oakey with the SAA is somewhat complicated. Although her training with both Couture in Paris and La Farge in New York as well as her close association with de Kay and her participation in the 1875 Cottier show should have made her a likely candidate for the Society of American Artists, she was denied membership by La Farge; she did exhibit in the first three of the SAA exhibitions as well as in the 1882 show under her married name. Oakey was a close friend and associate of de Kay’s throughout their early careers, when they shared a studio together and both entered New York’s art schools as young female painters. The relationship is highlighted throughout the early entries of de Kay’s Journal, particularly in her discussions of their weekly sketch club in the mid 1870s. See Helena de Kay Journal in Gilder MSS, Lilly Library Manuscript Collection, Box 21. While Brownell reproduced a portrait by Oakey for the article, after her marriage to Thomas Dewing in April of 1881 (which took place shortly before the publication of this article), she began to paint out-of-doors floral subjects, the work for which she is most recognized today. Because Thomas Dewing was considered one of the period’s major figure painters, she may have wished to avoid being in direct competition with her new husband, and thereby chose to focus on floral still lives. Interestingly, while Thomas Dewing was elected to the SAA in May of 1880 and exhibited in every exhibit between 1878 and 1883, his name was never mentioned in Brownell’s series. For more background on Maria Oakey Dewing see Burke, et.al., 419-420, and Swinth, 94-5. Oakey is frequently depicted as a talented female artist who, like de Kay, sacrificed her professional aspirations in order to respond to her domestic duties.
paintings. His assessment was accurate as, although she had exhibited a few works during the 1870s in New York, Boston and Philadelphia, she had received almost no coverage in the American press; her audience was decidedly French. Cassatt was portrayed as an independent woman whose intelligent directness, French training and exhibition history, and association with Degas and the avant-garde Impressionists set her apart from her more amateurish American female counterparts: “Judging from [the portrait sent to the Second Exhibition of the Society of American Artists] and from the accompanying ‘At the Opera,’ it is easy to see, on the other hand, that in force few, if any among American women-artists are her rivals.”

Countering his earlier comments on the importance of “poetry,” Cassatt was admired for her neglect of the poetic, sentimental and spiritual side of painting; the “prosaic details” of works such as At the Opera, were deemed “deliberate, intelligent and well executed,” placing her in the same camp as Thomas Eakins. It is notable that Brownell would chose to reproduce At the Opera (figure 5.31), which Cassatt exhibited in Boston, rather her less controversial image which had been exhibited at the Society of American Artists, The Mandolin Player. A more traditional image painted in 1874 during her early travels in Europe, The Mandolin Player was created prior to Cassatt’s time in Paris and her involvement with the Impressionist painters. At the Opera is clearly an image of modern life and a strong example of Cassatt’s response to the work of Degas and the Impressionist’s programmatic search for subjects that depicted modern sensibilities of contemporary French society. The image directly contrasts with that chosen by Harper’s Monthly for its “Present Tendencies of

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69 Brownell (July 1881):333.
70 The work was shown at the Thirteenth Exhibition M.F.A. Massachusetts Charitable Mechanics Association. Cassatt also exhibited Portrait of Mrs. Cassatt (now known as Reading Le Figaro) at the SAA exhibition.
American Art." In the Harper’s article, the only reproduced picture by a female painter was by Cassatt; the image, based on one of her earliest paintings, A Spanish Lady (figure 5.32), was also completed during her travels in Europe, and is not at all representative of her work after 1877, when she remade herself artistically as a painter of modern women. "Miss Cassatt" was discussed in one sentence in Harper’s, briefly praised for her color and composition. The coverage of Cassatt alone underscores the different approaches between Scribner’s and Harper’s as well as the level of support given by the periodical to new artists challenging the traditions of American art.

That Scribner’s chose to represent At the Opera, the most outwardly modern of any painting reproduced in the series, is striking; even in contrast to the previous thirty illustrations of the “new movement” which appeared before it, Cassatt’s work is the boldest image of contemporary modern painting. Possibly because this image, in terms of its technique, is quite removed from that of the Impressionist landscape painters, as Cassatt still kept the human form intact, Brownell saw her work as a “good example of the better sort of ‘impressionism’ and the sureness with which, contrary to the frequent notion of it, this proceeds;” he attributed this sureness to the fact that she “served an Academic apprenticeship, and ‘went over’ to Degas and the rest of the school only after

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71 S.G.W. Benjamin (March 1879): 495.
73 Only three other women were mentioned – Miss Curtis, for her beautiful representations of child life, Mrs. Mary Hallock Foote for her illustrations and Miss Fidelia Bridges, for her watercolors, all with no more attention paid to them than that given to Cassatt. In the Harper’s article, Cassatt was rather erroneously grouped with the “Philadelphia artists” and there was no discussion of her painting, her technique or her involvement with the Impressionist movement in Paris. See S.G.W. Benjamin (March 1879): 495.
she had acquired her powers of expression.”

This statement is telling in the American reception of Impressionism and the continued high regard for academic training and salon painting. French Impressionism on the whole was not well understood, and received almost no attention in the American press during the 1870s; despite the fact that many American artists were studying in Paris, they seemed to have little interest in the movement and its public exhibitions, particularly the early shows between 1874 and 1881.

Cassatt’s image is distinctly one of a modern, Parisian, independent expatriate

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74 Brownell (July 1881): 333.

75 Americans’ first exposure to these shows was Henry James’ unfavorable review of the second Impressionist exhibition for *The New York Tribune*, in which he seemed to prefer salon painting to images of “unadorned reality” by the “Irreconcilables.” (“Parisian Festivity,” *New York Tribune*, May 13, 1876.) While articles on Impressionism began to appear in the smaller professional art periodicals in 1879/80, see George Inness, “Mr. Inness on Art-Matters,” *Art Journal* (New York) 5 (1879):374-77 and Lucy Hooper, “Art Notes from Paris,” *Art Journal* (New York) 6 (1880):188-90, the movement was generally misconceived, and would not be correctly understood as explorations of the dissolution of form into light and color until it was seen collectively in the Durand Ruel show in 1886 in New York. According to Laura Meixner, during the 1870s French Impressionism was only discussed in terms of the work of Manet, who was (incorrectly) seen as the movement’s “high priest” and was also directly connected with the realistic literary work of Emile Zola. Criticism of French Impressionism during this period consisted of “the opinions of conservative or uncomprehending critics, partly swayed by French attitudes, who condemned Manet’s Impressionists qualities in the [daily] American press, with the Impressionist movement itself either ignored or ridiculed.” Meixner, (1995), 206. The only substantial discussion of Impressionism in the periodic press occurred in *Lippincott’s Magazine* at the end of the decade in December of 1879. While admitting that “the impression they make upon me is disagreeable,” the critic did more than merely denounce the movement, and actually went into some explicit detail describing the optical motivations of the painters as well as their ties to Japanese prints and modern urban life. Cassatt was mentioned briefly as one of the group, but was not singled out in the same negative manner as Renoir and Pissaro. L.Lejeune, “The Impressionist School of Painting,” *Lippincott’s Magazine* 24 (December 1879): 720-727. Further, in the early 1880s, some American artists were incorrectly labeled “impressionists,” particularly those who had studied in Munich, such as Currier, Muhrman and Bunce. In fact, this “Munich version” of Impressionism was often association with the “sketchy” style of the Society of American Artists, as reviews of its fourth show often discussed the society’s “impressionist painters.” William Gerdts, (1984), 32.
female; no respectable American woman would ever contemplate an evening at the opera unaccompanied by a male escort, and, further, to allow herself to be so conspicuously stared at by another male in the audience. The theatre subject, while quite popular with realist and Impressionist artists such as Degas and Renoir, was essentially non-existent in America in 1880. Brownell did not address the style or technique of Impressionism, and failed to enlighten the reader as to the basic intentions of the movement.

It is surprising that *At the Opera* elicited only praise from Brownell, for it seems to lack some of his more genteel prerequisites of painting; by giving it prominence of place as the final image in the series, Brownell may be possibly signaling the direction in which the new movement might take itself.\(^76\) Interestingly, Brownell was one of the first American critics to discuss the Impressionist painters (albeit those in “Degas’ camp”) in a positive light. Widely dispersing Cassatt’s image of contemporary life to a nationwide audience, *At the Opera* was one of the earliest images of a French modern subject to be reproduced in the popular monthly press.\(^77\) A review in *The New York Times* of the 1879 Impressionist show in Paris negatively commented on Cassatt’s *Lydia in a Loge* (1879) and her association with the group:

> I am sorry for Mary Cassatt; she is a Philadelphian, and has had her place in the Salon – a great triumph for a woman and a foreigner; but why has she thus gone astray! Her ‘Lady in an Opera-box’ is a nasty representation of a dirty faced female, in variegated raiment, who in real life, would never have been admitted in any decent society until she had washed her face and shoulders, while the background looks as though painted with the yolk of an egg.\(^78\)

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\(^{76}\) One also might consider the 1880 changes in the SAA constitution, mentioned above, that encouraged the involvement of artists living overseas, resulting in both the opening image by Sargent and as well as the closing one by Cassatt.


Brownell’s support and promotion of Cassatt was representative of Scribner’s level of support to non-traditional, expatriate painters working within the new movement.

Scribner’s commitment to encouraging and publicizing female artists was unique among the popular monthlies. Brownell’s article represented the culmination of the periodical’s efforts to promote American female artists, which began with the series on decorative artists by Clarence Cook and evolved through the discussions of women in art schools, studios and artistic life. By including these five women and reproducing their work in such an important venue, Scribner’s helped to construct an image of the independent female painter as a viable and competitive entity in American art. To what degree Helena de Kay drove Scribner’s actions is hard to determine, although one can safely assume that between her efforts in forming the Arts Students’ League and the Society for American Artists, as well as her influence behind the scenes on Gilder and his staff, her impact on the emergence of the American female artist in the late 1870s was palpable.

Brownell’s series marked a pivotal moment for Scribner’s, for Gilder, and for the artists in his circle. Presented as an article about the “new movement,” Brownell essentially introduced in the national press for the first time a number of the “young painters” to the American public, many of whom would go on to become leaders in American art by the end of the century. In both text and illustration, he encouraged the public to understand and accept these young painters’ preferences for figures and portraits over landscapes, their references to European art, including Old Master
paintings, the Barbizon school and French Realism, and their overall dedication to a less finished, more spontaneous style. The article was a manifesto, selectively reproducing illustrations to defend the new movement and its artists, including women and expatriates, against its “philistine critics.” The “Younger Painters of America” also represented the culmination of Gilder’s efforts at *Scribner’s* over the mid to late 1870s to bring together all of the various genres of “art literature” that had been published in the magazine over the four year period. With this final serious, critical account, *Scribner’s* effectively evaluated the art of the period, the progress made in laying a new foundation, and the expectations for the future. Soon to be editor-in-chief, Gilder had used the magazine as a vehicle to change the nature and direction of American art and American art criticism in the late-nineteenth-century. During the closing years at *Scribner’s* he built on the public’s gradual acceptance and awareness of the new movement, and began to incorporate more discussions on art’s relationship to the spiritual, the mystical and the symbolic, as experienced in the work of the artists of his circle. Articles on painters such as Vedder, La Farge and Millet, published during the same time as the series on the “Younger Painters,” sought to further widen the horizons of his readership while cementing the achievements of the 1870s. Using his own words in addition to those of selected critics, he would seek to secure the changes he had wrought on the world of American art.
Chapter VI. Offering Transcendence through Aesthetics, 1880-1881: Spiritual Illustration in Scribner’s Final Years

“The value of art must be in what it reveals of spiritual truth, and not in its representation of external form and texture. The practical point we wish to make is just here: that that art is best which subordinates everything to the revelation of spiritual beauty and verity.” - Richard Watson Gilder, “Pictures,” in “Topics of the Time,” Scribner’s Monthly November 1880.

“In these days of confusion of doctrine and lessening of faith, many are turning for something stable and indisputable, not to science, but to art. The infinite and the divine, though inexplicable as terms, are as real to the human mind as water and air are to the human body; and in the pursuit or the appreciation of art the craving of humanity for these is, at least partly, satisfied.” – Richard Watson Gilder, “Prophecy and Science,” in “Topics of the Time,” Scribner’s Monthly May 1881.

Reading the first installments of “The Younger Painters of America” upon his return from a fourteen month trip to Europe, his first voyage overseas and first exposure to works by Old Masters and French contemporary painters, Gilder must have been proud of the accomplishments of his artistic circle. He recognized the vital importance of promoting and endorsing the younger painters’ style in America, where “unfinished” was still to some “unacceptable.” As he thought about their affinities with many of the legendary masters such as Michelangelo, Titian, Rembrandt and others that he had seen abroad, Gilder became aware that this “unfinished” style was not only a link to many of the great painters in the history of art, but more importantly, a means of revealing the spiritual within the subject, its beauty and its truth. The “sketch-like” images of the “younger painters” offered, in Gilder’s mind, a means to transcend the material world, rather than an imitation of its surface.

This desire for transcendence had been driving Gilder of late, as he continually questioned the value of the traditional ways of coping with a post Civil War world, ways
taught to him by his Methodist preacher father. Gilder had been in Paris during a time when issues of religion and spirituality had risen to the surface after a decade of positivism and prosperity; many there had proposed art as a means of both release and deeper understanding and Gilder was receptive to these possibilities. Returning home in May of 1880, Gilder looked back on the last decade, an excellent period for the magazine and the publishing industry at large, but also ten years of unbridled corruption, greed, deceit and depravity. How could he use his position, both as a cultural leader and a prominent editor, to convey what he had experienced overseas and to offer the American public alternative ways of coping with the anxieties of the age and a means to rise above their material world? How could he use what he knew about art to reveal, in the words of his friend and colleague John La Farge, “the higher life?”

The final years before Scribner’s became the Century, the period of 1880-81 represented an important moment in Gilder’s personal development as an aesthetic thinker. With his mission of establishing the artists in his circle and his plan to reform art criticism well in place, Gilder now sought to promote his own platform on the role that art could play in American cultural, social and religious life. Many of his original ideas of the mid-1870s had been further developed and refined during his fourteen month stay in Europe, through his deepening relationships with and exposure to artists who both shared and helped to shape them. During the final years of Scribner’s, Gilder underwent a type of spiritual crisis, as he rejected the strict Methodism preached by his father and began to search for alternative varieties of religious experience. Gilder’s quest for the divine as witnessed through art, for a form of aesthetic spirituality, was deeply felt and expressed continuously throughout the pages of the periodical during this time; a leitmotif of his
editorials, his reviews and the major articles on prominent artists, Gilder encouraged his readers to look closely at works of art that contained an underlying spiritual message. The chapter looks back to the topic of religion addressed in the beginning of the dissertation and reveals how, while remaining true to its religious origins, Gilder had guided *Scribner’s* away from its initial purpose as an evangelistic periodical, now offering art over Protestant doctrine as a means of transcendence. In close touch with the contemporary art world in both America and abroad, Gilder chose at this time to feature artists whose work, either in style or subject matter, incorporated the the sensual, the symbolic and the mystical. His mission to popularize the spiritual in art culminated in his publication of a five part series on Jean-François Millet, fully illustrated with images that conveyed a moral message without any direct reference to organized religion; the series is the subject of Chapter VII. This chapter examines Gilder’s emphasis during 1880-81 on the spiritual in art as presented in his editorials, his critical review of Jules Bastien-Lepage’s *Joan of Arc*, and the illustrated monographs he published on William Blake, Elihu Vedder and John La Farge; while the four highlighted artists varied widely in terms of style and iconography, the images reproduced to represent their work in *Scribner’s* all shared in a desire to offer some type of spiritual message, and relied on some form of religious belief to encourage a personal encounter on the part of the viewer. A close analysis of these illustrations reveals how, although by different methods, these reproductions offered a means of transcendence through *Scribner’s* extensive mass publication of religious imagery, rarely seen before in a popular monthly magazine.

As Kirstin Schwain deftly demonstrates, in the Gilded Age, Christianity was challenged by the rise of science and the growth of historical criticism both of which
threatened biblical authority and religious convictions. These challenges, which were thoroughly explored and addressed by *Scribner’s* during the 1870s, inspired individuals to create new interpretations and forms of religious experience. As a result, religion in late nineteenth century America came to be defined more in terms of personal experience rather than by Protestant precepts. Schwain notes how, seeking to reconcile modern science and liberal Protestantism, William James in his *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, “severed religion from institutional settings and moral behavior and advocated a private religious faith premised on firsthand encounters with the divine.”¹ I argue that Gilder anticipated the shift in popular religious imagery from, to use David Morgan’s terms, didactic to devotional, and encouraged Americans to engage directly with works of art in order to achieve this divine encounter.² His promotion of “spiritual art” through illustration in his widely read monthly magazine ultimately sowed one of the many seeds which resulted in the explosion of popular religious art at the turn of the century, both as “high art” and as reproduction. Gilder was an important transitional figure in this phenomenon, who, in his attempt to popularize aesthetic spirituality during the early 1880s, helped to bring about the inundation of Christian imagery into the public sphere a decade later. It is important to recall the era’s more fluid relationship between original works of art and their mass-produced copies to fully appreciate how religious images operated visually in the magazine; these reproductions of paintings, drawings and frescoes whose original locations were either in artists’ studios, churches or hand-printed

¹ Schwain, 5-6. Schwain’s concise description and discussion of the condition of religion in Gilded Age America speaks directly to Gilder’s specific concerns at this time with spirituality and was extremely helpful to me in formulating my thoughts on a very complex subject.
² Morgan, 267.
books, were now made available to the viewer in a portable magazine, allowing for a
different and often more intimate encounter. *Scribner’s* provided its primarily Protestant
readers with alternative ways of looking at religious imagery that may not have been
previously available to them, enabling viewers to closely and privately examine
illustrations that dealt with mystical or Catholic subjects. It was through these
illustrations of saints, angels and prophets that Gilder sought to offer his readers a means
of transcendence through the individual act of reading his periodical, rather than a shared
traditional religious experience.

Gilder’s questioning of his inherited Protestant faith was shared by many
Americans of his generation; his call for greater spirituality in art was both a public and
personal cry for more authentic experience. In the articles examined here, Gilder avoided
the use of words such as “Christian,” “Protestant” and “Catholic.” This is not to say that
he was condemning religion, but rather that Gilder wished to change the tone of the
periodical, distancing it from the earlier moralizing of its initial issues. The terms
“spiritual” and “imagination” were employed consistently throughout the texts discussed
in this chapter, and Gilder used them (as do I) to define and convey that sense of a
unique, individual and creative relationship with the divine, rather than a blind,
communal obedience to religious doctrine. His editorials of the time attested to his
awareness of the ability of *Scribner’s*, with its powerful use of illustration, to make
available to the public what J.T. Jackson Lears calls an “alternative to the crumbling
Protestant culture of late nineteenth century American and the sterility of nineteenth century positivism.”

Many of Lears’ ideas are not only central to this discussion of spirituality in art, but also shed light on the complex relationship between the somewhat more exclusive, anti-modernist attitudes of the Brahmins of Boston, and their impact and influence on Gilder and his colleagues in New York. As the center of the nation’s economic and commercial life, New York City’s extreme inequalities of wealth caused the role, position and responsibilities of its cultural elites to be somewhat fluid. Although less clearly exclusive and defined as a group and less confident in their claims for culture than their Bostonian counterparts, many of its members did share a common bond in that they had not inherited their wealth, but actually earned their living from their cultural endeavors.

The artists selected by Gilder to be featured in Scribner’s during the time period were strongly supported by Boston’s prominent patrons and collectors, such as Quincy Adams Shaw and Martin Brimmer, and Harvard intellectuals, particularly Charles Eliot Norton. The reputations of Blake and Millet, and the early work of Vedder and La Farge all were

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4 Many of that culture class were employed by the magazine industry in general, and by Scribner’s in particular. Their New York was recognized as a national cultural center primarily because of its role as the home of “the practical or business side of intellectual life, the work of editing and publishing at the great monthly magazines,” rather than the more intangible, cerebral claims of its northern neighbor. Bender, 207. Although a fictionalized account, William Dean Howells’ A Hazard of New Fortunes, first published in 1890, provides an insightful comparison of the two cities, and a window into Gilder’s position. The novel’s protagonist, Basil March, moved from Boston to New York to run a new popular magazine, Every Other Week; as editor-in-chief, he observed the unique impact of New York’s capitalist forces on art, culture and society. While New York appeared more vibrant and culturally liberating, issues of the inequities of its society also revealed the city’s darker side and the complex situation of the ruling members, such as Gilder, of its intellectual community. William Dean Howells, A Hazard of New Fortunes (New York: Dutton, 1952).
initially bolstered and encouraged by Boston’s “cultural capitalists,” before being publicly promoted in the pages of *Scribner’s*.

While Gilder also exercised crucial cultural power, he and his associates at *Scribner’s* did so in a much more populist manner. He sought to expose his middle class American readers to the pleasures of aestheticism, to the release from bourgeois anxieties provided by it, and to its abilities to offer transcendence. These notions of art had long been recognized by the Boston elite, but were generally eyed with suspicion by the American public as dangerously resembling sensuality. Although both groups sought to elevate public taste, Gilder did so on a much wider and broader level. Gilder recognized Boston’s cultural authority and looked to its leaders to affirm his aesthetic choices, but he used quite different means by which to popularize them. While, as Paul DiMaggio asserts, the Brahmins were seeking to isolate high culture from the popular, commercial culture industry, I argue that Gilder sought to conflate the two in the pages of *Scribner’s*.5

On a personal level, although Gilder experienced emotional breakdowns and, after many feelings of guilt and regret, officially acknowledged his agnosticism in 1905, he was not as burdened with the advanced pessimism and disillusion of his Bostonian colleagues. While he did participate in the Brahmin ambivalence of the anti-modernist quest for spirituality, he continued to somewhat idealistically hold the ideas of “the beautiful” and transcendence through aesthetics in high esteem and strongly believed in material progress, particularly in the art and literature of America. He was also not

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profoundly dissatisfied with the country’s modern culture; in fact, he was trying to shape it.

Gilder did look to the Bostonian apostles of culture for validation and kept up ties with its leaders such as Norton, who maintained an active, mentor-like correspondence with him and many other members of the rising “brownstone culture” of New York; extending Boston’s influence through these lines of friendship, Norton forged a strong postwar link between Boston and New York.\(^6\) His efforts to encourage new ways of looking and writing about art, both as a professor of Art History at Harvard and the editor of the *North American Review*, mirrored those of Gilder’s at *Scribner’s*, as each worked to expand their constituents’ imaginative powers and to insure that literature and art would assume a more central role in public life. Both rejected traditional Protestant religion and looked to art as their primary source of spiritual uplift and as well as a means for social and moral reform.\(^7\) The dialogue between New York and Boston, *Scribner’s*

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6 Bender, 172. Norton recognized that post-Civil War America was poised for a dramatic change in its intellectual, moral and aesthetic values, and worked to bring together a group of “highly developed” individuals to cultivate this transformation.

7 Both also may have responded to their respective prominent Protestant father figures. Norton’s father was known as the “Unitarian Pope” while the Reverend Richard Gilder, an ardent, traditional Methodist-Episcopalian, died in the line of duty as a chaplain to the Federal army. Writing of his conversation with John Ruskin on the subject of art and religion, Norton believed, “that art might be made to tend directly to religious ends, and …that the study of art might lead to the contemplation & to the comprehension of the beauties which God has spread through the natural world & thus to a fuller knowledge and stronger faith in God himself.” Charles Eliot Norton, 1856 travel diary, Norton Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University (bMS Am 1088.5 [Box 15], quote reprinted in Linda Dowling, *Charles Eliot Norton: The Art of Reform in Nineteenth Century America* (Durham, New Hampshire: University of New Hampshire, 2007), 29. One of my goals in the chapter as well as the dissertation is to respond to critics, from the progressive period up to present day, who dismiss Gilder as a reactionary member of that “brownstone culture.” In this I share a similar cause with Dowling in her work on Norton, as we both seek to demonstrate that our protagonists’ commitments, particularly during the 1870s, were far from reactionary.
and the *Atlantic Monthly*, Gilder and Norton, all had important ramifications for the ideas and images incorporating the imaginative, the sensual, the symbolic and the mystical that are discussed below.

**Gilder on the Editorial Page: Looking for the Spiritual in Art**

With “The Old Cabinet” coming to an end in 1878, Gilder’s writings on art and aesthetic ideas began to appear in *Scribner’s* main editorial column, “Topics of the Time,” in 1880. Originally the sole domain of Josiah Holland and his evangelical messages, the nature of the column clearly experienced a shift as Gilder began to voice his own opinions. Holland, who had become progressively weaker during 1880, unofficially authorized Gilder to assume his position as the main editorialist in that year, which allowed for a smooth transition upon his death in 1881. This transition was marked by a significant change on the editorial page, with a new emphasis on aesthetics over religion; when religion was discussed it was more in regards to “spiritual insight” than specific Christian doctrine. Aesthetics was now offered as a serious moral option in dealing with the “scientific question,” with Gilder promoting the “artistic spirit” as an antidote to scientific attacks on traditional beliefs. Gilder’s editorials on the subject set the tone for the periodical as he outlined his ideas on the value of art as a means to reveal the “infinite and the divine.”

In its twenty-first volume, *Scribner’s* highlighted its accomplishments over its first ten years in an editorial entitled “Our Decennial.”\(^9\) Applauding the periodical’s “connection and sympathy with the current topics of thought” and its promotion of American literature, Gilder considered its role as the driving force behind the improvements and achievements in American wood engraving to be one of *Scribner’s* greatest achievements. This summary of the past decade was followed by another piece, “Pictures,” which foreshadowed Gilder’s new mission as editor, to help his readers understand the notion of “the spiritual in art.”\(^10\) Gilder proudly acknowledged that in the pages of *Scribner’s*, art held “an equal place with literature,” and, as such, it was a vital mission of those in control at the magazine to “look at art from the public side, and particularly to learn the limitations of the public’s appreciation of art, and to do what one can to make those limitations less.” Gilder admitted that the some of his readers still attached great importance to the concept of finish, preferring for example the clean surface of a photograph to a sketchy portrait. However, according to Gilder, the unfinished style of the portrait was essentially what allowed it to reveal the very spirit of the sitter. Arguing that art as mere imitation was not worth cultivating, Gilder stated that its true value lay in its ability to reveal “spiritual truth, and not in its representation of external form and texture. The practical point we wish to make is just here: that that art is the best which subordinates everything to the revelation of spiritual beauty and verity.”\(^11\) In these editorials we witness Gilder’s support and promotion of his artistic circle and the

“unfinished style” of America’s “Younger Painters,” tying their work to notions of the divine as revealed in art. Gilder took the criticism of SAA detractors and used it to his advantage, suggesting that although their paintings might not always provide mimetic rendering of their subjects, they did offer a more vital spiritual and aesthetic experience. Also evident was his pride in the engraving process developed by Scribner’s which allowed its readers to see the painterly, artistic qualities of these images that embodied his concept of spiritual beauty, and his dedication to expose his readers to this “art with a higher message” both literally and visually.

As the editor of an illustrated magazine, Gilder acknowledged the risks involved with publishing engravings of sketches, which the public might find insulting to their sensibilities and ultimately reject as incomplete, flawed pictures. However, he openly stated that the success of Scribner’s illustrations was ultimately due to his and the art director’s attempt to “lift them, by all the ingenuities of expression we could bring to bear upon them, into spiritual significance.” Providing an example of this “ingenuity,” Gilder compared the images in Scribner’s to those found in English periodicals. In Gilder’s opinion, illustrations found in popular English periodicals, as a whole, although carefully well-drawn and “finished,” were “devoid of all vital and spiritual significance, while such pictures as can be found by scores in Scribner’s are surcharged with grace and dramatic force and meaning.” The popularity of Scribner’s illustrations, which, according to the editorial, presented the “vitalities in art,” was a testament to the fact that the magazine was dramatically changing visual practices in America. Gilder strongly suggested that in its technological innovations, its publication of “unfinished” illustrations by the new

12 Ibid.
“younger painters,” and its critical commentary, *Scribner’s* had played an important role in improving Americans’ aesthetic awareness and providing new ways of seeing:

> We trust that the time may soon come when they will have a hearty interest in the various experiments we make for their benefit, and understand the meaning of those essays in art which they have been wont to regard as fragmentary and imperfect. When a people can accept an engraved sketch as an engraved sketch, and delight in it as such for what it reveals and suggests of spiritual meaning, and not demand that the sketch shall be realized in completeness of modeling and surface, they will have made a great advance, and be in a condition both to be instructed and delighted.\(^\text{13}\)

In looking back over the magazine’s ten year history, Gilder clearly believed that he had made strides in accomplishing his original mission, to teach taste to the American people and to change not only the way they valued art, but also the way that they perceived it. In addition to his original goal, Gilder now wanted his readers to recognize art’s higher function as a means of transcending the material world; he used his new power as *de facto* editor-in-chief to encourage and explain to his audience the concept of a divine encounter through aesthetic experience. His desires for his readers, as outlined in his editorials, would be carried out in the illustrations and “art literature” he chose for the magazine going forward.

In the opening editorial of the final volume of *Scribner’s*, Gilder addressed the topic of science and religion, a controversial issue that had been the subject of numerous editorials and articles during Holland’s tenure. In a significant shift from Holland’s thoughts on the issue, Gilder substituted art for theology as a means to deal with the constant challenges to faith resulting from the ever increasing prominence of science in post Civil War society. Published in May of 1881, “Prophecy and Science” addressed the need for current day prophets during a time in which science had caused faith in

\(^{13}\) Ibid.
theological systems to be “greatly weakened, as well as faith in ‘inspiration’ and ‘revelation.’”

According to Gilder, while science had called for rational definitions of metaphysical concepts such as Truth, Soul and God, these concepts were better understood through the “spirit of art.” Gilder stated that, contrary to scientific thought, there exists “an artistic spirit and force as real and lasting as the substance of a planet.” Yet in order for the general public to comprehend this spirit in major works of art, “art-prophets” were vital, as they were able to “point out their supersensual qualities, their artistic value and preeminence.” Those “skeptics” who approached art purely from a scientific point of view were unable to discern the “beauty, the informing spirit,” found in great works of art. Gilder encouraged his readers to join a number of people who, “in these days of confusion of doctrine and lessening of faith, are turning for something stable and indisputable, not to science, but to art.”

