Capturing the game: the artist-sportsman and early animal conservation in American hunting imagery, 1830s-1890s

Doyle Leo Buhler

University of Iowa

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CAPTURING THE GAME:
THE ARTIST-SPORTSMAN AND EARLY ANIMAL CONSERVATION
IN AMERICAN HUNTING IMAGERY, 1830s-1890s

by

Doyle Leo Buhler

An Abstract

Of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Doctor of
Philosophy degree in Art History
in the Graduate College of
The University of Iowa

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Thesis Supervisor: Professor Joni L. Kinsey
ABSTRACT

During the last half of the nineteenth century, American sportsmen-artists painted hunting-related images that were designed to promote the ideals of sporting behavior, conservationist thought, and the interests of elite sportsmen against non-elite hunters. Upper-class American attitudes regarding common hunters and trappers, the politics of land use, and the role of conservation in recreational hunting played a significant part in the construction of visual art forms during this period, art which, in turn, helped shape national dialogue on the protection and acceptable uses of wildlife.

This dissertation takes issues critical to mid-century American conservation thought and agendas, and investigates how they were embodied in American hunting art of the time. Beginning with depictions of recreational sportsmen during the era of conservationist club formation (mid-1840s), the discussion moves to representations of the lone trapper at mid-century. These figures were initially represented as a beneficial force in the conquest of the American frontier, but trappers and backwoodsmen became increasingly problematic due to an apparent disregard for game law and order. I explore the ways in which market hunting was depicted, and how it was contrasted with acceptable “sportsmanlike” hunting methods. Subsequent chapters consider the portrayal of the boy hunter, an essential feature to the sportsman’s culture and its continuance, and the tumultuous relationship between elite sportsmen and their guides, who were known to illegally hunt off-season. The last chapters address the subject of the wild animal as heroic protagonist and dead game still life paintings, a pictorial type that represented the lifestyle of sportsmen and their concern for conservative catches and adherence to game law. Developments in conservation during the period were significantly tied to class and
elitist aspirations, and artist-sportsmen merged these social prejudices with their agenda for game conservation. Their representations of hunting art both responded to and promoted the conservationist cause.

Abstract Approved: ____________________________
Thesis Supervisor

__________________________________________
Title and Department

__________________________________________
Date
This is to certify that the Ph. D. thesis of

Doyle Leo Buhler

has been approved by the Examining Committee for the thesis requirement for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Art History at the May 2011 Graduation.

Thesis Committee:
Joni L. Kinsey, Thesis Supervisor

Julie Hochstrasser

Dorothy Johnson

Barbara Burlison Mooney

Laura Rigal
To Amber
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ABSTRACT

During the last half of the nineteenth century, American sportsmen-artists painted hunting-related images that were designed to promote the ideals of sporting behavior, conservationist thought, and the interests of elite sportsmen against non-elite hunters. Upper-class American attitudes regarding common hunters and trappers, the politics of land use, and the role of conservation in recreational hunting played a significant part in the construction of visual art forms during this period, art which, in turn, helped shape national dialogue on the protection and acceptable uses of wildlife.

This dissertation takes issues critical to mid-century American conservation thought and agendas, and investigates how they were embodied in American hunting art of the time. Beginning with depictions of recreational sportsmen during the era of conservationist club formation (mid-1840s), the discussion moves to representations of the lone trapper at mid-century. These figures were initially represented as a beneficial force in the conquest of the American frontier, but trappers and backwoodsmen became increasingly problematic due to an apparent disregard for game law and order. I explore the ways in which market hunting was depicted, and how it was contrasted with acceptable “sportsmanlike” hunting methods. Subsequent chapters consider the portrayal of the boy hunter, an essential feature to the sportsman’s culture and its continuance, and the tumultuous relationship between elite sportsmen and their guides, who were known to illegally hunt off-season. The last chapters address the subject of the wild animal as heroic protagonist and dead game still life paintings, a pictorial type that represented the lifestyle of sportsmen and their concern for conservative catches and adherence to game law. Developments in conservation during the period were significantly tied to class and
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INTRODUCTION
WITH GUNS DRAWN

During the last half of the nineteenth century, American sportsman-artists painted hunting-related images that were designed to promote the ideals of sporting behavior and conservationist thought. These ideals, known among the initiated as the “sportsman’s code” were a set of rules for proper sportsmanlike behavior. Upper-class Anglo-American attitudes regarding animal conservation and the role of conservation in recreational hunting played a significant part in the construction of fine and popular visual art forms during this period, forms of art which, in turn, helped shape national dialogue on the protection and acceptable market uses of wildlife. Though certain aspects of the hunting genre appeared before 1830, many fundamental and enduring tropes and conventions were forged in the middle decades of the nineteenth century by these sportsman-artists. During this same period the earliest examples of organized animal conservation were becoming apparent, spearheaded by the numerous sporting clubs forming in major Eastern cities in the 1840s. In addition, writers on American sport hunting were advocating the conservation of game animals, arguing that conservation was essential to being a “true sportsman.”¹ The fascination with hunting wildlife, the desire of elite sportsmen to preserve the hunt for the future, the behavioral codes these hunters were advised to follow, and other socio-political aspects of hunting all underlie the hunting images produced in America. Moreover, sportsman-artists depicted the

¹Thomas Doughty, “The Characteristics of a True Sportsman,” Cabinet of Natural History and American Rural Sport 1 (1830), 8; “Sketch of a True Sportsman,” American Turf Register and Sporting Magazine 6, no. 1 (January 1833), 14-15 [magazine hereafter cited as ATRSM]. The term is ubiquitous in the sporting literature that followed Doughty’s article, and the writers commonly link being a true sportsman with the enforcement of game laws and the protection and preservation of game animals. This is discussed more fully in Donald William Klinko, “Antebellum American Sporting Magazines and the Development of a Sportsman’s Ethic” (PhD diss., Washington State University, 1986). The term is used particularly by sportsmen’s club members in reference to their ethical stance.
growing schism between elite “true sportsmen” who hunted for recreation and non-sport hunters such as poachers, market and sustenance hunters, and guides, who were considered to have no code of ethics regarding sport shooting.

The fundamental issues of conservationist thought that developed during the early 1800s have not been considered in any significant way in American art history, even considering the groundbreaking dissertation by Ruth Weidner, entitled “Images of the Hunt in Nineteenth-Century America and their Sources in British and European Art” (1988).² Investigating the iconographical origins of American hunting imagery, Weidner breaks down the hunting pictures produced over the century thematically and briefly mentions conservation as possibly influencing artists, but she does not go into detail concerning the set of beliefs of “true sportsmen.” John Reiger dealt at length with the “sportsman’s code” in American Sportsmen and the Origins of Conservation (1975) and later published a short essay on art in which he draws connections to the growing conservation movement; yet due to its brevity, Reiger’s paper left much work to be done. These works, in addition to James A. Tober’s economic study Who Owns the Wildlife? (1981) are useful sources, and provide a deeper understanding into the issues discussed here. However, these studies neglect any discussion of the hunting images as conveying class-based notions of the gentleman-sportsman, or as playing a key role in developing conservationist thought and legislation. Though types of hunters varied, genteel, or “true sportsmen,” (who produced and commissioned art, and who shot for recreation and health), and those who hunted out of need, represent two extremes in the paradoxical, ever-shifting perception of “the hunter” from the 1840s until the century’s end - the

formative period of conservationist ideology in American popular culture. Research reveals that what may be seen at first as polar distinctions were not so clear cut.

Current interpretations of the specific hunting images discussed here are, for the most part, valid and not under dispute. These images were in part celebrations of westward expansion, Anglo-American hegemony, and Manifest Destiny. They were also, however, designed to advance a position in the dispute between elite sportsmen and non-sport hunters. My study is in part an investigation of the schism between these classes of hunters as it was expressed by artist-sportsmen and those artists who identified with upper-class sporting culture. Moreover, it is also an exploration of the ways in which the painted scenes of hunting promoted conservation, and spoke to upper-class sportsmen’s notions of power and privilege over the common hunters, trappers, squatters and backwoodsmen. By exploring the various cultural presentations of the hunter, as well as his role in conservation, our understanding of the visual representation will be enhanced. These hunting images in turn enhance our interpretation of literary discussions regarding game law and conservation during this contentious period.

Hunting art, or paintings of hunt-related themes, is a subgenre of the larger genre painting type. It is generally assumed that genre painting – the artistic representation of ‘everyday life’ – presents an accurate depiction of the time and place in which it was created. This certainly was the prevailing opinion of many art historians until the 1970s.

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Within the last generation art historians, using various methodologies, have begun to reinterpret images and question traditional assumptions regarding them.

The recreational lifestyle depicted in hunting scenes was adopted by increasing numbers of Americans as the century progressed. Indeed, by 1900 conservation-minded sportsmen constituted a significant political force, with the President of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt, among its most prominent brethren. Despite their solid basis in reality, these scenes are colored by popular culture and high society ideals. As such, sporting scenes often tell us more about the artist’s worldview, including the prejudices, politics, religious and club affiliations of the creator, than about anything we might witness were we to travel back to mid-century America. Similarly, the artist’s patron (often a fellow sportsman), and the views of the patronage class as a whole, must be considered to fully understand the pictures we investigate today. Like paint on canvas, the artist and the patron are captured within these images, their beliefs frozen for our modern perusal.

As in most genre painting, social commentary underlies these images. Political and sectional ideologies were particularly abundant in American sporting scenes. By concentrating on two, long neglected participants in this commentary – the sportsman-artist and the sportsman-patron – this study contributes to an ongoing scholarly discussion of scenes and aspects of ‘the hunt’ in America during the nineteenth century. All of the paintings discussed here are constructions based largely on the reality of hunting culture and hunting politics in America during the second half of the nineteenth century.
Societal interest in sporting culture in America began to grow in the 1830s, and became even more intense over subsequent decades. The passion for sport shooting was reflected in the mid-century emergence of popular sporting periodicals, such as *American Turf Register and Sporting Magazine* (1829-1844), *The Cabinet of Natural History and American Rural Sports* (1830-1833), and *Spirit of the Times* (1831-1861). Though initially designed for a class of men of refined taste who could afford the pastime as a leisure activity, such publications later attempted to cover all types of sport, and to be inclusive of readers from differing classes and political stripes. One of the central messages of these magazines was the need for game conservation. This in turn became the rallying cry of newly-emerging sporting clubs, which published notices in the magazines, and wrote wildlife conservation and the strict adherence to game law into their by-laws. Authors at this time began writing books promoting a manly, outdoor lifestyle and a code of behavior that would set them apart from those hunters who appeared to have little or no code of conduct.

American fine and popular art had referenced hunting during the colonial and early republic periods, but before the 1840s, American artists often borrowed compositions from British and European illustration, sometimes adding uniquely American landscapes and game species to the scenes. Many of the sportsman scenes in the early 1800s are nearly identical to British scenes of gentlemen sportsmen with their pointers and retrievers, stalking after fowl, and were sold as prints, or as illustrations for books and periodicals. ⁴ Artists such as Alvan Fisher and Thomas Doughty were merging

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⁴James Ward and Edwin Landseer’s pastoral hunt scenes were found in the *Sporting Magazine* during the 1820s and 1830s. A contemporary British artist Henry Alken composed, engraved and published a series of sporting prints during the 1830s, one of which, titled *Comparative Sporting*, contrasted The
sport scenes with landscape painting, while genre painters such as William Sidney Mount were introducing sporting culture to American genre painting and to the larger American audience.

Sportsmen who followed the conservationist ideals of sporting clubs and magazines held a set of hunt-related tenets in common: seasonal and bag limits (the number of game animals allowed per hunting event), strict adherence to game laws, proper and fair shooting methods, and the care and breeding of hunting dogs. Though never stated publically by members, an important aspect of the club culture was its private, exclusive atmosphere. Sporting clubs were like any of the gentleman clubs of mid-century – restricting membership to the select, rich, and famous few. Distinguishing themselves from those who did not follow game law was one way to advertise their superiority. Non-sport hunters, by the estimation of “true sportsmen,” did not discriminate methods in their pursuit for game. For market hunters (which could include trappers, hide hunters, and “Eggers”), the bottom line was profit, and the more game captured in the shortest time, the better. When using firearms they often employed the still-hunt method, sitting in a blind and firing “sniper” style, a controversial practice among “true sportsmen” at the time. Market hunters also used steel-traps, decoys and other techniques to capture their game. “Pot hunters” (a term used pejoratively by “true sportsmen” to condemn those who shot or trapped game for sustenance) tended, in the minds of the elite, to be backwoods settlers living on the wildlife surrounding them, and, toward the century’s end, to be Native Americans. This type of hunter shot as much as he could eat, sell or trade to neighbors in order to survive. A fourth group which played an

important part in the debate were farmers, on whose land common hunters often
trespassed in their search for game. In contrast to these hunters, “true sportsmen” made
careful selection of hunting methods, theoretically followed the seasonal and bag limits
set forth by each region, and, as a matter of course, asked permission to hunt on another’s
property. Outspokenly against mass killing of game, “true sportsmen” tended to only
pursue fowl and deer, leaving other game for the “less fortunate” and the market. In
paintings and illustrations “true sportsmen” are usually depicted dressed in fine hunting
apparel, including hunting cap, boots, and buttoned jacket, with dogs, maybe a horse, and
one or two companions. “True sportsmen” differentiated themselves from all other
hunters, had government connections, and led the way in passing legislation to restrict
others from free, unlimited hunting.

Among this fraternity of “true sportsmen” was the artist. For reasons ranging from
the wish to be accepted in high society, the desire for secure patronage, or for pure
enjoyment, sportsmen-artists sought to be included among this elite brotherhood, and in
most cases they were welcomed. Many artists belonged to the same exclusive social clubs
as did their sporting patrons. On hunting expeditions, painters were able to gain scientific
knowledge of wildlife anatomy and habitat, as well as a familiarity with firearms, the
sportsman’s dress and vocabulary, and the types of game sought; this knowledge was
necessary for their craft and for acceptance by their peers and patrons. Because of the
elite sporting terminology, the titles of their paintings – such as Claiming the Shot, On
Point, To-Ho, On the Wing, A Brace of Quail, Flushing the Covey, and Sportsman’s
Trophies – often betray the art as having originated from a sportsman’s hand. The
differences between the sportsman type and the non-sport hunter type are quickly
apparent in the paintings produced during this time. The art celebrates the activity of
shooting and the restricted, exclusive culture which further distinguished upper-class
sportsmen – and the artists seeking inclusion in the fraternity – from lower-class, non-
sport hunters.\footnote{Daniel Justin Herman, in \textit{Hunting and the American Imagination} (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), demonstrates that although many writers attempted to make the sport of hunting appear democratic, in many ways it resembled the English model of class-based hierarchies, prejudices and regulations.}

Many, if not all, of the paintings included in this study have been analyzed in
recent articles and books, and are generally well known to scholars of American art
history. They were produced by leaders in the field of western painting, and were well-
received when first exhibited; in many cases, they were subsequently reproduced as
engravings and mass-produced for public consumption by art-unions, gift-book
publishers, and lithography firms such as Nathaniel Currier of New York, Currier & Ives,
and Louis Prang of Boston. While the patrons and subsequent owners of the actual
paintings often came from the top of the social ladder, anyone could potentially own a
print. Engravings, woodcut and lithographic prints based on these paintings would find
their way into every variety of American household. From the drawing rooms of the
nouveau riche, to the walls of the frontier dugout, these inexpensive, accessible, and
light-weight prints reached all regions of the United States. As such, they were seen and
understood in a multitude of ways, depending on the viewer’s origins and social
background. While exploring a selection of these diverse readings, my study attempts,
when possible, to concentrate on the responses of fellow contemporary sportsmen and the
original buyers of these images.
Various aspects of conservation and issues important to “true sportsmen” were embedded in paintings by artist-sportsmen. A favorite for such artists was depicting both proper hunting methods and controversial examples. Though usually not explicitly delineated in sporting clubs’ by-laws, certain hunting techniques marked the sportsman as a “true sportsman:” the shooting of game birds “on the wing” was considered the height of sportsmanly skill, while “fire-hunting” at night was vehemently despised. In between these two extremes were numerous methods intensely debated at the time. The fairness of a given hunting method was often discussed by sportsmen, and these were represented by the artist. The fairness issue was especially evident in the case of the bison slaughter, which many sportsmen spoke out against, seeing it as a market-specific industry as well as a pursuit for tourists and adventure seekers. “True sportsmen” were determined not to exploit game, but instead follow legally-set or self-prescribed bag limits. This view of bag limits is perhaps best exemplified by the dead game pieces of the period, which stand in contrast to photographs of slaughter from the same time period.

The training dimension of proper, “true” sportsmanship was critical, and though not stated in the by-laws of sporting clubs, was clearly promoted through magazines and books on American sport shooting. As well as being evident in the sporting literature of the period, the importance of teaching youth the values of the “sportsman’s code” is also expressed in the painting of the time. In addition to training future sportsmen, the breeding, training and care of hunting dogs was essential to the culture and its continuance. Well-behaved pointers, retrievers and terriers were a sign of the “true sportsman,” and served as visual indication for the “sportsman’s code.” In contrast, abuse or ignorance of dogs conveyed non-sportsmanlike, non-ethical hunting.
Another issue of concern for artist-sportsmen was the strict adherence to seasonal hunting restrictions. Well-established in many cultures, seasonal restrictions were essential to the code of the sportsman in America. Seasons were spelled out in the law, which also detailed the maximum number of animals an individual sportsman was allowed to take per event. The season expressed in a given picture and the game pursued was one way for artists to comment on the adherence or ignorance of game law. Snow scenes, in particular, were commonly used by artists who wished to convey the hardships, and, by the 1880s, the criminality, of a hunting event. Closely related to these restrictions was the enforcement of game law, with “true sportsmen” deputizing themselves to respond to game exploitation by market hunters. Game laws were generally specific to the region of the country, and based on the health of a given game population in that area; in the Northeastern states, where the majority of the artists who painted hunting scenes lived and worked, many region or county-specific game laws were in effect. Game laws were essentially about control of land and resources, and the restriction of said resources to a select few, who had the time and money to pursue them.

Property rights, land ownership and its use were critical aspects of the sportsman’s identity, and of the very notion of conservation. The acquisition of undeveloped land and its resources was intimately connected to the sportsman’s mindset and club culture. The last quarter of the century saw organizations such as the Long Island-based Southside Sportsman’s Club buying tracts of land to preserve hunting opportunities. The establishment of sporting clubs and eventually club hunting grounds also coincided with the political phenomenon known as Westward Expansion. Corresponding to the ownership of land were the heated sectional issues between North
and South. Interestingly, unlike the standard celebratory pictures depicting expansionism where trains of pioneers and wagons are shown in movement, the territorial conquest in hunting pictures is depicted as a *fait accompli*, with armed figures stalking in and controlling the land, waiting patiently for a shot, or more often resting peacefully after the hunt. The conquering aspect of Manifest Destiny parallels that of hunting: both concern the domination of nature by civilized man. While a gun-toting sportsman could feel the pleasure of being one with nature, he also could experience power and triumphant control over the land and its resources. It was not only the mission of Euro-Americans to confiscate the hunting grounds from the Native Americans, there was also the need to control unsettled lands and to limit their use by all non-sport hunters. Such issues pervade the sporting art of the period.

Each chapter of this study concerns one of the issues discussed above, each of which was critical to early American conservationist thought and agendas, and was embodied in hunting art. Chapter One investigates the mid-century depiction of the recreational sportsman in American art, when conservationist-minded sporting clubs were being created, and how the hunting figural type was formed through the use of established visual codes. Thomas Doughty’s landscapes peopled with hunting gentry from the 1820s on, Thomas Hewes Hinckley’s *Snipe Shooting* (1845) and Francis Flora Palmer’s *Woodcock Shooting* (1852) are examples of this type, in which figures are finely dressed and portrayed recreating in the midst of grand aristocratic estates or game parks. Well-to-do sportsmen in the United States wanted pictures that reflected their lifestyle and beliefs about proper field shooting, and that conveyed their wealth. By producing scenes of powerful men shooting guns in a state of leisure or resting after the hunt, artist-
sportsmen attempted to convey notions of stability, control, and civilized, genteel masculinity and camaraderie. This type of picture typically included certain signifiers of sporting culture, such as proper apparel, fowling pieces, well-behaved hunting dogs, accurate representations of appropriate shooting methods, and other related iconography.

Chapter Two investigates the mid-century subject of the lone trapper, and how the elite sportsman dealt with his representation. The trapper figure was most commonly characterized in literature and art as existing on the edge of society, and he represented both positive and negative aspects of the American character. In this period of emblem creation and the effort to find recognizable symbols for America, the lone backwoods hunter became a ready figurehead for westward expansion, and he was often commended in popular media for his role in clearing the way for agriculture and industry. Such notions were perpetuated and solidified through the stories of James Fenimore Cooper and Washington Irving, among others. Cooper’s “Leatherstocking” books became a major source for American “history” artists, with the hunter hero idealized in pictures, and his rugged nature, his independence from civilization’s restrictions and his connection to nature emphasized. In part because of their hunting prowess, the fictional Leatherstocking and the mytho-historical Colonel Daniel Boone became famous and beloved figures among all classes of Americans, particularly young sportsmen. Popular literature and prints praised the backwoods hunter as a courageous, independent spirit and as a guide and protector of new immigrants moving west. At the height of Boone’s popularity, the mid-century art world was inundated with images featuring Caucasian backwoodsmen and frontier fur trappers. Pre-1845 scenes of frontiersmen are typically portraits, not history paintings. The Boone-like figure often clothed in buckskin, fringe
and moccasins, carried hunting paraphernalia including long rifle, Bowie knife and
tomahawk. By mid-century, wealthy land-owning sportsmen-benefactors were often
depicted in this way to convey the sitter’s connection to the Boone archetype, and the
sporting fraternity.

Prior to 1850, the figures depicted in the actual act of hunting had more frequently
been Native American protagonists, stalking and slaying big game animals in an
unsettled, primordial West. Through the second half of the nineteenth century, the white
trapper/hunter took over the Indian’s position in hunt scenes by artists such as William
Ranney (1813-1857) and Arthur F. Tait (1819-1905). The lone, independent hunter
continued to be represented as a beneficial force in the early colonizing and settling of the
American frontier, but began to take on a more dangerous quality that evoked lawlessness
and even savagery. Despite their heroic characterizations in literature, backwoods hunters
were increasingly perceived by upper-class Americans as representing anarchy, isolation,
and the abandonment of civilization. The backwoods trapper was an anti-hero, and his
brutishness was emphasized in dime novels and papers like Crockett’s Almanack and
similarly colloquial Southern humorist literature. The character type was becoming a
source of concern to wealthy business leaders and politicians living in urban America,
who regarded the lower-class hunters and trappers as a threat to society. These wealthy

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6These include Charles St. Memin’s portrait of Meriwether Lewis (1807, NYHS), W. C. Allen’s
Boone (1839, KHS), George Caleb Bingham’s portrait of Leonidas Wetmore (1840, George Baumunk
Collection), John Syme’s portrait of John James Audubon (1826, Mill Grove Museum, PA); and John W.
and Victor G. Audubon’s portrait of their famous father (1842, AMNH), which shows the gentleman
sportsman, in hunting coat, blue vest, and leather-stockings, with horses and groomsman in the background.

7See J. Gray Sweeney, Columbus of the Woods: Daniel Boone and the Typology of Manifest
Destiny (St. Louis, MO: Washington University Gallery of Art, 1992) for the history and popularity of the
Boone figure in art.
sportsmen had an added concern: the threat to their sport. As a result, by the 1850s trappers were increasingly presented pictorially as troublesome and problematic.

Beginning in the early 1850s, prints of both archetypal sportsmen and of trappers began to flood the market, in a sense fighting for public recognition and acceptance by middle-class America. Some artists even merged the two hunter types. Thomas Cole (1801-1848), Ranney, and Tait, among others, sought to blur the lines between the sportsman and the trapper by presenting the trapper figures as approachable and civilized. In contrast, some artists presented a harsh assessment of the non-sport hunter; one example, William Holbrook Beard’s *Hunter’s Evening Meal* (1845), shows two such hunters about to become a bear’s evening meal. In many cases, it remained for sportsmen-artists to satirize or celebrate, criticize or cleanse the trapper’s complex history and meaning.⁸

Chapter Three is an exploration of the ways in which market hunting was depicted during this era, and how its polar opposite – shooting “on the wing” – signified the “true sportsman.” The bison market, the most conspicuous example of market hunting, surged after the demise of beaver in the Rocky Mountain West and increased with each decade. George Catlin (1796-1872) predicted in the 1830s that the trade in skins would spell the end of the animal within decades, and suggested a national park for their protection.⁹ In 1843, Audubon noted frequently while visiting Ft. Union that the

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⁸This may help explain the absence of Davy Crockett’s representation in fine art. A living tall-tale, Crockett’s physical (albeit largely supernatural) depiction was relegated to the monthly comic almanac; his place in the upper-class American imagination did not make the transition to fine art until Theodore Roosevelt’s generation, and the new cult of manhood ca. 1890. Crockett represented, among the nineteenth-century upper class, uncontrolled exploitation and amoral behavior.

market in bison robes would spell the end of the species. He expressed disgust at the 
horrific and wasteful manner in which the animal was skinned. Positive representations 
of the bison hunt involved Indians, while representations of white hunters were more 
frequently negative, suggesting tourist or market hunting. Many American military men did 
hunt bison, but the practice was largely seen by “true sportsmen” as unfair, wasteful and 
unnecessary, and the art tended to support this position. The trapping and market 
slaughter of other forms of wildlife was treated similarly, and the imagery of trapping and 
other unfair methods (decoys, fire hunting, still hunting bison, etc.) helped to solidify the 
distinction between “true sportsman” and market hunter.

Chapter Four focuses on artistic portrayals of the child as hunter and the training 
of children and dogs as part of the core belief of sportsmanship. At mid-century, the male 
child in sporting scenes is often shown assisting an elder hunter in the proper techniques, 
as in William Ranney’s *On the Wing* (1850). However, after the Civil War, the child is 
often portrayed hunting alone, as in John G. Brown’s *Taking Aim* (1875). Boys and 
young men play a critical role in the hunting imagery of the time, not only as developing 
practitioners and potential conservationists, but as pupils of the conquest of nature and, 
by extension, of the continent. Hunting art depicting the child as hero or antihero was 
produced and bought by members of sporting clubs, and a re-evaluation of these images 
in light of the conservationist messages of self-control, masculinity and exclusion that 
they convey is revealing.  

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10 John James Audubon and John Bachman, *Viviparous Quadrupeds* (1846) (reprinted as 
*Audubon’s Mammals: The Quadrupeds of North America [Complete and Unabridged]*) 
(Edison, New Jersey: Wellfleet Press, 2005), 179 [hereafter cited as *VQ*].

11 Art historian Sarah Burns finds Homer’s overtly masculine hunt scenes as conveying 
individualism in modernity. See Sarah Burns, *Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America* 
Chapter Five looks at the tumultuous relationship that formed between sportsmen and their guides, and the ways this attitude was translated into painting and popular art. Like the images of the trapper before them, guides were portrayed as ambiguous characters. Sportsmen saw guides – locals who also hunted year-round outside of the law – as a problematic necessity when shooting in remote terrain, but basically understood as market hunters for hire. While denigrating their life-style, they were forced to rely on these locals. Given the mindset of the artist and the patron class, representations of guides and their actions must be seen in the context of the culture of fair game use and conservation. One can see a development from Ranney’s heroic and democratic sporting scenes of the 1850s (where guide and sportsman are comrades), through Tait’s more divided scenes of the 1860s and 1870s, to John George Brown’s (1831-1913) clearly segregated sporting group of 1865, Thomas Eakins’ (1844-1916) enigmatic versions of the 1870s (where he depicts himself as guide), and the dark and troubling pictures of guides by Winslow Homer in 1880s and 1890s.