Through its appreciation, the human mind was actually able to comprehend concepts such as “the infinite and the divine.” Further, while science had made specific demands on religion to rationally verify doctrine, science was unable to do the same to art, as “the infinites of art it does not profess to comprehend, nor does it ask of them scientific demonstration and analysis.” A substantial departure from the early Scribner’s editorials, this piece called for Gilder’s readership to turn to art as a means to transcend the material world and encounter the divine, as the demands that scientists and skeptics had placed on contemporary theology had caused a serious questioning of religious authority. While an unusual subject for the main editorial page of a popular monthly magazine, this piece was written at a time when

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15 Ibid., 143.
Gilder was developing his own critical abilities as an “art prophet,” to practice what he preached and to alert his readers to the “supersensual qualities” of contemporary artists that he believed spoke to this new level of the imaginative, the symbolic, and the spiritual in their work. His extensive reproduction of their religious imagery further underscored his efforts to bring the notion of aesthetics as a vehicle of transcendence to his readers.

Jules Bastien-Lepage’s Joan of Arc: Illustrating a Divine Encounter

After his frequent editorials on aesthetics and spirituality, Gilder selected an ideal subject for his first stand-alone review of a contemporary work of art. “Bastien Le-Page” was one of only two non-editorial pieces of art criticism ever written by Gilder for Scribner’s and its reproduction of the image of the young female saint provided him with an excellent opportunity to convey the notion of transcendence through art to his readers.\(^\text{16}\) He probably chose the topic because of his intimate knowledge of both the artist and the painting, originally titled Joan of Arc Listening to the Voices, which had been purchased by an American collector and was exhibited at the April 1881 SAA exhibition, later that year at the Metropolitan Museum, and in Boston in September of 1882 (figure 6.1).\(^\text{17}\) Jules Bastien-Lepage was of great importance to SAA artists in the early 1880s, as, according to William Gerdts, he offered them “a solution to the dilemma of academic training versus modernist experimentation within an ideological format that


\(^{17}\) When the painting was originally executed and exhibited at the Paris Salon its title was Joan of Arc Listening to the Voices, and Gilder used the painting’s full title in the article. It is unclear when or why the title was shortened to its current Joan of Arc, which is how it was listed in the catalogues for the SAA exhibition and the Second Annual Exhibition Fair of the New England Manufactures’ and Mechanics’ Institute in Boston, and the title which I will use going forward.
The influence of Bastien-Lepage’s art was evident at the 1881 SAA exhibition, both in the appropriation of his style in many of the works by Society artists on view there as well as the actual presence of his *Joan of Arc* at the show. He elevated the SAA’s reputation as a thoroughly cosmopolitan organization, in touch with current modern international trends. Bastien-Lepage would have appealed to Gilder on a number of levels, given his French academic training, his close relationship with both local and expatriate artists in his circle, his positive impact on the SAA and his affinity with the Barbizon school, particularly Millet. Further, *Joan of Arc* spoke directly to Gilder’s interest in art as a means to comprehend the divine.

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According to Gerdts, many of the SAA artists were not ready to fully adopt the more radical aspects of Impressionist painting, yet were looking to incorporate the lighter palette and rural outdoor settings so prominent in Bastien-Lepage’s work. His “glare aesthetic” is recognizable in a number of works submitted by SAA artists to the 1881 exhibition, particularly by those of Weir and John Singer Sargent. Gerdts (1984), 27. See also Biesenstock, 119-123, for the impact of Bastien-Lepage’s work on SAA artists, as well as the critical reception of *Joan of Arc* at the 1881 exhibition; reviewing the show, some critics rejected the painting as “un-American” while others hailed it as progressive. There is no information regarding the curious omission of any review of the 1881 SAA exhibition in *Scribner’s*.

Bastien-Lepage was a close associate of many expatriates in Gilder’s circle, particularly Saint-Gaudens and J. Alden Weir; it is likely that these friends organized the meeting in Paris between Gilder and the painter who was so popular among the expatriate community. A fellow student of Saint-Gaudens during his time at the École des Beaux Arts, Bastien-Lepage remained close to the sculptor throughout the 1870s, and Saint-Gaudens commemorated their friendship with the small relief portrait that introduced the article. The relief, as well as the *Scribner’s* engraving of it, were submitted by Saint-Gaudens for the 1881 SAA show and both were displayed near the painter’s *Joan of Arc*. Weir negotiated the exhibition of *Joan of Arc* at the SAA show, as well as its sale to Erwin Davis and ultimate donation to the Metropolitan Museum in 1889. An intimate member of Bastien-Lepage’s circle of artists, Weir painted with him in Brittany during the summers of his time in Paris and actually visited his home at Damvillers in 1880. For more on Weir’s relationship with Bastien-Lepage and his circle, as well as the sale to Davis see Doreen Bolger Burke, *J. Alden Weir: An American Impressionist* (New York, London and Toronto: Cornwall Books, 1983), 70, 106-8. Bastien-Lepage had been previously recognized in *Scribner’s* when he was highlighted in D.M. Armstrong’s article on the Paris Exposition as a “rising star.” Armstrong shared Gilder’s appreciation of the
Although it included a brief biographical sketch of Bastien-Lepage, the article was essentially an account of Gilder’s strong personal engagement with Joan of Arc.  

In his introduction Gilder recalled the first time he saw the painting in Bastien-Lepage’s studio near the Gare Montparnasse during his visit to Paris in 1879, and his vivid encounter with the larger than life figure of Joan, whose “look of devotion in [her] face and attitude was so real and intense.” Feeling like an intruder, Gilder was struck first by the spirituality of the scene, and then, upon close looking, by its historical accuracy; he described Bastien-Lepage’s direct connection with Joan, as both hailed from the peasant class in the same region in France. Gilder emphasized the divine quality achieved through Bastien-Lepage’s simple realistic portrayal of Joan, as well as that of the innocent girl in his earlier painting of 1875, First Communion, that image would shortly

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20 The piece included a two page account of Bastien-Lepage’s career by Paul Hourie, which was published in L’Estafette on March 22, 1880. Gilder directly credited Hourie when introducing the sketch, which appeared in a smaller type set to differentiate it from Gilder’s critique. Gilder (June 1881): 233-235.

21 Ibid., 230.

22 Unlike other academic realists of the period, Bastien-Lepage did not research the scene or purchase historical costumes, but gave the work authenticity by using for his model a local girl from his own native town, placing her in the yard of a neighboring peasant’s cottage; this new type of realism gave the image a sense of being “close not only to the historical facts, but to the true spirit of the event.” Ibid.
appear in *Scribner’s* August 1881 issue and was praised for its ability to express the soul of a child as she participated in a timeless Catholic tradition (figure 6.2). He argued that the strength of the *Joan of Arc* came from the intensity of the young woman’s expression: “How satisfactory, how spiritual, how restrained and exquisite in expression is this!”

The original work depicts the scene of her initial calling, with the Saints Michael, Catherine and Margaret behind Joan, who gazes out past the viewer, leaving one to intuit her response to “the voices.” The entire painting was reproduced in *Scribner’s* as a rough outline drawing (figure 6.3) in which the hovering saints were loosely sketched in the upper left hand corner, thereby encouraging the viewer to look at the image in a new way, completing it with their own eyes and allowing the unfinished quality of the image to suggest the metaphysical nature of the subject. The sketch-like quality and indistinct forms of the saints in the outline drawing called attention to Joan’s private, interior encounter with the divine, something that would have greatly appealed to Gilder. The painting itself was created during a time when the image of Joan of Arc was highly contested, with French patriots viewing her as a personal expression of romantic humanism and national pride, while ardent French Catholics wished to claim her for the church. Although the intensely Catholic nature of the painting cannot be denied, in the

23 *First Communion* was given pride of place in the article where it was reproduced on its own full page, just as its predecessor *Joan of Arc*; the image was used as an illustration for Mary Goring’s article “By the Sea in Normandy,” *Scribner’s Monthly* 22 (August 1882): 512-527 illustration on page 521.
24 Gilder (June 1881): 235.
25 For more on the numerous and highly contested interpretations of Joan of Arc see Marina Warner, *Joan of Arc: The Image of Female Heroism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), especially 237–274. As Warner points out, while a motion was made for the canonization of Joan in 1869, no action was taken until 1909, when she was
The text itself Gilder emphasized the image’s intensely spiritual moment and Joan’s entranced expression, omitting any specific reference to the particular Catholic saints. To underscore Gilder’s approach, rather than reproducing a more detailed image of the entire painting, the article featured a full page close-up of the figure of Joan gazing intently into the distance, directing the viewer to focus on her personal experience (figure 6.4). The nature of the reproduction, given its own full page which was separated from the text with clear blank pages before and after, encouraged the viewer to remove the image from the magazine, as an intimate keepsake, recalling the small devotional paintings of madonnas in the early Renaissance, which also ushered in a new type of intimate personal relationship with the viewer.  

Gilder claimed that the true power of Joan of Arc came from the spiritual connection between Bastien-Lepage and his subject, a connection that was confirmed in his discussion with the artist in his studio, allowing the painting to reveal to its viewers a declared “Blessed.” It was not until 1920 that Pope Benedict XV finally authorized the canonization and Joan was recognized as an official saint of the Catholic Church and a patron saint of France. According to Laura Coyle, Americans during the late nineteenth century were drawn to Joan of Arc for her courage and her youth, with the more patriotic episodes in her life story becoming the basis for the numerous Joan of Arc representations that emerged in the United States between 1880 and 1900. Nora Heimann and Laura Coyle, Joan of Arc: Her Image in France and America (Washington D.C.: Corcoran Gallery of Art, 2006), see Laura Coyle’s essay, “A Universal Patriot: Joan of Arc in America During the Gilded Age and Great War,” 53-72. Joan of Arc’s popularity during the Gilded Age was evidenced by Mark Twain’s 1896 fictionalized biography of the saint, along with the various statues erected in America in her honor, as well as the numerous paintings and illustrations which told her story. Coyle states that it was only after her canonization in 1920 that Americans saw her as inextricably linked to the Roman Catholic church and it was not until that time that she was recognized, particularly among American Catholic communities, for her piety, morality and sanctity.  

See for example Duccio’s Madonna and Child ca.1300 tempera and gold on wood. Metropolitan Museum of Art.
sense of “religious passion and devotion.” The image, with its realistic depiction of a young woman, sought to make the viewer “feel” what Joan felt, to transport him or her to another time and place and to encourage a similar personal encounter with the divine. While one could also argue that such a venerable and contemplative painting of a more than life-sized young woman could also elicit associations on the part of Americans at the turn of the century with universal religious types, I think the power of the image in *Scribner’s* lay in its reference to the direct individual experience of transcendence. In Gilder’s eyes, this was the true purpose of art, and we witness his desire to convey this to his audience, not only in his own critical work but also in his selection of artists featured in the final volumes of *Scribner’s*. While these artists had widely diverging religious beliefs, artistic styles and approaches to their subjects (and did not always speak directly to the work of the SAA painters), they all shared a desire to offer a release from the material world through aesthetic experience.

**William Blake in Scribner’s Monthly: Illustrating Transcendence**

A fully illustrated article on the mysterious and often disturbing work of William Blake might seem like an unusual choice for a popular monthly magazine in Gilded Age America. I believe that Blake’s work spoke directly to Gilder’s new emphasis on the imaginative and the spiritual in art and appealed to him as an example of a personal aesthetic encounter with the divine. Blake’s engravings represented a unique combination

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27 Gilder (June 1881): 235.
28 For more on these types of associations, particularly as they occur in the female images of Abbott Thayer, see Schwain, specifically Chapter Four, “The Protestant Icons of Abbott Handerson Thayer,” 104-132.
of literature and art, where images did not merely illustrate words but had an unusual power in their own right, and whose presence were vital to a complete understanding of the artist’s conception. As such, Blake’s work offered an excellent example of how illustration could provide a transcendent experience, as image worked with text to take the viewer to a “higher place.” As noted above, in his editorial pieces, Gilder had emphasized *Scribner’s* development, through new technology, of enhanced illustrations that did not merely mimic the text, but rather added a deeper, more complex meaning to the piece, and Blake’s work clearly spoke to that type of multi-level experience. During the 1870s Gilder and a small group of “cultured” colleagues, most of whom were from Boston, recognized Blake’s imagery as a primary example of art as a means to contemplate and further comprehend “the beauty which God had spread through the natural world.”

Blake’s emphasis on the transforming power of the imagination was central to both the Brahmins’ and Gilder’s ideas on art education, and their shared desire that art could fill a spiritual void. Gilder felt strongly that Blake’s art, which was little known and had rarely been seen in this country, needed to be experienced and understood by his readership. Using his new technology to reproduce Blake’s images in a way that was able to capture their essential nature, he published the first illustrated article ever to appear on Blake in the United States. Blake’s work gave Gilder an opportunity to increase and improve the role of illustration in his periodical, and more importantly, to use both image and text to offer a means of transcendence to an American public caught up in the economic materialism of the post Civil War era.

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“William Blake, Painter and Poet,” was written by Horace Scudder, a well known critic who worked extensively in Boston for Charles Eliot Norton at the *North American Review* and for William Dean Howells at the *Atlantic Monthly*. Blake himself had died in 1827 as a relatively obscure engraver, but was resurrected in England by biographer Alexander Gilchrist and his Pre-Raphaelite circle in the early 1860s. Scudder was intimately familiar with the artist, having written “The Life of William Blake” (*North American Review*, October 1864) in response to the publication of Gilchrist’s biography; Scudder’s original article contained no illustrations and emphasized Blake’s life story and his poetry. Norton commissioned Scudder to write the 1864 piece, as he had recently “developed an intimacy with William Blake, whose ‘unworldliness’ touched him.”

30 During the 1860s Scudder was also the editor of a popular children’s periodical, *Riverside Magazine for Young People*, which was recognized for its innovative illustrations.

31 The biography, *Life of William Blake, “Pictor Ignotus,” with Selections from his Poems and other Writings*, included much of Blake’s poetry, excerpts from his prophetic writings, and fac-similes and photo-lithographs of his paintings, drawings and engravings. Gilchrist died before the completion of the book, leaving Dante Gabriel Rossetti to finish the text, while his brother William, served as editor. Other well-known members of the Pre-Raphaelite group, such as Algeron Swinburne (*William Blake, a Critical Essay*, London, 1863) and James Smethan would go on to write critical commentary on Blake, which was included in later editions of the biography. As mentioned below, during the 1870s and 80s, one of Elihu Vedder’s close associates, Edwin J. Ellis worked extensively with William Butler Yeats on a three volume study of Blake’s poetic and pictorial work that was ultimately published in 1893.


33 James Turner, *The Liberal Education of Charles Eliot Norton* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 197. Interestingly, Blake seems to also have appealed to Gilder early on in his career. In fact the only periodical outside of Boston to publish an article on Blake was the small publication, *Hours at Home*, in 1870, the one year during which Gilder served as its editor before its merger with *Scribner’s*. The article was a fairly standard recapitulation of the Gilchrist biography, although it did include a more in-depth discussion of Blake’s artwork than Scudder’s 1864 piece and other earlier articles mentioned below in n. 41. In its conclusion, the author commented on Blake’s
By 1870, Blake had yet to gain any type of popular recognition in America, as evidenced by one of the very few critical discussions of the artist in May of 1868 in which the author conceded that, “to most of our readers, Blake’s very name is yet unknown”; he attributed this to the fact that the artist “was crazy…a vision-seeing creature, a mystic seeing things that were unseeable by men who trust only to their senses and their reason.”

The reviewer seemed to capture what one could see as a general, pragmatic American response to Blake at the time: “He was deranged….a strange and harmless creature. The effort to make him an apostle and a prophet will fail. The world is not yet quite gone mad. While some of his poetry will take a place among the treasures of our language and his engraved designs will be prized by connoisseurs in art, his tardy apotheosis will go no farther.” Richard Grant White, “Swinburne’s ‘William Blake’ ” in “Literature and Art,” The Galaxy 5 (May 1868): 652-56. Quotes from 652-3.

The timing of the article, with its intention to directly coincide with the Boston exhibition, was confirmed in its opening sentence: “The exhibition in Boston of a number of William Blake’s pictures, brought together from various quarters, gives opportunity for a more complete view of his singular power than has been possible before on this side of the Atlantic.” Horace Scudder, “William Blake, Painter and Poet,” Scribner’s Monthly 20 (June 1880): 225-240, quote from 225. An intimate exhibition of sketches at the Art Students League in January of 1879 had preceded the MFA show, but only included a small number of Blake’s illustrations and pencil sketches which were displayed along with drawings by John La Farge and a self-portrait by Whistler. The New York Times described the “little reception” as a show “fitted for connoisseurs as there was no popular element present to reward those who are not devoted to art in the highest and most advanced stage.” The critic, after briefly describing Blake’s Book of Thel, inquired “what could the uninitiated make out of Blake’s illustrations?” “Arts Students League,” New York Times, January 8, 1879, 5.
he was well known among and collected by Brahmin/Harvard circles. Part of this cultural elite, Scudder himself owned twenty original Blake plates, which he had previously lent to Norton for his helio-type reproduction of the *Book of Job* in 1875. A select group of Bostonian collectors, that included Scudder, provided the 117 drawings, watercolors and engravings for the show, some of which were reproduced for the Scribner’s article. Norton and Scudder, given their long-standing interest in Blake and

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36 Despite the overwhelming bibliography on William Blake, almost no scholarship has been devoted to his introduction to and reception in America in the nineteenth century, with the exception of Clare Frances Elliott “William Blake’s American Legacy: Transcendentalism and Visionary Poetics in Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman” (PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2009). Elliott argues that while Blake remained in relative obscurity in England in the 1840s, Americans such as Emerson and other transcendentalist poets were reading Blake’s poetry (a copy of the *Songs of Innocence and Experience* was given to Emerson by Elizabeth Peabody in 1842) and that Blake had a significant impact on Emerson’s major essays. The dissertation continues to examine the transatlantic discussion in terms of the affinities between Whitman and Blake in the late 1860s.


38 The majority of the works were lent by a select group of prominent Bostonian Brahmins including R.C. Waterston, E.W. Hooper and Henry Adams. R.C. Waterson (1812-1899) was an ordained Unitarian minister out of Harvard Divinity School who was recognized for his extensive library and wrote numerous books on topics such as “Thoughts on Moral and Spiritual Culture” (1842). His wife, Anna Cabot Lowell Quincy Waterston (1812-1899), of extensive Bostonian lineage, also wrote travel articles for the *Atlantic Monthly*. E.W. Hooper served as the treasurer of Harvard for over 25 years and was the brother of Clover Hooper (the wife of Henry Adams.) Hooper also came from an important Boston family, as his mother Ellen Sturgis (1812-1848) was a widely regarded transcendentalist poet whose work was regularly commissioned by Emerson, published in *The Dial* and also appeared in Elizabeth Peabody’s *Aesthetic Papers*. At this point in time, no information is available as to how long Blake’s work had been in private circulation in Boston, or as to how the work was acquired, but it is clear that Blake was a topic of conversation and contemplation amongst the Brahmin class. Images also came from Anna Gilchrist, the widow of Blake’s biographer, who had brought her extensive collection of Blake’s work with her on her visit to America. Mrs. Gilchrist ultimately remained in the United States for six years and became a close friend of the Gilders, spending “many memorable” evenings at the Studio with them there along with Norton and Scudder. Anna Gilchrist read *Leaves of Grass* in 1869 and wrote an anonymous
their close relationship with Gilder, were prominently involved with the exhibition and chose to publicize it in the pages of *Scribner’s*, which would openly promote the show.\(^{39}\) Interestingly, the article appropriated Norton’s art historical program to aestheticize spirituality and I would argue that the Blake piece represents Gilder’s first publication of “art historical literature” adding to the list of genres described in Chapter IV.\(^{40}\) However, while Norton used original drawings by Blake to enlighten Harvard undergraduates, Gilder sought to popularize Blake’s imagery, offering it to the American public as a

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\(^{39}\) The introduction of the exhibition catalogue stated that “the present collection is the first which has been attempted in this country, and was occasioned by the temporary deposit here of a number of pictures by Blake belonging to Mrs. Alexander Gilchrist. The fact that the number of purchasers of Blake’s original works was small and confined chiefly to the wealthy connoisseur class in London, accounts for the necessarily small collection of his works which could be made available in America.” Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Print Department, *Exhibition of drawings, water colors and engravings by William Blake* (Arranged in the first Print room, June 1880), 6. The introduction also noted that given Blake’s relative obscurity and the novelty of the exhibition, for more information on the artist, one should read the Gilchrist biography, Norton’s work on Blake, and the *Scribner’s* article: “Mr. C.E. Norton prefaced a helio-type reproduction of the book of Job with an essay on Blake, and *Scribner’s Monthly* for June 1880 contains the most recent and accessible statement of his work.”

\(^{40}\) Particular passages by Scudder confirmed the article’s appropriation of Norton’s work, as it drew directly from his 1875 text and its images. For example, in Scudder’s description of the book of Job he stated, “‘Everywhere,’ it has been said, ‘throughout the series we meet with evidences of Gothic feeling. Such are the recessed settle and screen of trees in plate two, and too, much in the spirit of Orcagna. The decorative character of the stars in plate twelve; the Leviathan and Behemoth in plate fifteen, groups so as to recall a mediaeval medallion or wood-carving; the trees, drawn always as they might be carved in the wood-work of an old church.’” Scudder (June 1880): 238. These lines were taken directly, word for word, from Norton’s *Book of Job*, whose information was, in turn, derived primarily from Rosetti’s text. See Norton, 77-78.
means of transcendence in the pages of his periodical. While less interested in mass enlightenment, Scudder and Norton did recognize the opportunities afforded by the appearance of the Blake article in *Scribner’s*, with its technological advancements and experimental methods of its art and printing departments, *Scribner’s* was the only popular publication of its kind that could incorporate high quality reproductions of the illustrations into a discussion of the work. They could not have ignored that fact that Blake’s imagery would receive substantially greater exposure than if it had been placed in one of the Boston literary magazines.  

Incorporating a discussion of the numerous illustrations into the text, Scudder was now able to describe the spiritual, mystical and imaginative qualities of Blake’s art, taking full advantage of the fact that readers could actually see and experience Blake’s engravings (figures 6.5, 6.6, 6.7, 6.8 and 6.9); his elemental forms and their relationship

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41 Scudder’s ownership of twenty-plates of the Book of Job also suggests the high level of his involvement in bringing Blake to America. Scudder, who would later serve as the editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* from 1890-1898, shared Norton (and Gilder’s) strong sense of cultural mission. For more on Horace Scudder see Sedgwick, Chapter 6, 201-245. In addition to introducing Scudder to the artist and assigning him the Blake article for the *North American Review*, Norton also used Scudder’s plates for his 1875 publication of his *Book of Job*, which included high quality reproductions of each engraving. Norton’s book was the first fully illustrated publication on Blake by an American critic to appear in this country, an important landmark given the nature of Blake’s work which so intrinsically combined text and image. Given Scudder’s close ties to Norton and the Brahmin community, it would have seemed to be more likely that his piece on Blake would have appeared in a prominent Boston publication, such as the *North American Review* or the *Atlantic Monthly*; in fact, up until that point of the five major articles written for an American audience on Blake between 1864 and 1880, all but one appeared in those two publications. Horace Scudder, “The Life of William Blake,” *North American Review* 99 (October 1864): 465-83; Gail Hamilton, “Pictor Ignotus,” *Atlantic Monthly* 13 (April 1864): 433-448; “Blake’s Songs and Political Sketches,” *North American Review* 108 (April 1869): 641-47; and T.S.Perry, “William Blake,” *Atlantic Monthly* 35 (April 1875): 482-488.
to his text are difficult to fully grasp without actually looking at them.\textsuperscript{42} Unique in both its subject matter and style, the article sought to make Blake’s work accessible to an American audience, presenting it as an example of art’s redeeming spiritual qualities.

Opening with an engraving of “Death’s Door” (figure 6.7), which was his most widely dispersed engraving at the time, Scudder explained the divine nature of Blake’s imagery through a discussion of his “sacred forms.” \textsuperscript{43} Scudder used the illustration to demonstrate how, from early on, Blake’s forms were representative of ‘the elemental’ aspects of life and death, with its figure of youth in a crouching pose, looking wide-eyed into the sky and framed by the sun as compared to the figure of old age, who, hunched over, looks downward and inward toward the grave. Scudder encouraged the reader to understand how Blake revealed simple spiritual realities through these elemental forms, depicting natural things as types. These figures were repeated throughout his work (and the article) and became familiar to the viewer. Blake used these forms to “render his larger visions;” universal concepts such as youth, old age, childhood, justice, pity, vengeance, death and the divine were captured in the shapes of the upright, muscular

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\item[\textsuperscript{42}] Scudder encouraged readers to attend, if possible, the Boston exhibition in order to take advantage of the “opportunity for a more complete view of his singular power than has been possible before on this side of the Atlantic.” Scudder (June 1880), 225. The article explained Blake’s intensive printing methods, which allowed him to produce unique books whose engravings worked side by side with his words to convey his total conception. Scudder underscored the vital importance of Blake’s art in relation to his writing, for without it, “we are blind men, hearing the songs, but not seeing the images they embody: that their beauty wonderful as it is, would be heightened by the symphony of design into some strange and inexpressible delight assailing eye and ear at once.” 231-2.
\item[\textsuperscript{43}] Surprisingly, the image itself, while drawn by Blake, was not engraved by him, but by another engraver, Schiavonetti. Upon his death, Walt Whitman designed his grave to resemble that of Blake’s.
\end{itemize}
youth, the bent over old man, the lamb, the raging flames of fire, the winged infant, all of
which were represented in the illustrations. According to Scudder,

> The elemental facts of life were those which were most luminous to him and for
> which he found visible shapes, which were repeated constantly in his
designs….These common types were expanded for him into wondrous and
luminous revelations of infinite truth and beauty… So the entrance of divine love
into the human life is a present reality, whenever Blake, recording his visions,
draws the lamb with its bowed head or its affectionate caresses.44

Scudder included the reproduction of the exuberant youth with outstretched arms of
“Glad Day” to demonstrate how this form appeared again and again throughout Blake’s
work and in a number of different reproductions in the article (figure 6.8). Once Blake
“catches at” these forms, their spiritual energy was so vital that he kept going back to
them, repeating them and emphasizing that energy; the repeated images were not copies,
but rather a “repetition of a spiritual conception.” Blake was presented here as a type of
prophet, whose revelations were his visions presented to Scribner’s readers in the textual
illustrations. Scudder’s detailed analysis directed the reader to look closely at these
images in different ways, appreciating their signs and symbols not only as art forms, but
also as a way of seeing divine truths.

One of the most powerful examples of this in Blake’s imagery was his illustration
from the Book of Job entitled, “When the Morning Stars Sang Together” (figures 6.9,
6.10 and 6.11). The central illustration and its corresponding border were placed next to
each other, so that the viewer could easily look back and forth to examine the primary
figurative image of God (on the right) and the decorative symbolic border depicting the
six days of creation (on the left). The central focus of the primary illustration, (figure
6.9), God physically separates heaven and earth and oversees the challenge between light,

44 Ibid., 231, 234.
in the form of an angel Apollo with a four horse chariot on his right, and darkness, in the form of a winged Satan angel riding coiled serpents, on his left. At the top of the image, the angels celebrate with arms and wings stretched upwards toward the bright celestial heavens, while Job and his family passively huddle in a darkened cave on earth below, remaining steadfastly devout, as they raise their hands in reverence to the figure of God above. Blake was not afraid to offer the viewer frank and direct images of his vision of God, a physical manifestation of a spiritual being. The substantial, solid figures of humans, angels and God himself conformed to recognizable Blake “types” that appeared throughout, and worked to depict forces of good and evil, the natural and the supernatural, life and death. The upper portion of the image is a conception of the divine, rising above the natural forces of life and its material world. It is an elemental illustration of transcendence. Meanwhile, this primary image was surrounded by a whimsical border filled with symbolic pictograms of the six days of creation (figure 6.10); art, the artist, and the act of creation literally framed the viewer’s vision of this “higher life.” Scudder quoted a letter by Blake which described his Book of Job as an emanation of “Divine wisdom,” and his work as a triumph of spiritual devotion over earthly physical concerns; not only did the letter reinforce many of the ideas in the illustration, but the art department chose to creatively frame it on the page with the symbols of creation, using the border both decoratively and figuratively:

The thing I have most at heart – more than life, or all that seems to make life comfortable without – is the interest of true religion and science. And wherever anything appears to affect that interest, it gives me the greatest of torments. I am not ashamed, afraid, or averse to tell you what ought to be told – that I am under the direction of messengers from heaven, daily and nightly. But the nature of such things is not, as some suppose, without trouble or care. If we fear to do the dictates of our angels, and tremble at the tasks set before us; if we refuse to do spiritual acts because of our natural fears or natural desires; who can describe the
dismal torments of such a state!–I too well remember the threats I heard!–“If you, who are organized by Divine Providence for spiritual communion, refuse, and bury your talent in the earth, even though you should want natural bread, sorrow and desperation pursue you through life, and after death, shame and confusion of face to eternity…. But I am now no longer in that state, and now go on again with my task, fearless, though my path is difficult.  

Both the passage and the illustration worked together to encourage the viewer/reader to allow themselves to be “led by spiritual powers” and to explore the possibilities of a divine encounter. Scudder also defined Blake’s Book of Job as an illustration of the book, as a work that shed light on its meaning, as “a revelation not contained in the book itself, but with a profusion of subtle, natural and symbolic decoration, enlarging the very scope of the book…To a spiritual discerner of the truths enfolded in the life of the man of Uz, Blake’s pictorial interpretation is rich with suggestion.” Gilder valued Blake as an illustrator, in his ability to create images that expanded their text, to use both style and subject matter to provide the viewer with a larger vision. “When the Morning Stars Sang Together” was the most basic and direct image of transcendence of all of Blake’s illustrations in the Book of Job; Scribner’s decision to reproduce that image to represent the larger work, and to do so in such a vibrant and creative manner was a clear demonstration of the desire of its editors to offer its readers a vision of “that higher place.”