Chapter Six is an exploration of the subject of the wild animal as heroic protagonist in American art during this period, and how its depiction served to show the sportsman’s love, respect and reliance on the “noble” animal. Before the 1840s, fine artists frequently adapted the combat narrative imported from Europe to the American landscape and wildlife. This style is exemplified in John J. Audubon’s (1785-1851) Osprey Fighting an Otter for Salmon (1844). In large part due to Audubon’s writings, game hunting became affiliated with natural history and science, thus giving a rationale for blood sport. Yet, with the increase in popular sympathies toward animal conservation, including the integration of Sir Edwin Landseer’s (1802-1873) heroic and sympathetic
models into American popular culture, game animals began to be portrayed more compassionately. They were anthropomorphized to encourage emotional connection between the viewer and the subject, and became a metaphor for human conflict. Wildlife species in turn began to be divided into two conspicuous camps: the “good” or heroic, noble animals (buffalo, deer, prairie dogs, game birds) and “bad” predatory animals (wolves, coyotes, and bears) which become equated with poachers; this division is particularly apparent in numerous paintings where predators attack or “steal” noble game. Some wildlife painters like Tait and William Jacob Hays (1830-1875) sought to convey the victims’ awareness of the hunter, to increase sympathy and to create a sentient victim worthy of killing in a sportsman-like manner. An early conservationist, Hays constructed several scenes from the point of view of a gun’s sight, or with the viewer in the animal’s space, with hunter in the far distance. Created with the sportsman-patron in mind, these images became more popular than the noble victim vs. predator (poacher) type, and Tait too later switched to this convention. In such pictures the emotive and mythic power is transferred from the lone hunter to the animal hero. As a result, the viewer both became, and potentially killed, the nature-dwelling hero if only in imagination.\(^{12}\)

Chapter Seven deals with dead game still life paintings, a pictorial type that was common during the entire nineteenth century, but that grew exponentially during the 1880s and 1890s, the climactic period of game protection. There was an overwhelming concern at the time that the sport of shooting was in jeopardy unless game laws were more strictly followed and enforced. This final chapter looks at how sportsmen-artists

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\(^{12}\)See Jon T. Coleman, “Animal Last Stands: Empathy and Extinction in the American West,” *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 55, no. 3 (Autumn 2005): 2-13, for more on this heroic transference from hunter to animal in literature. Landseer’s influence on American art, and most specifically the hunting genre, has not been properly addressed, and will be considered in this dissertation.
altered their pictures to reflect this new public awareness. Game pieces combine nostalgic vision, classist identification, and power politics in a non-figural scene, and convey at once the owner’s appreciation of high culture, and his or her recreational interests.

American game pieces are commonly described by scholars as being signs of a masculine ideal in response to the “feminization” of American culture in the 1870s and 1880s, or as nostalgic dreams of a pre-consumer-based past. During the late nineteenth century conservationist ideals and public acknowledgement of wildlife endangerment led to different ways of depicting dead game and hunting accoutrements. This chapter explores the use of game pieces and hunting trophies during this period as images that symbolize conservation itself. The 1890s marked the official end of the frontier and the beginning of national endeavors to save wildlife through federal legislation, national park creation, and law enforcement. Several still-life pictures directly address what was perceived to be the sportsman’s endangered recreation, including William Harnett’s nostalgic After the Hunt paintings, and the equally illusionistic “cabin door” trompe l’oeil paintings by “true sportsmen” such as George Cope (1855-1929) and Alexander Pope (1849-1924). These later artists depict modern hunting paraphernalia, and their works are celebrations of the sportsman’s privileged lifestyle, but also allude to his concerns. These pictures, which show a brace of woodcock or a single bird, stand in marked contrast to the piles of game that are highlighted in contemporaneous photos of market hunters.

Artist-sportsmen helped speed the process toward federal conservation by expressing not only the desires of the patron, but their own attitudes and prejudices.

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13 The frontier’s end was cited both in the 1890 U.S. Census and in Frederick Jackson Turner’s now famous paper, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” (1893), delivered at the American Historical Association. It should be noted that earlier efforts at wildlife protection and conservation had begun at Yellowstone National Park (founded in 1872), but a federal mandate was not made until 1894.
Much of this mindset was based on the artist’s sectional origin and loyalties, as well as on the desire to be accepted by the fraternity. This exclusive club mentality was epitomized in the Boone and Crockett Club (founded in 1887 by Theodore Roosevelt and George Bird Grinnell), which brought together wealthy and influential sportsmen (many of whom were artists) from across the country in the united cause of game protection. By the 1890s, the movement was crystallizing into a national, federalized program and it pulled together the various state laws into one manageable, enforceable law. By popularizing their vision of the “true sportsman,” artists made the debate accessible to mainstream Americans, while satisfying their clientele with knowledgeable depictions of their exclusive culture. By capturing the pursuit of game on canvas, the artist captured the evolution of the sportsman and an emerging respect for game and game law in the United States.
CHAPTER 1
REPRESENTING THE “TRUE SPORTSMAN”

In 1845, Thomas Hewes Hinckley (1813-1896), a sportsman-artist living on a farm in rural Milton, Massachusetts, painted one of the earliest sporting genre scenes to capture the lifestyle and look of the recreational, well-to-do American sportsman. In creating Snipe Shooting (Perfect Teamwork) (1845, fig. A1), Hinckley drew on long established British prototypes, yet gave the scene a decidedly American flavor by placing his figures in a recognizably Massachusetts landscape and in uniquely American dress. Two well-attired, armed men stroll with their dogs along a winding river which disappears into the background. The teamwork of the title is true on dual levels: between the two men, and between each hunter and his hound. The men are engaged in shooting “on the wing,” which, as the name suggests, involves shooting fowl in mid-flight; the technique was difficult, and it marked the disciplined, recreational sportsman who sought fair chase. Scenes such as Hinckley’s provided visual cues to express the emerging, elitist sporting culture and the protocol of the sportsman.

Perfect Teamwork and other similarly composed scenes by Hinckley revealed the importance of sport shooting for a number of mid-century artists. For recreational sportsmen like Hinckley, the pastime represented a combination of upper-class masculine ideals; foremost among them being leisure, composure and power. Control, both over self and nature, was a defining aspect of the gentleman sportsman. Indeed, Hinckley composed Perfect Teamwork at a significant moment in American history, when territorial and resource control became a national policy in the form of Manifest Destiny. The openly-expansionist mindset was echoed in other social arenas as well, including sporting culture. Hinckley’s scene was symbolic of this growing sporting culture.
As evidence of the new power of sportsmen, the mid-1840s saw the formation of one of America’s most important shooting clubs, the New York Sportsman’s Club (NYSC; later named New York Association for the Protection of Game (NYAPG)). Founded in 1844, the club passionately advocated for consistent game laws and their enforcement, and catalyzed the establishment of other game protection clubs. Their letterhead portrayed the embodiment of the “true sportsman,” a man shooting “on the wing” (fig. A2). The NYSC’s underlying mission was to protect game and the sport from non-sport hunters, particularly market hunters. The preamble of the club’s constitution gives a sense of its lobbying and enforcement mission:

Whereas, it has been found necessary, for the preservation of game and certain varieties of fish, that an association should exist to advocate the passage of suitable laws, to enforce such laws when passed, and promote a healthy public opinion in relation thereto; sundry gentlemen of the City of New York have formed this association for that purpose, and adopted the following as its constitution.14

Within months of forming, the association began bringing cases against illegal sellers of game and, in most cases, it prevailed.15 One of the first organizations of its kind in the United States, the NYSC was comprised of the city’s elite: intellectuals, businessmen, lawyers, bankers and artists. The writer and conservationist Henry W. Herbert (1807-1858), who wrote under the pen name “Frank Forester,” was one of the Club’s first prominent artist-sportsman members. Other early members included several art patrons: the first president of the NYSC, city alderman Bernard J. Meserole (d. 1853); attorney and author Charles E. Whitehead (1827-1903), who served as NYSC legal

14Constitution and By-Laws booklet (1914), 15 (located in New York Association for the Protection of Game MSS, Box 6, Folder 203, New York State Library, Albany).

15“Historical Sketch from 1893,” in ibid., 17. On June 8, 1844, the club brought suit against Daniel Young, a stall owner at Fulton Market. The association’s official name was changed on March 10, 1873.
counsel for decades; one time-New York City mayor and publishing mogul James Harper; Isaac Bell, Thomas A. Fowler, J. Prescott Hall, and a host of other prominent men.\textsuperscript{16} The member perhaps most important for early American artists was Prosper Montgomery Wetmore (1798-1876), president of the American Art-Union (AAU) from 1846-50 and after, a member of its management committee.\textsuperscript{17} In addition, several artists were members of the Sportsman’s Club, including William Jacob Hays (1830-1875), Sanford R. Gifford (1823-1880), Wakeman Holberton (1839-1898), and Herbert [Forester], by far the most public voice for conservation in America at the time. Scenes like Hinckley’s \textit{Perfect Teamwork}, and \textit{Snipe Shooting on Fowl Meadow, Norfolk County, Mass.} from 1846 represented the growing interest in genteel sporting behavior that culminated in the formation of these first sportsman’s clubs.\textsuperscript{18}

\textbf{“True Sportsmanship” Defined}

The 1840s marked the beginning of animal conservation in America, but limited and highly inconsistent regional game laws for the protection of wildlife were in evidence decades earlier. Little funding was provided for enforcement, but scattered laws protected a few species, usually fowl and deer – those animals specifically sought by elite,

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., 15; the Club’s ties to the New York art community are fascinating and deep. Though not listed as being present at the Club’s first meeting, Henry W. Herbert (“Frank Forester”) is often cited as a founding member. See “Game Protectors at Dinner,” \textit{New York Times}, May 22, 1894.

\textsuperscript{17}For more on the AAU officers, see Rachel N. Klein, “Art and Authority in Antebellum New York City: The Rise and Fall of the American Art-Union,” \textit{Journal of American History} 81, no. 4 (March 1995): 1534-1561.

\textsuperscript{18}“The Massachusetts Shooting Club, and Other Sporting Matters,” \textit{Spirit of the Times} 19, no. 12 (May 12, 1849), 138 [hereafter cited as \textit{SOTT}]; and “Game in Massachusetts,” \textit{SOTT} 20, no. 14 (May 25, 1850): 157. This group was organized “for the purpose of enforcing the law.” Penalties from prosecutions were to be given to the poor. Hinckley’s 1846 \textit{Snipe Shooting} scene (22x 30 in.) was won by a wealthy merchant Joseph Sargeant of Cleveland, OH, in the 1846 AAU annual distribution. A reproduction is in the Frick Library, and discussed in \textit{Sport in American Art} (exh. cat., Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1944), 14. The painting was lent by Harry Shaw Newman, The Old Print Shop, New York.
\end{footnotesize}
recreational sportsmen. Beginning with Virginia’s first closed season for deer in 1699, several Eastern states passed independent seasonal restrictions against hunting deer, snipe, woodcock, partridge and quail, inconsistent restrictions which only added to the confusion. By the 1830s, the game laws in New Jersey, where many of the urbanite sportsmen went to hunt, fined the perpetrator fifty cents for every bird found in his possession out of season, and required the forfeiture of the hunter’s gun. Yet still, state and regional differences in law abounded.

What made a “true sportsman,” and who defined one as such? The sporting journals of the early nineteenth century played a large role in spreading the term, and it quickly became a catch-phrase to identify a select few from other hunters, serving as self- and group-identification. As early as the 1830s, a large number of sports writers were differentiating “true sportsmen” – those who followed seasonal restrictions and supported enforcement of the protection laws – from sustenance and market hunters, who did not. One such writer claimed that “no true sportsman will, knowingly, violate the laws for the

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21 An early example of the term is found in Daily National Intelligencer (Washington, DC) Thursday, August 9, 1821, col. B. Other examples include “Shooting Game out of Season,” ATRSM 1, no. 5 (April 1830), 388; “Season for Shooting Game,” ATRSM 1, no. 10 (June 1830), 500; “Silence and Circumspection, Qualities Necessary To a True Sportsman,” ATRSM 2, no. 9 (May 1831), 431; W.H.C., “Sketch of a True Sportsman,” ATRSM 4, no.1 (September 1832), 14; “An American Sketch of a True Sportsman,” ATRSM 4, no. 1 (September 1832), 14-15; and 7, no. 8 (April 1836), 368; J.V.S., “American Sketch of a True Sportsman,” Spirit of the Times 6, no.10 (April 23, 1836), 79; “Game Laws,” ATRSM 8, no.7 (March 1837), 320; “Violation of the Game Laws,” SOTT 8, no.50 (January 26, 1839), 396.
Hunters who ignored the sporting codes of behavior, including market men, trappers, and so-called “pot-hunters” (those who hunted for “the pot,” or sustenance), were perceived by most elite sportsmen as lower-class and even criminal. Codes and laws to preserve the sporting order underlay much of the sporting art produced after mid-century.

One of the first authors to define the “true sportsman” was the landscape painter and avid sportsman Thomas Doughty (1793-1856), who, with his brother, published a short-lived but vastly influential sporting periodical entitled *Cabinet of Natural History and American Rural Sports* (1830-33). The journal’s first issue included an essay on what constituted the “true sportsman;” foremost among the various attributes Doughty espoused was the adherence to games laws and seasons:

A *True Sportsman* always respects the rules and seasons for shooting, and most heartily despises the man who destroys the unfledged brood, or the protectors which Nature has provided for them. He is provided with every article necessary for his excursions, without borrowing...In his general exterior, he appears neat, clean, and properly accoutered.23

As the statement implies, wealth was essential to being a “true sportsman,” making the avocation inherently class-based. Those who used the term tended to be Anglo-Americans who sought a civilized, gentlemanly sport in the United States modeled after the English recreation. Doughty’s figural images for the journal’s frontispieces

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22“New-Jersey Game Laws.” *New-York Spectator*, June 25, 1830, col. D. Many excellent studies have addressed some of this early movement, including those by James A. Tober and John F. Reiger.

23D[oughty], “The Characteristics of a True Sportsman,” *The Cabinet of Natural History and American Rural Sports* 1 (1830): 8. His essay on what constituted the “true sportsman” was reprinted in subsequent issues, where the author is cited as Thomas Doughty. He published the *Cabinet of Natural History* series with his brother John, which ran from 1830 to 1832; considering the journal an economic failure, Thomas left the publishing business at that point in order to pursue his painting career exclusively. Doughty settled in New York City in 1840, but lived in other major Eastern cities during his career.
reflected this Anglophilia, as well as the use of dogs, and shooting “on the wing” (figs. A3 & A4).