Continuously emphasizing the intensely spiritual nature of Blake – the painter, the poet and the man – Scudder demonstrated how a deep engagement with Blake’s art could be associated with some type of divine encounter. Scudder rarely mentioned traditional,

45 Ibid., 236. Scudder quotes a letter by Blake to a Mr. Butts, for whom Blake made the first series of his Inventions to the Book of Job. Butts ultimately sold the series to Lord Houghton. Blake also made a second series with slight changes for Mr. Linnell, from which Norton’s engraved series and the image reproduced here was made.

46 Ibid., 238.
organized religion, except in relation to Blake’s appropriation and ultimate rejection of it; the article avoided any type of characterization of Blake’s spirituality, although the selected illustrations do contain clear Biblical references. In terms of Blake’s use of Christian subjects, Scudder acknowledged that, “Blake, no doubt, imported into the Bible a crowd of fantastic ideas that sprang from his own fertile, impetuous brain. He went to it for a revelation of facts, and seized chiefly upon those which most other men were trying their best to be rid of.”

Blake’s illustrations of the *Book of Job* were described as his own personal spiritual interpretations of the story, with “every plate bear[ing] witness to the fullness of the spiritual meaning he brings to bear.”

All of Blake’s biographies, including Scudder’s account, included a discussion of his supernatural encounter with angels in trees, who gave him the original idea to create his own books; according to Blake, it was these angels who, from time to time, appeared to him and provided him with his visions. While some biographies have used this story as evidence of Blake’s madness, Scudder was unwilling to jump to similar conclusions, and preferred to emphasize his divine inspiration:

Mingled with the artistic power which we have been gradually illustrating, there was from the beginning, a controlling and directing influence which is hard to name. [Blake] owned, with unfaltering faith, the positive presence and guidance of the spiritual world. Blake’s letters, his conversations, his writings, his pictures and his whole manner of life, bore unvarying testimony to the dominance in his nature of a spiritual existence which comprehended, penetrated and controlled his earthly life…his entire life is a testament to the dominance of the spiritual.

Not intending to associate this spirituality with any type of organized religion, Scudder emphasized his reluctance to convey this idea without falling into “conventional

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advocacy of a private religious faith based on firsthand encounters with the celestial; in fact, Blake’s encounters embodied James’ definition of religion as “the feelings, acts and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation (moral, physical, ritual) to whatever they consider divine.”

In line with James’ approach, Scudder encouraged a personal, spiritual reading of Blake’s work:

Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and what one finds in Blake will depend largely on the seeing eye which he brings. We have no intention of shielding Blake behind any mystic veil, drawing it aside only for the initiated; we simply say that genius always holds the possibility of meaning, and perception always hold the possibility of blindness.

One can clearly see in this discussion how Blake would have appealed to men such as Scudder, Norton and the Brahmins, “the initiated” who would respond to the somewhat elitist aspects of his non-conformist spirituality, his mysticism and his romanticism. But Gilder felt it was vital for his middle class, Christian readership, who had been reared on traditional religious and democratic values, to personally encounter his art. Further, while Scudder, Norton and their colleagues may have “discerned” Blake through an intimate contemplation of his original, hand printed drawings, Gilder offered his readers a slightly different way of “seeing” Blake, a way which might also have been more true to Blake’s original intentions in terms of his experimentation with printing methods. Blake’s elevation of the art of illustration spoke to Gilder on many levels, as both a poet searching for spiritual meaning and a publisher of a magazine in which creative printing

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51 Scudder (June 1880), 230.
of illustration played a vital role. Although in mass numbers, Blake’s images were faithfully reproduced as illustrations and offered to readers in the form of a portable periodical, available for their private perusal and contemplation, rather than as an isolated framed plate hanging on a gallery wall. This alternative way of looking at Blake allowed for a variety of meanings and interpretations, making his illustrations of the spiritual accessible to a wide audience who brought different backgrounds, cultures and religious traditions to their act of viewing. In publishing Blake’s images, Gilder was not attempting to change or condemn his reader’s existing religious practices, but rather to offer a new form of religious experience through art that might speak to their current spiritual questions and conditions in a post Civil war society.

It was not an “elitist” initiation, but rather the possibility of a “higher” aesthetic personal encounter that Gilder wanted his audience to experience and which the Blake article sought to provide. Here was an artist who, through his “forms,” was able to reject the material world and get closer to God, to understand and attempt to depict transcendence. Blake’s imaginative work was a visual testament to the redeeming spiritual qualities of art. His images bore witness to the power of his imagination, an imagination that arose from a divine encounter that dominated his life and his work. Gilder wanted these images to be widely discussed and dispersed across the nation and accompanied by a text that could not only introduce Blake to the American public, but also explain the metaphysical nature of his work. The article on Blake, as well as those that appeared shortly thereafter on the two living American artists, Elihu Vedder and John La Farge, worked toward fulfilling Gilder’s mission in the final years of Scribner’s; Gilder chose to promote these two Americans, both of whom were strongly influenced by
Blake, not only for their imaginative art forms, but also for their abilities to offer alternative spiritual messages to a public searching for new types of religious experiences.

**Elihu Vedder in *Scribner’s Monthly*: Illustrating the Search for the Spiritual**

Entitled simply “Elihu Vedder,” *Scribner’s* article on the artist opened with an illustration of a mythical monster (figure 6.12). *The Lair of the Sea Serpent* seemed, to those who saw it, to contain some hidden meaning, which resulted from the surreal portrayal of this enormous slumbering snake, lazily coiled on a desolate beachscape.  

Blending the realism of the landscape with the supernatural fantasy of the serpent, the image was, apparently, made more disturbing by viewers’ mental, irrational associations with monsters and sea creatures; depicting the beast at rest, Vedder allowed its mystery to remain intact.  

*The Lair of the Sea-Serpent* was just one of a number of equally bizarre images in this full scale article on an artist who, although difficult to categorize, was clearly dedicated to depicting the imaginative and the metaphysical. The illustrations in the article spoke to Gilder’s anti-modernist fascination with the spiritual realm of magic.

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52 Charles de Kay, (November 1880).
53 Lying on a beach that resembles those of Newport, the sea serpent implied the “threat of the unknown,” as its true story is never revealed. David Tatham suggests that the image depicts a well-known but nameless sea monster of coastal New England, a type of mid-nineteenth century legendary “Loch Ness” which was occasionally sited by sailors. He argues that the strength of the image comes from its seriousness, which testifies to Vedder’s understanding of the popularity of the myth in American culture. While I agree that Vedder was unusual among American artists at that time to recognize the power of folk tales and legends from a variety of cultures and to incorporate these in his art, there is no discussion of this New England sea monster in the contemporary accounts of the painting or in Vedder’s memoirs. I think the argument is more valid in the larger context that Vedder used myth as an acceptable form through which he could depict his own thoughts and to visualize his dreams and his fears. David Tatham, “Vedder’s *Lair of the Sea Serpent,*” *American Art Journal*17, no.2 (Spring 1985): 33-47.
and myth, which may explain not only their appearance in *Scribner’s*, but also their appeal to Boston collectors. In both their style and iconography, which differed quite dramatically from the “younger painters” in Gilder’s circle, Vedder’s images suggested a continual search for the unheard, the unseen, for another realm that might reveal an alternative reality. As evidenced in the selected illustrations, although his subjects were based on fantasy, folklore and superstition, his images were depicted in an almost hyperrealistic style that made them even more confusing. With their reliance on symbol and myth, often drawn from Middle Eastern cultures, they seemed to offer some kind of alternative, inner meaning that was not readily apparent to the average viewer; Vedder combined the observed with the marvelous, placing imaginative objects such as rocs, sphinxes and serpents, in natural landscapes, allowing the mystery of a poetic story to grow out of a prosaic scene.  

But even more than the mysterious and the exotic, it was Vedder’s ability to represent man’s search for authentic religious experiences that appealed to Gilder and led him to mass produce his images and promote them to the general public. Vedder was recognized as a talented and rising young artist early on; between 1863 and 1865 he exhibited his imaginative literary creations at the National Academy and other venues in the city, including the Sanitary Fair of 1864, displaying his work along side the major Hudson River school painters. While Church and Bierstadt were promoting their images of “undiscovered” regions of South America and the Western

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55 He was elected to the NAD as an associate in 1864 and as a full member in 1865.
United States through which they had traveled, Vedder was painting visions from the exploration of his own dreams and fears, as he wandered through the world of his own imagination. In terms of sales, however, he was more successful in Boston and the “bizarre” paintings of his early career were sold to the same collectors who were attracted to the work of Millet and Blake; Martin Brimmer purchased *The Questioner of the Sphinx* and *The Roc’s Egg* in 1864 while Thomas Appleton acquired *The Lair of the Sea Serpent* in the same year. With the proceeds of the sales, Vedder moved permanently to Rome in 1865, but he maintained his friendships with artists he had worked with during the period, including his Boston colleagues, such as William Morris Hunt and John La Farge. As such, Vedder had associated himself in his early career with those artists whom the “new men” had looked to a decade later as the original leaders of their movement. Vedder’s ties to and popularity with the Brahmins further underscore this unique bond between *Scribner’s* and Boston’s cultural elite. As in the case of William Blake, while many of Vedder’s original paintings were generally on display in Boston’s private galleries,

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56 In his autobiography *Digressions of V.*, written in 1911 toward the end of his life, Vedder describes this pivotal point in his career: “On the floor, huddling in my single blanket, I too had dreams, of angels and devils, and that mattress became by turns a throne or a rack, according, I suppose, to the day’s affairs or the day fare. It was there I conceived ‘The Fisherman and the Genii,’ ‘The Roc’s Egg,’ ‘The Questioner of the Sphinx,’ ‘The Lost Mind,’ ‘The Lair of the Sea-Serpent.’” Elihu Vedder, *The Digressions of V: Written For His Own Fun And That Of His Friends* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1911), 194.

57 Both Vedder and La Farge were chosen to illustrate the first American edition of Tennyson’s *Enoch Arden*, which was a ground-breaking venture in book illustration that brought new attention to Vedder’s work. Vedder also credited La Farge with introducing him to the American landscape, as he joined him in Newport in 1864 and painted a number of beach scenes. David Tatham notes that the long sandy beaches of Newport may have provided the point of departure for the landscape portion of *The Lair of the Sea Serpent*. Tatham, 38.
Gilder sought to make these images of spiritual searching widely available for public consumption.

The article in *Scribner’s* resulted from Vedder’s return to New York in November of 1879, when he began to insert himself in numerous clubs and organizations, joined the SAA and became associated with the *Scribner’s* artistic community, taking advantage of all it had to offer. He decided to hold an exhibition of his recent work in both New York and Boston in the early months of 1880. The show in New York was not well received, causing Vedder to exhibit some of his older paintings in the Boston venue on loan from local collectors, in order to “help the excitement.” The strategy was effective, with thirty-six paintings sold and additional orders taken after the closing; many of the images reproduced in the *Scribner’s* article were among the sold pictures from the exhibition, including *The Cumaean Sibyl*, *A Little Knowledge is a Dangerous Thing*, *An Old Saint*, *On December 4, 1879, Vedder was invited by William Merritt Chase to attend a meeting of the Tile Club, where he was introduced to each member as they arrived: “they all seemed surprised and delighted to see me and said many complimentary things…[they said], ‘but you know, we were frightened at you,… we expected to see an old fellow with long hair!’… and begged me to return.” Quoted in Regina Soria, *Elihu Vedder: American Visionary Artist in Rome (1836-1923)* (Cranbury, New Jersey: Associated University Presses, Inc., 1970),138. The following week, Vedder was asked to return and, upon agreeing to join the club, was given the nickname “The Pagan,” perhaps in response to his bizarre, mythological subject matter or his reputation as a mystic. On that occasion he met Robert Underwood Johnson, Gilder’s right hand associate and soon to be assistant editor of the *Century*, and the two discussed the possibility of a major article on Vedder for *Scribner’s*. During these early months, Vedder developed long standing relationships with Johnson and Drake that ultimately led to his selection as the designer of covers for their newly proposed magazine, the *Century Illustrated Magazine*, whose origins were being negotiated at that time. (Figure 6.13) After a successful reception at the 1878 Paris Exposition, Vedder had been encouraged by numerous colleagues to exhibit his work in America, allowing viewers to see his new paintings, and also to justify the critical support he had received during a controversy with the French periodical *L’Art* over poor reproductions and negative criticism of two of his works shown in the Exposition, the *Cumaean Sibyl* and *Marsyas*. 
and a new version of *The Questioner of the Sphinx* (figures 6.14, 6.15, 6.16, and 6.17). Vedder was strongly reinserted back into the American art world and the public eye.

The exhibition not only confirmed Vedder’s status within the city of Boston, whose Brahmin collectors continued to support and purchase his work, but also further expanded his exposure in the press. Prior to 1879, Vedder was rarely mentioned in print media, possibly due to the fact that he seldom exhibited his work in the United States. Serious coverage of the gallery show included a six page review in *The Atlantic Monthly*, and a fully illustrated two-part article in Sylvester Rosa Koehler’s new venture, *The American Art Review*. William Bishop’s “Elihu Vedder. First Article,” which was

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60 Reviews of the show were published in the *Boston Journal*, *The Art Amateur*, and the *Boston Daily Advertiser*, which was written by Thomas Appleton, owner of the *Lair of the Sea Serpent*. See A. Chapin, “Art Gossip at Home and Abroad,” *Boston Journal* (March 27, 1880 and April 3, 1880), *Art Amateur* II, No. 5 (April 1880), 89, Thomas Appleton, *Boston Daily Advertiser* (April 7, 1880). Of the four previous articles on Vedder from the earlier part of his career, three were published in British periodicals including J. J. Jarves, “Art in America, Its Conditions and Prospects,” *The Fine Arts*, London, I (October 1864), 399; William Davies, “Drawings by Mr. E. Vedder,” *Art Pictorial and Industrial* London I (September 1870), 49, ill., and “Winter Exhibition at the Dudley Gallery,” *The Athenaeum* No. 2245 (November 5, 1870). The only (slight) mention of Vedder in the American press was regarding his work in the 1864 NAD exhibition, “National Academy of Design, 39th Exhibition,” *New York Daily Tribune*, supplement, 6th article (June 4, 1864). Prior to the exhibit, Vedder had been given a brief nod in S.G.W. Benjamin’s “Fifty Years of American Art,” *Harper’s Monthly Magazine* 59 (September 1879): 495. Benjamin acknowledged Vedder, along with La Farge, as a talent who had yet to fully mature but whose efforts had been in the right direction; the short paragraph admired him for his early “weird attempts at psychology in color,” and while admitting that his technique had improved during his time in Italy, he had not produced “marvelous paintings,” such as the *Lair of the Sea Serpent*, in recent years. The article did include a reproduction of a relatively unknown painting, *The Refuge*, 495.

61 “Elihu Vedder’s Pictures,” *Atlantic Monthly* 45 (June 1880): 843-48, and William H. Bishop, “Elihu Vedder. First Article,” *The American Art Review*, 1, No. 8 (June 1889): 325-329; “Elihu Vedder. Second Article,” *The American Art Review*, 1, No. 9 (July 1880): 369-373. While we know that the *Scribner’s* article had been in the planning stages since December of 1879, these articles were clearly timed to appear (relatively) in conjunction with the exhibition. The *Atlantic Monthly* piece was a close discussion of the show itself, praising Vedder as a “literary artist” who, unlike most contemporary painters,
followed by a second piece published the next month, was also introduced by a full page engraving of *The Lair of the Sea Serpent*, the two articles contained a number of high quality images, all of which, with the exception of the *Sea Serpent*, were reproductions of paintings made by Vedder between 1876 and 1880 (figure 6.18). *The American Art Review* article is relevant here not only because it was the first illustrated piece devoted to Vedder’s life and work, written by an established *Scribner’s* author on a topic already slated for publication in the popular magazine, but more importantly, in a larger context, it suggests that Gilder’s goals and imperatives for art criticism in America had begun to have an impact in the rise of smaller periodicals dedicated entirely to the arts, such as Koehler’s. 62 Further, the images chosen for the Bishop article were predominantly of idealized female figures in classical and Pre-Raphaelite style, underscoring *Scribner’s* art department’s conscious choice to focus on the intensely imaginative, bizarre, gothic paintings from Vedder’s Civil War days. *Scribner’s* wanted its readers to experience Vedder’s images of wonder, of the otherworldly and of the search for greater knowledge.

with their concerns to demonstrate their technical talents, was focused on ideas and imaginative subject matter: “His future is full of rich promise.” 62 Koehler hired William Bishop to not only cover Vedder’s exhibition, but also to “render an estimate and review of his performance as a whole.” Bishop had established himself earlier as a knowledgeable author of art literature at *Scribner’s* (See Chapter IV) and his discerning evaluation of Vedder’s work, which he deftly described and organized into different groups based on “prevailing moods,” closely followed Gilder’s guidelines for art criticism. As Mancini has demonstrated, *The American Art Review: A Journal Devoted to the Practice, Theory, History and Archaeology of Art*, although short-lived, provided extensive, illustrated coverage of the work and careers of many contemporary artists previously endorsed by Gilder, including a number of SAA members; the journal paid extra attention to artists working in graphic media, from whom Koehler commissioned new images made specifically for the magazine. Residing in Boston, Koehler sought through his publication to provide an extensive commentary on art institutions both around the world and also around the nation, significantly expanding the borders of art in America. Mancini, 70-74. In a sense, he took Gilder’s mission and expanded it in his own journal dedicated solely to the arts and also to the publication of high quality engravings by young aspiring artists.
Scribner's article, written by Charles de Kay, did not seek to describe Vedder's work and its evolution to the American public, but served more as a critique than a biographic sketch. Interestingly we learn from the correspondence that de Kay was never aware of which images Drake had chosen to use for the article or his intent to emphasize the older paintings, which may explain in part why most of the illustrations reproduced are not discussed in depth.\textsuperscript{63} While de Kay was critical of the "crude rawness" of his technique, he praised Vedder for his creativity, particularly in the images of the 1860s, when it seemed to run its wildest in his "magic" pictures of "stories told of such strange regions of heaven and earth." De Kay introduced Scribner's readers to the unique nature of Vedder's work, observing that these images had such a strange and arresting affect on the viewing public because of their originality, their ability to present familiar literary subjects with unique backdrops that drew on age old stories and myths which were "newly arranged, newly spun."\textsuperscript{64} Two recent paintings included in the article, The Cumaean Sibyl and The Young Marysas, which were described as his own unique conceptions of stories from Ancient Roman history and mythology, were also the subjects of two poems by Helen Hunt Jackson that directly followed the article and

\textsuperscript{63} In his letter he states, "Mr. Drake did not give me a list of the pictures by Vedder which the magazine is to use, in spite of my agonized appeals to him, so that my article is an essay having small relation to the illustrations. However, it may be that that is just what you prefer." Gilder MSS, Lilly Library Manuscript Collections, Letter from Charles de Kay to R.W. Gilder dated August 24, 1880.

\textsuperscript{64} De Kay (November 1880), 114. De Kay noted that Vedder emerged during the time of the Hudson River School painters, leaving the United States in 1856 to travel and study in Europe; upon his return in 1861, he became recognized for the "quickness and originality of his imagination. He seemed to have more ideas than all his fellow-artists put together, - ideas, that is to say, which were striking, original, unhackneyed."
served to further underscore the literary quality of Vedder’s work. It was the ability of Vedder’s images to make viewers rethink and reexamine age old symbols and stories that gave them their power.

The text urged the viewer to study the reproductions in their own right, without any explanation of the stories behind the pictures, or the events that influenced their creation, and the illustrations compelled the reader to look closer. The images of saints, prophets, serpents and sphinxes all shared a sense of the imaginative and the otherworldly, of mysteries of earlier sects, cults and faiths no longer fully understood; in addition, they clearly encouraged a type of dialogue with the pictures of William Blake from the June issue, five months prior as well as those of John La Farge, which would appear three months later. The illustrations shared a collective reference to obscure Eastern, pagan and Christian literature, with an emphasis on silent oracles, sibyls and mythological creatures, all depicted in a hyper-realistic style.


66 In his *Digressions*, Vedder spoke at length on Blake and his impact on his art and his life. Throughout his career, Vedder was frequently compared to Blake and he clearly felt the need to address the influence, describing his early exposure to the art of Blake and how his visionary poetry absorbed him throughout his life. Vedder commented on Blake’s work and their shared ability to “conjure up visions,” which included both “delightful things” and “images of horror indescribable.” In terms of the often cited notion of Blake as a madman, Vedder noted that “By his own work he kept himself from actual want and thus was left to wander and dream in the world of his visions; this looks to me like sanity... behind it all is Blake’s real world, where in his art and writings you can find simplicity, grace, beauty and grandeur, and when these are not fully expressed they are finely hinted at.” Vedder, 408- 417. One of Vedder’s closest and lifelong friends, Edwin J. Ellis worked extensively with William Butler Yeats on a three volume study of Blake’s poetic and pictorial work that was ultimately published in 1893; Ellis, a poet and critic interested in mysticism and Eastern religions, discussed Blake often with Vedder and also introduced him to the work of Omar Khayyám.

67 The story of the Cumaean Sibyl, a mystical oracle said to inhabit a cave with one hundred mouths who burned six of her nine prophetic books until the king of Rome
selected by *Scribner’s* respond directly to Leigh Schmidt’s contention that Vedder painted the loss of religion; they convey “an absence of God’s voice.”  

*Scribner’s* editors were drawn to Vedder’s pictures of religious iconic figures such as the Sphinx, the Cumaean Sibyl, and an old saint, that provided visual images of lost spiritual messages and fruitless struggles; “A Little Bit of Knowledge is a Dangerous Thing” (figure 6.15), with its mouse laying dead on what looks like an open medieval Bible after attempting to consume its pages, recalls the Dutch *vanitas* still lives with their spiritual warning against excessive earthly delights.  

Although he personally denied it, Vedder was often seen as a mystic by his colleagues (thus his Tile Club nickname, “the Pagan”). He frequently told of the spiritual visions he had had as a child and a young artist, revealing that many of his most imaginative paintings were based on these experiences, particularly those of his mother’s interactions with fortune tellers and his aunt’s agreed to purchase them from her, was hardly well known in America. Neither, for that matter was the story of “The Roc’s Egg,” taken from the *Tales of the Arabian Nights* in which Sinbad the Sailor’s crew disembark to an island where they find an enormous egg of a tremendously large mystical bird known as a roc, and ultimately consume the baby chick inside; the crew was later savagely killed by the avenging parents of the chick.  

Leigh E. Schmidt, “Visualizing God’s Silence: Oracles, the Enlightenment and Elihu Vedder’s *Questioner of the Sphinx,*” in *The Visual Culture of American Religions*, eds. David Morgan and Sally M. Promey (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 211-229, quote from 213. Schmidt comments on the appropriation of oracles, with their ties to pagan antiquity, by the early Christians and their ultimate rejection by Enlightenment figures. She argues that Vedder sought to “render the silences of an uncommunicative deity” and that *The Questioner of the Sphinx* offered a “dreamscape of that loss,” as the subject allowed him to visualize his own loss of spiritual messages.  

While this still life was actually painted in 1880 and exhibited and sold in Boston, the image, with its religious text labeled in Gothic script and gnawed through by a mouse who met his fate as a result of his hunger, was more in keeping with his macabre subjects of the 1860s.
discussions of her visions of “softly singing angels and the face of God.” In his memoirs, Vedder admitted that the Christian religion had failed him, which led him to look to other spiritual sources for inspiration, particularly in Eastern teachings; ultimately these would be the source of his most successful venture, the illustrations of Omar Khayyám’s *Rubáiyát* completed in 1884. However we see Vedder searching for spiritual meaning in these earlier images reproduced by *Scribner’s*, images that may have spoken to readers who were also looking for some type of alternative, authentic religious experience. Vedder’s somewhat obscure spiritual symbols and references appealed to *Scribner’s* editors as evidenced not only by their choice of Vedder and his images for the article, but also in the covers that they would soon commission for their new *Century* magazine; they embody Gilder’s ideas that art could invite some type of spiritual response, standing in for visionary faith, with the artist taking on the role of prophet and seer (figure 6.13).

An example of this quest for a spiritual voice, Vedder’s image of “The Questioner of the Sphinx,” was an engraving of a painting from 1875 that reworked and slightly altered the original image of 1863 (figures 6.17 and 6.19). When examining the evolution of the illustration, one can see how particular aspects of the original were manipulated to emphasize the intense desire on the part of the man to learn the mysteries of the sphinx, and to encourage viewers to relate to his quest. The face of the Sphinx, now crowned...

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70 Vedder, 40-42. In his *Digressions*, Vedder writes, “I am not a mystic, or very learned in occult matters. I have read much and thought much, and so it comes that I take short flights or wade out into the sea of mystery which surrounds us, but soon getting beyond my depth, return... and yet it delights me to tamper and potter with the unknowable, and I have a strong tendency to see in things more than meets the eye.” 408. Vedder’s father raised him in a strict Universalist household surrounded by revivalist preachers. He attended Sunday school regularly, where he asked questions about God that “have remained unanswered to this day.” 64.
with the symbolic serpent, is turned more fully toward the picture plane, with its widespread ear more prominently featured. Much older and stripped down to a mere loincloth, the grizzled Egyptian desperately grasps its protruding chin as he leans in more urgently, pressing his ear against the Sphinx’s lips in order to hear its secrets. The desert is now a wasteland containing a single skull, which forms a triangle between the questioning wanderer and the enlarged ear, suggesting an emptiness, a solitude and ultimately death. In the illustration, the lips of the Sphinx are more closely pursed, underscoring its inability or unwillingness to reveal the wisdom of the ages, and leaving the questions of the man unanswered. The image captures man at the end of life, searching for revelation, for knowledge of the next life, but unable to attain it. This sense of unobtainable wisdom was also conveyed in the illustration of the Cumaean Sibyl, as Vedder depicted the aged seer wandering in the foothills of Rome, surrounded by her smoldering books of prophecy burned to spite the Roman King who refused to value them; she does however maintain one under her arm, suggesting that not all of the wisdom of the ancient world is entirely lost, but might require a difficult journey to uncover (see Figure 6.14). These illustrations, in their subject matter, iconography and hyperrealistic style, were representative of a desire for some form of religious or spiritual authority, a phenomenon that was prevalent during the period.

In addition to images of mythological figures, Vedder also portrayed that desire as a personal search, with images displaying the intensity of his own internal vision, a type of insider’s view into his dreams, visions and fantasies. As mentioned above, Vedder often recounted his bizarre and terrifying childhood experiences, and believed that these events, further impacted by his exposure early on to mystical aspects of the Catholic
religion, caused him to live in a “type of limbo between dream and reality.” Vedder was highly valued by the *Scribner’s* art editors not only for his ability to capture this mystical “dream state,” but also for the effect that it had on viewers. The barren, desolate desertscape of “The Lost Mind” engraving reinforces the vacant yet direct gaze in the eyes of the wandering barefoot woman, as she seems to explore some strange place between reality and the imagination (figure 6.20). Heavily veiled in a dark cape and grasping some type of rosary beads or talisman, she searches within this empty abstract space; the woman leads viewers to wonder if this is what it feels like to lose one’s mind in some form of spiritual encounter. She embodies the anti-modernist quest for a more authentic experience and, as Lears describes it, “a felt but unacknowledged longing for the emotions engendered by Catholic piety.” The fact that the *Scribner’s* editors chose to recognize this image by including it in its *Portfolio of Proofs Second Series*, further underscores the power they attributed to the image’s ability to capture the human condition in search of transcendence, and their desire to have their readers experience it.

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71 In her chapter on Vedder in *Painting the Dark Side: Art and Gothic Imagination in Nineteenth –Century America*, Sarah Burns argues that many of his paintings of the early 1860s were a result of his experiments with drugs, specifically hashesh. Interestingly, *Scribner’s* published an article in the July of 1880 on the practice of opium smoking in which Fitzhugh Ludlow, one of Vedder’s compatriots in New York City during the war, was cited for his belief that the genius of Eastern peoples and their imagery was a direct result of their use of this and other mind altering substances. Francis P. Lathrop, “The Sorcery of Madjoon,” *Scribner’s Monthly* 20 (July 1880): 416-22, quote from 419. Burns also contends that Vedder’s experiences as a young boy in Cuba, where he frequently encountered death and was introduced to the local Catholic religion, were vital to the development of his unique imagery. See Burns, *Painting the Dark Side: Art and Gothic Imagination in Nineteenth –Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press: 2004), 158-88.

72 Lears, 161.

73 *Proofs from Scribner’s Monthly and St. Nicholas Second Series* (New York: Scribner & Co., 1881). *The Lost Mind* is Illustration XII.
Even more intriguing was the final image of the article entitled “Weirdness” (figure 6.21). While never mentioned in the text, the art editors chose to end the piece with this most intensely bizarre and visionary image of a female face, whose hair seems to alight in flame from her head. This small illustration, which has much in common with many of Vedder’s Medusa images and seems quite Blake-like in appearance, recalls iconic paintings of “the goddess” in Eastern religions. With her face removed from her body, floating above a sharply receding space, her flaming head in the tiny drawing embodied the intensity and to a certain extent, the darker side, of Vedder’s bizarre imagination, and offers a small window into his own mind. Her relentless, constant stare demands the viewer’s attention and suggests a state of meditation; in the fixity of her gaze as well as the intense perspective of the picture, she beckons the viewer to enter and explore this form of mediation in which the mind has left the body. The editors at Scribner’s were not afraid to confront their viewers with controversial images and to encourage them to use contemporary works of art and their own imaginations to take them to new places. Specifically selected by Scribner’s to conclude the piece, this illustration, as well as others by Vedder of unanswered oracles and wandering lost souls, directly confronted the viewer in their representation of the search for some form of alternative spiritual experience.