Sportsmen who fell under this category, like members of the NYSC, supported and helped write game law legislation to protect their sport. While not promoting the heavy-handed restrictions of British game law, that regarded wildlife as the property only of royals and the lordly elite, affluent American sportsmen nonetheless advocated the same rigidly-defined, class-based culture of the sport as practiced in Great Britain and Europe. It was an exclusive culture that prescribed specific dress, language, and methods of shooting. Many genteel sportsmen in America referred to this sporting etiquette as the Oakleigh Code, after its British author’s pseudonym.24 A model for all sportsman clubs that followed, the Oakleigh Code summarized the proper behavior and protocol expected of “true sportsmen.” Like Doughty’s summation, the code found killing game out of season, or when immature, to be reprehensible and “unsportsmanlike,” and condemned poaching.25 The lifestyle of the gentleman sportsman, however, was beyond the means of most Americans; in time, a rift was formed, leading to a schism between sportsmen and non-sport hunters that would fester for generations to come, and position class against class.

24Thomas Oakleigh [pseudo.], The Oakleigh Shooting Code (London: James Ridgway and Sons, 1836); two editions followed, the third published in 1838. It was still cited in the US in the 1840s, and seems to have been the model followed by Herbert (Forester) for his writings on the topic; for instance, see Tom Oakleigh, “Hints for the Shooting Season,” ATRSM 7, no. 5 (January 1836), 216-219; and “British Field Sports,” SOTT 11, no. 41 (December 11, 1841), 481. Frank Forester, The Complete Manual for Young Sportsmen…Prepared for the Instruction and Use of the Youth of America (New York: Stringer and Townsend, 1856), 128-130, quotes from Oakleigh, and calls the code a “work of decided merit.” Strangely enough, John F. Reiger, whose entire thesis is the importance of the sportsman’s code on animal conservation, never mentions Oakleigh or his code’s influence on American sportsmen. Many of the sporting articles published in American sporting papers at this early date in fact come from the London papers. Ironically, actual British tourists to the western United States had no reservations in killing as much game as possible, enjoying the freedom of unlimited hunting that America offered.

Distinguishing between the recreational sportsman and the non-sportsmanlike hunter had long been a major task of artists and authors who dealt with hunting in their work. In fact, one of the first English poems to celebrate the hunt, and to describe Georgian hunting etiquette – *Pteryplegia, or, The Art of Shooting-Flying* – distinguishes the behavior of the “true sportsman” from the poacher. Penned by George Markland (1678-1722), and published posthumously, it touches on all aspects of the gentleman’s recreation of taking fowl “on the wing.” Two passages by Markland specifically distinguish between the two poles of hunting practice:

> Turn the wild Poultry from the bough-
> Away shame, ne’er let that bawling
> Lurcher bay, Poachers alone surprise the gazing prey!...

> Sometimes the Cock may at half-bent go down
> True Sportsmen therefore always mount the Gun.
> They walk with Flint by Guardian Thumb restrain’d
> With piece well handl’d, ready at Command.26

While the majority of this 373 line poem extols the virtues of the “true sportsman,” Markland also mentions the gentleman’s counterpart, the poacher, who “alone” shoots game birds in their nest. This poem was essentially a manual for proper, gentlemanly behavior in the field and established shooting “on the wing” as the penultimate hunting method. As such, the hunting of fowl became esteemed over larger game as the prey for the “true sportsman.” Game laws in England, from where Markland penned his opus, were severe at the time for poachers and penalties included imprisonment and hanging. The poacher in Markland’s poem is presented as little more than a nuisance, yet poaching was actually a large problem for English land owners and continued unabated well into...

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the 1870s. It thrived in America as well, and it was in opposition to the poacher’s lifestyle that the American “true sportsman” defined himself. 27

Sporting literature in America from the 1840s on noted the importance of conserving game in line with the British-originated Oakleigh Code. American writers, however, were already noting one key difference between American and British hunting practices: the market hunt. Commenting on the lack of sporting literature and etiquette in early-1840s America, one reviewer wrote that unlike the British,

Sporting is with us, for the most part, not an art but a trade, and needs no teacher but personal experience…with us…the bison, the bear, the deer, the otter, the raccoon, are hunted either for profit accruing directly from their skins or meat, or for protection from their destructive habits. 28

In America at mid-century the professional market hunter had steady work, but gentleman-hunters, who were trained following the customs of the gentleman class (to which this reviewer obviously belonged) wished to eliminate the poacher and market hunter from the field. Average Americans still widely perceived the “true sportsman” ideal as an elitist phenomenon, but the beginnings of concern for conservation among the upper middle-class American sportsman was apparent, as was the movement towards a disciplined model of recreational shooting. The same reviewer concluded that as “admirers of true sporting, we [Americans] are no friends to indiscriminate slaughter…we abjure the spirit that destroys at all seasons and by all methods.” 29


29 Ibid., 356. The term “true sportsman” is found in British papers from the late 1700s, and seems to have been imported, along with its aristocratic meaning, to the United States.
In addition to his frontispieces for the *Cabinet of Natural History*, where the hunting event takes precedent, Doughty painted dozens of works in which the hunting event is meant to provide associational value for what are predominantly landscapes. *In Nature’s Wonderland* (ca. 1835, fig. A5) is one such example, where a miniscule sportsman leans against his gun to take in the sublimity before him. The painting was purchased by the brother of another painter of sportsman scenes, Alvan Fisher (1792-1863) of Boston, who Doughty collaborated with on exhibitions.30 The majority of Doughty’s paintings depict either fishermen or sportsmen in fine attire with their dogs flushing game fowl; his figures are included in part to allow the sportsman viewer access to the scenic space being celebrated, and may be read as invitations to join in the hunt. Both in the journal illustrations and the large paintings, Doughty’s placement of sportsmen figures had a major influence on artists and non-artist sportsman alike, reminding the viewer that the noble recreation of shooting was for gentleman alone, and that there were certain rules that one must follow to be a “true sportsman.”31

Following Doughty’s lead, other landscapists such as Thomas Cole (1801-1848), Worthington Whittredge (1820-1910), Sanford R. Gifford (1823-1880), and Jasper F. Cropsey (1826-1900), began to include the sportsman figure, giving associational value to romantic landscapes, and reminding the viewers of the artists’ interest in the sport of shooting.32 For instance, Cropsey’s *Sportsmen Nooning* (1854, fig. A121) presents a

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30 Alvan Fisher’s brother Dr. John Dix Fisher is listed as the painting’s first owner. See the Detroit Institute of Art website, www.dia.org.

31 Other early examples of Doughty’s landscapes with sportsmen include *Landscape with Pool* (ca. 1823, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts), *Delaware Water Gap* (1826, Private), *View of a Lake* (ca. 1830, Cleveland Museum of Art), and *A River Glimpse* (ca. 1843, Metropolitan Museum of Art).

32 Gifford created several landscapes with barely perceptible hunting figures; for more, see Chapter 5. Thomas Bangs Thorpe painted a few landscapes, though apparently without figures. See “Sketchings,”
group of men at leisure among a Hudson River landscape. These artists were also inspired by the British-American landscapist Joshua Shaw (1776-1861), who was one of the first to introduce the depiction of unidentified hunters and hounds in idyllic pictures.33

After the demise of his *Cabinet of Natural History*, Doughty joined forces with Alvan Fisher and portrait painter Francis Alexander (1800-1880) for a group exhibition of landscapes and hunting scenes in Boston in May 1834 at Chester Harding’s Gallery.34

Fisher, like Doughty and Shaw, was among the first American artists to incorporate sporting narratives into landscapes. Fisher produced a large number of dog and game genre pictures during his career, especially in the first decade of the nineteenth century, and played a critical role in increasing interest in the sporting genre. His earliest extant painting, *The Young Hunter* (1811, Dedham Historical Society) features a well-dressed figure with hound, stalking ducks swimming in a nearby pond. The scene has aspects of both genre and landscape paintings, and is perhaps one of the first cross-over examples in America, in which the figural narrative comes to the fore. Fisher was also one of the first American artists to represent himself on canvas as a gentleman sportsman. In a self-portrait from 1837 (fig. A6), Fisher presents himself on a lakeside, dressed in

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34Dunlap, *Progress of the Arts*, 176.
black hunting jacket and stylish black hat, sitting on a red blanket-covered rock with gun in white gloved hands, a slain deer at his feet. Fisher’s role in inspiring future sporting artists in America is profound. Writers at the sporting periodical *Spirit of the Times* loved Fisher, and gave his art frequent notice and adoring reviews, in part because of Fisher’s early specialization in horse genre. Through this medium, Fisher played a key role in shaping the self-image of the American “true sportsman,” and other sportsmen-artists would have been encouraged to pursue this genre based on Fisher’s success.

The visual codes that Doughty and Fisher borrowed from the British – the depiction of shooting “on the wing;” trained, well-disciplined dogs; the most modern firearms; and proper, even stylish apparel – helped the viewer recognize the character of their subjects as “true sportsmen.” The sporting action occurs in pastoral settings that suggest a game preserve. Additionally, in the early examples of “true sportsman” pictures no guides are present; the performance is carried out entirely by the skilled gentleman shooter, on horseback or strolling with a comrade, completely at leisure. Even the titles given to hunting paintings point to the social distinction inherent in the images. For instance, “sportsman” was often used differently than “hunter,” which commonly denoted the sustenance hunter/poacher. Moreover, the home of a sportsman was presumably in the city or on a plantation, that of the guide or non-sportsman being in the woods, and the titles make this clear. For example, in 1853, the Irvington, New Jersey artist Elias W.

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36 Alvan Fisher’s art is discussed in “Animal Painting,” *SOTT* 12, no. 2 (March 12, 1842), 13. He was one of the first American painters to make portraits of celebrated horses, which was the key reason for his *Spirit* appeal. In typical *Spirit* fashion, the reviewer refers to Fisher as a former horse painter, who switched to genre painting because the owners of said horses didn’t like his work. Also see *The Paintings of Alvan Fisher*, xvi-xvii, and 2-3.
Durand (1824-1908) painted *The Hunter's Home*, which exhibited at the NAD that year. Though unlocated, the title suggests it is set in the backwoods. Jerome Thompson’s *The Night Hunters Awaiting their Comrades* (1855, unlocated) is certainly a reference to the controversial fire hunters, or some similarly deceptive practice.\(^{37}\)

Picking up where Doughty’s *Cabinet* left off when it folded in 1834, the sporting journals *Spirit of the Times* (1831-1861) and *American Turf Register and Sporting Magazine* (1829-1844) continued to promote the ideal of “true sportsmanship,” but they also addressed less elitist forms of sport.\(^ {38}\) Under the editorial direction of William Trotter Porter (1809-1858), both journals regularly addressed the importance of game conservation. The *Spirit* was also the major mid-century source for sport-related literary humor, featuring stories infused with class-based prejudice directed in large part toward the backwoods squatter. Porter, his staff, and most of the *Spirit*’s correspondents were well-bred, landed gentlemen. Claiming it was all in good humor, the collective writing by the *Spirit* circle betrayed the paper’s elitist and usually Whig-leaning viewpoint, which was not unlike that held by the majority of the NYSC.\(^ {39}\) The *Spirit* became the central literary vehicle for the message of game conservation and protection during this period. Through the *Spirit*’s essays, reporting and advertisements promoting the NYSC’s aims,

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\(^{37}\)There were exceptions. William Smith Jewett (1812-1873) painted *Hunters Lunching, A Scene in Dutchess County* (1847), which came to be owned by one E. (Ephraim?) Dresback of Tiffin, Ohio, and though referred to as hunters, denotes the leisure of the activity of sportsmen. See SIRIS website, www.sirismm.si.edu.

\(^{38}\)Porter gave Forester much space to plead to *Spirit*’s readership the case for game protection. See J.V.S., “American Sketch of a True Sportsman,” *SOTT* 6, no. 10 (April 23, 1836), 79. Some forms of hunting described include the Southern pastimes of alligator shooting and opossum hunting.

\(^{39}\)Norris W. Yates, *William T. Porter and the Spirit of the Times* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1957), 15, 80, 87-88, 113-115. The *Spirit* frequently expressed a fear of backwoods simpletons like Crockett running for governmental offices, and stressed the uncouth hunting methods of poor whites. See ibid., 91-93, 122. Porter was a Whig and surrounded himself with Whig friends, which can be sensed in the *Spirit*’s antebellum reporting. See ibid., 6, 24 & 43.
artists who identified with the sportsman culture were frequently reminded of game laws and related issues.

While generally lacking images within its pages, The Spirit revealed its classist orientation in part by devoting a fair amount of space to discussing the fine art of the period. These discussions took the form of regional exhibition reviews and promotions for its own “gallery of sporting art,” located next to the editorial office. Even with the Spirit’s stated mission of being all-inclusive, reviews of animal genre and hunt scenes such as those produced by Alvan Fisher, William Ranney and Arthur F. Tait tended to play second fiddle to the more popular horse portraiture such as that produced by Edward Troye (1808-1874, fig. A7). In the first decade of its run, praise of sportsman-artists tended to be directed towards the British masters, such as George Stubbs (1724-1806), James Ward (1769-1858), John Frederick Herring (1795-1865) and Edwin Landseer (1802-1863), each of whom celebrated the aristocratic nature of sport.

Despite sport painting being a minor component of its focus, the Spirit remained a steady supporter of American sporting and hunting artists. The fact that many of the journal’s reviews of hunting art were penned by visual artists and art collectors who were also skilled in art history and criticism – namely James Topham Brady (1815-1869), Thomas Bangs Thorpe (1815-1878), and possibly Henry W. Herbert – likely helped bring attention to the genre. Having trained under the genre painter John Quidor (1801-1881),

\[40\]Back Matter, SOTT 9, no. 2 (March 16, 1839), 24.

\[41\]Besides advertisements, Landseer’s art is praised roughly seven times in the Spirit, most of which concerns his paintings of dogs. One example is “Edwin Landseer’s ‘Three Sporting Dogs’,” SOTT 19, no. 20 (July 7, 1849), 233.

\[42\]During much of the 1850s, the art reviews in the Spirit are written by James Topham Brady, a close friend of Herbert, who used the pseudonym “Query,” and wrote with a good deal of wit and art historical knowledge. See “Our Own Art-Union,” SOTT 19, no. 15 (June 2, 1849), 175. Unsigned reviews
Thorpe was primarily a landscape painter, though he also produced the occasional wildlife scene or portrait.\textsuperscript{43}

As an artist, art historian and contributor to sporting journals of the time, Henry W. Herbert was attempting to spread the British model of sportsmanship – also known as the Oakleigh Code – to American hunters.\textsuperscript{44} An immigrant from Manchester, England, Herbert worked to bring culture to recreational hunting, to teach the general public of the benefits of game conservation, and to fight for stricter game laws.\textsuperscript{45} A leading conservationist at mid-century, and a member of the NYSC, it was through his writing

\textsuperscript{43}Titles of some of Thorpe’s landscapes that may feature hunting figures include \textit{Palmetto Swamps}, \textit{Banks of the Mississippi} (ca. 1867), \textit{I’ll Fight it out on this Line} (ca. 1869), \textit{Bluefishing off Montauk Point} (ca. 1871), and \textit{A Frontier Inquest} (ca. 1878), all of which exhibited at the Brooklyn Art Association. Thorpe also painted \textit{The Homestead} (n/d), a cabin scene in the midst of blasted trees, which recalls and merges two of Thomas Cole’s images of nature at risk: \textit{The Hunter’s Return} (1845, Amon Carter) and \textit{Lake with Dead Trees} (1825, Allen Memorial Art Museum), with its fleeing deer. Thomas Bangs Thorpe artist file, Brooklyn Museum of Art Library and Archives.

\textsuperscript{44}Herbert (especially when writing as Forester) regularly used the term “true sportsman” in reference to conservation; some instances include “The Last Bear,” \textit{ATRSM} 11 (March 1840), 107; “Precepts and Practice; or Cursory Conversations on Sporting Matters in America,” \textit{ATRSM} 11 (November 1840), 574; and “Proposed Alteration of the Game Laws,” \textit{SOTT} 15, no. 51 (February 14, 1846), 603. Herbert drew the sporting images that appear in several of his books, including \textit{The Deerstalkers} (1843), \textit{Frank Forester’s Field Sports of the United States} (1849), \textit{Warwick Woodlands} (1845), \textit{American Game in its Seasons} (1853) and \textit{The Complete Manual for Young Sportsmen} (1856). Other artist friends in the \textit{Spirit} circle of intellectual sportsmen include Henry Inman, John G. Chapman, Charles Elliott, Charles Lanman and Robert Clarke. Chapman and Herbert became good friends (Judd, \textit{Life of Forester}, vol. 1, 25), and this fact may have some bearing on his hunting imagery. Chapman also painted one of the only portraits of Davy Crockett during his life, and produced hunt-related imagery, such as \textit{Deer’s Head} (1848), exhibited at the AAU. Herbert’s authorship of art reviews in the \textit{Spirit} is less definitive than Thorpe’s, but he did such reviews for other periodicals.

\textsuperscript{45}“Frank Forester’s Field Sports in the United States and the British Provinces,” \textit{The Living Age} 19, no. 236 (November 25, 1848): 375. The reviewer of Herbert’s book notes that in terms of game law, “the sympathy of non-sporting citizens is with the poachers;” see ibid., 378. Much of the same attitude is expressed in Forester, \textit{Complete Manual for Young Sportsmen}, 133, 343 & 386.
under the pseudonym “Frank Forester” that he had the greatest impact on future sporting behavior. He advised the American gentleman-sportsman to follow a rational system when killing game, to follow the seasonal limits religiously, and to look down upon market hunting. Herbert was especially disgusted by “fire-hunting” or “jacking” (the use of lights at night to virtually paralyze game animals), an “unsportsmanlike” practice which was almost without exception attributed to the South, as he explained:

There is a mode of killing woodcock commonly practiced in Southern States (in Louisiana, especially), which is so singular, and so completely at variance with all our ideas of sporting at the North and East…which they never would imagine. This process is termed fire-hunting.46

After describing the mêlée, Herbert notes that the method must “lack all variety which arises from the working of the emulous, obedient, and well-trained dogs, in observing whose exquisite instinct, fine attitudes, and beautiful docility, me judice, lies half the pleasure of field sports.” Herbert was also adamant for the protection of fledgling broods:

The Destruction of this the finest of our gallinaceous game, is to be attributed wholly, in all the districts I have enumerated, to the same cause, the havoc made among them at periods when a little knowledge of their habits would protect them from the most ruthless pot-hunter…when they are occupied in laying, hatching, or rearing their young broods.47

Concerning the mode of hunting in Arkansas, Thorpe described the fire-hunting of deer as “unsportsmanlike.”48 Artists would later pick up the theme of fire-hunting as a antithesis to the esteemed method of shooting “on the wing.” That the Spirit would repeatedly print satirical and condemnatory accounts of Southern hunting practices may at first appear as bad business sense, but it was actually quite understandable. The bulk of


the *Spirit’s* Southern subscribers were turf owners and horse breeders who feared pothunters and squatters just as much as those sportsmen in the North.\(^{49}\)

**Seminal True Sportsman-Artists**

One of the first American gentleman artist-sportsmen was the portraitist and art historian William Dunlap (1766-1839). Though working before the beginning of the conservation era, Dunlap understood the meaning of “true sportsmanship” and lived the lifestyle of a gentleman farmer. He regularly walked the hills of New Jersey and Virginia with his gun after game fowl and rabbits, was proud to shoot woodcock “on the wing,” and knew the correct scientific nomenclature of the game he bagged.\(^{50}\) In Dunlap’s three volume work, *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States* (1834), he praised Doughty’s work, as well as that of Henry Inman (1801-1846), a sportsman-artist who, like Dunlap, was a member of the Sketch Club, and beloved by fellow artists and writers.\(^{51}\)

Inman, a good friend of Henry Herbert and Porter, was a “true sportsman” of the Doughty variety. As a member of the *Spirit* circle, Inman would have been keenly aware

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\(^{50}\) William Dunlap, *Diary of William Dunlap (1766-1839)*, vol. 1 [Collections of the New York Historical Society; for Year 1929, LXII] (July, 14, 1798), 309. Dunlap would often take his young son shooting with him.

of game law issues then circulating. While enjoying all forms of field sports, Inman was primarily an angler, and was later described as a “true sportsman” by art critic Henry Tuckerman (1813-1871). While Inman was best known for his portraiture, he did occasionally depict genre scenes of anglers and sportsmen with guns. In an 1826 pencil sketch for his poem “Forest Hymn,” for example, Inman shows a recreational sportsman with gun, leaning against a large tree trunk, and pausing to contemplate nature. Inman was praised by Porter and the Spirit staff as the ideal sportsman-artist: angler first, fowler second. In his self-portrait from ca. 1837 (fig. A8), Inman presented himself in a traditional hunting portrait pose, sitting on a rock, with gun, with his son in the background.

One of Inman’s students, William Sidney Mount (1807-1868), became one of the most important painters of that period. Though not a member of the Spirit circle himself, Mount was close to several members, especially Inman and portrait painter, Charles L. Elliott. Mount made a novel move in 1835 by introducing into the comic genre those same sporting characters that Inman, Doughty, Fisher and others had used to people their landscapes. The characters were not Mount’s usual rural Long Island types but rather

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53 Illustrated in William H. Gerdts, “Henry Inman: Genre Painter,” American Art Journal 9, no.1 (May 1977): 32. The sketch, measuring 7 x 5 ½ in., is in a private collection. It is noteworthy to mention that Inman had a pointer dog, which he painted, and exhibited that painting at the NAD exhibition in 1829, the same year he met with William Sidney Mount in Stony Brook.

gentlemen sportsmen, dressed as such, and placed in amusing situations. By most accounts, Mount considered himself a gentleman sportsman, though, like his characters, one caught precariously and unhappily between two opposing lifestyles, the rural and sporting life of Long Island (where he spent most of his career), and the excitement and business opportunities of Manhattan.

One of Mount’s fondest memories was a sporting excursion with Inman, who came to stay with Mount at his rural home in Stony Brook, Long Island in 1829. The artist later recounted,

During his stay [we] rambled together through woods and dales, and over hills far and near we took our guns and amused ourselves with shooting quail except when Mr. Inman left his aim to admire a beautiful bit of landscape.

It was a time of bonding between the two artist-sportsmen, and recreation was the intended goal. While he enjoyed shooting, Mount, like Inman and their other artist friends Charles Lanman (1819-1895) and Thomas Cole, was an angler above all. We may assume Inman, as part of the Spirit circle, was influential in how Mount understood, enjoyed, and represented the sport of shooting. Mount used this knowledge of sporting

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55For Mount’s tension between city and country life, see Alfred Frankenstein, *William Sidney Mount* (NY: Harry N. Abrams, 1975), 8. This in a recurring theme throughout Mount’s writings, and is the subtext of many of his pictures. Another sportsman Mount would know was the partner of his brother Henry, the portrait and sign painter William Inslee. The only known work by Inslee is a small pencil sketch of a young man leaning against a wall with his fowling piece, long thought to be a self-portrait; it is located in the Long Island Museum of Art, Stony Brook, and reproduced in Ernest Rohdenburg, “The Misreported Quidor Court Case,” *American Art Journal* 2, no. 1 (Spring 1970): 80. On friendship with Elliott, see Frankenstein, *Mount* (1975), 122, 145, 149 & 234.


57In his diary entry for June 15, 1853, Mount complains that fishing sometimes takes him away from his art; reprinted in Frankenstein, *Mount* (1975), 268. Cole owned a copy of Izaak Walton, as well as angling apparel. See Thomas Cole MSS, Box 5, Folder 3, p. 7 & 9, New York State Library, Albany.
culture to sharpen the humor of his work by providing an insider’s view of rural existence for urban viewers.

While Mount had planned several, apparently unfinished, traditional hunting scenes featuring gentlemen sportsmen during the 1850s and 1860s, he is better known for portraying gentleman sportsmen in comical scenarios. A number of his paintings – specifically *The Sportsman’s Last Visit* (1835, fig. A9), at least two versions of *Sportsman at the Well*, originally titled *Well by the Wayside* (1848, fig. A10), and *The Herald in the Country (Politics of 1852, or Who Let Down the Bars?)* (1853, fig. A11) – depict sportsmen (possibly self-portraits) navigating through the sporting issues of the day, including the issue of trespass on private farmland. While they tried to ally with farmers in the fight against non-sport hunters, such trespassing even by “true sportsmen” was an ongoing problem. Mount’s well-to-do sportsman at the well has laid his day’s take on the ground, and casts a suspicious glance while getting a drink, implying he is on another’s land. In *Who Let Down the Bars*, the wealthy hunter, who stands on one side of the fence with game at his feet, has been caught by the farmer. The elite “poacher” has taken a crumpled issue of the *New York Herald* from his coat and is reading the news of the day to distract the farmer. The common reading of this picture is as a political jab, although Mount scholar Alfred Frankenstein refutes the notion that Mount had any

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58 Mount’s diary entry for April 18, 1847 has the artist contemplating “a sporting scene representing a man loading his gun – Boy and dog grouped around,” which sounds like Ranney’s future scenes. Mount twice mentions, in his list of subjects for April 1851, and 1855 (in the Smithtown Library Collection), “a man laying for ducks over a bank,” reprinted in Frankenstein (1975), 245 & 306. Plate 154 in Frankenstein, Mount (1975), 409, reproduces a sketch by Mount dated November 25 and 26, 1866, titled “Coming Up,” showing a sportsman lying down with gun, as birds pass overhead.

59 Another version was in his estate, and went unsold in 1871. See “Schedule B: Pictures of the Estate of Wm. S. Mount, Sold and Unsold by Robert Somerville, April 10 and 11, 1871,” in Frankenstein, Mount (1975), 462.
partisan agenda in painting the picture, but simply wanted to present these two men in a comical light. When considered as a mix of political and social commentary, his pictures work on several levels: from popular (even clichéd) political puns for a general audience, to exclusive jokes to be enjoyed by sporting brethren. In all of his hunt-related scenes, Mount presents average sportsmen with human failings, rather than some elitist ideal.

Mount’s gentlemen clients may have encouraged his sporting scenes. Henry Brevoort (1782-1848), a later NYSC member, introduced Mount to Washington Irving, and commissioned Mount’s *Raffling for the Goose* (1837, Metropolitan Museum of Art), depicting the controversial sport of gambling.60 Other patrons included General John Roe Satterly (1790-1865), in whose home *The Sportsman’s Last Visit* was painted, and the Nicolls family of the southside of Long Island, who commissioned portraits from Mount. George Pope Morris (1802-1864), the buyer of *The Sportsman’s Last Visit*, was co-founder of the *New-York Mirror*, a poet and a conservationist. He later praised Mount’s *Well by the Wayside* in his art review in the *Mirror*.61

Mount was in regular communication with another artist-sportsman, Charles Lanman, and later in life his letters expressed conservationist ideals, particularly

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61Mount’s diary, November 14, 1852, the artist recalls painting the picture here; reprinted in Frankenstein, *Mount*, 249. The general spelled his name “Satterly,” not “Satterlee,” an often repeated error. *Sportsman at the Well* (1848) was in the collection of Mongerson-Wunderlich Galleries, Chicago, now private. In a letter to George Pope Morris, who had given the painting a praising review in the *Mirror*, Mount wrote that he painted it for the AAU, but that the committee was not willing to pay the asking price of $300. Mount to George Pope Morris, December 3, 1848, reprinted in Frankenstein, *Mount* (1975), 234.
regarding overfishing. Lanman published a number of books on travel and sport and often addressed the problematic state of fish and fisheries in America. Mount read the books Lanman sent, and in return Lanman looked to Mount for artistic support. When Lanman asked Mount to supply information on fishing opportunities at Long Island, Mount agreed but expressed concern that, if written of too favorably, flat fish would be overfished. Through his writings and his art, Mount revealed himself to be interested in the sporting lifestyle; he felt the need to balance art and sport in his life, but was also aware of the problems in protecting wildlife.

**On the Wing**

The majority of artists producing sporting images during the 1840s continued to present the American sportsman in compositions and settings largely indistinguishable from contemporary English and French examples. A number of American sportsmen-artists, however, attempted to maintain traditional European visual codes, while infusing their art with American ideals and dress. These artists included Thomas Hewes Hinckley, William Tylee Ranney (1813-1857), William Jacob Hays (1830-1875), and the group working for Nathaniel Currier.