Ultimately the article on Vedder and his exposure to the press in the early 1880s launched him on a successful career in print media, which was closely promoted and supported by the staff at Scribner’s, and the soon-to-be Century. Recognizing the power of illustration and mass reproduction, Vedder returned home to Rome to begin his drawings for the Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám, which was published in 1884. The book
was comprised of 56 full size plates with images interpreting his vision of Khayyám’s
quatrain; Vedder selectively rearranged these quatrains, thus creating his own story
enhanced with his illustrations that combine Eastern subjects with Christian imagery and
symbolism. The work, based on the poetry of an Arabian sage, spoke directly to the
growing anti-modernist fascination with the spiritual exercises and aspirations of Oriental
mystics; however, Vedder’s illustrations also strongly suggested a Christian dimension,
making its spirituality difficult to characterize. While some contemporary critics
considered Vedder’s interpretation as symbolic of Christian redemption, others saw it as
a philosophical song of life and death. The Century published a lavishly illustrated
article by Horace Scudder (not coincidentally the author of Scribner’s article on William
Blake), “Vedder’s Accompaniment to the Song of Omar Khayyám,” in its November
1884 issue to coincide with and promote the publication; in his conclusion Scudder
avoided a specific spiritual reading of the poem stating that, “into this subject we do not
purpose to go” (figures 6.22 and 6.23). Taking the illustrations that appeared in the
Scribner’s article to a new level, the images in the Rubáiyát also represented a unique
combination of the spiritual and the imaginative in art, a concept that Gilder highly
valued and also experienced in the work of John La Farge.

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74 According to Jane Dillenberger, Vedder fused Christian references with the Persian
poet’s verses to extend the range of meaning in his version of the Rubáiyát. For more on
the Rubáiyát and Vedder’s unique use of Christian and classical forms see Dillenberger’s
essay, “Between Faith and Doubt: Subjects for Meditation,” in Taylor et.al., 115-165,
perticularly pages 127-149.

75 Horace Scudder, “Vedder’s Accompaniment to the Song of Omar Khayyám,” Century
the Rubáiyát under Mr. Vedder’s interpretation, echoes the strain which rises to many
lips today. It is nevertheless quite permissible for one to recognize the truth and the
sadness and sweetness in it who yet finds the Te Deum Laudamus a profounder hymn of
humanity; or, if he must seek an Oriental interpretation of the human and the divine, may
be better satisfied with the Book of Job.” 9.
John La Farge in *Scribner’s Monthly*: Celebrating America’s Premier “Religious Painter”

Wishing to usher in the new year with a spiritual message, Gilder gave his readers an artistic vision of the divine to mark the beginning of 1881 and to celebrate Twelfth Night. Opening their January editions, readers would have been treated to Gilder’s poem, “A Christmas Hymn,” which featured two full page, intensely decorative drawings of the nativity with striking depictions of the holy spirit bathing the scene in a stream of heavenly light. (Figures 6.24 and 6.25) The scenes are bold illustrations of pure transcendence and were created by America’s most prominent religious artist of the time, John La Farge. These highly developed and detailed images capture the impression of a supernatural presence, as the variations of light and dark within the engraving convey the mystery of the scene, illuminating the angels that flutter overhead, and the prolific garments and accessories of the mounted kings and their attendants. Appearing side by side and framed by Gilder’s hymn, written in a Gothic script for maximum aesthetic effect, the pages resemble a type of medieval psalter, a private devotional poem now mass produced and widely distributed, offering the American public another way of viewing religious imagery. The illustrations were the most overtly Christian images yet to be reproduced in *Scribner’s* or in any other general popular monthly. Their loose, painterly style conveys a sense of the spiritual and presence of the supernatural – the ideal gift from both a poet and an artist who sought to give their readers and viewers a glimpse of “the higher life.”

The images for “A Christmas Hymn,” represented a highpoint in Gilder’s artistic relationship with La Farge, who in a co-operative effort, provided the two illustrations to
accompany Gilder’s verse. While these images did serve to illustrate Gilder’s poem about the birth of Christ, more importantly, they embodied Gilder’s ideal that art allows for the “revelation of spiritual beauty and verity.” As images of “spiritual significance,” the illustrations are religiously inclusive in their depiction of the nativity, a subject that was generally recognized by both Protestant and Catholic worshippers. While the images themselves are of a more Catholic origin, drawn directly from early Renaissance religious frescoes and altarpieces, their naturalist interpretation of a religious theme gave them wide appeal. La Farge later used the illustrations to encourage the Episcopal congregation of the Church of the Incarnation in New York City to adopt them for the decoration of its main altar in 1885-6. The illustrations mark an important

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76 R.W. Gilder, “A Christmas Hymn,” *Scribner’s Monthly* 21 (January 1881): 432-433. The illustrations derived in some sense from La Farge’s earlier interest in the Magi, although here the setting was much more surreal, rather than the identifiable Newport landscape of the earlier The Wise Men out of the East, drawn in 1868 for *Riverside Magazine*. For more on La Farge’s decoration of the Church of the Incarnation see Barbara Weinberg, “John La Farge: Pioneer of the American Mural Movement” in Henry Adams, et.al. (1987), 175.


78 La Farge’s *Illustration of Christmas Hymn* was included in the *Proofs from Scribner’s Monthly and St. Nicholas Second Series* of 1881 whose engravings, although reduced in number from 100 to 50, were selected not “for the skill and delicacy of the engraving and printing [as in the prior portfolio], but now in the present collection, the main consideration has been the artistic value of the designs.” “Culture and Progress,” *Scribner’s Monthly* 21 (January 1881), 483. *Proofs from Scribner’s Monthly and St. Nicholas Second Series* (New York: Scribner & Co., 1881). La Farge’s *Illustration of Christmas Hymn* is Illustration XIV. It should be noted that the second portfolio was published prior to the article on La Farge, which appeared in February of 1881, therefore no images from that article were included. The primary Renaissance sources for the nativity scenes were the Pisa and Pistoia pulpits by Giovanni Pisano from 1301 as well as Giotto’s *Nativity* scene in the Arena Chapel (1305). For more on the images and the wall mural see H. Barbara Weinberg, “La Farge’s Eclectic Idealism in Three New York City Churches,” *Winterthur Portfolio*, Volume 10 (1975): 199-228, particularly 217-9. The *Scribner’s* nativity illustrations anticipate La Farge’s most fully realized devotional images of Christ in the Church of the Ascension, completed between 1886-8.
moment not only at *Scribner’s*, but also in a larger sense within both the publishing industry and the American art world, in the rapid increase in devotional, religious works of art and the public’s desire for that imagery. Gilder’s publication of La Farge’s nativity illustrations was a clear demonstration of his intent to respond to that desire, offering his readers a vision of transcendence.

The appearance the following month of “John La Farge” in *Scribner’s* February edition of 1881 was appropriately timed in terms of both La Farge’s career and Gilder’s interest in spirituality and aesthetics. The article was published at what could arguably be seen as the apogee of La Farge’s career as a painter, an illustrator, a muralist, and most importantly, the leading force in the rise of church decoration in America. While La Farge had had a substantial influence on Gilder’s aesthetic philosophy and on his artistic circle throughout the 1870s, Gilder chose to publish the article at a moment when La Farge was recognized publicly for his religious art at Trinity Church in Boston and St. Thomas Church in New York City. La Farge was also highly respected by wood-engravers during this period, and fully invested in developing creative processes to enhance the art of illustration. Promoted as America’s premier religious painter, La Farge was the ideal artist to feature, given the importance of both illustration and the spiritual theme of the art literature being published in *Scribner’s* at this time. La Farge’s devotional religious images are representative of a new visual piety that had begun to emerge in America and was narrowing the historical differences between Protestants and Catholics regarding the use of imagery for worship.79 While Blake’s pictures were imbedded in the Old Testament, and Vedder’s drew from a wide variety of religious and

79 For more on this trend toward devotional images see Morgan, 266-337.
mythological sources, La Farge’s illustrations were the most overtly Christian and subtly Catholic of the three featured “spiritual artists.” Scribner’s, in its promotion of La Farge’s career and, in particular, his religious imagery, his work in stained-glass and his sensuous style of church decoration, was an early participant in what Lears has identified as the movement toward Catholic forms in response to the anxieties of the age, both in terms of a breakdown in traditional religious authority as well as a rise in the association of these forms with the “cult of taste.”80 The article celebrates La Farge as the country’s spiritual leader in art, whose paintings, architectural projects and decorative work embody, well beyond that of any other American working at the time, a sense of the “higher life.”81

As discussed in Chapter III, La Farge’s ideas on art and its role in a post-Civil War society deeply influenced Gilder and his circle, and in many ways, shaped Gilder’s thinking about how he should use Scribner’s to spread the “cultural gospel.”82

Scribner’s readers were already familiar with La Farge from the pages of “The Old Cabinet,” where Gilder had frequently cited him as the artist who most fully represented his aesthetic ideology, and compared his achievements to many of the old masters, including William Blake.83 In the mid 1870s, La Farge was featured in Scribner’s in

80 Lears, Chapter 5, 184 -215.
81 “The Higher Life in Art” (cited above) was the title used by La Farge for his lectures on the Barbizon School which he later published as a book in 1908.
82 Their correspondence further reveals how La Farge’s ideas on art molded Gilder’s own thoughts, which he ultimately expressed in his editorials See La Farge letters to Gilder, Gilder MSS, Lilly Library Manuscript Collections.
83 Gilder wrote, “[La Farge’s figures] always have something of the high typical quality; they are drawn under the guidance of an eye which, like Raphael’s, Durer’s, Delacroix’s, not only sees, but imagines.” Not only did Gilder boldly associate La Farge with the great masters, but also with the “imaginative presentation of the human form in painting, which is generally conceded to be the highest art.…has there been any man, except William Blake, who could handle the human form in such a large and imaginative way?” “The
Clarence Cook’s article on recent church decoration, and he had also been discussed in the critic’s earlier series on home decoration as well. La Farge continued to appear in *Scribner’s* editorial pages in the late 1870s, as he was applauded for his work at Trinity Church, supported on his position regarding wood engraving, praised for his “imaginative” paintings and “delicate” water colors in a review of the 1878-9 Art Season, singled-out for his studio sale in 1880, and celebrated for his innovations in stained glass. Meanwhile reviews (both favorable and unfavorable) of his church decoration

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84 Cook (January 1876): 352 (For more on this see Chapter II); Cook (February 1878): 569-577, in which Cook critically discusses La Farge’s work at Trinity and St. Thomas Church.

85 See “The Old Cabinet,” *Scribner’s Monthly* 13 (April 1877): 564, in which a long letter to the editor by H.E., presumably Henry Eckford a/k/a Charles de Kay, provided a detailed description of the decoration and the murals, and declared “the interior is a great success;” In a discussion of “The Art Season 1878-9” La Farge’s work was reviewed in “Culture and Progress,” *Scribner’s Monthly* 19 (December 1879): 311-312. His “delicate flower pieces” in the Society of American Water Colors Exhibition were highly praised as was his contribution to the SAA show, *Venus Anadyomené*, which was considered, “the most imaginative picture [in the exhibit]…It is a beautiful picture in its subtle meanings and delicate, masterly manipulation. Mr. LaFarge’s cactus flower was also warmly admired for its deep, rich color;” “The Art Season,” in “Culture and Progress,” *Scribner’s Monthly* 20 (June 1880): 315 announced his Studio Sale, stating that “Mr. LaFarge is now devoting himself to stained glass and mural decoration;” and “American Progress in Stained Glass,” published one month prior to the monograph, in “The World’s Work,” *Scribner’s Monthly* 21 (January 1881): 485-486. “The World’s Work” piece outlined the techniques that La Farge had introduced to dramatically change the medium and provided an in-depth explanation of the revolutionary nature of his method. The article described the recent work by La Farge and Tiffany, who were both producing windows whose images were created entirely with glass (without relying on paint) and gave a detailed explanation about their methods of rolling and pressing the glass, as well as their creative use of “leading,” in which the lead actually represents the outlines of the object. In addition to appearing in the magazine’s various editorial columns, Gilder also ensured that the (albeit few) illustrations that La Farge did contribute to *Scribner’s* were featured in the magazine’s first Portfolio of proof impressions. The Portfolio included La Farge’s only contribution to the periodical in the 1870s, his “Wind Harp,” that had originally illustrated the poem “Little Sigrid” by H.H. Boyensen. A portfolio of proof impressions, selected from *Scribner’s Monthly and St.*
appeared in all the major newspapers and popular monthlies, while his work as a watercolorist and a landscape painter continued to be discussed in smaller art journals. In agreeing to the article, La Farge had important input as to which illustrations should be included, and asked that the piece focus on his unique contributions to the art of stained glass and his interior church decoration. While La Farge originally requested E.D. Stedman, a literary critic and frequent contributor to *Scribner’s* as the author, Gilder selected an emerging poet, George Lathrop, to write the monograph. He and his wife, Rose Hawthorne, daughter of Nathaniel Hawthorne, were close friends of the Gilders; during the course of their marriage, the Lathrops developed an intense interest in Catholicism, ultimately converting in 1891. Given his background as a poet, his ties to

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87 The article stated unequivocally that La Farge was the first artist in America to fully explore the medium of stained glass for its own decorative possibilities, experimenting with its color and texture to create a new art form. Although La Farge would devote himself to the medium for the rest of his career, Lathrop did not discuss the nature of his innovations, particularly in terms of his reconciliation of illusionism with decoration, and his process of modeling by using the glass itself. Just after the article was published La Farge began his more radical technique for opalescent glass, in windows such as *Peacock and Peonies* (1881) in which he did not paint onto the surface, but relied entirely on the glass itself for both color and form.

88 Lathrop was also strongly supported by Gilder, who frequently published excerpts of Lathrop’s poems and praised his books in the “Old Cabinet.” For more on the two couples’ close friendship during the 1870s, see Helena de Kay Gilder diary – Gilder MSS, Lilly Library Manuscript Collections. Gilder was instrumental in procuring Lathrop a job as associate editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, which he held between 1875 and 1877. In 1883 Lathrop founded the American Copyright League, which sought the enactment of an international copyright law, a cause for which Gilder had worked diligently for almost ten years; Lathrop was instrumental in the eventual passage of the law in 1890. Both
Concord, transcendentalism and the American literary tradition, his interest in Catholicism, and his brother Francis’ role in the decoration of Trinity Church, Lathrop was chosen by Gilder as the ideal man to write the story of La Farge and his art.\textsuperscript{89}

La Farge was introduced as a “religious painter,” setting the theme of the article in which religion (albeit not the traditional Protestantism of America’s forefathers) drove and dominated his art and his style: “A few years ago it would no doubt have surprised most of the visitors to our Academy exhibitions, and even many admirers of the painter himself, had they heard Mr. John La Farge described as a religious painter.”\textsuperscript{90} The article marked Gilder’s anticipation of the emergence of religious aesthetics, and how La Farge’s work in particular responded to this call for new varieties of spiritual experience. Describing his work as “raying out a spiritual sentiment,” Lathrop presented La Farge to the reader as a type of modern day Fra Angelico, whose art and life were deeply tied to the beautiful, the religious and the mysterious.\textsuperscript{91} This “myth of La Farge” was sanctified in print in the \textit{Scribner’s} article as La Farge was canonized as the country’s premier religious artist: “[La Farge] is the first American Artist possessing a recognized individual style and a certain degree of creative power, who has executed religious

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\textsuperscript{89} It is unclear if La Farge originally met Lathrop through his brother Francis or the Gilders, however, it is certain that they knew each other, as the frontispiece of Lathrop’s first book, \textit{Rose and Roof-Tree}, was an illustration of one of his poems, “Jessamine” by La Farge; in fact, the first time La Farge was mentioned in “The Old Cabinet” was in reference to this illustration. George Lathrop, \textit{Rose and Roof-Tree} (Boston: James R. Osgood & Co., 1875).


\textsuperscript{91} \textit{Ibid.}, 509.
figure-compositions….He has special truths to tell, or a special way of telling truths, which have not been set forth in the same manner before.”\(^92\) In the piece, Lathrop described how La Farge developed as a “creator of sensuous environments,” beginning as a draftsman, emerging as a painter of intimate floral still lives and landscapes, and ultimately maturing into his present, more socially conscious position, as decorator of public religious spaces and educator of taste. The article underscores throughout LaFarge’s desire to portray the religious aspects of life and nature, with Lathrop stating upfront his intention to “review his previous and less widely published work [which] will show that the inspiration of religious art was in him from the first.”\(^93\)

The selected illustrations emphasized La Farge’s overall sensual approach, as the art editors included engravings from the 1860s and 70s that drew on the imaginative and emotional responses of the viewer (figures 6.26 and 6.27). Lathrop described “The Spirit of the Water-Lily” (figure 6.26), which appeared on the opening page, as one of La Farge’s most spiritually-charged visions, a “poetic union between the life of a human

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\(^92\) *Ibid.*, 503. To fully understand this mythologizing of La Farge, one must keep in mind the almost cult-like status of the artist shared by the Gilders and their artistic circle. La Farge’s aristocratic, mercurial, exotic and somewhat secretive personality had an almost hypnotic effect on Gilder. Lathrop was actually not the first to write about La Farge in such a mythical way and it is highly likely that he was familiar with James Jackson Jarves’ commentary about the artist. Jarves in his *The Art Idea* described La Farge as “a profound artist of deep religious feeling, of a tone inclining to spiritual melancholy, and, of a rare and peculiar sensibility…He evokes the essences of things, draws out their soul-life, endowing them with an almost superhuman consciousness. The solemn splendor and interpenetrative power of his free, unconventional manner, with its spiritual suggestiveness of hues, seize upon the imagination and bind it firmly to his art.” J. J. Jarves, *The Art Idea: Sculpture, Painting and Architecture in America.* 2nd ed. (Riverside, Cambridge New York: H.O. Houghton and Co., 1864), 224-5. For more on the myth of La Farge, particularly as established by Royal Cortissoz in his biography see Pyne, 57-58.

\(^93\) Lathrop (1881): 503.
figure and that of nature.”\textsuperscript{94} Scribner’s readers would have clearly picked up on the similarity of La Farge’s sensual “Triumph of Love,” with the recently published illustrations of Blake, specifically his “When the Morning Stars Sang Together” (see Figure 6.9 and 6.27), and their shared interests as printers, engravers, and creators of mystical and spiritual imagery.\textsuperscript{95} A reliance on loose brushwork not only added to the sensuous, ethereal quality of these illustrations, but also spoke to the style of the “younger painters” promoted by Gilder as a means to more deeply convey emotion and essence. According to Lathrop, La Farge’s style of drawing for reproduction allowed for a “refined spiritually.”\textsuperscript{96}

\textsuperscript{94} Ibid, 508. The highpoint of La Farge’s career as an “illustrator of the otherworldly” can be found in his popular designs of musical fairies for the \textit{Songs from the Old Dramatists}, which included “The Spirit of the Water-Lily.” Published in 1872, \textit{Songs from the Old Dramatists} was a collection of lyrics from early English play-writes, including Beaumont, Fletcher, Shakespeare, Robert Greene and Thomas Lodge; the songs, which were generally taken directly from old English dramas, were collected by Abby S. Richardson who asked LaFarge to illustrate them. Abby Sage Richardson, ed., \textit{Songs from the Old Dramatists} (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1872).

\textsuperscript{95} The actual block was exhibited in the Water Color Society exhibition of 1876 and, although Lathrop does not mention it, the image is representative of La Farge’s watercolor exhibition pieces and his substantial contribution to the American Water Color movement. Kathleen Foster, “John La Farge and the American Watercolor Movement: Art for the ‘Decorative Age,’” in Adams et.al. \textit{John La Farge} (Washington D.C.: National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1987), 123-160. According to Foster, \textit{The Triumph of Love} was critical to the growth of the medium and the Water Color Society in the mid 1870s. The exhibition of the block itself began a new trend of displaying illustrational material, as shows began to include the best products of the new photographic transfer technology. Marsh’s engravings of La Farge’s designs were also exhibited at the Water Color Society Show in 1878, although after that time illustrational materials were found more frequently at the Salmagundi shows. As the “Triumph of Love” had never been printed, La Farge sold the block to \textit{Scribner’s} for $25 in 1879. The new photographic techniques were used to transfer the design to another block, which was cut by Timothy Cole for this article.

\textsuperscript{96} Ibid, 508. Lathrop also discussed another important drawing, “The Wise Men out of the East,” which was not reproduced. Lathrop noted the mysticism of the “Wise Men” describing it as “the embodiment of a religious story to-day...there is about this special depiction of the magi making their journey in the wake of the star a weight of suspense, a
Most readers were unaware of La Farge’s work as a draftsman, but within the publishing industry he was recognized as a true innovator, devising radical techniques that incorporated the use of photography to dramatically improve the engraving process. His wood-cut drawings marked a turning point in terms of the quality of reproductions appearing in American periodicals, particularly in the pages of *Scribner’s*. Because La Farge drew with ink washes, his images were difficult to engrave; given the nature of his painterly style, there were few distinct lines to reproduce. This led to friction between La Farge and traditional engravers, ultimately resulting in his desire to develop new methods of engraving to allow for a more sensuous mode, methods that *Scribner’s* would perfect for mass reproduction. La Farge began to photograph his drawings onto a prepared woodblock, making it possible for the engraver to capture the tonal and atmospheric qualities of the original image, thus eliminating modeling with contour lines. “The Spirit of the Water-Lily” and “The Triumph of Love” are prime examples of this new method of engraving ushered in by La Farge as he tried to transcend the literal and the physical in reproducing these sensuous poetic images.  

His technical innovations were adopted by Henry Marsh and Timothy Cole, *Scribner’s* primary engravers, who dramatically changed the nature of reproductions in the periodical and, with the aid of *Scribner’s* art and printing departments, ultimately the publishing industry.  

refined spirituality.” Lathrop argued that La Farge’s creation of a picturesque landscape dramatically lit by the shining star, rather than a more traditionally formal composition to depict the scene, made the image appealing to the modern viewer.  

The block for “The Triumph of Love” was originally painted in a monochrome of grey, brown and tan washes on a prepared white surface, a design that would have been impossible to capture before the new process was implemented.  

The argument over the nature of engraving and the importance of adopting these new methods came to a head in the dispute between La Farge and William Linton, who represented the “old school” style. Their disagreement was played out in the daily press,
foster a close dialogue between its artists and engravers in order to improve the overall quality of the image as it appeared in print. As such, the wood-engravings highlighted here as essential to La Farge’s growth as a spiritual artist, were also vital to the popular reception of images and Scribner’s reputation as a leader in creative illustration.

In text and, even more clearly, in illustration the article promoted the La Farge aesthetic, in which linear description was replaced with nuances of color and texture; his sensuous, simplified approach to painting, which drew from both Eastern and Western traditions, was proclaimed as superior to the earlier descriptive, narrative, and positivist

and also summarized in an editorial in “The Old Cabinet” in which Gilder strongly defended LaFarge’s position. “The Old Cabinet,” Scribner’s Monthly 16 (June 1878): 291-2. (See Chapter III). La Farge’s innovations resulted in the photoxylography process which was used extensively by Scribner’s art department. The process called for a wood block to be painted with light sensitive chemicals, then a photographic negative was placed on the block, which developed out the image with just a few minutes of sunlight. The technique allowed the engraver to carve the block without redrawing the image and to create an ink print that had the subtleness of a continuous tone photograph. For more see Julie Mellby “Photoxylography and Timothy Cole,” Graphic Arts exhibitions, acquisitions and other highlights from the Graphic Arts Collection, Princeton University Library, http://blogs.princeton.edu/mt/mt-tb.cgi/4686. This “new school” of engraving was celebrated in Scribner’s, just two months after Lathrop’s article, in an article entitled “Wood-Engraving and the ‘Scribner’ Prizes,” published in April, 1881. In the article, the author noted how important this new engraving process had been to the rise of Scribner’s: “When Scribner’s was established, in 1870, and for several years after, the native resources of magazine illustration were limited to a few designers upon the block, who either made original drawings or copies of paintings, in which the quality of the painting was swallowed up in the pictorial mannerisms of the draughtsman. In the illustration of books from original drawings on the block [there was one] noted instance of work done with thorough technical knowledge and true artistic spirit: the blocks of Mr. Henry Marsh after drawings by John La Farge. The value of the work lay in the co-working of a good block-draughtsman and a sympathetic and unconventional engraver of thoroughly artistic sense. Examples in point are the cuts of ‘The Wolf Charmer’ and ‘The Spirit of the Water-Lily’ reprinted in this magazine for February 1881.” These methods actually made the job of the engraver more difficult, as it now required a “subtlety in conception and deftness of hand sufficient to translate the best examples of ancient or modern art.” “Wood-Engraving and the ‘Scribner Prizes,’ ” (February 1881): 939. The article went on to describe La Farge as a “delicate and original artist” whose new experimental methods had liberated engraving, allowing engravers to “throw themselves into the spirit of the work.”
paintings of his American predecessors. Reacting against the materialism of the time period and seeking to replace those earlier conventional modes with his own vision of the divine, his small floral still lives were praised for their ability to “generate a species of awe, a mood of worship,” as they elicited a private spiritual and emotional response from the viewer. The intimacy of his still lives was captured here in “The Spirit of the Water-Lily” as the delicate winged fairy emerges from the lily, ascending toward the viewer, “thrilled with a joy so transcendent that you imagine it to be mingled with a faint undertone of pain…a mysterious, poetic feeling, deeper than the actual lines and tints at first seem to promise, [this] is the underlying chord in all that Mr. La Farge has done.”

The article argued that all of La Farge’s earlier efforts as engraver, painter and innovator in stained glass worked to reveal and inform his ultimate artistic achievement, the creation of a new aesthetic in American church decoration. According to Lathrop, La Farge’s ability to “aestheticize the public environment,” was recognized by architects in the 1870s who allowed and encouraged him to incorporate painting and sculpture into their churches; his decorative work helped to restore the “former traditional and natural position” of the church in America, which, while ever-present in Europe, was essentially non-existent in the United States. The discussion of his masterwork, Trinity Church,

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99 In his discussion of La Farge’s paintings, consisting of small flower pictures and non-traditional landscapes, Lathrop made clear that he was far more expressive than the traditional landscape painters or the Pre-Raphaelite followers of John Ruskin, both of whom were popular when La Farge began painting in the 1860s. Lathrop (1881): 511.

100 Ibid, 509.

101 Lathrop noted that long before La Farge was selected for the Trinity commission, he had been working “in the decorative direction,” painting two figures of a larger triptych for a Catholic Church in 1862; he described these pictures of a Madonna and St. John as “among the most beautiful and important of the artist’s paintings.” Just as he had an early appreciation for Japanese art, La Farge was at the forefront of the decorative movement,
was centered around the “radical” fact that an accomplished artist was able to bring Catholic traditions to a Protestant institution, resulting in “a great advance upon any church decoration heretofore achieved in this country.”\textsuperscript{102} Although in his letter to Gilder about the article it was clear that La Farge wanted readers to know that the design, decoration and execution of Trinity were entirely his own vision and inspired by his Catholic and humanistic beliefs, he may also have responded to the concerns of Trinity’s rector and charismatic preacher, Phillips Brooks. One of the most influential spokesmen for upper-class Anglo-Americans, Brooks shared in the concern over the challenges facing spirituality from scientific advancements and questions raised by evolutionary thought; La Farge’s two devotional wall murals at Trinity of \textit{Christ and the Woman of Samaria} and the \textit{Visit of Nicodemus to Christ}, both directly responded to these concerns as they depict Christ ministering to and directly addressing human needs.\textsuperscript{103} While they were not reproduced, these murals, which contained a much stronger Christian message than the symbolic Old Testament figures in the central tower, were highlighted as La Farge’s most successful work in the church, with \textit{Christ and Nicodemus} described as “one of La Farge’s masterpieces.” Lathrop also saw these paintings as superior to the “unnatural, unfeeling” work of modern European religious painters, such as J.F. Overbeck, and emphasized the strength and seriousness of La Farge’s faith as manifested in these pictures, particularly in a country where this type of religious imagery and conviction had never been seen before in the fine arts.

\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., 514. It is clear from La Farge’s letter to Gilder, that he wanted readers to know that the design and execution of Trinity were entirely his, and its decoration, inspired by his Catholic and humanistic beliefs, was a result of his own vision.

\textsuperscript{103} For more on Philips Brooks and La Farge see Pyne, 64.
The illustration selected to represent the Trinity project (figure 6.28) was actually a working drawing, a cartoon for an angel in the tower, which was one of the original images La Farge submitted to H.H. Richardson for the proposed mural. As an illustration of a cartoon, cross-hatched for reproduction, the image called attention to the actual process of decorating the church and tied La Farge to the tradition of Renaissance fresco painters, from Giotto to Michelangelo. The sculptural form of the angel also recalled the work of Italian masters such as Giovanni Pisano and Luca della Robbia, whose angels, which La Farge highly admired, adorned Roman Catholic churches throughout Pisa, Pistoia, Florence and Siena. La Farge was not afraid to draw on these sources, which gave the image a Catholic overtone. Further, the unfinished nature of the image itself encouraged Gilder’s notion that a sketch could more strongly convey the emotional essence of a figure than a finished detailed drawing. Here the lightly drawn wings behind the angel give it an ethereal quality; La Farge may have chosen this image over those more solid drawings of the larger Old Testament prophets in the church to convey a sense of divine transcendence. Not only did the illustration allow readers a means of seeing recent interior church decoration, the reproduction of this image gave La Farge the idea to mount exhibitions which sold this drawing and others like it as independent pictures; he took full advantage of the publicity offered by the Trinity

104 The image includes the traditional cross hatch that allows for enlargement onto the wall. La Farge’s assistants employed a variety of mechanical and photomechanical processes to enlarge and transfer the drawing to its correct placement within the decorative scheme. La Farge also sketched this figure and others like it in dense watercolor to provide the assistants with guidelines in terms of color. The drawing testifies to La Farge’s awareness of art historical models and methods, as he was able to intuit how a small sketch of this angel would look on the wall next to the larger figure of Isaiah while resting on the curving arch supporting the tower.
commission as well as the reproduction of his sketches in *Scribner’s*. Concluding his discussion of the era’s most aesthetic place of worship in America, Lathrop proclaimed the success of the Trinity project (which had been a subject of debate in the press) and its establishment of La Farge as the leader in the new movement of religious decoration.

The popularity of his work at Trinity brought him another religious commission in New York City, the altar murals in St. Thomas church, which were represented in the article with an illustration of “The Three Marys” (figure 6.29). La Farge’s two scenes of the resurrection in the chancel of St. Thomas had a more mystical, supernatural narrative than the overall scheme at Trinity and, according to Lathrop, evoked a sense of awe and wonder from the viewer in its combination of the real and the ideal. While both resurrection scenes were described in depth in the text, the art editors chose to reproduce a cartoon of *The Three Marys*, which depicted the passage, recounted in the book of Luke, when they discover that the tomb has been opened, and are greeted by two angels.