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63 This is thoroughly explored in Weidner, specifically 8, 13-16.

64 In 1828, George Catlin exhibited a painting titled *The Sportsman* in New York, a picture which may have been inspired by Thomas Doughty, who was a leader in the Philadelphia art world. It was exhibited at the American Academy of Fine Arts. William Sidney Mount produced *The Sportsman’s Last Visit* (1835, Long Island Museum of Art, Stony Brook).
Thomas Hewes Hinckley had particular success with translating this subject matter into the American mode. Though from the Boston area, he began his artistic training in Philadelphia in 1828, taking drawing and perspective classes from the engraver William G. Mason (1797-1872). In the early 1830s he moved back to Boston, and in 1833 began advertising himself as a portrait and landscape painter. As an aspiring Boston artist, it is likely Hinckley visited Doughty and Fisher’s joint exhibition in 1834 at Chester Harding’s gallery and he had some success in 1843 with a hunting dog scene, *Setter and Her Pups*, which turned his attention to sporting scenes and dog portraits. Establishing his studio in 1845 in Milton, MA, just outside of Boston, Hinckley began producing portraits and genre paintings of well-to-do sportsmen shooting game fowl (figs. A1 and A12). The majority of Hinckley’s sporting scenes during the late 1840s were sent to the American Art-Union, though some were likely commissioned by his neighbors in Milton and nearby Boston. One of these patrons was James Oakes (also known as “Acorn”) (1807-1878), a merchant, lawyer, and writer for the *Spirit*, who himself was a promoter of “true sportsmanship” and praised Hinckley’s lifelike depictions as “seldom excelled by any artist.”

In one example, *Snipe Shooting* (1846), Hinckley’s sportsmen are shown stalking game in an expansive field, dressed in proper apparel and using hunting dogs to flush the game. One man fires his gun at an escaping bird “on the wing,” while his partner, holding

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65Marjorie Shaw, 2; and “Thomas H[ewes] Hinckley Dead,” *The Daily Inner Ocean*, February 16, 1896, 11, col. F. Mason was one of the first daguerreotypists in the United States.


67James Oakes wrote as “Acorn” for the *Spirit*, and was described as a good friend of Herbert in “The Old ‘Spirit’ Coterie,” *Field and Stream* 15, no. 25 (January 20, 1881), 485. Oakes commissioned Hinckley to paint his horse Polly Ogden.” See Letter from “Acorn,” *SOTT* 25, no. 7 (March 31, 1855), 74.
his fowling piece at waist-level, follows his pointers’ lead. They are set in the landscape of Hinckley’s backyard, the wooded region leading into the Blue Hills known as Fowl Meadow, a sportsman’s Eden. In a related scene, Hinckley’s Rest After the Hunt (1846, fig. A13), the men are dressed in fine hunting jackets, and with a coach on call, display the leisure aspect of the hunting act.

In 1845, Hinckley’s contemporary William Ranney produced a scene related to Rest After the Hunt titled Deer Hunters (1845, fig. A14) in which he also stressed recreational sport shooting. The moment depicted is after the hunt, with dogs attentively standing by to protect the slain deer lying at the standing man’s feet. While dressed less elegantly than the hunters depicted in Hinckley’s images, the men are still obviously upper-class and are shown relaxing, conversing as equals, and enjoying one another’s company. In these examples, Ranney and Hinckley are clearly presenting the figures as signifiers of the sportsman’s code.

Born in Ohio, Ranney was essentially raised in North Carolina, where he began his artistic career around 1835, painting portraits of Fayetteville’s elite. It was there that

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68 Hinckley’s painting was awarded to Joseph Sargeant, of Cleveland, Ohio, at the AAU annual distribution. It had inscribed on the back: “Snipe Shooting on Fowl Meadow, Norfolk County, Mass,” signed lower right: “T.H. Hinckley, 1846,” and is mentioned in Sport in American Art, 14. A painting similar to Hinckley’s snipe hunting scenes titled Hunters with Setters in Summer Landscape by a Lake (ca. 1845) (o/c, 25 x 30 in.) has been attributed to Albertus D. O. Browere by the Old Print Shop (OPS Portfolio, vol. 15, no. 6 (February 1956), pl. 32.) The narrative is set in an idyllic landscape, with two sportsmen, one on horseback, the other cleaning his fowling piece.

69 Another Hinckley scene of a sportsman shooting “on the wing” is Shooting Birds in New England (n/d, 25 x 30 in.), illustrated in Sloan and Company Auction Catalog 705, November 20, 1977, lot 1447, 146. The painting depicts a well-dressed sportsman, kneeling and shooting from a rocky shore at a flock of seabirds. Other sportsmen fire from a boat.

70 Ranney’s Deer Hunters is illustrated in Bantel and Hassrick, 13.
Ranney formed many of his views on culture and politics. In 1836, he served for six months with Sam Houston’s militia in Texas, fighting against Mexico. After his return from the war in 1843, Ranney lived in New York, then briefly in Brooklyn, before settling in West Hoboken, New Jersey in 1846. His free time was spent shooting in the nearby marshes (and playing cricket on the first New York team), and he knew many of the sportsmen who frequented the area’s hunting grounds. Rather than sell art to local land owners, however, Ranney sent the majority of his art to be sold by the American Art-Union, the National Academy, and to the art supply store/gallery of Williams, Stevens & Williams. This art shop, located at 353 Broadway in Manhattan, displayed the work of both European and American artists, including Ranney and Arthur F. Tait (1819-1905). Early owners of Ranney’s sporting scenes, including NYSC member David Lydig Suydam, may have seen these works first in the store’s windows.

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72 Few of Ranney’s hunt-related paintings were commissioned, but rather produced on speculation and for art-unions and galleries. Such was the case for several of Ranney’s sporting scenes, including Jack (A Hunting Dog) (1846, NAD), Duck Shooters (1849, AAU), A Rabbit Hunter (1849, AAU), On the Wing (1850, AAU), and The Fowler’s Return (1854, NAD). Williams, Stevens & Williams, which began as a home furnishing store, also carried art supplies, bought American paintings, and imported art from abroad. By the early 1850s, WS&W had regular art exhibitions. The store also had some connection to the American Art-Union, since AAU subscriptions were received there, and the store advertised in the Art-Union’s bulletins. See “City Intelligence,” New York Herald, April 17, 1849, col. a. Major exhibitions were held there, including that of Frederic Edwin Church’s Niagara, Edwin Landseer’s Twins and Rosa Bonheur’s The Horse Fair. Also see “Bulletin-Advertisements,” Bulletin of the American Art-Union 4 (December 1851), n.p., for a Williams, Stevens & Williams store advertisement.

From his studio in Hoboken, Ranney had easy access to New York City, where he had close friendships with those in the artistic and literary world. The most important of these friendships were those with two members of the NYSC: the *Spirit*’s editor Porter, and its owner and printer John Richards. Ranney, Porter, and Richards (known as “The Governor”) were all members of the New York Cricket Club, which practiced and competed at the Elysian Fields in West Hoboken.74 The region of New Jersey where Ranney chose to make his home would become a prime hunting destination for artist-sportsmen and writers who had studios in the city. Ranney’s home seems to have been a gathering place for the sporting fraternity to which he belonged. Mount visited him there, as did Tait, and probably Lanman as well.75 Though extant records do not show Ranney as being a member of the NYSC, given his friendship with Porter and Richards, and his clear depictions of proper sporting behavior, he most certainly knew of the club’s mission.76

Ranney was in his element depicting sportsmen and their hunting dogs. His scenes often included hunters caring for the dogs, the comradeship and teamwork involved between a shooter and his human guide or companion, and the passing on of


75On this region as a hunting destination, see Cadbury/Marsh, 25. In a letter dated April 13, 1847, from Stony Brook, Mount responds to Lanman’s April 10th letter concerning his visit with Ranney, stating “I know you must have been pleased with Ranney’s sunny countenance.” The letter is in the Mount MSS, New-York Historical Society, and reprinted in Frankenstein, *Mount* (1975), 117.

76Arthur F. Tait is believed to have frequented Ranney’s studio, as had William Sidney Mount, and possibly lent him some western props; see Cadbury/Marsh, 29; and Gruber, *William Ranney*, 10.
proper shooting techniques to a student. In *On the Wing* (1850, fig. A15), Ranney presented the manly challenge and the skill needed for game shooting, and included several of the attributes of the “true sportsman.” Set in the marshlands around Hoboken, not far from Ranney’s studio, the picture shows a master sportsman aiming off canvas, into the sky; behind him his young assistant kneels and watches the action intently, while their setter follows their gaze. Although Ranney did use apparel to designate the status of the figures, his image is more about proper behavior and shooting methods in the field. Wearing a red bandanna rather than the standard top hat, and with grey boots and coat, the adult in *On the Wing* seems to be a transitional figure, lying somewhere between the rugged lone hunter and the “true sportsman.” Without the use of blinds or decoys, the hunter, with his trustworthy assistant, is relying on his skill alone to shoot game in flight. Ranney’s use of the term “on the wing” as a title recalled the list of sporting authors, from Oakleigh and Hawker, to Doughty and Forester, who extolled the technique. The subsequent praise and mass reproduction of the image helped to crystallize the sportsman’s code in art.

Both *On the Wing* and *The Retrieve* (1850, fig. A16) carefully depict the attributes of the “true sportsman” as defined by both Thomas Doughty and Henry Herbert. Both pictures reveal Ranney’s knowledge of sporting behavior and techniques. The *Spirit*’s guiding forces – Porter, Richards and Herbert – regularly noticed the NYSC’s activities; through their friendship, Ranney quickly turned his attention to local hunting scenes that

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77 His sporting images are discussed most recently in Bantel and Hassrick, *Art of William Ranney*; Bantel, on page xix, writes that Ranney’s scenes “anecdotally allude to the sportsman’s ethical code.”
can be interpreted as didactic in nature, and descriptive of the sportsman’s code.\textsuperscript{78} Though coming from different backgrounds and locales, both Ranney and Hinckley were creating hunt-related scenes that appealed to North-Eastern sportsman-patrons, and that spoke to readers of sporting journals. Besides their love of recreational shooting, these sportsmen shared a passion for breeding and training hunting dogs.

**The Hunting Dog**

Dogs were a vital part of the recreational shooting process: they discovered, pointed out, and ultimately retrieved game, and warned and protected the sportsman against potential predators. Because dogs played a significant role in what defined the “true sportsman,” the care, training and proper behavior of dogs were essential aspects of the sportsman’s code, and would be understood as such by the initiated. In defining “true sportsmanship,” Doughty wrote:

\begin{quote}
[the Sportsman’s] dogs are mannerly, because, by discipline, they are restrained to proper limits…[the sportsman’s] good breeding has taught him the fallacy of swearing at a dumb brute…To his dogs he is merciful and provident; he consults their comfort, and, if he will draw recreation from their services, he repays them by humanity.\textsuperscript{79}
\end{quote}

According to the top sportsmen of the day, without hunting dogs, there would be no sport. In fact, the original reason stated for organizing the New York Sportsman’s Club was to push for better treatment of lost hunting dogs captured by local administrators. The Club-authored “dog bill” established a pound to keep lost dogs until claimed by their owner, rather than killing them, which had been the practice. The club’s humane action

\textsuperscript{78}Richards owned the periodical *Spirit of the Times* from 1842 to 1859, and he, Ranney and Porter were founding members of the New York Cricket Club in 1843. See “Death of William Ranney,” *SOTT* 27, no.42 (November 28, 1857), 499. Porter died in 1858, Richards, in 1859. The note on Ranney’s brother is from Bantel and Hassrick, 84.

\textsuperscript{79}D. [Thomas Doughty], “Characteristic of a True Sportsman,” *The Cabinet of Natural History*. 
anticipated Henry Bergh’s American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) by more than two decades.80

Due to their appeal, as well as personal interest, many sportsmen-artists also specialized in hunting dog portraits and “gun dog” genre scenes. In these genre images well-trained dogs are usually portrayed disclosing, flushing, or retrieving game, or protecting the hunter’s bag.81 When not shown hunting, sporting dogs are often posed beside dead game. Genre scenes and portraits of pointers, retrievers and setters – breeds specifically linked to hunting culture – proliferated during mid-century and were commissioned by many of the top sportsmen of the period.82 These images displayed the dog’s pedigree and skill and although they lacked compositional or stylistic variety, the sub-genre nevertheless allowed painters to display their prowess at representing an animal’s coat, anatomy, and behavior.83 Like paintings which depicted shooting “on the

80“Common Council,” New York Herald, June 12, 1845. The club had gathered the year before “to consider the intolerably oppressive nature of the laws regarding Dogs, whereby many valuable sporting dogs were lost to their owners.” See “Game Protectors,” New York Times, May 22, 1894. Queen Victoria founded the Royal SCPA in 1824, and Bergh founded the American SPCA was formed in 1866. See James Crewdson Turner, Reckoning with the Beast (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 44-46.

81At the NAD exhibition for 1845, for example, there were five hunting dog scenes. See “National Academy of Design,” New York Herald, April 21-24, & 28-30; May 1-4, 9. However, the reviewer on May 1 writes that “We hate Painted Dogs, unless there is sentiment displayed – as in some of Landseer’s noble works; his Shepherd’s Dog, for example, where the expression of utter desolation is shown...” The reviewer then calls no. 141, Spencer’s Pet Dog, “abominable.” In 1839, Charles Deas, a sportsman-artist better known for his dramatic frontier scenes, produced a dog portrait for the annual exhibition , but he may have intended it to be a genre scene. He later painted a portrait of Lion, Sibley’s deerhound . In any case, sporting dog portraits were produced extensively during the century.

82In 1829, Robert W. Weir (1803-1889) exhibited a portrait of three pointer dogs at the NAD. The painting was listed as owned by S. Rogers, who was presumably the dogs’ owner. See Cowdrey, National Academy of Design Exhibition Record, 1826-1860, vol. 2, 190.

wing.” Images of hunting dogs in action were emblematic of the culture of the “true sportsman.”