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105 These exhibitions took place began in 1879 and continued throughout the 1880s. La Farge first exhibited pencil studies from his church decorations at Trinity and St. Thomas at the Arts Students’ League in January of 1879. La Farge’s work was shown alongside that of Blake’s illustrations from the *Book of Thel*, some pencil sketches and first editions of Blake’s illustrations, including “Blair’s Grave.” “The Arts Student’s League. Drawings by William Blake, of London, and John La Farge, of New-York – Painting by Whistler,” *The New York Times*, January 8, 1879, 5. The *Times* critic particularly praised a working drawing submitted to the commission for Trinity Church which served as a guide outlining the color scheme for the tower and its murals. La Farge began exhibiting decorative sketches extensively at the Architectural League of New York in 1887, and did so regularly throughout the rest of his career. After 1884, he included Trinity sketches for sale in his one-man shows in Boston and New York along with still lives, landscapes, and studies for illustrations. Yarnall, 33.

106 Lathrop (1881): 514. The rector at St. Thomas, William F. Morgan, dictated key elements in his plan for the decoration, calling specifically for the subject of the Resurrection, as well as the inclusion of Gospel texts and a tall Latin cross. For more on the St. Thomas project see Weinberg (1987), 172.
who tell them not to be afraid, that Christ has risen.\textsuperscript{107} The illustration captured each woman’s personal, emotional response to the news of Christ’s resurrection, with gestures conveying shock, acceptance and resolution. Lathrop described the scene of the women from the point of view of the congregation: “[they] seem to float off into an atmosphere of the visionary and unapproachable, tinged with some ray of divination, going beyond the real, yet arresting the real aspect, also and fixing it in a dimly luminous beauty.”\textsuperscript{108} The illustration captured that vision, as the women in the reproduced image seem to float in space, with no background or foreground to anchor them. Unlike the clear early Italian references in the Trinity angel, \textit{The Three Marys}, with their heavy drapery and faces in contrasting shadow and light, recall the mystical figures in the religious scenes of the great Spanish painters, Velázquez, Murillo, and Ribera; later in his popular illustrated “Life of Christ,” La Farge wrote of these artists, “Spaniards have painted wonderful religious paintings [that] carry an extraordinary amount of religious feeling. Tradition tells us that these artists were deeply religious in their lives and thought….the mark of the Spaniard is unworldliness.”\textsuperscript{109} La Farge appropriated aspects of this Spanish style to convey to the viewer a sense of deep religious feeling and devotion over the news of the resurrection heard by the three women as they encountered the angel messengers.

\textsuperscript{107} Also a working cartoon, this image gives a sense of the larger twelve foot high mural, as well as La Farge’s ability to depict the human figure. The drawing provided one of the few records of the project, as the murals would ultimately be destroyed in a fire which burnt down the church in 1905.

\textsuperscript{108} Lathrop (1881): 514.

Flanked by Saint-Gaudens’ painted plaster reredo (see figure 3.3), the murals created a “complete environment,” in the chancel, a sensuous ensemble, which Americans, used to the cold, white, unadorned walls of New England churches, had never before experienced in their worship; it is representative of what Kathleen Pyne has recognized as the “upper-middle-class Protestant majority’s welcoming of the infusion of Catholic aestheticism as a healthy antidote to Calvinism’s tendency toward morbid self-accounting and guilt.”\(^{110}\) Lathrop continually reminded the reader how revolutionary La Farge’s “heavenly visions” of holy and supernatural scenes were for a nation raised on Puritanical aesthetics; in his words, La Farge, “was, moreover, not only the first of our artists of marked ability to execute religious paintings for the walls of our churches, but he was the first who brought to bear a true artistic taste and handling upon every detail of their architectural decoration….He gives us so much that no other American painter has ever attempted to give.”\(^{111}\) The praise for La Farge’s religious decoration, as well as a greater visual awareness and understanding of his projects on the part of the public afforded by the *Scribner’s* illustrations, helped to fuel a vital change amongst Protestant congregations, who, previously suspicious of beauty in the worship place, began to adopt

\(^{110}\) As Kathleen Pyne notes, conversion to Anglo-Catholicism became a commonplace phenomenon at the end of the century. The American Episcopalian church had experienced phenomenal growth in the 1850s, when New York became the center of the movement and the numerous churches built at the time were by-products of this emerging Episcopalianism. Anglo-Catholicism intensified within the Episcopalian church in the 1880s and 1890s, as congregations became more receptive to aspects of worship originally associated with Catholic practice. Pyne, 61. The reredo, which was executed in painted plaster relief, was based on a design by La Farge and had been reproduced in the Cook’s earlier article. This engraving by Timothy Cole was regarded as one of *Scribner’s* finest illustrations (see figure 3.3).

\(^{111}\) Lathrop (1881): 514.
and encourage the notion of a sensuous environment, ushering in a new era for church
decoration in the 1880s and 90s.\footnote{112}

The article, in both text and image, underscores La Farge’s commitment to
devotional works of art that both mirrored and informed Gilder’s interests, and also drove
the aesthetic side of \textit{Scribner’s} at that time in terms of criticism and illustration. Both
men shared a desire in not only improving the general public’s awareness of art, but also
of its transcendent qualities.\footnote{113} La Farge and his images of revelation spoke directly to
readers searching for religious experiences beyond their traditional Protestant
upbringings, and visually embodied Gilder’s ideas on the spiritual in art.

With \textit{Scribner’s} soon to be changing its name to the \textit{Century}, the articles, review,
and editorials discussed in this chapter were some of the Gilder’s final contributions to
the original magazine before he would become editor-in-chief of its successor. It is
telling that he chose to focus so intently on a spiritual message, whether it was delivered
by a contemporary artist in France, a deceased English print-maker, an expatriate painter

\footnote{112}{The success of his religious decorative work at Trinity and St. Thomas, as well as the
publicity afforded those projects from the \textit{Scribner’s} article, led to numerous religious
commissions for La Farge in the early 1880s, and assured his reputation as the religious
painter of the age. Other commissions included the Church of the Incarnation (1885-6),
the Brick Presbyterian Church (1883) and the Church of the Ascension (1886-88).

113}{In his discussion of La Farge’s personal life, Lathrop continuously reminded the
reader that, in spite of his upbringing and sophisticated persona as well as his experiences
overseas, La Farge chose to return to this country in the early 1860s and since that time
had devoted himself to changing the general direction of American art. Because he
remained in the United States, avoiding the rigidity of formal Parisian training, he was
able to create a hybrid style combining both cultures, which, with the incorporation of
many features of French art, ultimately helped to develop the adopted style of the new
movement in America. For more on this hybrid style see Henry Adams, “The Mind of
John La Farge,” in Henry Adams et.al. (1987), 69-71 and Albert Boime, \textit{Thomas Couture
and the Eclectic Vision} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 571-72.}
living in Italy, or a decorator of churches from New York. During its final two years of publication, Scribner’s was overflowing with religious imagery; be it based on the Old and New Testament, ancient and Eastern mythological texts, or historical literature, the depth and breadth of these illustrations of spiritual, imaginative and mystical figures, cannot be ignored. Gilder’s mission was not to directly challenge traditional Protestant doctrine outright in the pages of Scribner’s, but rather to rid his readers of earlier Protestant anxieties about religious images and offer them now as a means of transcendence. He sought not only to provide, but also to popularize that possibility, and he did so through the mass reproduction of illustrations with which his audience could personally engage. Recognizing a wide-spread desire for alternative spiritual experiences, Scribner’s published images that encouraged some type of emotional or intuitive response to these religious figures, forms or symbols on the part of its readers. While the articles discussed the featured artists’ backgrounds and critiqued their work, it was their images of angles, saints and prophets that encouraged religious feeling and conveyed the notion of art as means to reveal spiritual truth, rather than to merely record reality. Gilder recognized the power of these illustrations to speak directly to his public, providing them with news ways of seeing religious imagery and anticipating the overwhelming amount of that imagery that would be disseminated over the next twenty years. His mission to popularize the spiritual in art, as underscored in the articles discussed above, would culminate in his series on Jean-François Millet.

Published between the Blake article of June 1880 and the La Farge piece of February 1881, the five part series represented what Gilder saw as one of his greatest achievements in the magazine, as he introduced Millet to his American audience.
Presented as the contemporary master of French painting whose works suggested a moral message without any direct reference to traditional religion, Millet and his images stood as an ideal model for Gilder’s quest for the spiritual in art. By publishing this series concurrently with his articles on Blake, Vedder and La Farge, *Scribner’s* encouraged a dialogue among its readers about these different artists and how their imaginative work responded to a need for alternative spiritual experiences and a means for new modes of thinking about religion and art.
Chapter VII. “Peasant and Painter,” 1880-1881: Selling Jean-François Millet to the American People

[Through the efforts of many] we are enabled to open to American readers, even before it has been read in France, the hitherto sealed book of Millet’s life…. In many respects the story is what might have been imagined. The massive forms, the tragic landscape of his youth, the primitive and serious people who were about him in early life – these were what he was always painting, even when distance and poverty made him an exile from them…that his was a nature which could not escape suffering was divined in his childhood. But how keenly he suffered will be a revelation even to many who knew him personally.” – Richard Watson Gilder, “Jean François Millet – Peasant and Painter. Introduction Part I,” Scribner’s Monthly (September 1880).

The fall of 1880 was an exciting time for Richard Watson Gilder. Having returned from Europe in the spring, Gilder spent the following months preparing for his increased responsibilities at Scribner’s and contemplating the future of the magazine for the coming decade. Discussions with the magazine’s business partner, Roswell Smith, were already underway about changes in the ownership and management structure at Scribner’s and Gilder would play an important role in determining the course of the new entity. By 1880 Scribner’s had passed the one hundred thousand mark in circulation and had thoroughly established itself in popularity and prestige; its rapid rise was brought about by a number of Gilder’s initiatives, including the magazine’s high quality illustrations and its expanding coverage of cultural topics, particularly that of the visual arts in America. Proud of the periodical’s substantial success over a relatively short period of time, Gilder was eager to continue his efforts of improving art criticism and public taste,

1 The transformation of Scribner’s into the Century was already in process by 1880, as a disagreement between Charles Scribner’s sons and the managers of Scribner’s Monthly, had reached the point that the two groups chose to separate, as evidenced by letters written by Gilder discussing “business changes here.” See Letter from Charles Scribner dated May 17, 1879 and February 3, 1880 in Richard Watson Gilder Papers, NYPL.
and using the magazine as a platform to explore the spiritual in art. With its first installment appearing in September of 1880, “Jean François Millet: Peasant and Painter” represented a major coup for Gilder in the publishing world; beating his French colleagues to the press with a story that was close to his heart, the series embodied many of his passions and his initiatives. The Millet series is representative of Gilder’s vision of the periodical going forward as it responded to his proposals and suggestions for improved coverage of the arts within his prescribed terms. Illustrating trends in French painting adopted by the new generation of American artists, and conveying a powerful spiritual message without reference to particular doctrine, Millet’s art spoke directly to Gilder and he sought to spread the word to his readers through the publication of the artist’s life story, complete with numerous images of his life’s work. The series participates in the broader themes of the dissertation as it exposes how Americans were introduced to, looked at, understood and valued contemporary art, both formally and spiritually, and how Gilder’s colleagues collectively participated in this effort.2

The Millet series was also a direct result of Gilder’s voyage overseas between 1879 and 1880, during which he spent valuable time with a variety of prominent influential writers, critics and artists in the cultural centers of London, Paris, Rome and Venice. With this exposure to the cultural elites of Europe, Gilder constantly evaluated art’s increasingly prominent role in American society, and the responsibility of Scribner’s as a major player in driving and directing that effort. In addition to these larger, more philosophical concerns, Gilder also had some specific projects in mind during the trip.

One of the most important to him was the desire to learn more about the life and art of Jean-François Millet while he was visiting France. Gilder had been introduced to the work of the painter through a number of colleagues in New York, including La Farge, Cottier and Eaton, and was also familiar with the Millet collections of prominent Bostonians; during his time in Paris, he made it his mission to gather as much information as possible about the work of this realist artist who had such appeal to those men whose taste he highly respected. In his search for details about the artist, Gilder learned of an incomplete manuscript about the life of Millet, written by the civil servant, critic and part-time dealer Alfred Sensier, who had died two years earlier on January 7, 1877. Realizing the substantial opportunities in procuring this as yet unknown manuscript for Scribner’s, Gilder set out to obtain it along with a significant number of Millet’s images. Upon reading Sensier’s subjective and sentimental narrative, Gilder anticipated the strong appeal of “Peasant and Painter” among his readership, as it embodied a variety of social, economic, and religious ideals that Americans held dear, particularly during an age of rapid industrial change and spiritual questioning. The publication of the Millet manuscript and the accompanying twenty three illustrations between September 1880 and January 1881 represented the culmination of Gilder’s efforts at Scribner’s to effectively use his position to convey his ideas about the power of art to the American public.

What led Gilder to publish such a substantial story of a deceased French painter of the peasantry who was relatively unknown to the general American public? The Millet biography allowed him to fully realize the aesthetic program that he had developed over the last decade, advancing his mission to improve criticism in the periodic press, his legacy as a self-appointed educator of taste, his role as a spokesperson for the “Younger
Painters of America,” and his desire to encourage Americans to appreciate and understand an artist whose images were emblematic of a higher morality. In addition to these aesthetic concerns, Gilder also further increased the popularity and distribution of Scribner’s with the promotion of a lavishly illustrated, marketable romantic tale. Gilder’s manipulation of Millet’s legacy contributes to the contemporary debate about the “modern artist,” as it responded to the cult of celebrity as well as the use of new methods of printing to reproduce iconic images such as The Sower and The Angelus on such a substantial scale. Ironically, it was through the applications of commerce and technology - advancements with which the very nature and appeal of images that privileged the dignity of individual labor prior to mechanized production, seemed so deeply at odds - that the fame of Millet, his work and his legend were dispersed across the United States in the pages of Scribner’s.

“Scooping" the French Press

As soon as he heard about the possibility of obtaining a “Millet Manuscript,” Gilder was driven to purchase the text, translate it and publish it as quickly as possible; this required a substantial amount of negotiation, given Sensier’s recent death. A recognized art critic, Alfred Sensier contributed annual reviews of the Salon to French aesthetic journals, and also wrote major monographs on Barbizon painters including Theodore Rousseau. A close friend of many landscape artists in the mid 1840s, Sensier developed a wide range of connections through Rousseau, Diaz, and Troyon, who introduced him to Millet in 1847; the two corresponded closely over the next thirty years,
until Millet’s death in 1875. Sensier’s intimate relationship with Millet allowed him to become an amateur dealer on his behalf, and in the early years of Millet’s career, Sensier bought a large proportion of his paintings and drawings, providing him with artistic materials in exchange for finished works. At the same time, he organized exhibitions, promoting and selling Millet’s work on his own and, later, through more prominent dealers, such as Durand Ruel. As part of his efforts to promote Millet, Sensier began writing his biography upon the artist’s death, relying heavily on Millet’s letters, with quotes taken directly from Millet’s own words. When Sensier died in 1877 with an unfinished manuscript and the family asked critic Paul Mantz to complete the biography, he was able to do so based entirely on the correspondence between the two men. With the help of Millet’s son, François, a close friend of Eaton’s, and Charles LeBrun, the

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3 Sensier was born in Paris on Dec. 25, 1815, the son of a notary who would later become commissaire général under the July Monarchy. Between 1848 and 1850, he entered the Louvre as Chef de Bureau des Musées under Jeanron and after a brief period out of office became Chef du Secrétariat of the Ministry of the Interior in 1850, a position he held until his retirement in 1873. For more on the life of Alfred Sensier, see the introduction by Paul Mantz to Alfred Sensier, Jean François Millet Peasant and Painter, Trans. Helena de Kay (London: Macmillan and Co., 1881), v-viii, as well as Christopher Parsons and Neil McWilliam, “‘Le Paysan de Paris’: Alfred Sensier and the Myth of Rural France” *Oxford Art Journal* 6, no.2 (1983): 38-58.

4 A longtime defender of Millet in the press, Mantz wrote for a number of French periodicals, with his art criticism appearing most frequently in the Gazette des Beaux Arts. Between 1881 and 1882 Mantz was the directeur général des beaux arts, a high-ranking position in the government’s fine arts bureaucracy. The *Scribner’s* article noted the break in the year 1877, the point at which Sensier, due to his death, was no longer able to continue writing, and the remainder of the text, which was essentially the bulk of the fifth and final installment was comprised almost entirely of Millet’s letters: “Here the MS. Of Alfred Sensier comes to an end.* [Owing to the death of Sensier in 1877, M. Paul Mantz takes up and concludes the narrative. Ed.S.M.] But there are notes in pencil and on the margins of catalogues, bits from newspapers, and best of all, packages of long letters from Millet, with which we try to continue the story. We will leave Millet to speak as much as possible. He wrote a great deal, but no one will be surprised to hear that all the letters are not equally interesting. They are full of intimate details…” (January 1881): 396.
executor of Sensier’s will and a collector of Millet’s work, Gilder obtained the advance sheets of Sensier’s manuscript from the French publisher A. Quantin, securing the manuscript for publication in *Scribner’s* prior to its distribution in France in 1881. Further, Gilder procured an astonishing number of Millet’s images for reproduction through fac-similies made by the Yves & Barret process, with most of them produced directly from Millet’s drawings. While some of the engravings came from reproductions of well-known paintings such as *The Sower* and *The Angelus*, the majority were made from images copied directly from drawings in LeBrun’s, Sensier’s or the Millet family’s holdings, and, as such, had never been seen by the public (figures 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4 and 7.5).

Given that time was of the essence in order to publish the manuscript in America prior to its appearance in France, Gilder enlisted his wife to translate the text from its original French. With her fluency in the language, de Kay worked quickly and efficiently, in time for the first installment to appear in *Scribner’s* in September of 1880, just four months after their return from Europe. Using some artistic license, de Kay modified the title of the piece to read “Jean François Millet: Peasant and Painter,” a subtle but significant change, as it signaled the way in which Gilder would go about selling Millet to his middle class American readers. While Sensier’s book, *La vie et l’oeuvre de J.-F. Millet* was published in France the following year, Gilder presented the manuscript in its entirety and fully illustrated to the American public in a five part, seventy page article published in monthly installments between September of 1880 and January of 1881.

Gilder was clearly proud of his accomplishment, as he recounted to his audience in his

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5 See Gilder correspondence with A. Quantin et Cie dated March 24, 1880, and with C. LeBrun dated March 3, 1880 Richard Watson Gilder papers, NYPL.
introduction to the piece of his unique and important “scoop”: “we are enabled to open to
American readers, even before it has been read in France, the hitherto sealed book of
Millet’s life.” In Gilder’s rush to publish, he had, in a certain sense, claimed Millet’s
legacy for an American audience. The appearance of “Peasant and Painter” resulted in an
explosive awareness and interest in the artist in the United States and set the tone for
Millet criticism for the rest of the nineteenth century, securing Millet’s position as the
most popular international painter in America.

Millet in America before “Peasant and Painter”: Closed Spaces in Brahmin Boston

I do not intend to suggest that Gilder introduced Millet to America, as the artist
was well known within certain circles prior to the publication of the article, particularly
in the city of Boston. In light of the extensive scholarship concerning Millet’s
relationship with Boston, it is important to place the Scribner’s biography within the
historical context of Millet’s critical acclaim in America. Born in 1814 in Cherbourg on
the Normandy coast, Millet settled into his famous home at Barbizon in 1849; here he
attracted a number of American artists in the early 1850s, including William Babcock,
William Morris Hunt and Edward Wheelwright, all of whom came from Boston to study

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6 R.W. Gilder introduction to “Jean François Millet – Peasant and Painter” in *Scribner’s
Monthly* Vol. 20, (September 1880): 735.

7 The most complete discussion of Millet in America can be found in the exhaustive
studies of the subject by Laura Meixner in her book, her dissertation, and her numerous
articles. See Meixner (1995); “Jean-François Millet: His American Students and
Influences,” (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 1979); “Popular Criticism of Jean-
p.78-84.
in Paris. These young expatriates befriended him, lived with him at Barbizon, studied with him, appropriated his style and purchased his work for themselves or Boston collectors. Millet’s most famous American student, William Morris Hunt, acquired *The Sower* in 1851 and encouraged other major Boston collectors to buy up many of Millet’s paintings, as French collectors had, in effect, ignored most of his work in the 1850s. Millet was not officially recognized until the Exposition Universelle in 1867, with the exhibition of his most prominent paintings, *The Gleaners* (1857) and *The Angelus* (1857-59). As a result, by the time of Millet’s death in 1875, many important Millet paintings could be found in Boston, particularly in the collections of Quincy Adams Shaw and Martin Brimmer.9 In addition to encouraging the sale of Millet’s work, Hunt was also vital to Millet’s introduction to America in terms of his considerable promotion of the artist’s style, which was evident in his work as a both a painter and a teacher. Hunt’s wide connections to artistic, social and intellectual circles in Boston ensured the legacy of

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9 By 1889, there were more than 125 paintings and pastels, and thirty drawings owned in the city of Boston, some of which had already been given to the Museum of Fine Arts. Private patrons such as Peter Brooks, Henry Sayles, Frederic Ames, Quincy Adams Shaw, and Martin Brimmer owned a third of all of Millet’s Salon paintings, and, collectively, the city claimed the most comprehensive selection of his pastels in the world. Bequests from these collectors, particularly Shaw and Brimmer, currently make up the bulk of the MFA’s substantial Millet holdings, which exceeds 150 works. For more on the Boston patrons of Millet, see Alexandra Murphy, *Jean-François Millet* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1984, Exhibition Catalogue), particularly pp ix – xviii.
Millet in that city as well as among select cultural groups in other urban areas such as Newport and New York.  

In terms of popular print media, Millet had little exposure to the general American public prior to the publication of “Peasant and Painter.” While Laura Meixner’s documentation of articles on Millet in political and religious journals, aesthetic periodicals, daily newspapers and monthly magazines is extensive, I would argue that it presents a somewhat distorted picture in terms of the average American’s familiarity with Millet and his work before 1880. While the articles, authors and sources of these texts work to support Meixner’s argument in tracing the cross-class, diverse audiences’ use of plural belief systems to interpret Millet’s art for their own respective purposes, one might imply from her discussion that Millet was widely known and discussed by Americans during the later 1860s and early 1870s. The majority of the articles that she cites are generally taken from relatively obscure, short-lived journals with specific political, religious or aesthetic agendas whose circulations were often quite small vis-à-vis the more popular monthlies.  

With the exception of a rather poor reproduction of Millet’s

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10 For example, Hunt was the only artist admitted to the intellectually elite Saturday club, whose membership included Emerson, Longfellow, O.W. Holmes, Hawthorne, C.E. Norton, Henry James, and Thomas Gold Appleton. Hunt’s promotion of Millet is discussed extensively in both Meixner’s book and dissertation as well as in Murphy’s 1984 exhibition cited above. For a discussion of the impact of Millet on Hunt’s teachings see Hirschler (2001), particularly “The Students of William Morris Hunt;” 23-33. Hunt’s appropriation of Millet’s style clearly impacted his students, as seen in the work of Helen Knowlton. Having inherited and maintained Hunt’s classes according to his methods until the early 1900s, Knowlton also published Talks on Art, which summarized Hunt’s teachings, as well as his biography in 1899. Hirschler notes how “Exhibition records show her to have favored subjects that recalled the simple, rural landscape of Millet’s France, perceived through Hunt’s glass,” as evidenced in images by Knowlton such as her Haystacks of 1875.

11 See for example, Pictor Ignotus, “Art in Boston,” in Round Table 2, no, 28 (June 25, 1864); Edna Dow Cheney, “Jean-Francois Millet,” in Radical 2 (July 1867): 668.; or L.G.
Women Sewing, in the November 1871 edition of Harper’s Monthly (figure 7.6), an image which is quite uncharacteristic of Millet in terms of its style, no illustrations of Millet’s work existed in the periodic press prior to the publication of the Scribner’s series; Eugene Benson’s un-illustrated, one page discussion of Millet in Appleton’s Journal was the only text devoted to the artist to be found in a popular American magazine during his lifetime.\(^\text{12}\) As such, I think it is important to situate Meixner’s research within a larger framework, to underscore the fact that until his death in 1875, the middle class American public was generally unfamiliar with Millet and had never seen his work. While this chapter clearly builds on her substantial body of scholarship, it pursues a different path, exploring how the popularizing of Millet participated in the larger growth of print media as it began to change the nature of art reception and consumption in America during the late nineteenth century, and, more specifically, what

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Ware, “Jean-Francois Millet,” Unitarian Review 4, no. 2 (August 1875): 164. When Millet was cited in daily newspapers or even in more popular periodicals, the texts were brief, and contained no illustrations. See for example N.Y. Evening Post, December 7, 1867, p.1. “Francois Millet Peasant Painter”\(^\text{12}\) See M[oncure] D [aniel] Conway, “Edouard Frere, and Sympathetic Art in France,” Harper’s New Monthly Magazine, 43, no. 358 (November 1871): 805-6. Conway devoted a brief paragraph to Millet and placed him in the context of numerous French landscape and academic painters. The Benson article focused on Millet’s subject matter and the primitive sadness of the life of the peasantry; while the piece served as the most sophisticated comprehensive discussion of Millet up until that time, it failed to describe any particular work in-depth. Eugene Benson, “The Peasant-Painter – Jean-Francois Millet,” Appletons’ Journal 8, no. 185 (October 12, 1872): p.404. Eugene Benson (1839-1908) was a perceptive critic whose articles in the 1860s and early 1870s for The Galaxy, Appleton’s and the Atlantic Monthly dealt with social, literary, and artistic issues; Benson adopted many of the aesthetic ideas which Gilder would go on to promote in the pages of Scribner’s. Unable to establish a literary career in America, Benson moved to Italy. Unfortunately little scholarly attention has been paid to Benson, particularly his work as an art critic. For a full list of his published articles see Robert J. Scholnick, “Between Realism and Romanticism: The Curious Career of Eugene Benson,” American Literary Realism 14, no. 2 (Autumn 1981): 242-61.
the publication of such an extensive article can tell us about Gilder, Scribner’s and its readership in the early 1880s.

Prior to the Scribner’s series, the single most important discussion of Millet appeared almost two years after his death, with the publication of Edward Wheelwright’s “Personal Recollections of Jean-François Millet” in the Atlantic Monthly’s September 1876 edition. In fact, in a discussion of the tributes made to Millet after his death, Mantz wrote at the conclusion of the Sensier text, “And even America sent her testimony of esteem and regret, the article by Mr. Edward Wheelwright in the ‘Atlantic Monthly’ of September, 1876, is one of the most complete and personal studies of Millet that have been published.”13 An analysis of the Atlantic Monthly article, which preceded “Peasant and Painter” by four years, is helpful in order to put the more dramatic chronicle of Millet’s trials and tribulations found in the Scribner’s series in context, particularly when compared to Wheelright’s intellectual memoir of Millet. The differences between the scholarly Atlantic with its distribution to 20,000 primarily Bostonian readers, with the more popular Scribner’s, whose 125,000 subscribers were dispersed from New York City across the nation, are made clear in a comparison of the two accounts of the artist. Framed around his personal experiences with Millet, Wheelwright’s article was geared toward a New England audience with its emphasis on Millet’s classical learning and cultivated family background. Wheelwright pointed out that while Millet’s family could technically be classified as “peasants,” they were in fact more like “independent yeomen” who cultivated their own land and were a traditional, well-respected French family. Providing a thorough description of the Barbizon landscape and the specific activities of

13 Sensier, (January 1881): 405.
the local peasantry, Wheelwright described them as “not badly off……Barbison was, in fact, a prosperous place; there was no real poverty there.” 14 His portrayal of Millet’s life in Barbizon was somewhat Thoreauian in his removal from the urban materialism of Paris and the conformity of the city’s academic art world, as well as Millet’s detached view of the local peasantry. 15 Wheelwright’s account worked to separate Millet from the peasant class as much as possible, describing how when Millet went to Paris he “shed his blouse and sabots.” In a comment that would clearly have appealed to the Brahmin readers of the Atlantic, Wheelwright noted “it was not among the peasants, his neighbors, that he found his friends and associates. These came to him from the world outside. They were people of taste and culture, artists and men of letters.” And while Millet depicted peasants, they were “of the orderly class – not ne’er do wells,” as the painter avoided the “ignoble aspects” of the peasantry which were “repulsive to him,” and sought, rather, to depict their “ideality.” 16

This account of Millet’s relationship to the peasantry differed substantially from the Sensier text, which situated Millet well within the peasant class. While Sensier did note Millet’s familiarity with the classics, his text emphasized Millet’s use of the Bible; Sensier did not deny the reputation of Millet’s family, but the emphasis was on their piety rather than their class status. It was clear to Gilder when he initially read the manuscript that the Sensier text would resonate with Americans across the nation, in middle class homes and farms. While the Atlantic article did provide a thorough discussion of Millet’s

15 Millet was compared to Thoreau by certain critics in the 1860s and 70s. Meixner (1995). 51.
16 Wheelwright (September 1876): 273.
art as well as a personal tribute to the man who had been Wheelwright’s mentor and teacher, the piece was aimed at a limited audience that was already familiar with the artist through his exposure in Boston since mid-century. The fact that there were no illustrations further underscores the contrast between the two; Atlantic readers desiring to see his work would need to seek out original Millets in local collections, while Scribner’s readers had the images readily available as they perused the text describing them. The comparison calls further attention to the complex relationship between Scribner’s and the Boston community discussed in Chapter VI, and sheds additional light on the changing nature of the publishing industry by the end of the 1870s, as its power base shifted from Boston to New York.

17 Millet was also not a stranger to the Boston daily press, which in addition to printing obituaries around the time of his death, also covered a lengthy argument over Millet’s work between Hunt and Charles Henry Moore, a loyal follower of Ruskin and Hunt’s major antagonist. An exhibition of Millet’s paintings in May of 1875 from Bostonian collections at the Athenaeum set off the debate in the local press on the nature of Millet’s unfinished style and peasant genre subjects. The Atlantic Monthly also got involved, printing an editorial that praised Millet as a draftsman, but was critical of his abilities as a painter. See “Art” Atlantic Monthly, 36 (September 1875): 374.

18 In his history of the Atlantic Monthly, Ellery Sedgwick notes that while Scribner’s catered to its prosperous and growing middle class readership, the Atlantic was the magazine of a narrower, more liberally educated, intellectual elite which had begun a long decline in influence. Sedgwick, 127. Comparing the Atlantic to the more popular monthlies, Sedwick notes that it was committed more narrowly to literary high culture, had little fiction that appealed to nonintellectual interests, and featured fewer special departments appealing to diverse audiences: “The new Scribner’s, then, was a morally earnest, high-quality, and quite successful effort to provide cultural education for the upwardly mobile middle class, and particularly its women. It contained enough middlebrow, middle-class popular culture to provide its audience entertainment and pleasure, and enough highbrow material to make them feel they were being culturally improved. By contrast, Howell’s Atlantic, as the decade wore on, reflected the intentions of its publisher and editor to stay the course of high literary and intellectual culture, to accept a niche between the scholarly magazines like the old North American Review and the popular quality illustrated magazines like Scribner’s rather than trying to compete with the latter by imitating them.” Quote from 129. William Dean Howells understood this shift not only in his role as both editor of the Atlantic Monthly during the decade, but
It is important to emphasize that, although by 1880 there were a substantial number of Millet paintings in America, they were concentrated in the homes of a select group of Boston Brahmins, a fairly closed community within itself. While Millet’s primary collectors, Brimmer and Shaw, did lend a select number of Millet paintings for temporary exhibitions at the Athenaeum and the Museum of Fine Arts, they did not open their private collections to the public. As Alexandra Murphy has pointed out, up until 1881, Shaw’s collection, which was recognized as the largest assemblage of Millet’s work in the United States and second only in size to that of James Staats Forbes’ collection in England, had been seen by only a select few.  

The Millet paintings were not generally available for viewing, as noted when they were lent to the 1889 Bayre exhibition at New York’s American Art Association Gallery: “Mr. Shaw’s Millets have been unknown to us save by reputation and their appearance here has fairly take our connoisseurs off their feet. We have seen no group of Millets illustrating so perfectly the artist’s powers as a painter’s painter or his ability as a colorist.”   

Peter Birmingham has argued that the scaled down nature of Barbizon paintings like Millet’s found more favor also as a “realist” novelist and as a man from the Midwest who stood outside the inner circle of literary Boston. Howells watched the circulation of the Atlantic drop sharply during his tenure from 35,000 in 1871 to 12,000 in 1881, largely due to the competition from the New York illustrated monthlies. In the late 1870s he recognized the need to make the Atlantic more fully national and democratic in its content and authorship, following Scribner’s as the current standard in the publishing industry. Wheelwright’s article was representative of that “literary Boston” that made up so much of the Atlantic’s material and from which Howells sought unsuccessfully to steer the magazine away. For more on Howell’s tenure at the Atlantic Monthly see Sedgwick’s chapter 4, “William Dean Howells 1871-1881: Editorial Realist,” 113-159.  

An article on Shaw’s holdings was published in an 1881 edition of the Art Amatuer, Murphy, p.xii.  

Boston Evening Transcript (July 22, 1889) quote from Murphy, xiii. Shaw did not officially give his collection to the Museum of Fine Arts until October 11, 1907. For more on the gift see “The Quincy Adams Shaw Collection,” Museum of Fine Arts Bulletin XVI no. 94 (April 1918):11-18.
in private Bostonian parlors than in the galleries of New York City mansions, contrasting the typical Bostonian Millet connoisseur, generally a Harvard graduate who was philanthropic and financially sound but not extravagant, with the New York art collector, a businessman more interested in filling his home with grand French academic works by painters likely to impress, such as Gérôme and Meissonier.\textsuperscript{21} The Brahmin collectors may have been willing to selectively display their Millets to Boston’s literary society, but they were clearly not interested in expanding Millet’s exposure to middle class Americans across the nation. While original Millet paintings could be found in the serene atmosphere of these home galleries, designed for more intimate contemplation, and appealing to the upper echelons of Old Boston who saw his work as the artistic embodiment of transcendentalism, Gilder took Millet out of these private spaces and reshaped the way he was seen in America.

**Introducing Gilder to Millet**

It is not certain at what point Gilder first came to hear of Millet, although one can be sure that the painter’s name was frequently discussed by those within his inner circle. La Farge was intimately familiar with the work of Millet during his early years in Paris and through his contact with Hunt in Newport in 1859: “He [Hunt] introduced me to the knowledge of the works of Millet, of which he had many, including the famous Sower, and very many drawings, and more especially to the teachings, the sayings, and the curious spiritual life which a great artist like Millet opens to his devotees.”\textsuperscript{22} In 1875,

\textsuperscript{21} Birmingham, 45.
\textsuperscript{22} Royal Cortissoz, *John La Farge: A Memoir and Study* (New York: Houghton Mifflin And Ėo., 1911), 96. Toward the end of his career La Farge would lecture extensively on Millet, describing him as a “vision of emotional art,” and emphasizing his “ideals of life,
Gilder, who was at the peak of his career as a poet, published the poem, “A Sower went forth to sow,” which was clearly inspired by Millet’s image of *The Sower*, marking Gilder as one of the earliest of innumerable literary interpreters of Millet’s art and suggesting his strong familiarity with the artist. The poem not only described the sower in Millet’s painting, but also associated him with the hard labor of the French peasantry: “Thus did that Sower sow; His seed was human blood, And Tears of women and men. And I, who near him stood, Said: When the crop comes, then There will be sobbing and sighing, weeping wailing and crying, Flame, and ashes and woe.”

Gilder was also able to experience Millet’s work directly when Cottier’s gallery held a exhibition of Barbizon artists in April of 1878 in which four paintings by Millet, including *The Wayfarer* and *Hagar and Ishmael*, were on display. Gilder was also able to experience Millet’s work directly when Cottier’s gallery held a exhibition of Barbizon artists in April of 1878 in which four paintings by Millet, including *The Wayfarer* and *Hagar and Ishmael*, were on display.  

In addition to these sources, we know by reading his correspondence that Gilder became extremely familiar with Millet’s aesthetic philosophy through his close friendship with Eaton, an artist and illustrator at Scribner’s, as well as one of the original four

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founding members of the Society of the American Artists (see Chapter III). Eaton had been part of the second generation of American artists to adopt Millet as mentor and friend in the early 1870s, as he spent intermittent periods in Barbizon with the artist in the two and one half years before his death. Arriving in Paris to study in the studio of Gérôme, he began his academic instruction in 1872; during his early days in the city he saw Millet’s work displayed in window shops and became intrigued with the artist. Aware of his past history of mentoring young American students, Eaton traveled to Barbizon that summer and developed a close friendship with Millet as well as his son François and also married a local French peasant from the region. Millet’s influence on his work is apparent in Eaton’s first major painting, *Harvesters at Rest*, as he sought to combine his academic training with Millet’s genre subject matter and style in an image that closely resembles *Millet’s Harvesters Resting (Ruth and Boaz)* (figures 7.7 and 7.8). The impact of Millet on Eaton’s work continued upon his return in 1877 to New York City where he took a job as a teacher at the Cooper Union, and became a member of Gilder’s inner circle. During this period he rose in the ranks as one of Scribner’s primary artists, receiving, in addition to smaller assignments for illustrated articles, a commission for a series of frontispiece portraits of major American literary figures (see figure 4.3). Eaton would go on to be featured in the pages of *Scribner’s*, not just as an illustrator, but also recognized as a teacher at the Cooper Union in its coverage of the New York Art Schools and as one of the most promising of the “new men” in the seminal article on “The Younger Painters of America” (see Chapters IV and V). While at the Cooper Union, Eaton incorporated a series of lectures into his studio curriculum that were open to the public; these lectures were essentially summaries of Eaton’s conversations
with Millet during his time at Barbizon. Gilder and Eaton had frequent discussions regarding Eaton’s lectures and the need for improved academic training and exhibition venues in America.\textsuperscript{25} While Hunt may have exposed Millet to Boston connoisseurs, it was Eaton who thoroughly indoctrinated his style, subject matter and philosophical underpinnings to New Yorkers, particularly Gilder, who came to see Millet as the ultimate French artist whose work could be sold to the general American public. Further, while undocumented, it is highly likely that Eaton facilitated the purchase of the biography from Millet’s family and explains their willingness to provide the American Gilder with the exclusive manuscript as well as the numerous, unpublished drawings.

**Gilder’s Preface to “Peasant and Painter”: Setting the Agendas**

Intended as a prologue to the Sensier monograph, Gilder’s own four page introduction provided him with a platform to critically explain to his readership why “Millet must be set apart with such natures as those of Giotto, Michel Angelo and Rembrandt.”\textsuperscript{26} In his introductory remarks on Millet, Gilder addressed many of his major goals and concerns for both the future of *Scribner’s* (soon to become the *Century*), as well as art in America that have been explored throughout the dissertation: his desire to improve art criticism; his role as an educator of taste to middle class Americans; his position as spokesperson for and promoter of the country’s next generation of painters, many of whom were SAA members and illustrators for *Scribner’s*, and his mission to

\textsuperscript{25} In a letter to Gilder dated June 21, 1877, Eaton wrote: “I see the Academy as a great obstacle to art, culture, growth and education. It must be completely turned over (which I do not believe possible) or it must die – [it is in] the interest of artists and students in common in accepting this….we can depend only upon men who have recently been to Europe who have breathed the larger artistic spirit and have tasted the many advantages for the study of art abroad.” Richard Watson Gilder Papers, NYPL.

\textsuperscript{26} Gilder (September 1880): 735.
convey and reveal the spiritual in art to his readers. As a way of understanding the forces motivating Gilder in the publication of the Millet series, these opening remarks provide a window into his personal agendas behind the publication, which I will categorize here as aesthetic, political, and spiritual.

As highlighted in my earlier chapters, one of Gilder’s primary goals during his tenure at *Scribner’s* was to improve the nature of American art criticism. Having written extensively about the subject in the 1870s, Gilder now felt confident in his own capabilities as a critic and sought to discuss the work of Millet in clear, analytical terms and to explain his use of color and composition, his unfinished style, and the nature of realism; the text’s high quality wood engravings were essential in visualizing these concepts (figures 7.2, 7.3, 7.9, 7.10, 7.11, and 7.12). Differentiating Millet from other “realists” Gilder noted, “He knew how to select. He is called the chief of the realists, but he never painted ugliness for its own sake.” 27 This intense realism is evident in the illustration of “The Woodman” whose cumbersome bundle of gathered branches overwhelms the gnarled old man, stooping to bear the heavy load as he turns away from the viewer (figure 7.3). In the text Gilder emphasized Millet’s unique ability to “draw action,” not merely people in movement, but the action of the body; his discussion, which came directly from Eaton’s lectures, was represented in illustrations such as “The Reaper” and “The Diggers.” which effectively portray the human body in motion (figures 7.9 and 7.10) Attacking those who criticized Millet’s lack of precise outline, Gilder questioned the value of “the knowledge and practice of which is acquired yearly by hundreds of boys in Paris and which enable them to make drawings which resemble so

Defending his abilities as a draftsman, Gilder explained how Millet “drew not with exterior minuteness but with a correctness, a knowledge of the forms and articulation, the build and action of the human body;” his innate understanding of drawing was vital to his artistic expression, and his “graphic simplicity,” which was apparent in illustrations such as “Woman Bringing Home the Milk,” tied him to the great traditions of Greek sculpture. Millet’s subjects’ generalized features, seen in illustrations such as “Women Bringing Home Clothes After Washing” and “Noon” appealed to the average reader in their clarity and economy, separating them from the multitude of academic, “prettified peasants” by popular artists such as Jules Breton (figures 7.2, 7.11, and 7.12). This critical discussion of Millet’s figures was an important compliment to Sensier’s text, which, while primarily biographical in nature, did display the high quality wood engravings that, in their ability to capture the artist’s painterly techniques, so clearly visualized the aesthetic ideas Gilder sought to convey to his readers.

In addition to addressing specific aspects of Millet’s technique, the introduction also discussed the philosophical aspects of Millet’s work. Here we see Gilder using Millet as a vehicle to “teach taste” to the American public, as he virtually shamed the culturally insecure reader into a profound admiration for the artist and his noble subject matter. According to the text, if the viewer could not experience the power in Michelangelo’s *Dawn*, Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, or Millet’s *Sower*, “then it is idle to make him feel it.” As a prominent cultural spokesman of his day, Gilder emphatically lauded Millet as “the most powerful, the most saving, modern influence in France and

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28 Ibid.
29 Ibid., 733-4.
America, both in sculpture and in painting.” The American public must acknowledge this status, not only on aesthetic grounds but also on an emotional level, as his pictures “come straight to our own hearts from the hearts of those who are suffering and working in our own times.” \(^{30}\) Here Gilder as the teacher of taste, set the tone for the enormous popularity of Millet in America, by encouraging the public to appreciate his technique and his aesthetic treatment of the peasantry in these genre subjects; he also appealed to their democratic sensibilities, citing the noble ideals behind those images, ideals that all American citizens should be sympathetic to, and recognize as vital in both art and life. Notably, those ideals had not been embraced by Millet’s French countryman.

Through his use of terms such as “expressive,” “subjective,” and “imaginative” in describing Millet’s paintings, Gilder’s introduction also operated as a means to link the work of the established artist to that of the new “younger painters in America” whom Gilder had so fiercely promoted on the pages of *Scribner’s* during the late 1870s and early 1880s. Gilder noted that while Millet had only recently been “accepted, if at all with large reservations,” as part of the pantheon of French artists, contemporary American painters had long shared a deep-seated bond with him. Stressing his influence on the “young men” (and women), Gilder suggested a type of succession from Millet to this new American generation, crediting the group (as well as the cultural elite of America, among whom he considered himself a member) for having the aesthetic foresight to have recognized Millet and, in a sense, claimed him as their own. The introduction underscored Millet’s position as being at the forefront of “the line of true modern artists,” and, given Millet’s stylistic affinities with many of the new younger painters,

represented the future for American art. These affinities were made clear as *Scribner’s* seminal article on “The Younger Painters of America” had been conveniently published in the same volume as the Millet biography, and included numerous engravings by members of the recently formed Society of American Artists. Reproductions of paintings such as Ryder’s *Spring* and Abbott Thayer’s *Autumn Afternoon in Berkshire* (see figures 5.5 and 5.7) could be easily compared by readers to similar landscapes included in the Millet series, such as “Shepherdess” and “The Plain of Barbizon” (figures 7.13 and 7.14). By encouraging Americans to accept his lack of finish, his emphasis on the human figure, and his intimate pastoral landscapes, Gilder was not only teaching the public to become accustomed to Millet’s art form, but also endorsing a style that he hoped would become the dominant trend in American painting in the late nineteenth century.

In addition to these aesthetic and political associations, Gilder also recognized in Millet’s subject matter a means by which to convey his ideas on spirituality in art. Recognized as images of spiritual renewal, engravings of works such as “The Angelus” and “The Sower” (figures 7.15 and 7.16), embodied the idea of an aesthetic encounter with the divine, of an alternative religious experience. While *The Sower* depicts a type rather than a specific Biblical figure, and cannot be tied to a particular doctrine, it does cause the viewer to make associations with larger Biblical concepts, such as the Parable of the Sower. Both “The Sower” and “The Angelus,” which were of the highest quality in terms of the article’s reproductions and their veracity to the originals, conveyed a sense of the devotional in their depiction of a pure and unadulterated relationship between

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32 For more on spiritual associations with these Millet paintings, see Robert Herbert, et.al. (1976), 78-80 and 87-90 and Meixner (1995), 59, 76.
humankind and nature. In Millet, Gilder believed he had found an artist whose images of the most simple subjects could fill the void of the devout: “We must be able to make the trivial serve for the expression of the sublime; that is true power.” According to Gilder, Millet’s common genre subjects often called to mind spiritual subjects and themes, and while he specifically painted shepherds, sowers and harvesters, these figures were also images of universal mankind; in describing his work, Gilder suggested that Millet’s paintings were emblematic of a higher morality: “he was capable with a single figure to personify the good or evil of all humanity… for his largeness, for his Biblical majesty and elevation, and for his sense of beauty, Millet must be set apart.” 33 As such, the art of Millet fulfilled Gilder’s larger aesthetic project, to provide a sense of “the higher life” during a time of urbanization, social turmoil, questioning of traditional Protestantism and searching for alternative religious experiences.

The Sensier Text: Mythologizing Millet

Following Gilder’s critical preface, the series itself had mass appeal as a romantic fairy tale, enhanced by a variety of picturesque and heartrending images such as “The Birthplace of Millet” and “Teaching the Baby to Walk” (figures 7.4 and 7.17). In his introduction Gilder informed his readers that “in many respects the story is what might have been imagined – the tragic landscape of his youth, the primitive and serious people who were about him in early life…the poverty, the suffering.” 34 Sensier’s biography, which stood as the first official monograph of Millet and has survived a number of editions since its original appearance in 1881, was divided into the following five

33 Ibid., 734-5.
34 Ibid., 735.
sections for its serialized publication in *Scribner's*: Part I provided detailed accounts and images of his childhood between 1814 and 1837 in his hometown of Gruchy; Part II dealt with Millet’s early career in Paris between 1837 and 1849; Part III focused on Millet’s new life in Barbizon; and Parts IV and V described his most important works of art as well as the final years of his life, primarily through the use of his letters to Sensier. While the biography in many ways established the standard reading of Millet’s life, with Sensier recognized as the authority on the artist, its various contradictions, exaggerations and frequently fictitious narratives were often at odds with the historical record. However, the combination of Sensier’s account (as well as de Kay’s translation of that account) with a careful selection and placement of Millet’s images made for a good romantic novel that, in spite of its French subject matter, spoke directly to many concerns shared by Americans in a post Civil War world; any controversial facts or images that might disturb that dialogue were not included.

Describing Millet’s early years, Sensier emphasized the pious nature of Millet’s upbringing, recounting tales of Millet’s great uncle who risked his life to preach the gospel after the French Revolution, and of his grandmother, Louise Jumeline, who named her grandson after St. Francis of Assisi; according to Sensier, Millet’s grand-mère roused him every morning, saying “Wake up my little François; you don’t know how long the birds have already been singing the glory of God!”35 The popular heroine of the story,

35 *Ibid.*, 738 This portrayal of the young François raised in the French countryside by his pious grandmother would become a standard way of introducing Millet, as the phrase was frequently cited (without any credit to the Sensier text) in a number of art historical writings. See, for example, George Sheldon’s discussion of Millet in *Hours With Artists* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1882), 168, in which he lifted this passage directly from *Peasant and Painter*. 
beloved by *Scribner’s* readers, Louise Jumeline was praised for her religious fervor, her wisdom, her love of family and of nature:

All her strength was concentrated in love of God, doing her duty, and love of her family. Full of religious fire, harsh toward herself, gentle and charitable to others, she passed her days in good deeds, with no less an ideal than that of a saint. She was so rigid in her duties as a grandmother that she never allowed herself to inflict the slightest punishment upon her grandchildren in a moment of impatience, but waited until the next day, in order to explain to them the importance of the fault and the justice of the punishment. Her charity was boundless…the doors of the Millet house were always open.  

Americans responded strongly to the virtuous Louise who cultivated a domestic environment that instilled spiritual sensibilities in her children and grandchildren and maintained traditional foundations of social stability and moral order; *Scribner’s* readers saw her as the French equivalent of the Anglo-American Madonna. Guided by his pious grand-mère, Millet’s childhood in his rural Gruchy adhered to the ideal of the feminine sphere, which as described by David Lubin was “in the mid to late nineteenth-century American social ideology regarded as the place where morality and virtue were nurtured, safeguarded and prepared for an eventual march outward into the tainted world.”

One of the most popular images in the series was that of “Madame Millet,” which was widely accepted as a portrait of the beloved Louise.  

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36 Sensier (September 1880): 736.  
39 The revisionist mission to debunk much of the “Millet Myth” created by the Sensier biography and its popular illustrations such as *Madame Millet* was taken up by Robert L. Herbert in “Millet Revisted,” *Burlington Magazine* 104, no. 712 (July 1962): 294-305; and no. 714 (September 1962): 377-86. In addition to erroneous facts pertaining to his
drawing Millet made in 1849 of his second wife, Catherine Lemaire, who was actually his mistress at the time of the portrait (see figure 7.1). The text and the placement of the image in “Peasant and Painter” did nothing to dispel the misunderstanding.

Sensier also embellished Millet’s romantic relationships. He mentioned Millet’s first wife Pauline-Virginie Ono, who, upon contracting consumption, was described as making his life “still harder, complicated by the sufferings of a dying woman.” After her death in 1844, Millet met Lemaire, who would ultimately bear him nine children, and, according to Sensier, would cause Millet to live a life of increasing hardship in his efforts to support his ever expanding family. While Sensier wrote that upon Pauline’s death, Millet went on to “marry the woman who became the mother of his children and the devoted companion of his whole life,” in reality Millet did not marry Catherine until after the birth of their fourth child in a civil ceremony. Further, when Millet’s grandmother died in 1851, she was unaware of Catherine Lemaire or their children, and Millet did not attend her funeral.40 There is no information available as to Helena de Kay’s knowledge of these inaccuracies and falsifications in the context of her translation of the text. While she was close to two of Millet’s late confidants, Eaton and Will Low, who were quite familiar with his personal life, we do not know if she chose to ignore these realities or was never informed of them; however, it is clear that had Americans been fully aware of

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Millet’s true relationships with his wives, mistresses and his grandmother, his story may not have been quite as appealing.

In the “coming of age” portion of the story, the reader witnessed the development of Millet’s early career when his father died an untimely death, and the family rallied to raise money to support Millet’s artistic education, allowing him to go to Paris, rather than remain in Gruchy as a peasant tied to the land. Louise Jumeline’s final words to Millet as he left for Paris served as a warning against the moral dangers of the big city:

“Remember the virtues of your ancestors; remember that at the font I promised for you that you should renounce the devil and all his works. I would rather see you dead, dear son, than a renegade, and faithless to the commands of God.”

In classic Dickensian tradition, the devout peasant painter struggled with life in the evil metropolis of “savage Paris” where his “material life was a daily fight. He was without money, position or connections. He met people who took advantage of his poverty, who wearied him with their refusals and went to all lengths of cruelty… He never spoke of this time without a sort of terror.”

During this period, Millet recognized the “wickedness” in depicting the female nude and stopped painting mythological subjects associated with the corrupt and immoral Salon, dedicating himself to “rustic art.” De Kay directly translated Sensier’s myth of the pure and pious country boy attempting to survive the evils of a large metropolis, including thieves, swindlers and fallen women; the story spoke directly to Scribner’s readers during this period of population movement away from small farms to industrial, urban areas and validated their concerns regarding the dangers of city life.

41 Sensier (September 1880): 749.
42 Sensier (October 1880): 831.
The text’s illustrations played an important role of the privileging of country over city. According to Sensier, it was Millet’s departure from Paris and return to Barbizon that transformed the nature of his art, now inspired by the arcadian landscape:

[It] gave to his pictures an elevation, a largeness, which have made him unique in our art – one who speaks a language hitherto unheard. The echo of country life, its eclogues, its hard work, its anxiety, its misery, its peace, the emotions of the man bound to the soil – all these he will know how to translate and the inhabitant of the city will see that “the trivial can be made to serve the sublime,” and that something novel can be evolved from the commonest acts of life.43

The numerous illustrations of shepherdesses, peasants carding wool, sheep-shearing, wood-gatherers, rustic landscapes, and scenes of family life underscored this notion of the sublime in the countryside and were extremely popular with Scribner’s readers.44 While these images of agrarian piety were somewhat at odds with what was actually happening in American agriculture at the time, they did speak to the numerous articles in Scribner’s throughout the 1870s endorsing rural farming communities as the backbone of American democracy and promoting village improvement societies to discourage young people from abandoning farm life for urban opportunities.45 One might see these illustrations as the French counterparts of the popular Winslow Homer engravings of young milkmaids and farmer boys in the Adirondacks during the early 1870s.46 The pastoral simplicity of these pictures, which was further enhanced by the reproduction process that emphasized their strong bold outlines, was contrasted with two academic drawings included to represent his work in Paris, of a “Woman Bathing,” and “Oedipus

43 Sensier (October 1880): 839.
44 Meixner (1995), 68.
45 Johns, 33-34.
46 I am indebted to Erica Hirshler for the comparison between Homer and Millet, the subject of her talk, “Pent Fury: Winslow Homer and Jean-François Millet,” in the 2010 CAA panel “Modernizing Millet” in which we both participated.
Being Taken from the Tree,” both of which had been ultimately intended for paintings submitted to the salon. The difference between these two styles, particularly the somewhat detailed and baroque illustration of Oedipus, worked to further convey the power of the images produced in the country or inspired by the peasantry and reinforced the moral aspect of Millet’s Barbizon subjects (figures 7.5, 7.18, 7.19. and 7.20).

Recounting the peasant painter’s continued suffering from the poverty and hardships of rural life, Sensier stressed Millet’s heroic sense of dignity and integrity in the face of his distress:

Perhaps it may seem that I unveil too much of the secret corner of Millet’s life—of his poverty. But of such a man everything is of value, and to see him always dignified and serene amid the storms of life, meeting his fate by work, calm love of his art and such persistent self-abnegation, it will be admitted that his poverty ought to raise him in our esteem.47

While the text romantically described Millet’s poverty, the illustrations included clearly omitted his most extreme expressions of it. As a part of the construction of the Millet myth, Sensier sought to depoliticize the socialist aspects associated with Millet and his work. Recounting the events of 1848, Sensier downplayed any serious role that Millet may have played in the revolts, either in his own actions or in the subject matter of his paintings: “He had no military spirit or the rage of revolt, and all he saw made his heart bleed.” While there is no detailed information regarding Millet’s involvement, scholars such as T.J. Clark have argued persuasively that his imagery suggests some type of

47 Sensier (November 1880):109. The text recounted stories of Millet struggling with the grocer, the baker and the tailor who “sent the sheriff’s officer to sell the furniture in his studio, and he would not allow the artist a day’s or even an hour’s grace,” stories to which many middle class Americans could relate. (November 1880):107.
affiliation with the liberal movements that used his work to promote their cause. In his discussion of *The Gleaners*, Sensier emphasized the painting’s artistic merits, arguing against any leftist interpretation of the image and stating clearly that Millet was not a socialist or an idealist, but “like all deep thinkers, he loved humanity.”

It is important to note that the actual image entitled “The Gleaners” that was reproduced for the article is not based on the original Salon painting, but rather one of Millet’s earlier treatments of the subject; the somewhat low quality illustration seen by *Scribner’s* readers diverges substantially from the 1857 painting (figures 7.21 and 7.22), as the changes made in the composition transform the imagery rather dramatically. In the illustration, the three figures of the gleaners are grouped more tightly and placed much closer to the now taller and more monumental haystacks in the background; the image focuses more directly upon the gleaners, excluding the wider landscape of the local workers, abundant fields and small town from which they are marginalized in the Salon painting. Actively involved in the harvest as they unload their hay, the men are placed closer to the picture plane and to the gleaners themselves. The vertical format of the image leaves out the foreman on horseback, who stands off to the side in the original

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49 The image was based on a drawing from 1853 now in the British Museum and included in Robert Herbert, *Millet’s “Gleaners,”* (Minneapolis Institute of Arts: 1978, Exhibition Catalogue), 33, 44.
painting, mitigating the distance of the gleaners from the community. As such, in the illustration, the gleaners are not denied a place in the collective and appear to play more of a central role in the harvest, quite different from the painting’s lowly scavengers who salvage the leftovers from the fields after they have been plowed. In the illustration, the lightness of the sketch causes the figures to appear less massive and, as a result, slightly more feminine; the positioning of the gleaners also raises their forms in line with or above the horizon line, again reducing their sense of isolation, intense poverty and social immobility. In its softening of the most politically offensive aspects of the painting, the inclusion of this illustration seemed to respond to the contemporary criticism of the (Salon painting) gleaners’ “gigantic pretensions, they pose as the Three Fates of Poverty… their ugliness and their grossness unrelieved.” In fact, the image is more aligned with Millet’s communal Harvers Resting (Ruth and Boaz) (see figure 7.8), whose story in the Bible of gleaning gave the practice associations with charity, loyalty, and community.

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50 I would like to thank Bradley Fratello for alerting me to the furrows in the original painting, the subject of his talk, “Of Furrows and Faith in the Art of Jean-François Millet,” in the 2010 CAA panel “Modernizing Millet” in which we both participated. In the Salon painting, faint lines on either side of the canvas are arranged to resemble seemingly traditional orthogonal lines; upon closer inspection, however, the lines refuse to meet in a specific vanishing point at the horizon line, emphasizing the isolation of the women and their inability to enter the communal world depicted in the painting’s background. These furrows are eliminated in the image in “Peasant and Painter,” further diminishing its reading as a criticism of conditions of rural labor in the Second Empire.


52 In the Book of Ruth, the protagonist chose to remain with her widowed mother-in-law and gleaned to support them on the farm of Boaz, a wealthy landowner who was so impressed with Ruth that he ordered his harvesters to leave generous amounts of grain for her. For more on the French association of gleaning with biblical precedents see Liana Vardi, “ Construing the Harvest: Gleaners, Farmers and Officials in early Modern France,” American Historical Review 98, no. 5 (December 1993): 1435. Quoted in
Sensier condemned the Parisian critics for stigmatizing Millet as a “vanquished partisan,” and sought to offset their political interpretations with an emphasis on his aesthetic genius. However, in his actual discussion of what made The Gleaners such an extraordinary painting, Sensier described the antithesis of the illustration included in the text, noting, “Now all changes. Millet has found the key. From this time on, his figures, as principal subjects, will be luminous against a luminous sky, melt and yet be accented in the same atmosphere, without artifice of effect.” 53 Readers would be hard pressed to identify the article’s illustration with Sensier’s description, with the confusion allowing the text to sidestep the political issues associated with the Salon painting’s basic composition; adding to this confusion was Scribner’s placement of this low quality reproduction at the conclusion of Part II, and the discussion of the famous painting and its appearance at the 1857 Salon in the middle of Part III, thereby further suppressing any direct association. Scribner’s did not include a reproduction of the Salon painting or a notation to clarify the vital differences, allowing readers to believe they were seeing a copy of a powerful iconic work, rather than a mere study of the subject.