Scenes of dogs stalking game for sportsmen, as well as interior scenes of small terriers hunting for vermin or keeping watch over dead game, were popularized in large part by British painters like George Morland, David Wilkie, James Ward, and Edwin Landseer, who were, like their American followers, looking back to earlier Netherlandish masters – Frans Snyders, Jan Weenix, and Jan Fyt. The growing American fascination with dog genre was most directly due, however, to the success of Edwin Landseer, who was at mid-century achieving phenomenal acclaim in America with his emotionally-charged, anthropomorphized dog genre and sporting scenes (fig. A17). His uniquely sentimental depictions played a critical role in furthering the career of animal artists on both sides of the Atlantic, and in the increasing appeal of hunting art. Landseer was Queen Victoria’s favorite painter and portraitist of her hunting dogs, and his art and career were watched closely by artists and the art press. The celebrated art critic John Ruskin noted the importance of “Scotch terriers” on Landseer’s development: that he gained his success with “a kindly, if sometimes nauseatingly sentimental, sympathy with their natures.”

Landseer’s dog paintings were often mentioned in the American press, especially by Henry Herbert in his American sporting novels; when describing the interiors of hunting lodges, for example, Herbert would include Landseer compositions on the walls, and for his book, the Complete Manual for Young Sportsmen (1856), he drew a dramatic scene of a hound pointing out fallen game reminiscent of Landseer (fig. A18). When Landseer’s Distinguished Member of the Humane Society (1838, Tate

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84 Pre-Raphaelitism, 364-5, quoted in Animal Painting: Van Dyck to Nolan (The Queen’s Gallery, Buckingham Palace, 1966-7), 11.
Collection), a portrait of a faithful hound on a dock, was reviewed in sporting magazines like the *Spirit*, the praise it received helped to promote dog portraiture as a viable career choice for American artists.\(^{85}\)

Paintings from the early nineteenth century hint at the emerging popular interest in dogs and their place in sporting culture. The interest was undoubtedly sparked by the English and European examples that were becoming available in print form, but was also furthered by native artists. John James Audubon (1785-1851), the noted hunter-naturalist, painted a few scenes featuring hunting dogs with game while working in England.\(^{86}\) Edmund C. Coates (1816-1871) produced what may be the second American hunting dog genre scene shown in an exhibition, simply titled *Dogs and Game* (1840). By the mid 1840s, most major New York exhibitions included several hunting dog genre paintings. Luman Reed, a major art collector, owned several sporting images including a large *Dogs and Game*, styled after the Netherlandish master Jan Fyt, and two by George Morland – *Dogs Fighting* and *Gunner*.\(^{87}\)

Perhaps in light of the success Landseer was gaining in America, Ranney tried his hand at the sympathetic hunting dog scene. In one, *The Fowler's Return* (1854, Private Collection), Ranney presents two setters waiting anxiously as they guard their master’s

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\(^{85}\) A mezzotint copy of Landseer’s original was on display at Goupil’s Gallery, New York, 1848. James H. Beard painted a version of this Landseer work for the Lotus Club. Landseer’s dogs decorated the walls of Harry Archer’s Orange County domicile in Frank Forester’s *Warwick Woodlands* (Philadelphia, 1845; second edition, 1851), 178.

\(^{86}\) Audubon painted *Spaniel Flushing English Pheasants* (1827, 57 x 93 in.), illustrated in *Parke-Bernet Gallery Sales Catalogue* 1115 (1950), lot. 346. A similar piece by Audubon is *Hunting Dog and Dead Game* (February 1830, 42 x 32 in.), painted for his father in law, William Bakewell, and most recently owned by William Bakewell Shaffer of Cincinnati, Ohio, a distant relative. It is mentioned in Alice Ford’s 1964 biography on Audubon. Dog scenes by Audubon are especially rare, however.

\(^{87}\) Wayne Craven, “Luman Reed, Patron: His Collection and Gallery,” *American Art Journal* 12, no.2 (Spring 1980): 46. Morland’s *Dogs Fighting* may in fact be the *Dogs and Game* after Jan Fyt; ibid., note 28, cites the Morland paintings, listed in Reed’s Estate papers, Winterthur Museum.
gun, while in the second, *Spaniel with Woodcock* (ca. 1855, Merestead Painting Collection), depicts a dog in profile presenting a woodcock to an unseen master. At an unspecified point in his career Ranney painted a *Newfoundland Dog*, which was sold to Benjamin Swan, a one-time member of the NYSC, at the Ranney Fund Exhibition in December 1858. Though unlocated, Ranney shows through his choice of hunting dog his knowledge of what recreational sportsmen required in the field. One of the sturdiest hunting dogs available, the Newfoundland breed was sought after by most elite sportsmen, including Audubon and his own patrons.

Hinckley also produced a number of sentimental dog portraits, including *Setters and Game* (1847), *To Ho* (1848), and *Setters and Quail* (1854, fig. A19), some of which he sold to the AAU. While he sent a good deal of art to art-unions and galleries, he relied heavily on the personal patronage of local sportsmen. Hinckley produced a number of hunting scenes for the Forbes family of the Boston area, including in his scenes the family members, their dogs, and the deer that inhabited their estate on Naushon Island.

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88 Bantel and Hassrick, 135, 157.

89 Ibid., 212. Going back to Peter Hawker, the Newfoundland was described as the all-purpose hunting dog of choice. In a letter from Newfoundland, on Aug. 17, 1833 (reprinted in Lucy Audubon, ed. *The Life of John James Audubon: The Naturalist* (New York: G. P. Putnam and Son, 1869), 364), Audubon wrote that he had obtained seven Newfoundland dogs for patrons. In the BOA text, Audubon uses the terms “true sportsman” and “unsportsmanlike,” and speaks of game laws in “Ruffed Grouse,” *BOA*, vol. 1, 215-218.

90 Hinckley’s *Setters and Game* (measuring 5’ x 4’2” feet) was won by J. P. Prall at the AAU year-end distribution, but soon thereafter was listed for sale in the *Spirit*. See Back Matter, *SOTT* 17, no. 50 (February 5, 1848), 594. One review (*Literary World*, November 6, 1847, 329) noted the painting “lacks true animal expression,” but *Spirit’s* reviewer liked it. “To-Ho,” it may be noted, was the specific call to tell the hunting dog it was close to game.

91 Hinckley painted *Setters and Quail* for Robert B. Forbes, in 1854, which is now in the Milton Public Library. See Shaw, 17. He also painted Forbes’ dog, Phil, in 1884. See ibid., 24, originally noted in Hinckley’s account book, in Thomas Hewes Hinckley MSS, Norfolk Historical Society, MA.
He also painted a group portrait of the Milton-area hunting dogs, which included his own dog Don.\textsuperscript{92}

Like Hinckley, many sportsman-artists largely restricted themselves to painting the hunting dog rather than its human owner. Though ultimately better known for his post-1860 wildlife paintings, Hinckley’s New York City contemporary William Jacob Hays was originally known for his expressive dog scenes. Hays’ dog portraiture and hunting dog genre scenes were his original calling to fine art in 1845, and reflected his interest in sport shooting.\textsuperscript{93} His dog images were favorably reviewed in \textit{The Crayon}, the mid-century American art journal, and were exhibited frequently at National Academy of Design (NAD) exhibitions, with a few early scenes being sold through the AAU. As early as 1864, Hays was listed as a member of the New York Sportsmen’s Club, where he undoubtedly found sporting friends and patrons for his game and dog scenes. He eventually served as secretary and treasurer for the club, from the late 1860s until his death in 1875.\textsuperscript{94}

Hays produced numerous dog scenes and portraits, including \textit{Terrier} (1852, New York Public Library), \textit{Pointer Honoring Setter} (1853, fig. A20), \textit{The Point (Terrier and...}


\textsuperscript{93}Hays and Sanford R. Gifford, both NYSC members, took art lessons in the early 1840s from the Anglo-American drawing teacher John Rubens Smith, whose father, John Raphael Smith, made engravings after Morland and Landseer. The younger Smith knew these masters, and most likely used their work as models when teaching. See [Raphael Peale], “Reminiscences of John R. Smith,” \textit{The Crayon} 2, no. 19 (November 7, 1855), 287.

\textsuperscript{94}Hays is listed as a member in 1865, one of the earliest complete rolls extant, but may have joined earlier. See NYAPG MSS, Box 5, Folder 195 (NYSL, Albany, NY) for list of members of the NYSC, 1865; For Hays as NYSC secretary, see “Protection of Game,” \textit{Forest and Stream} 3, no. 19 (December 17, 1874), 297; and NYAPG MSS. In this report, Hays resigned due to ill health.
Game)(1854), Hunting Dog (1855), and Flushing the Covey (1858, unlocated), which
was praised in The Crayon for the two dogs’ “excited faces” and the “remarkably well
expressed” foreshortening of the flying bird.95 Fellow NYSC member and Hays’ personal
physician, Fessenden N. Otis, commissioned an unlocated Skye Terrier.96 Sometime in
late 1858, Hays painted Setters and Game, which was commissioned by financier and
fellow NYSC member, August Belmont. While on display at the NAD exhibition in
Spring 1859, the painting was reviewed in The Crayon favorably (“remarkable…for
fidelity of drawing and manipulation”) and praised in The Albion (“a large and capital
picture, finished with great care…Hays may be congratulated”); its review in the Spirit,
however, was rather ambiguous:

Hays has fortunately selected a specialty, and with his natural ability, if he
perseveres, he must eventually succeed...(the painting) shows evidence of careful
study, and the faults apparent will disappear the moment Mr. Hays acquires a
greater freedom of handling and adopts a more simple style of composition.”97

That same year, Hays brought a lawsuit against an unspecified New York print company
for producing reproductions after his Goupil-produced lithograph A Good Retrieve (fig.

95 “Domestic Art Gossip,” The Crayon 5, no. 3 (March 1858), 88.

96 Other Hays’ paintings owned by Otis include Orchids (18 x 24 in.), Chicken Snipe (12 x 8 in.),
Mule Deer (12 x 8 in.) and American Elk (Wapiti), Wyoming Territory (30 x 20 in.). See Catalogue of the
Private Collection of Modern Paintings and Bronzes Belonging to Dr. F.N. Otis, of this City (Otgies, &
Co., 1890). Otis also owned a stag painting by William H. Beard, fish scenes by Seymour Guy, an
Adirondack scene by Homer Martin, and A Gray Day, Upper Saguenay by Sanford R. Gifford.

97 “National Academy of Design,” The Crayon 6, no. 6 (June 1859), 192; “Fine Arts: The National
Academy of Design,” The Albion 37, no. 22 (May 28, 1859), 261; and Thorpe, “National Academy of
5 (May 1860), 136, states that Hays’ Setters and Game was “painted for the collection of Mr. August
Belmont.” It was one of just six American paintings in Belmont’s extensive art collection.
A21) without acknowledgment or payment. Hays’ portrait image of a brown and white hunting dog holding a quail gently in its mouth was apparently unique enough that Hays won the case. Harper’s Weekly noted that Hays “has just done a service to all men who live by any department of creative art…their debt to their brother artist is all the greater.” Though Hays concentrated on wildlife scenes after 1860, his dog scenes continued to be acquired by the New York elite throughout his career.98

**Spreading “True Sportsmanship” through Art**

Following on the early successes of the NYSC, a host of like-minded sportsmen in other Northeastern cities formed similar associations with the mission of game protection. The first was The Massachusetts Shooting Club in 1848, and the San Francisco Sportsman’s Club soon followed. The Maryland Sportsman’s Club formed in 1857,99 and the Nebraska Sportsman’s Club and Chicago’s Audubon Club emerged at about the same time, the latter organized specifically to prosecute dealers and to push for a national association.100 Though Southerners felt passionate about sport shooting and

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98.“Sketchings: Domestic Art Gossip,” The Crayon 6, no. 3 (March 1859), 92; “The Last Work of Mr. Hays,” Harper’s Weekly, March 5, 1859, 147. On Hay’s original painting, see “Domestic Art Gossip,” The Crayon 3, no. 3 (March 1856), 91. This last article also mentions “a number of pictures of dead game” in Hays’ studio. Hays and Winslow Homer’s close friend Eliphalet Terry had some success with Dog and Game (1866), exhibited that year at the NAD as no. 256. See “National Academy of Design,” Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper, May 26, 1866, 147.

99On the Massachusetts sporting club, “Preservation of Game in Massachusetts,” SOTT 18, no. 20 (July 8, 1848), 235. Cincinnati had a shooting club in the 1830s, but does not appear to have had a preservationist mission. On the San Francisco Sportsman’s club, “Quail and Pigeon Shooting in California,” SOTT 24, no. 39 (November 11, 1854), 462. “Maryland Sportsman’s Club,” SOTT 27, no. 3 (February 28, 1857), 27. The Maryland club formed in 1856.

also had a deep divide between gentleman-planters and poor white squatters, they took
longer to organize for the protection of game than did sportsmen in the North.\(^{101}\)

By November 1859 the number of New York regional protectionist clubs had
reached a critical mass and the first meeting of the New York State Sportsmen’s
Association was held in Geneva, New York. Surprisingly, the Civil War did not halt the
work of such groups; the NYSC continued its efforts, and the State Sportsmen’s
Association met annually during the war.\(^{102}\) After the war, sportsmen once again turned
wholeheartedly to the mission of game protection and more clubs joined the fold.
Hartford (CT) Sportsman’s Club began advertising in the newspapers in 1865. The
Southside Sportsmen’s Club (of Long Island) was formed in March 1866 by NYSC
members including Benjamin L. Swan, Charles Banks, and George Lorillard.\(^{103}\)
Sportsmen’s clubs such as these, following the NYSC paradigm, were responsible for
lobbying for game legislation within their counties and states.

By the early 1850s, the “true sportsman” type had become a visual trope in art,
thanks in part to the paintings of artists like Hinckley, Ranney and Hays, but also to
popularly reproduced images. These included the enormously popular book illustrations


\(^{102}\)The State association became known more for trap shooting and supporting the market side of hunting, while the NYSC, always more political and reform-oriented, was given a subordinate role at the state meetings. See Tober, 186-7.