Sensier’s greatest feat as Millet’s political censor in the text was actually an act of omission, as he chose not to include an illustration of one of Millet’s most overtly political images, The Man with a Hoe, for the biography; Scribner’s made no effort to reproduce it as well. Clearly one of Millet’s most graphic representation of the peasant’s plight, the image would have been somewhat at odds with the series’ more picturesque visions of local shepherds, spinners and milkmaids. The two illustrations included which

53 Sensier (November 1880): 192.
came closest in terms of subject matter, “The Diggers” and “The Reaper,” are both images of action; the men in these works do not share the same sense of desperation of *The Man with a Hoe* and neither background landscape evokes its barrenness (see Figure 7.9,7.10 and 7.23). Avoiding the controversial image as much as possible, Sensier addressed it briefly by describing it in Millet’s words, citing a letter in which he ponders, the ideas which people attribute to me. It is impossible to admit that one can have some sort of an idea in seeing a man devoted to gaining his bread by the sweat of his brow. Some tell me that I deny the charms of the country. I find much more than charms. I find infinite glories. I see as well as they do the little flowers of which Christ said that Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. But I see as well, in the plain, the steaming horses at work, and in a rocky place, a man, all worn out, whose ‘*han!*’ you have heard since morning, and who tries to straighten himself a moment and breathe. The drama is surrounded by beauty.\(^{54}\)

One could hardly identify the image based on this passage, which essentially nullified the brutal realities of rural labor during the Second Empire. Attempting to mitigate the political uproar caused by the appearance of *The Man with a Hoe* at the Salon in 1863, the text stated that Millet’s pictures were not being correctly interpreted, that “he did not speak the same language” as his critics in Paris. Sensier described at length the hostility of the Parisian public toward Millet, who considered him as “the painter of the ugly, and the libeler of the country;” however, “Peasant and Painter” made sure to exclude any images that might have generated those opinions. This decision is not surprising given the fact that *Scribner’s* had been generally conservative in its discussions on the labor question throughout the 1870s.\(^{55}\) *Scribner’s* was eager to publish this selective account of Millet’s life and work, aware that the text underscored the French rejection of Millet while it depoliticized his work; the omission of illustrations of his two most controversial

\(^{54}\) Sensier (December 1880):198.

\(^{55}\) Johns, 36.
paintings further encouraged the American public to adopt him as their own, regardless of their political views.

On the other hand, the article, in both text and illustration, clearly celebrated Millet’s traditional images of spiritual renewal, citing *The Sower* and *The Angelus* as his two most important pictures. The showcasing of these images was evident not only in terms of the discussion devoted to them, but in the extremely high quality of their reproductions, arguably the two most conventionally beautiful illustrations in the series and those most apt to be removed, framed and displayed (see figures 7.15 and 7.16). According to Sensier, Millet devised the idea for *The Sower* during his time in the fields in Barbizon, as he studied the movement of the sowers’ bodies and saw the act as “a sort of sacred ministry…..before they put foot upon the field, they toss a handful of grain into the air in the sign of a cross; then, stepping upon the field, they would pronounce, in low voice, some indistinct words which sounded like a prayer.”

Sensier devoted over three pages of text to the development of the image, its detailed description, its exhibition and critical reviews, citing it as Millet’s *chef-d’oeuvre*. *Scribner’s* full page engraving of the image was given pride of place as the frontispiece of Volume Twenty One. Although it was never directly discussed in the article, Americans would have immediately associated the image with the Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13:1-9.

Biblical connections with *The Sower* were subtly linked in the article to *The Angelus*, whose reproduction appeared above the description of Millet’s return after a long absence to his childhood home; the invented account obliquely referenced both the Prodigal Son and the Parable of the Sower:

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56 Sensier (November 1880), 104.
One evening he was returning to Grucy, the “Angelus” was just ringing, and he
found himself at the door of the little church of Eulleville. He went in; at the altar
an old man was praying. He waited, and when the old priest rose, he struck him
gently on the shoulder and said: “François,” It was the Abbé Jean Lebrisieux, his
first teacher. “Ah, is it you, dear child, little François?” and they embraced,
weeping. “And the Bible, François, have you forgotten it? And the Psalms, do
you ever read them?” “They are my breviary,” said Millet. “I get from there all
that I do.” “These are rare words to hear nowadays, but you will be rewarded…It
is well. I am content. Where I sowed, good grain has grown, and you will reap the
harvest, my son.”

Text and image worked closely together to convey these Biblical associations as well as
the purity and morality of the small independent farmer, a concept that deeply appealed
to American readers. Here, Sensier effectively introduced the religiously charged (and
fictional) scene with the tolling bell of the Angelus. Discussion of The Angelus did not
appear until the next section in which Sensier provided detailed background information
about the spiritual nature of the painting, the recitation of the Latin chant, and the ringing
of the bells as a daily “call to prayer” for the French farmer:

As the day dies, two peasants, a man and a woman, hear the Angelus, They rise,
stop work, and standing bareheaded, recite, with eyes cast down, the words,
“Angelus domini nuntiavit Mariae.” The man, a true peasant of the plain, his head
covered by a mass of short straight hair like a felt hat, prays silently; the woman is
bent and full of devotion.

While Sensier praised Millet’s image as a “truly original picture, in it he revived his
childhood’s sensations,” he failed to mention that the painting was actually made to order
for a visiting Boston collector, Thomas Appleton, who personally selected the subject

57 Ibid., 109.
58 Sensier (December 1881):193. The Angelus prayer played an important role in
traditional French agricultural life. The prayer, which commemorated the Incarnation of
Christ, structured the day of French peasants, who, upon hearing the tolling of the church
bells, stopped their work three times a day to recite it.
upon commissioning the work but never took possession of it.\textsuperscript{59} \textit{The Angelus} was a relatively obscure painting in 1880, and its recognition as an important symbol of spiritual renewal by American (and later French) audiences was originally crafted in the Sensier text, ultimately resulting in its enormous popularity less than a decade later.\textsuperscript{60}

It is not surprising that this image and its counterpart, “The Sower” were featured engravings in “Peasant and Painter,” as both depicted traditional, conservative subjects that conveyed a dignified, religious experience associated with a spiritual unity between man and nature. Rather than threaten, they inspired a type of nostalgia for rural America before the industrial age and also embodied Gilder’s ideas on the spiritual in art. While the original \textit{Sower} was securely held in the Boston collection of Quincy Adams Shaw, during the 1880s other Americans sought to “safeguard” \textit{The Angelus} as well, leading to the dramatic effort to purchase the painting just eight years after its initial appearance in \textit{Scribner’s}. Destined to become the most popular image in the United States, the work sold for an astounding $125,000 dollars in the summer of 1889.

The series concluded with a letter from Millet to Sensier summarizing his thoughts on “questions of art” that related directly to Gilder’s goals. Millet discussed the importance of nature, the need for truth in conception and also the vital role of passion and the imagination: “the spiritual can only be expressed by the observation of objects in

\textsuperscript{59} Introduced to Millet by Hunt, Appleton never returned to purchase the painting, forcing Millet to delay completion of the work until 1859, and ultimately selling it to a Belgian painter for 1,000 francs the following year.

\textsuperscript{60} For more on the dramatic change in public reception of \textit{The Angelus} and \textit{The Gleaners} in France during the Third Republic see Fratello, (2003). Fratello examines the historical, political and cultural factors that drove the French public’s appreciation of two works from their inception in 1857 to their donation to the Louvre in 1890. Fratello describes how the French began after Millet’s 1887 retrospective exhibition to critically associate \textit{The Angelus} with strong religious sentiments.
their truest aspect…there is no isolated truth."⁶¹ In these final words, Millet captured Gilder’s ideal of a painter who could reveal spiritual “truth,” inspire a new generation of artists and appeal directly to the nation.

The embellished account of a poor and devout artist, “Peasant and Painter” was a sentimental narrative that provided a natural framework for its illustrations while pulling on the heartstrings of Scribner’s readers. Through improved methods of mechanical reproduction developed by Scribner’s art and printing departments, Gilder put Millet’s pictures in living rooms across America. With their large, clear and simple figures, free of specific details or identities, Millet’s universal images allowed not only for excellent reproduction, but also for mass appeal. The story of Millet’s rise from humble origins through piety and hard work embodied the values of middle class Americans, who embraced him as the “Puritan peasant.” Millet’s recent death added to this cult of celebrity, generating even greater popularity, and Gilder thoroughly capitalized on the circumstances of the publication as an ideal opportunity to combine fact and fiction, narrative and illustration, biography and fantasy. Unconcerned about providing an objective, accurate account of the artist’s life, Gilder was clearly aware that the rural nostalgia and moral idealism inherent in both text and image would speak directly to his middle class readers. And it did – the article made Millet a household name as Americans pasted reproductions of The Sower and The Angelus taken directly from the magazine upon their walls. Gilder’s reproductive technology vastly expanded Millet’s popularity, transforming his very intimate works into popular iconic images that hung in middle class homes across the nation.

⁶¹ Sensier (January 1881): 406.
The mythologized figure of Millet and his pastoral imagery stood as a critique of all that Gilder found wrong with America in the Gilded Age - of its materialism, its crudeness, its irreverence for the past, its restless energy and its relentless desire for economic success at all cost. Millet’s style of painting, with its emphasis on the expressive and the subjective, was the adopted mode of many of the artists in Gilder’s circle; as a result, Millet afforded the “new men” (and women) a greater sense of credibility, for, while their style was generally seen as young and immature vis-à-vis more established American artists, their connection with a “French master” tied them to a greater European tradition. Millet’s rural, earthy subject matter allowed Gilder to support and promote a French artist to the American public, by suggesting that this painter’s depictions of lowly peasants working the land captured universal ideals to which all viewers, regardless of their awareness of academic painting or their religious or political preferences, could relate. Recognizing the potential appeal of Millet’s story, Gilder used the biography as a means to advance his own aesthetic program as he interpreted it in Millet’s paintings, as well as to improve Americans’ awareness of an artist who spoke to him so personally; as a result, Millet’s life story and the illustrations of his sowers and shepherdesses were distributed to households across the nation. In his mythologizing of Millet, Gilder set the tone for Millet criticism for the rest of the nineteenth century, secured his unprecedented status as the most popular international painter in America, and preserved his legend as the “peasant painter,” a legend that continues to endure today.
Epilogue

On April 4, 1881 Charles Scribner agreed to sell his rights to *Scribner's Monthly* provided that the name be changed beginning with the November 1881 issue. Printed between May and October of 1881, the final edition of *Scribner's Monthly* was representative of what the magazine had become over its eleven year history, with pieces ranging from historical series such as the lavishly illustrated chronicle of “Peter the Great” and those of local color including “Bear Hunting in the South,” to social commentary on pressing issues such as “The Sanitary Conditions of New York City,” and John Muir’s articles on the need to preserve the forests of the Sierra Nevada. “Topics of the Times” covered its usual variety of political, religious, literary and artistic issues, and “Culture and Progress,” “Home and Society,” “The World’s Work,” and “Bric-à-Brac” continued to offer in-depth discussions on contemporary fiction and non-fiction, painters and sculptors, home decoration, new scientific inventions and technological discoveries, as well as humorous antidotes and cartoons. On the aesthetic front, the final volume was exemplary of the kinds of topics Gilder wished to present to the public, with articles on the Farragut Monument, Bastien-Lepage, the “Younger Painters” of America, and Tiffany’s new decoration of the Seventh Regiment Armory; the volume contained a number of high quality reproductions of featured works of art, such as Bastien-Lepage’s *Joan of Arc*, as well as a frontispiece that displayed a highly nuanced engraving of a photograph of Thomas Carlyle by the recently deceased Julia Margaret Cameron.

Looking back to the initial issues of *Scribner's*, the transformation of the periodical in such a brief period from an unsophisticated, sober Christian based magazine to what was often recognized as the “best general periodical in the world” is
considerable.\textsuperscript{1} A comparison of the first with the twenty second volume demonstrates how Gilder and the editorial staff took full advantage of improvements in printing, stereotyping and engraving processes, while reaching out to a continually expanding audience made up not only of New York metropolitan and east coast readers but also those from the New South and the growing West. Gilder had effectively challenged the competition through his connections with national authors and artists to give Scribner’s a reputation as a magazine with a distinctly American point of view. Reviewing the twenty two volumes one can witness how Scribner’s participated in the rise of New York City as the epicenter of the developing publishing and culture industries, encouraging an increased awareness of the European art world as it recognized the city’s new status as an important emerging metropolis. Over the period Gilder increasingly relied on his ties with native artists, most of them trained overseas, to fuel, enhance and exploit the rising interest in all things cultural among his upwardly mobile, middle class readership, teaching taste while also promoting those painters, illustrators and engravers in his circle. Between 1870 and 1881 the number of columns, articles and series devoted to the arts more than doubled with the substantial rise in accompanying engravings further underscoring the increasingly aesthetic tone of the periodical. Summarizing his mission at the magazine, Gilder wrote, ‘In a country like ours, where galleries are few and worthy paintings are rarely to be seen by people of culture out of the great cities, the education service to be rendered by such art-work as that of Scribner’s is incalculable.’\textsuperscript{2} Through a continued effort to increase its coverage of the arts and improve the quality of its images,

\textsuperscript{1} John, ix.
\textsuperscript{2} “The Rise and Work of a Magazine,” \textit{Century Illustrated Magazine} 23 (Nov. 1881-April 1882), Publisher’s Department: 28.
Gilder had slowly transformed the periodical to speak to a more secular America, replacing its early evangelical tone and theological disputes with a new spiritual emphasis on the redemptive powers of art and beauty.

At Gilder’s suggestion, the new periodical was named the *Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*, after the well-known Century Club where many of its contributors, both authors and artists, often gathered. With the exception of Holland, who had planned to retire but died shortly after the printing of the first issue, the members of the editorial, art and business departments were unchanged and the renamed magazine transitioned rather seamlessly. Emerging over the course of the 1870s as a powerful voice in literature and art, Gilder was now a partial owner and editor-in-chief, positioned to exercise substantial influence not only in cultural affairs but also in both local and national political arenas. Although a deep belief in the power of art stayed with Gilder personally for the rest of his life, his new post called for him to redirect his efforts to the more material aspects of running the magazine. During his tenure at *Scribner’s*, Gilder had fought for beauty, aesthetics and spirituality to have their rightful place in the pages of the periodical as well as in the nation’s culture at large, a difficult mission in any capitalist society. Like so many involved in the Aesthetic and Arts and Crafts Movements, Gilder made substantial accomplishments in his attempts to make art a central feature of everyday life, and what he achieved in seeking to attain that ideal was in many ways more important than its end result. He may have believed that he had devoted much of his time and energy to the aesthetic arena during his tenure at *Scribner’s*, and given his new powerful role in the publishing industry, he needed, as editor of the *Century*, to focus his efforts on political and economic issues as well as
cultural ones. Members of Gilder’s circle also recognized these changes; as Walt
Whitman observed in 1888, “Gilder seems to be coming on: is a bigger man than he was
– by far bigger than when I first knew him.”³

Gilder informed his readers in the opening issue that the Century would provide
“an elaborate discussion of living practical questions.”⁴ Almost exclusively devoted to
more “practical” subjects, his “Topics of the Time” column was no longer a vehicle for
Gilder’s own opinions, but rather a collaborative effort in which experts were brought in
to write many of his monthly essays on the pressing issues of the day. Commentary on
the editorial page now addressed political issues such as corruption in the civil service,
the labor situation, ballot reform and the banking system. Gilder personally took on a
more active role in city politics; he used his position to publish the work of local political
and social reformers, such as Theodore Roosevelt and Washington Gladden, a clerical
leader in the social gospel movement, and Albert Shaw and Richard Ely, who argued for
greater municipal provisions of social services. In the 1890s he accepted leadership
positions in municipal organizations, serving as president of the New York Kindergarten
Association, and as chairman of the New York Tenement House Commission.
Simultaneously, Helena de Kay began to play less of a prominent role in the American
Art world in the 1880s, as she stopped exhibiting her work in 1886 and submitted
decorative illustrations only intermittently to the Century; turning her focus to her role as
wife and mother of her five children. Scholars, politicians and reformers now joined the

⁴ “Topics of the Time” Century Illustrated Magazine 22 (November 1881): 144.
writers, painters and actors who gathered with the Gilders at The Studio, and later at their new home on Clinton Place.  

Art remained a vitally important aspect of the magazine. A large number of the artists whom the couple had championed so strongly behind the scenes and on the pages of Scribner’s were ultimately recognized as the next generation of American artists at the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, in both its actual construction and decoration as well as in the galleries of the American art exhibit. Further, the art exhibit also validated the reputation and status of illustrators as artists, with the inclusion of a large selection of contemporary illustrations, many prepared specifically for the pages of the Century. As Gilder stated in his editorial on the fair,

The Columbian Exhibition will prove to the most doubting and critical spirit that American art exists, that it is capable of great things in a way distinctively its own. It will convince all cultivated Americans of the vitality and vigor and independence of American art; and we believe its effect upon the vast public which will view it will convince them of the genuineness of the nascent American love of art.

While still committed to the arts, in its initial years the Century did not share in the urgency of Scribner’s Monthly in terms of its zealous showcasing of the artists in Gilder’s circle, its concern over America’s lack of cultural awareness, its desire to teach taste, and its mission to convey an alternative spiritual experience through art. Gilder’s emphasis on the supremacy of French art remained, and contemporary American artists continued to be featured, although in the 1880s they tended to be more established in their careers and

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5 During this time their Friday night salons were frequented by the American realist writers that Gilder was heavily promoting in the Century, including Mark Twain, W.D. Howells, Henry James and Joel Chandler Harris.

6 R.W.Gilder, “The Columbian Exposition, What It Will Do for America?” in “Topics of the Time,” Century Illustrated Magazine 44 (October 1892): 955. The Century itself had an exhibition at the WCE which showed how manuscripts and drawings were prepared for publication.
were not exclusively a part of Gilder’s inner circle. Articles on Winslow Homer and
George Inness reaffirmed their success rather than ardently promoting their work, and the
only new significant artist to emerge as an important illustrator in the pages of the
*Century* was Frederick Remington. The voice of a younger generation fighting for
national recognition was not as vehement, and this may have been a result of the gains
already made on the pages of *Scribner’s* as well as the successes of many of the SAA
artists themselves who, although little known in the 1870s, had achieved prominence by
the mid 1880s.

With the exception of “Topics of the Times,” the remaining monthly columns that
often dealt with cultural issues were eliminated during the mid 1880s to make room for
expanding historical articles, particularly the extremely popular series on the Civil War,
which ran from November 1884 through January of 1888; during this period there was a
dearth of space devoted to contemporary American artists. Recognizing the substantial
popularity of lavishly illustrated chronicles and biographies, Gilder followed the Civil
War articles with series such as “The History of Life in the Thirteen Colonies” and “The

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7 Throughout the 1880s and early 1890s Gilder published numerous articles on
contemporary French art, featuring the work of Courbet, Gérôme, Carolus-Duran,
Fromentin, Monet, Corot, and Rousseau, as well as a lengthy survey of current French
sculptors. Mariana Van Rensselaer’s “An American Artist in England,” critically
acclaimed the recent work of Winslow Homer while Henry Eckford, a/k/a Charles de
Kay, applauded George Inness in a monograph in the *Century’s* first year. Mariana Van
Magazine* 24 (May 1882): 57-64. Remington’s work could be found continuously in the
pages of the *Century* throughout the 1880s and 90s; he initially appeared as the artist who
illustrated Theodore Roosevelt’s articles about the West, but ultimately began to write
and illustrate his own pieces on native Americans, cowboys, and life on the plains, which
were extremely popular. Remington did not attempt to sell his work as a professional
artist until January of 1893; his exhibition at the American Art Association displayed
over one hundred oil paintings, watercolors and pen and ink drawings, all of which had
been originally created for illustrations and many of which had appeared in the *Century.*
Life of Abraham Lincoln.” 8 Much of the art department’s efforts in the mid 1880s were focused on providing images to illustrate these historical accounts, rather than presenting works of contemporary art in their own right. 9

The arts were, however, still central to the periodical’s identity. Recognizing Mariana Van Rensselaer as the magazine’s primary art critic during the 1880s, Gilder published her extensive series on American architecture and European cathedrals; she also wrote on practicing national artists in articles which were more critical and less emotionally invested than those of the Scribner’s era. As Mancini points out, Van Rensselaer was driven by her desire to “guide and foster the public’s imperfect habits of perception and consumption.”10 Writing as a professional critic and emphasizing the formal qualities of works of the art, Van Rensselaer provided much of the commentary in the initial years of “The Century Series of Pictures by American Artists,” which was implemented in the 1890s, just prior to the opening of the WCE, and remained popular until 1912. The series featured one large, quality print by a recognized American painter, followed by a brief critical description of the work and the achievements of the artist in the section at the end of each issue labeled “Open Letters;” an average of three images per volume appeared over a five year period. Representative of Mancini’s notion that the

8 Edward Eddleston’s “A History of Life in the Thirteen Colonies” included thirteen stories that ran episodically from 1882 to 1890. In the course of Eggleston’s research in England, he uncovered important material, including John White’s drawings of American Indians in the British Museum, which were subsequently reproduced in the Century’s articles and later published in 1896 in book form as The Beginners of a Nation.

9 Alexander Drake found the Civil War series to be “the most troublesome and aesthetically the least satisfying task” of his career. Robert Underwood Johnson, Remembered Yesterdays (Little, Brown & Co: 1925), 203-4.

10 Mancini, 111. For more on Van Rensselaer see chapter 3, “Professionalism and a New Aesthetic Order,” 99-133. Gilder and Van Rensselaer were close professionally and personally; he died while temporarily living in her home in 1909.
new professional critic sought to strictly define the acceptable standards for the fine arts in America, the series was quite different in style and intent from Gilder’s full-scale institutional promotion in the 1870s of “the new young men” (and women), which not only provided examples of their work as a movement, but also gave readers a window into their lives and their part in the expanding American art world. No longer quite as passionate in its tone and scope, the “Century Series” reflects the emergence of professional criticism and its desire to erect secure borders for that world. With the Century’s publication of articles stressing formal analysis and cultural authority, Gilder appeared to be satisfied that his goal of improving art criticism in America had been achieved.

Much of the Century’s emphasis on the arts was historical, with major series focused on classic subjects such as Greek Sculpture, and French and English Cathedrals. The richness and spontaneity of the fight for the “Younger Painters” was replaced with a less challenging review of the great painters of the past. The Century’s most important art project, Timothy Cole’s “Old Masters” series, began in 1888 and ran until 1903; endorsed by academics in the recently formed subject of art history, the series was essentially a fifteen year long introduction to the history of art, bringing a vast number of high quality reproductions of iconic images along with in-depth discussions of the artists from the early Renaissance up until the nineteenth century into the homes of middle class Americans. In spite of the industry-wide adoption of photography through the halftone process by this time, Gilder continued to employ the more traditional wood engraving

11 Ibid., 104.
method for these images as he still believed it was aesthetically superior and, therefore, more appropriate given the subject matter.

Gilder’s efforts in his early years as editor paid off, as the Century’s distribution peaked in the mid-1880s at an unprecedented 250,000, due in part to the popularity of its Civil War Series. During this period, its main rival, Harper’s Monthly, began to substantially improve its art department, hiring some of the engravers who had previously worked at Scribner’s Monthly and thereby vastly upgrading the quality and creativity of its illustrations. Scribner’s Magazine, started by Scribner and Co. after an agreed upon five year grace period, commenced publication in 1888 and provided additional competition. Circulation started to decline in the 1890s, and by the turn of the century inexpensive periodicals had begun to outbid the older monthlies for contemporary authors whose work had greater mass appeal. Motivated more by advertisers than aesthetics, these magazines employed inexpensive photographic reproductions that tended to present “art” in a more popular vein, eschewing the more classical standards of Gilder and his commitment to traditional wood-engraving. As Neil Harris pointed out in his essay on “The Half-Tone Effect,” these new technological innovations inaugurated an iconographic revolution in terms of popular perceptions and tastes.\textsuperscript{12} The Century’s commitment to aesthetic design resulted in an excess of fanciful borders, tailpieces and Greek maidens overflowing into the text; while their quality was unquestioned, the

\textsuperscript{12} Neil Harris, “Iconography and Intellectual History: The Half Tone Effect,” in New Directions in American Intellectual History, ed. John Higham and Paul K. Conkins (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 196-211. The first successful commercial halftone method was patented in 1881 by Frederick Ives of Philadelphia, and during the 1880s, he improved the process with the invention and commercial production of the cross-lined screen. The relief halftone process came to be widely used by popular journals in the 1890s.
imagery came to be viewed as mannered, superfluous and out-dated, suggesting that by the late 1890s the excessive decoration and high mindedness of the articles was alienating its middle class readers. More “modern” magazines such as *Munsey’s*, *McClure’s* and *Ladies Home Journal* adapted quickly to the changing trends in public opinion, while the *Century* held on to its more idealistic views in the face of a new progressivism and pragmatism that was pervading American society in the early twentieth century.\(^\text{13}\)

Further, by 1900, the fifty-six year old Gilder continued to cling to more old-fashioned standards on the editorial page, taking on moral issues, such as international copyright and forest conservation, but refusing to attack head on the more contested problems of the day including the abuses of unrestrained corporations and capitalists, and international empire-building; the muckrackers of the early twentieth century were eager to pursue the topics Gilder avoided, and readers responded in kind, looking elsewhere to meet their new demands.\(^\text{14}\) While the *Century* continued to publish until 1930, the death of Gilder in 1909 marked the end of the periodical’s genteel tone that had originated at *Scribner’s Monthly*. The Gilded Age had past and Americans no longer subscribed to the idealism of the magazine that had defined an era.

The editorials, articles and, most importantly, the illustrations published in *Scribner’s Monthly* between 1870 and 1881 clearly changed the nature of the way that Americans appreciated, understood and responded to works of art, as well as the direction of American art itself. The explosion of print media during the decade forever altered the

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\(^\text{13}\) Gilder ultimately adopted new methods of photomechanical reproduction, such as the half tone and by 1900 the magazine was reproducing photographs in color.

\(^\text{14}\) Johns, 233-266.
way in which Americans looked at art and the art that they admired, as readers not only carried and dispersed *Scribner’s* images from one place to another, but also framed and hung them on their walls. For the first time, a popular magazine gave the general public wide access to high quality reproductions of an expansive variety of works of art; *Scribner’s* served as their museum, their gallery, their access to important pictures, both historical and contemporary, and also as their guide in terms of how to appreciate them. No other periodical would have such a wide spread affect on the general viewing public until the appearance of Henry Luce’s *Life* Magazine in 1936, which continued to transform public aesthetic awareness of print media through the full scale promotion of both the journalistic and artistic qualities of the photograph, just as *Scribner’s* had endorsed the wood engraving as a work of art two generations earlier. As we move into another pivotal period for periodicals, with many proclaiming the impending death of print media, one can look back to the dramatic changes that took place during these formative years of the magazine industry when *Scribner’s* led the way with its innovations in illustration and critical content, and wonder what is in store for the viewing public in the coming decade.
Figure 1.1 Thomas Moran, “The Beehive.” (June 1871)
Figure 1.2 Thomas Moran, “Crater of the Castle Geyser.” (June 1871)
Figure 1.3 Thomas Moran, “The Grotto Geyser.” (June 1871)
Figure 1.4 Thomas Moran, “Crater of the Giant Geyser.” (June 1871)
Figure 1.5 Thomas Moran, Image from “The Great South” “Frankfort, on the Kentucky River.” (November 1874)
Figure 1.6 Thomas Moran, Image from “The Great South” “View From Lookout Mountain.” (May 1874)
Figure 1.7 Thomas Moran, “Rock Pinnacles Above Tower Falls.” (May 1871)
Figure 1.8 Thomas Moran, “Tower Falls, on Tower Creek, Wyoming.” (May 1871)
Figure 1.9 Thomas Moran, “Lower Falls of the Yellowstone, Wyoming: (350 Feet in Height.)” (May 1871)
Figure 1.10 Thomas Moran, “Upper Falls of the Yellowstone, Wyoming.” (May 1871)
Figure 1.11 Thomas Moran, *The Grand Cañon of the Yellowstone* (1872), oil on canvas. 84 x 144 ¼” (245.1 x 427.8 cm). National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, lent by the Department of the Interior, Office of the Secretary (L.1968.84.I).
Figure 1.12 Thomas Moran, “Great Hot Springs at Gardiner’s River.” (February 1872)
Figure 1.13  Thomas Moran, “Ruins of Hot Springs and Geysers.” (February 1872)
Figure 1.14 William Henry Jackson, *Great Spring Fire-Hole Basin* 1871 (photograph) United States Geological Survey Photographic Library (Jackson 109).
Figure 1.15  Thomas Moran, “Great Spring Fire-Hole Basin.” (February 1872)
Figure 1.16  Thomas Moran, “The Great Cañon and Lower Falls of the Yellowstone.”
(February 1872)

THE WONDERS OF THE WEST—II.
MORE ABOUT THE YELLOWSTONE.
Figure 1.17  Frederick Church, *The Parthenon* (1871), oil on canvas. 44 ½ x 72 5/8" (113 x 184.5 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Bequest of Maria DeWitt Jesup, 1912 (15.30.67)
Figure 1.18  J.M.W. Turner, *Slave Ship (Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying, Typhoon Coming On)* (1840), oil on canvas. 35 3/4 x 48 1/4” (90.8 x 122.6 cm). Museum of Fine Arts Boston. Henry Lillie Pierce Fund. (99.22)
Figure 1.19  Thomas Moran, (from photograph by Carlton Watkins) “El Capitan: 3,300 Feet High.” (January 1872)
Figure 1.20  Thomas Moran, *The Chasm of the Colorado* (1874), oil on canvas. 84 3/8 x 144 3/4” (214.3 x 267.6 cm). National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, lent by the Department of the Interior, Office of the Secretary (L. 1968.84.2).
Figure 1.21  Thomas Moran, “The Grand Chasm of the Colorado.” (February 1875)
THE CAÑONS OF THE COLORADO.

Figure 1.22  Thomas Moran, “Mu-av Cañon Looking West.” (March 1875)

give up the expedition and try to reach the Mormon settlements to the north. Our hopes were that the worst places were passed, but our barometers were so badly injured as to be useless, so we had lost our reckoning in altitude, and knew not how much descent the river had yet to make.

It rained from time to time, sometimes all day, and we were thoroughly drenched and chilled, but between showers the sun shone with great power, and the mercury stood at 115°, so that we had rap-id changes from great extremes, which were very disagreeable. It was especially cold in the rain at night. The little canvas we had was rotten and useless; the rubber ponchos, with which we started from Green River City, were all lost; more than half the party were without hats, and not one of us had an entire suit of clothes, nor had we a blanket apiece. So we gathered drift-wood and built fires, but the rain came down in torrents and extinguished them, and we sat up all night on the rocks shivering. We were, indeed, much more exhausted by the night’s discomfort than by the day’s toil.

So difficult were the portages on August 18th that we advanced but two miles in this work. I climbed up the granite to its summit and went back over the rust-colored sandstones and greenish-yellow shales to the foot of the marble wall. I climbed so high that the men and boats were lost in the black depths below, and the river was but a rippling brook, and still there was more cañon above than below.

I pushed on to an angle where I hoped to get a view of the country beyond, to see if possible, what the prospect was of our soon running through this plateau, or, at least, of meeting with some geological change that would let us out of the granite; but, arriving at the point, I could see below only a labyrinth of deep gorges.

After dinner, in running a rapid, the pio-neer boat was upset by a wave. We were some distance in advance of the larger boats; the river was rough and swift and we were unable to land; so we clung to the
boat and were carried down stream over another rapid. The men in the boats above
saw our trouble, but were caught in whirlpools, and went spinning about so in the
eddies that it seemed a long time before they came to our relief. At last they came.
The boat was turned right side up and bailed out, the oars, which, fortunately, had floated
along in company with us, were gathered up, and on we went without even landing.

On the 20th, the characteristics of the
canyon changed; the river was broader, the
canyon walls were sloping, and composed of black slates that stood on edge. These nearly
much smaller scale than the great bays and
bustresses of Marble Canyon. The river was
still rapid, and we stopped to let down with
lines several times, but made greater prog-
ress, running ten miles.

On a terrace of trap we discovered an-
other group of ruins. Evidently, there was
once a village here. Again we found
mealing-stones and much broken pottery,
and upon a little natural shelf in the rock,
hack of the ruins, we found a globular basket
that would hold perhaps a third of a bushel.
It was badly broken, and, as I attempted to
take it up, it fell to pieces. There were
many beautiful flint chips scattered about, as if this had
been the home of an old
arrow-maker.

The next day, in nearing a
curve, we heard a mad
roar, and down we were car-
ried with a dizzying velocity
to the head of another rapid.
On either side, high over our
heads, there were overhang-
ing granite walls, and the
sharp bends cut off our view.
A few moments and we should
be carried into unknown
waters. Away we went on a
long, winding chute. I stood
on deck, supporting myself
with a strap fastened on
either side to the gunwale,
and the boat glided rapidly
where the water was smooth.
Striking a wave, she leaped
and bounded like a thing of
life, and we had a wild ride
for ten miles, which we made
in less than an hour. The
excitement was so great that
we forgot the danger until we
heard the roar of a great fall
below, when we backed on
our oars, and we carried
slowly toward its head, and
succeeded in landing just
above. We found we could
make a portage, and at this we
were engaged for some hours.

Just here we ran out of
the granite. Good cheer re-
turned; we forgot the storms
and the gloom, and the cloud-covered can-
on, and the raging of the river, and pushed
our boats from shore in great glee.

The next day we came to rapids again,
over which we were compelled to make a
Figure 1.24  Thomas Moran, “Glen Cañon.” (February 1875)
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Figure 1.27  Thomas Moran, “The Side Cañon of Lodore.” (January 1875)
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Thomas Moran, “The Grand Cañon of the Colorado.” (March 1875)
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doors and in the windows; and the population is of the lowest and poorest class. The Commune has its emissaries and exiles here. There are swarthy faces which have gladdened in mad gaiety over the flames of the Hôtel de Ville and become the hue of copper bronze under the sun of New Caledonia. There are secret meetings in obscure little cafés, into which strangers seldom enter; where the last movements of the Nihilists are discussed, and the would-be regicide is commended over draughts of absinthe and more innocent beer. Made-moiselle Berthe, with her little sisters, fabri-
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Figure 4.30  J.M. Whistler, “Symphony in White, No. III.” (August 1879)
Figure 4.31  J.M. Whistler, “Etching: Joe.” (August 1879)
Figure 4.32  J.M. Whistler, “Portrait of Painter’s Mother (‘Arrangement in Black and Gray’).” (August 1879)
Figure 4.33 George Du Maurier, “The Height of Aesthetic Exclusiveness.” *Punch* 77 (1879)
This is not a museum, nor a crockery store, but simply Arabella’s reception-room. She is slightly touched with the fashion for old china, Majolica, Fayence, etc., etc., etc., etc.
Figure 4.35 “A Flank Movement on the Hanging Committee.” (January 1879)
Figure 4.36 E. A. Abbey, “Tiles for a Mantelpiece.” (January 1879)
Figure 4.38 Edward Wimbridge, “A Tile Man’s Design for a Mantel-Piece.” (January 1879)
by throwing in a lively suggestion, if there were any suspicion that either or both of the combatants were showing signs of flagging. Fortified with cheese, crackers, etc., these disputations progressed with great spirit, and were only interrupted when the master of ceremonies tapped the back of his violin with his bow and announced a quartette, a solo or a ballad from the "Barytone."

It was after the first annual dinner, which took place in the studio of the "Obtuse Bard," and which was one of the most crisp and toasty affairs that ever took place since the time of Lucullus, involving as it did, too, a singularly small consideration in cash per capilla—it was after this memorable affair that the "Owl" spake out suddenly as one inspired and said: "Let us all take a tramp!"

"And kill him?" asked the "Chestnut."

"No! stupid!" said the offended bird.

"Let us all go on a journey in search of the picturesque. Let us each contribute of his substance so many ducats to a common fund. And then, armed with sketchbook, easel, umbrella, tooth-brush and——"

He was interrupted by a barely audible expression of emotion that was more eloquent than words:

"Where shall we go?" said the usually unimpassioned "Grasshopper," with a gust of eagerness.

"To the Catskills!" said the "Chestnut.

"To the Adirondacks?" suggested the Griffin.

"How about the Isles of Shoals?" queried the "Marine."

"Or the coast of Maine?" said "Sirus."

"Why not go to Long Island?" asked "Polyphemus."

"That sand place?" said the "Gaul."

"There's nothing there," said the "Bone" with scorn.

"How do you know?" said "Polyphemus."

"Why," said the "Grasshopper" conclu-sively, "nobody ever was known to go there!"

"What!" said the "Owl." "Nobody ever went there! Then that's the place of all others to go to!"

"All right!" said the club, with emphasis.

"And look here!" added the "Owl."

"Let us make an article about the journey and illustrate it ourselves."

"Splendid!" said the club.

"And sell it to a grasping publisher!" said "Sirus."

"Not much of a grasp!" said "Polyphemus," who appeared to know.

"Think they wouldn't have it?" asked the "Bone."

"We could try," said the "Marine."

"We shall," said the "Griffin."

"We shall!" echoed the club. And with many apologies to Scribner's Monthly that is precisely what the Tile Club proposes to do.
Figure 4.41  Winslow Homer, “A Littoral Tile.” (January 1879)
Figure 4.42  Winslow Homer, *Promenade on the Beach* (1880), oil on canvas. 20 x 30 1/8 “ (50.8 x 76.5 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Springfield, Mass., Gift of the Misses Emily and Elizabeth Mills, in memory of their parents, Mr. and Mrs. Issac Mills (36.06).
Figure 4.43  E. A. Abbey, “Ho! For Long Island.” (January 1879)
Figure 4.44  E.A. Abbey, “Tiler’s Tiling.” (January 1879)
Figure 4.45  F. Hopkinson Smith, “Studio of a Tile Man.” (January 1879)
Figure 4.46  Charles Reinhart, “The Tile Club and the Milliner of Bridgehampton.”
(February 1879)
Figure 4.47  Henri Fantin-Latour, *A Studio at Les Batignolles* (1870), oil on canvas. 80 3/8 x 107 5/8” (204 x 273.5 cm). Musée d’Orsay, Paris, Moreau-Nélaton Gift.
Figure 4.48  William O’Donovan, “Pharaoh, The King of the Montauks. (From Bass-Relief Modeled in Clay from Life.)” (February 1879)
belonged to those earliest times of all. The house was now modernized, however, the panes in the windows being at least eight inches high, and no more ancient than the Revolution. While the literary fellows of the party listened to the reminiscences of Payne from the old gentleman’s lips, the artistic and virtuoso members were rapt in adoration of the bric-a-brac.

“It was in the house next door he was born,” he said, deftly, looking his inter-
Figure 4.50 E. A. Abbey, “Procession of Ye Tilers.” (February 1879)
Figure 4.51  R. Swain Gifford, “Morning at Jesse Conklin’s.” (February 1879)
Figure 4.52 Camille Corot, *Ville d’Avray* (1870), oil on canvas. 21 5/8 x 31 1/2” (54.9 x 80 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Catherine Lorillard Wolfe Collection, Bequest of Catherine Lorillard Wolfe 1887 (87.15.141).
Figure 4.53  F. Hopkinson Smith, “Flat Top Tree.” (February 1879)
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Figure 4.55  E.A. Abbey, “Sketching at Easthampton.” (February 1879)
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Figure 4.59  E.A. Abbey, “A Belle of Brideghampton.” (February 1879)
Figure 4.60  John Kensett, Eaton’s Neck, Long Island (1872), oil on canvas. 18 x 36” (45.7 x 91.4 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Gift of Thomas Kensett, 1874 (74.29).
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Figure 4.64 Frederick Dielman, “Shadow-Painting.” (March 1880)
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Figure 4.66  Charles Reinhart, “A Successful Sketch.” (March 1880)
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Figure 4.69  Napoleon Sarony, “North End of Salon – 1879.” (March 1880)
During the winter of 1878-9 the Tile Club prospered. The expedition of the preceding summer, duly chronicled in these pages (see Scribner for January and February, 1879), had resulted in much artistic and other profit; and collectively and individually the Club was conscious of an agreeable progress. It had its bereavements in the departure of three of its members, the Grasshopper, the Gail, and the Chestnut.
Figure 4.71  A. Quarterly, “Parting Company with the Tow at West Troy.” (March 1880)
Figure 4.72 “The Community Afloat.” (March 1880)
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Figure 4.76  R. Swain Gifford, “A Decorative Notion.” (March 1880)
Figure 4.77  J.M. Whistler, *Symphony in Grey and Green: The Ocean* (1866), oil on canvas. 31.7 x 40.1" (80.7 x 101.9 cm). The Frick Collection.
Figure 4.78  John Vanderlyn, *The Death of Jane McCrea* (1804), oil on canvas. 32 1/2 x 26 1/2” (91.2 x 67.3 cm). Wadsworth Atheneum (1855.4).
Figure 4.79  Benjamin West, *The Death of Wolfe* (1770), oil on canvas. 59 x 84” (151 x 213 cm). National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.
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MIDWINTER NUMBER.

THE CENTURY MAGAZINE.

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THE TILE CLUB ASHORE.

A SIMPLE SKETCH.

Space but these pages chronicled the small hour of the guilty thief, two years have gone. If in that interval nothing has been heard of the Tile Club, it is because the unconsecrated practices and modest habits of that worthy body have led it to avoid the public gaze and to prefer the seclusive charm to be found within itself alone.

It is a little older than it was; it has undergone some slight changes; but in character and in spirit it remains the same. In its devotion to art unwavering, elevated, if not inspired, in its faithful pursuit of the Beautiful and the Good, it maintains the agreeable and inexpensive tenor of its way, proceeding by slow but certain footsteps to that eminence in the not too remote future, which true virtue, wholesome ascendency, and liberal publisher shall inevitably confer. Secure in this happy connect, and mindful of its obligations to many indulgent readers, the Tile Club renew its respectful salutations.

Sires will be missed. That amiable artist, whose moments of dyspepsia delivered the critical atmosphere about him, has gone where all good artists go—when they can. He is even now close to the old masters in a Flemish cathedral or some modern Dutch gallery, exposing his sensitized nature to their beauties and their emotions, and absorbing everything about him. Otherwise, the Club is itself, reinforced and vigorous. In the place of Sires it has taken the Burr, the worthy associate of its English representative, the Parr, who is familiar to all peoples by his charming pictures of American colonial life. The Burr is not beautiful to look upon, but there is a great deal more in him than at first

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THE SOCIETY OF AMERICAN ARTISTS.  (See page 2)
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PRESENT TENDENCIES OF AMERICAN ART.

in the subtle elusive tints of flesh, or in the powerful rendering of a mass of scarlet, as in his notable painting of the “Court Jester.” A fine identity also distinguishes his works, and his art life is fired by a lively enthusiasm which must result in genuine and exalted art.

In Philadelphia the new movement has some powerful allies, among whom should is hidden in a mere bit of charcoal in a skillful hand. Among those who have made a specialty of illustration, Mr. Fenn, who is just now in Europe, naturally occurs as among the first of living landscapists. As an illustrator of out-door life, whether it be an old windmill, a Western forest, an ivy-covered ruin, or a sweep of rocky shore, he is equally successful in rendering it grand-
Figure 6.1 Jules Bastien-Lepage *Joan of Arc* (1879), oil on canvas. 100 x 110” (254 x 279.4 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Gift of Erwin Davis, 1889 (89.21.1).
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Figure 6.12 Elihu Vedder, “The Lair of the Sea Serpent.” (November 1880)
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Figure 6.22 Elihu Vedder, “Air of Heaven,” from the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* reproduced in *Century Illustrated Magazine* (November 1884)

50
Why, if the Soul can fling the Dust aside,
And naked on the Air of Heaven ride.
Wert not a Shame—wrt not a Shame for him
In this clay carcass crippled to abide?

51
’Tis but a Tent where takes his one day’s rest
A Sultan to the realm of Death address’d.
The Sultan rises, and the dark Ferrâsh
Strikes, and prepares it for another Guest.
Figure 6.23 Elihu Vedder, “The Cup of Death,” from the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* reproduced in *Century Illustrated Magazine* (November 1884)
Figure 6.24 John La Farge, “Illustration of A Christmas Hymn” (January 1881)

A Christmas Hymn.

I.
Tell me what is this innumerable throng,
Singing in the heavens a loud angelic song?
Those are they who come with swift and shining feet
From round about the throne of God the Lord of Light to greet.

II.
Oh who are these that haste beneath the starry sky—
As if with joyful tidings that through the world shall fly—
The faithful shepherds they, who greatly were afraid
When as they watched their flocks by night the heavenly host appeared.
Figure 6.25 John La Farge, “Illustration of A Christmas Hymn” (January 1881)

III.
Who are these that follow across the hills of night
A star that westward hurries along the paths of light?
Three wise men from the East who worship and treasure bring—
To lay them at the feet of Him their Lord and Christ and King.

IV.
What babe new-born is this that in a manger cries?—
Nest on her lowly bed His happy mother lies.
Oh see the air is shaken with white and heavenly wings—
This is the Lord of all the earth, this is the King of kings.
Figure 6.26 John La Farge, “The Spirit of the Water-Lily.” (February 1881)
Figure 6.27 John La Farge, “The Triumph of Love.” (February 1881)
Figure 6.28 John La Farge, "Cartoon for Angel. Tower of Trinity Church, Boston (Reversed.)" (February 1881)
Figure 6.29 John La Farge, “Cartoon for the Three Marys: St. Thomas’s Church, New York.” (February 1881)
price of untiring exertion. The steep fields made the work heavy, and life on land and sea required very hard and often very dangerous work.

For the people of the neighborhood, the sea was an inheritance. Gruchy had no fishermen, but they got from the beach a waves. Then the entire village, armed with long rakes, rushed to the sea-shore to reap the sea-weed—a rich but dangerous harvest. Some of the men of Gruchy were hired by smugglers, and spent long nights in avoiding the coast-guards. The Millets never indulged in this suspicious industry. "We never ate

manure, which the horses and mules had to carry up the steep, narrow paths to the fields above. They were always watching the wrecks, to seize them before they were carried out again; and after great storms whole banks of sea-weed came up on the Vol. XX.—48.

that bread," said Millet; "my grandmother would have been too unhappy about it."

Millet, the painter of peasants, was born October 4th, 1814, in the village of Gruchy, commune of Gréville, canton of Beaumont.
People talked about his work and the boldness of his handling. The general opinion was that he ought to be sent to Paris to study. On the other hand, Langlois watched the progress of his scholar like a hen who has hatched a young eagle; he let him exercise himself as he chose, in portraiture or Biblical subjects. Sometimes he got Millet to help him on his religious pictures. At the Church of the Trinity at Cherbourg may be seen two large pictures from sacred history, at which Millet worked with Langlois, on delicate parts such as the drapery and the hands. Langlois felt, however, that he could not teach Millet anything. He therefore addressed the municipal council of Cherbourg a petition, which led them to vote an annuity of 400 francs for Millet's education. The general council of La Manche added later six hundred francs, which should be paid until the completion of the young artist's studies. Millet told me several times that this annuity did not last long, and that it was far from being sufficient for his needs; soon the little pension from the town of Cherbourg was suppressed on account of lack of funds.

It was a great event in the Millet family...
of Paris. He had no military spirit, nor the rage of revolt, and all he saw made his heart bleed.

We would go together of an evening to a few hours. His facility was extraordinary, and he never omitted the telling note or charm of color.

One evening, standing before Deforge's

the plain of Montmartre or Saint-Ouen.

The next day I could find Impressions of the day before, which he had painted in a window, he saw two young men examining one of his pictures, "Women Bathing."

"Do you know who painted that?" said
Figure 7.4 Jean-François Millet, “Birthplace of Millet in the Village of Cruchy Normandy,” (September 1880)
nailed to a rock and condemned to endless labor; but I could have forgotten all if I had only been able once in a while to see again my native place."

Millet and his wife came to Paris in December, 1845, and for a time lived in a modest lodging in rue Rochechouart, while waiting to go into three Mansard rooms in the same street, No. 42 bis, where Millet had arranged a very informal studio, whose whole furniture consisted of three chairs and an easel. At once he began to work. His "St. Jerome Tempted by Women " was fine in effect and in movement; it was superbly painted. Couture sent artists to see this "astonishing piece," While he was painting it he received a letter from his grandmother:

"You say you are painting a portrait of St. Jerome, groaning under the tempests which besieged his youth. Ah, dear child, like him reflect, and gain the same holy profit. Follow the example of a man of your own profession, and say, 'I paint for eternity.' For no reason in the world allow yourself to do wrong. Do not fall in the eyes of God. With St. Jerome, think ever of the trumpet which will call us to the Judgment Seat. " Thy mother is ill, and part of the time in bed. I get more and more helpless, and can hardly walk. We wish you a happy and fortunate new year, full of the most
Figure 7.6 Jean-François Millet, “The Sewing Women,” in *Harper's Monthly* (November 1871)
Figure 7.8 Jean-François Millet, *Harvesters Resting* (1873) oil on canvas. 26 ½ x 47 1/8” (67.3 x 119.7 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Bequest of Mrs. Martin Brimmer. (06.2421).
field, they would pronounce, in a low voice, some indistinct words which sounded like a prayer.

Millet had the idea of the sower in his heart without knowing how to define it. Barbizon formulated the work for him, but the scene is laid at Gréville. Although "The Sower" was conceived and executed at Barbizon, it was entirely with the remembrance of Normandy. In point of fact, the first "Sower" by Millet was a young fellow of a wild aspect, dressed in a red shirt and blue breeches, his legs wrapped in wags of straw, and his hat torn by the weather. It is not at all a man of Barbizon—it is a young fellow of Gréville, who, with a proud and serious step, finishes his task on the steep fields, in the midst of a flock of crows, which fly down upon the grain. It is himself, Millet, who remembers his early life, and finds himself once more upon his native soil. Later, he made several drawings and pastels of a "Sower," all having the look of the people at Barbizon. The action is less dignified, the man is more weighed down, like the people about Paris; and in order that there should be no mistake, Millet made as a frame about him the portrait of the country—the old tower and plain of Chailly.

The first "Sower" (1850) was executed with fury, but having reached the end of his work, Millet found, like Michael Angelo with his statues, that the stuff was insufficient, the canvas was too short. He traced the lines of his figure exactly and produced the twin brother, which appeared in the exhibition which opened at the end of the year 1850. The Salon was then at the Palais Royal. With "The Sower" Millet sent "The Sheaf Binders." "The Sower" made some noise, the young school talked about it, copied it, reproduced it in lithography, and it has remained in the memory of artists as Millet's chef d'oeuvre. Théophile Gautier was touched by it. In the following quotation we see the impression made by this virile work:

""The Sower," by M. J.-F. Millet, impresses us as the first pages of the "Marais du Diable" of George Sand, which are about labor and rustic works. The night is coming, spreading its gray wings over the earth; the sower marches with a rhythmic step,

* The first "Sower" is owned by Mr. Quincy A. Shaw, of Boston, who owns also a number of other works by Millet.
Figure 7.10 Jean-François Millet, "The Reaper." (November 1880)

While studying with patience the action of his reapers, Millet produced a figure which had long occupied his thoughts. We know what a serious affair the sowing is to an agricultural people. Plowing, measuring, and harrowing are done with comparative indifference, at any rate without heroic passion; but when a man puts on the white grain-bag, rolls it around his left arm, fills it with seed, the hope of the coming year, that man exercises a sort of sacred ministry. He says nothing, looks straight before him, measures the furrow, and, with a movement cadenced like the rhythm of a mysterious song, throws the grain, which falls to the earth and will soon be covered by the harrow. The rhythmic walk of the sower and his action are superb. The importance of the deed is real, and he feels his responsibility. If he is a good laborer, he will know how much seed to throw with every fling of his hand, adjusting the amount sown to the nature of the soil. I have seen sowers who, before they put foot upon the field, would toss a handful of grain into the air in the sign of a cross; then, stepping upon the
confiner of the neighboring communes very indignant; they went so far as to write about it to the bishop of Coutances. I have found among some old papers the rough draft of the letter he addressed to the bishop in justification, and in which he said that he lived with his brother who was a laborer, that in the commune there were very poor children who would have been deprived of every sort of instruction, that pity had decided him to teach them what he could, and he begged the bishop in the name of charity not to prevent him from teaching these poor little ones to read. I think I have heard that the bishop finally consented to let him continue. Very magnanimous, to be sure! * * * When he died I was about seven years old, and it is curious to realize how deep are the impressions of an early age, and what an indelible mark they leave upon the character. My childish mind was filled with stories of ghosts and all sorts of supernatural things. To this day I enjoy them, whether I believe them or not I cannot say. The day that my great-uncle was buried, I heard them speaking in a mysterious way about the way he should be buried. They said that at the head, on the coffin, must be laid some big stones covered with bundles of hay; their instrument got embarrassed in the straw, and then broke on the stones, which made it impossible for them to hook the head and draw the body out of the grave. Afterward I knew what this mysterious language meant, but from the time of the burial, several neighbors, with the servant of the house, who all had hot cider to drink, passed the night, armed with guns and torches, watching the grave. This guard was continued for about a month. After that they said there was no more danger. This was the reason: some men were said to make a profession of digging up bodies for doctors. They knew where a person died in a commune, and they came immediately at night to steal it. Their way of doing was to take a long screw and work through the earth and the coffin, catching the head of the dead man; with a lever they drew the body out of the grave without disturbing the earth. They had been not leading the dead man, covered with a cloak, holding him under the arms and talking to him as if he were a drunken man, shakling him and telling him to stand up. Others were seen with the body behind them on horseback, the arms held round the waist of the rider, and always covered with a great cloak, but the feet of the body were seen below the cloak.

Some months before the death of my great-uncle I had been sent to school, and I remember well the day he died the maid-servant was sent to bring me home, so that I should not be seen playing in the street under such solemn circumstances. Before sending me to school I had, doubtless, at home learnt my letters and to spell, as the other children thought me very clever. Heaven knows what they called clever. My introduction to the school was for the afternoon class. When I arrived in the court-yard where the children were playing, the first thing I did was to fight. The bigger children who brought me were proud of bringing to school a child of six, and a half who already knew his letters, and besides I was large of my age, and so strong that they assured me that there was not one of my age or even of seven who could beat me. There was none there less than seven, and as they were all anxious to make sure of the matter, they
Figure 7.12 Jean-François Millet, “Noon.” (September 1880)
It was in January, 1837, that Millet arrived in Paris. He had several letters of recommendation for friends or relations of important men in Cherbourg. He went to M. Georges, then expert in the Royal Museum. Georges received him kindly, and asked him what he could do. Millet unrolled a big drawing, some six feet high, on paper. Georges, surprised, showed it to his friends and pupils who were there, and who cried out: "We didn't know they could do this in the provinces!" "It is very good,"
Jean-François Millet—Peasant and Painter.

The Plain of Barbizon.

Every day. He had no other hope than an order from the Minister, and it was a long, difficult piece of work. The figures in "The Hay-makers" were to be half life, in the middle of a plain, at rest near a hay-cock. Millet sought long on the banks of the Seine and at St. Ouen, but could find nothing that he could use. "I don't see anything but inhabitants of a suburb; I want a country-woman." However, he finished his work, and had just received the price, when the revolution of the 19th June, 1849, broke out. The cholera, too, reached its height, and decided Millet and Jacques to leave the city. Furnished with 1800 francs, they went with their families to Barbizon and stopped at old Ganne's. There had already settled, since June, 1848, Théodore Rousseau, Hughes Martin, Belly, Louis Leroy and Clerget.

It was at this time that Millet and Rousseau first knew each other; they had merely met at Daz's. They were neither men to enter easily into intimacy; they took several months to examine one another, and it was not till long after that they talked without constraint. Millet, prudent and discreet, always kept a reserve with Rousseau, which the latter appreciated later. He was never a pupil of Rousseau, as has been stated. When they met they were of equal force. If, afterward, one showed the influence of the other, it was Rousseau, whom Millet's art preoccupied so much that he was drawn by him toward simplicity of subject and sobriety of line.

Millet and Jacques hired studios—such studios—in peasant houses, and set out together to discover the country. I often visited them at this time. They were in such a state of excitement that they could not paint. The majesty of the old woods, the virginity of the rocks and underbrush, the broken boulders and green pastures, had intoxicated them with beauty and odors. They could not think of leaving such enchantment. Millet found his dream lying before him. He touched his own sphere. He felt the blood of his family in his veins. He became again a peasant.

The following is from his first letter from Barbizon, June 28th, 1849:

"We have determined, Jacques and I, to stay here some time, and we have each taken a house. The prices are very different from those in Paris, and as one can get there easily if necessary, and the country is superb, we will work more quietly than..."
Figure 7.15 Jean-François Millet, "The Sower." (November 1880)
Figure 7.16 Jean-François Millet, “The Angelus.” (November 1880)

JEAN-FRANÇOIS MILLET—PEASANT AND PAINTER.

life,—of his poverty. But of such a man everything is of value, and to see him always dignified and serene amid the storms of life, meeting his fate by work, calm love of his art and such persistent self-abnegation, it will be admitted that his poverty ought to raise him in our esteem.

The new buyer was not a casual passerby. Rousseau had discovered him, and, according to his discreet fashion, had sent him to Millet. M. Letroné did not stop; he ordered two more pictures, among others the beautiful composition of the woman feeding chickens, whose price was the enormous one of 2,000 francs. Millet worth 2,000 francs! and how would he use this treasure? To make his house comfortable and enjoy his wealth? Not at all. He thinks of home, and goes off, in June, 1854, with all his children, to La Hague. He went for one month and stint four.

At Gréville, he found neither his father nor his two mothers. Only his eldest sister and one of his brothers remained in the village—a new generation. The old friends of his childhood were under the grass of the cemetery. The first days were sad enough, but the fields, the active life of the house, and the pure air from the cliffs, restored his tone. He wanted to paint, and he drew, with a son’s affection, everything which the family had owned: the house, the garden, the cider-mill, the stables, the orchard, the hedges, the pastures and covered ways of the ancestral house. These sketches and notes, taken in all the neighborhood, served him later for his compositions.

One evening he was returning to Grachy, the “Angelus” was just ringing, and he found himself at the door of the little church of Eulléville. He went in; at the altar an old man was praying. He waited, and when the old priest rose, he struck him gently on the shoulder, and said: “François.” It was the Abbé Jean Lebrisieux, his first teacher.

“Ah, is it you, dear child, little François?” and they embraced, weeping.

“And the Bible, François, have you for-
Figure 7.17 Jean-François Millet, “Teaching the Baby to Walk.” (October 1880)
Figure 7.18 Jean-François Millet, “Sheep-Shearing.” (October 1880)
Figure 7.19 Jean-François Millet, “Oedipus Being Taken from the Tree.” (October 1880)
Figure 7.20 Jean-François Millet, “Woman Bathing.” (October 1880)
Figure 7.21 Jean-François Millet, "The Gleaners." (October 1880)

THE NEW SOUTH.

It was with the simplest means that he obtained the exquisite tones and transparent effects of his pictures.

(To be continued)

THE GLEANERS.

It would seem that facts may now be arrayed which leave no doubt that upon the general cycle of American advance the South has described such an epicycle of individual growth that no profitable discussion of that region is possible at present which does not clearly define at the outset whether it is to be a discussion of the old South or the new South. Although the movement here called by the latter name is originally neither political, social, moral, nor aesthetic, yet the term in the present
Figure 7.22 Jean-François Millet, *The Gleaners* (1857), oil on canvas. 32 7/8 x 43 3/4”. Musée d’Orsay.
Figure 7.23 Jean-François Millet, *The Man with a Hoe* (1860-2), oil on canvas. 21 ½ x 39”. Collection of the J.Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, California.
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