\(^{103}\)On the Hartford Sportsman’s Club see “New Items,” *Circular* 1, no. 50 (February 27, 1865), 400. On the Southside Sportsmen’s Club see *Southside Sportsmen’s Club of Long Island, Eighteenth Annual Report, May 1st, 1884* (New York: E. F. Weeks, 1884), n.p.
by F. O. C. Darley (1822-1888), as well as images produced by Frances “Fanny” Flora Bond Palmer (1812-1876), Arthur Fitzwilliam Tait, Ranney, and Louis Maurer (1832-1932) for Nathaniel Currier’s lithography firm. Currier (later with partner James Ives) produced an enormous body of prints celebrating the hunt in America and depicting “true sportsmanship.” The high quality and affordability of the Currier prints, not to mention the frequency with which they produced sporting-themed works, allowed more Americans to display art in their homes, and to celebrate the ideals of sporting culture.

Darley’s illustration for the frontispiece of Herbert’s *Warwick Woodlands* (1851, fig. A22), which Herbert apparently made the rough sketch for, was based on the Doughty/Hinckley format, with two well-attired gentlemen and their faithful, well-disciplined pointers. Like Hinckley’s work, this picture was meant to symbolize and reinforce the owners’ lifestyle and exclusive culture. While drawing upon American precedents, Darley was undoubtedly looking back to the British prototype as well, and one artist’s work in particular may have been his model- a staff artist for the Currier & Ives firm, Fanny Palmer.

It is noteworthy that Palmer, one of the first artists to codify the representation of the masculine American sportsman for the public-at-large, was English-born and a woman. Palmer came from a background of leisure, but entered the United States as the sole bread-earner in the house. Her images for Currier reached a huge number of Americans, and were quite influential in disseminating the ideal of the sports hunter. In the early 1850s, Palmer produced a number of sporting scenes for the Currier firm.

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including *Partridge Shooting* and *Snipe Shooting*, both from 1852 and part of the “Long Island series” (figs. A23 & A24). Her sporting scenes usually featured two adult men, finely dressed and shooting ‘on the wing.’ The elite figures are stylistically akin to Hinckley’s stoic hunters of the mid-1840s, and the narratives depicted are simple and to the point, each set in typical New York forested landscapes.105 These images at once conveyed to viewers the types of game most favored by sportsmen, and the shooting method of choice.

Palmer had been perfecting this composition for a decade before coming to New York in the early 1850s. In fact, Palmer and her husband had produced a lithographic series with similar compositions ten years before, set in Leicestershire, England (fig. A25).106 Beyond the differences in setting, the composition and mood are strikingly familiar to her “Long Island series.” None of her sporting scenes show guides, but rather repeat the same two men, presumably modeled after her husband and son, who imagined themselves gentlemen of leisure, yet who relied on Fanny’s income to support their pastime. We assume the men shooting are Fanny’s husband and son based on the title of one of her prints: *Quail Shooting: Setters owned by S. Palmer* (1852). It shows two sportsmen, one shooting on the wing, the other looking off into the distance, presented as “composed” gentlemen in a moment of recreation. In the similarly composed *Snipe Shooting* (fig. A24), Palmer depicted the same two men in a marshy landscape, one firing

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105Ibid., 71. Fred J. Peters notes here that a Long Island resident historian, Harry Platt Hewlett, determined the sites shown in these as the then-sporting destinations of Flushing, Plattsdale and Jamaica. Palmer was most likely familiar with the work of British painter S. J. E. Jones, whose *Woodcock Shooting* (20 x 24 in.) was on display for sometime in the States, and whose compositions bear an uncanny resemblance to Palmer’s, both in terms of landscape, figural scale, and mode of shooting.

on the wing, the other motioning to his disciplined retriever to bring the snipe to his hand. In the Currier print *Woodcock Shooting* (1852), both men are armed, and one waits for the other to shoot, while their dogs crouch down, ready to assist. Even in her later prints from the 1850s and 60s, the dogs support the sportsmen, and the men need no guides. She repeatedly focused on the dress, the proper shooting method, and the well-disciplined hunting dogs; all of which spoke to the techniques of the “true sportsman,” which she would have been familiar with from her aristocratic British upbringing.¹⁰⁷

“True sportsman” images in the mode of Palmer and Hinckley changed little in the 1850s, and guides are for the most part absent. Artists such as James Brade Sword (1839-1915) and John Martin Tracy (1844-1893) would produce similarly composed works into the 1870s and 1880s.¹⁰⁸ The long line of mirror compositions that filled American collections attested to the popularity of the traditional composition of the 1840s, and was further proof of the way in which American sportsmen unabashedly mimicked British sportsmanship, dress, behavior, and class prejudice.

Like Palmer, Arthur Fitzwilliam Tait (1819-1905) had already been a professional lithographer in England before immigrating to the United States in 1850, and while he attempted to give his American sportsmen a democratic look, he essentially followed the same British precedents. What set Tait apart, besides his prolific career, was his introduction of guides into sporting scenes and his range of sporting narratives, many of

¹⁰⁷Rubinstein, 81, 86-7. Palmer arrived in American in 1844. See ibid., 82. On Palmer’s men-folk being sportsmen, see ibid., 79; On her husband and her images, see Harry T. Peters, *Currier & Ives*, 27.

¹⁰⁸Sword exhibited shooting scenes at the NAD in 1878, 1883, 1890 and 1891. One of these, *Shooting Prairie Chickens*, is illustrated in *Magazine Antiques*, July 1967. Sword’s horizontal style would later be taken up by fellow Philadelphia artist Thomas Eakins. Also see “Dog Chat,” *Forest and Stream* 44, no. 1 (January 5, 1895), 12. On Tracy as a sportsman and how that appealed to his patrons, see Marguerite Tracy and John M. Tracy, “With Horses and Dogs,” *The Quarterly Illustrator* 3, no. 9 (January-March 1895), 110.
which depicted controversial techniques.\footnote{109} It remains unclear whether Tait saw himself as a “true sportsman” in the Doughty-Forester sense, or whether he was just appealing to a patron group. He gave his figures various types of hats and coats for visual variety, but made clear through posture and narrative which figures were at the top of the hunting hierarchy. He was trained in hunting methods by the locals, and it seems he would employ any method possible to secure animal subjects.\footnote{110}

In several early scenes, Tait recalled Ranney’s compositions with two hunters working in conjunction. Perhaps from different social levels, one was often shown coming to the aid of the other. One of Tait’s first paintings for the American audience was such a scene, tinged with preservationist compassion, titled \textit{Let Him Go} (1851, fig. A26).\footnote{111} A man in the boat’s stern (possibly a self-portrait) stops his comrade from firing at a swimming deer, perhaps revealing a bit of “true sportsmanship.” There is already a slain buck in the boat, so the messages conveyed are that of conservation, and against the unfair advantage of “floating” deer. Painted for the AAU, the painting speaks to both wealthy patrons and the general audience. It shows Tait moving away from Landseer-inspired Scottish hunting themes to more American situations.

In 1857, Tait produced a series of four hunt scenes for Currier & Ives collectively titled \textit{American Field Sports}. These pictures – \textit{A Chance for Both Barrels}, \textit{Flush’d}, \textit{On a

\footnote{109}Tait’s first-known image with a sportsman and guide is \textit{Duck Shooting} (1851), owned by John Osborn, and exhibited in NAD’s 1852 annual show. This is compositionally very similar to Ranney’s marsh scenes. Tait painted another version of it the next year without the guide figure.

\footnote{110}Tait learned hunting methods such as driving and floating deer from locals such as Jonathan Bellows and sons, who ran the Lake House on Chateaugay Lake; see Cadbury, 40-41. In 1855, Lewis Bellows brought litigation against Tait for allegedly stealing their money and Tait became “unwelcome in Chateaugay country;” see ibid., 47.

\footnote{111}The painting is reproduced in Cadbury/Marsh, 116. The painting measures 34 x 44 in.
Point, and Retrieving – reinforce the differences between the upper-class sportsman and the methods he used, and those of the backwoods trapper-type. The pictures portray the skills that a well-trained and disciplined hunting dog should exhibit, and their inclusion in these images suggests their human companions are “true sportsmen.” Many of the sporting pictures Tait produced for Currier included portraits of actual sportsmen, such as Wild Duck Shooting – A Good Day’s Sport (1854, fig. A27), which features the likeness of James Clark, a well-known Tammany politician who commissioned the original painting, and his brother. The picture closely resembles Ranney’s The Retrieve (1850, fig. A16) as the two sporting gentlemen pause to take game from the dog, the man in the rear ramming the rod; Tait may have seen Ranney’s version before it was purchased. Tait apparently spent some time in Ranney’s studio, and according to some scholars, may have borrowed frontier props from Ranney, such as western costumes and guns, for his own compositions.112

Tait frequently portrayed without critique hunting practices that “true sportsmen” disdained. He painted most known techniques of shooting or capturing game, and made little distinction between market-trapping – portrayed in Mink Trapping, Northern New York (1862, Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute), which was commissioned and slightly altered by Currier and re-titled Prime (fig. A28) – and the seemingly “true” sportsman in The Regretted Shot (1863, destroyed; repainted 1867) who realizes he has killed a doe, while her fawn stands by looking confused (fig. A29).113 Tait depicted the method of

112 Cadbury/Marsh, 117. The original was painted in 1851.

113 The Regret was owned by Isaac B. Wellington (of Wellington & Cox) of Brooklyn, and was exhibited at NAD 1865 40th Annual Exhibition (Wellington owned many hunt-related pictures, including hunting dog and sentimental wildlife family scenes by George Armfield, and Edmond Tschagggeny’s Horses Pursued by Wolves. See New York Times, January 28, 1872). The 1867 version of the painting was commissioned by Thomas P. Crook of Albany, and was most recently in the collection of George A. Butler.
“jacking” deer, similar to “fire hunting,” at least once, in an uncompleted study.\textsuperscript{114} In another scene, \textit{Pigeon Shooting: Playing the Decoy} (1862), a Currier print after Tait’s \textit{Shooting From Ambush} (1861, fig. A30), Tait shows two well-dressed men hiding in a natural blind of branches, a pile of game at their feet, while a flock of pigeons gather on a roost-like stool with decoys. The composition bears a striking resemblance to Ranney’s \textit{On the Wing}, in terms of the central figure’s posture and dress, and the possible assistant, but in terms of method and skill, it is the polar opposite of Ranney’s. Here, the birds are “stool-pigeons,” tricked and ready to be shot, with little skill required. Many “true sportsmen” felt that decoys were unsportsmanlike and encouraged slaughter.\textsuperscript{115} This Currier reproduction shows that both Tait and the printing company also produced images of more common forms of hunting for the broader market, not only images for a privileged set of patrons.

Tait produced a number of shooting scenes and game bird groups in the early 1860s that were possibly motivated by the meat market. Many of these were produced for one of his most steady patrons at the time, Brooklyn restaurateur John C. Force.\textsuperscript{116} Force

\textsuperscript{114}This “Jacking Deer” scene is signed “A. F. Tait,” is 7 x 10 in., wash on paper, and located in the Adirondack Museum, Blue Mountain Lake, NY; it is illustrated in Cadbury/Marsh, 319.


\textsuperscript{116}The majority of oils by Tait that exhibited at the NAD during the Civil War were owned by Force. See Maria Naylor, \textit{Exhibition of the National Academy, 1861-1900}, vol. 2 (New York: Kennedy Galleries, 1973), 910-911. Force’s upscale Brooklyn restaurant, “National Shades,” located at 16 High Street, opened in the 1850s, and appears to have been a place for merchant-class English and anglophiles to mingle, eat, and do business. The restaurant is mentioned in regional papers. See “Classified Advertisements,” \textit{New York Times}, April 16, 1859; and “The War,” \textit{New York Herald}, November 2, 1861. Force had some connection to the \textit{Spirit}; he owned the only known portrait of the paper’s owner and NYSC
is also the central protagonist in Tait’s *A Good Time Coming* (1862, fig. A31); in the painting, Force stands before a backwoods shanty with three other figures, preparing to eat freshly-caught trout and drink port.¹¹⁷ In what amounts to an “after the hunt” scene, Force holds up a bottle for inspection, while guides prepare the meal for the two well-dressed gentlemen; it was a perfect scene to adorn the walls of Force’s restaurant. Force stands out as Tait’s major patron of the early 1860s, and, most significantly, would have relied on market men to supply his restaurant with game throughout the year, and thus would have been more sympathetic to the market hunter than most “true sportsmen.”

Currier & Ives’s lithograph after Tait’s *A Prime Skin: Mink Trapping* (1862, fig. A28), the painting of which was commissioned by Force, reflects the growing market for game animals, yet the scene emphasizes the bonding and camaraderie of two hunters, rather than the exploitation of wildlife, as in the painting. The original painting shows the two men holding up their respective catch in victory. The composition equates the market trapping of fur with the sport of shooting game birds. Working together as artist and patron to celebrate the business-minded sportsman, Tait and Force represent the business side of hunting, and thus appear to be working counter to the preservationist cause. The relationship between Tait and Force was significant, and offers a window to the function of hunting art of this time.

Louis Maurer (1832-1932), who became Tait’s close friend, also produced art for Currier & Ives, and was a sportsman of some renown. Maurer went hunting with Tait on occasion, and the two artists together studied the hunting prints of Catlin and Bodmer at

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¹¹⁷For information on *Good Time Coming*, see Cadbury/Marsh, 67.
the Astor Library while composing their frontier scenes. Maurer, like Palmer, depicted the American sportsman as a wealthy citizen of leisure, who dressed fashionably and travelled to the hunting site in style. In Maurer’s *Out for a Day’s Shooting: Off for the Woods* (1856, fig. A32), two sportsmen armed with fowling pieces travel in a carriage pulled by two black thoroughbreds; a teenager holds two dogs in the back of the carriage as a third dog runs alongside, helping to convey the speed at which the party is traveling. Every element suggests plenty and wealth, and recalls Hinckley’s *After the Hunt*. Maurer was a gun collector, a noted sharpshooter and a shooting instructor in Palisades Park, New Jersey during the Civil War, and was intimate with the various aspects of sportsman culture. Though Maurer spent much time with Tait at the latter’s Adirondack shanty, and saw firsthand the actual class divisions between laborer and vacationer that existed in the field, he would have identified with “true sportsmen.” In the early 1860s Tait and Maurer introduced guides into their sportsman scenes. These figures reflected the touristic, amateur nature of sport shooting that was emerging, and which was becoming problematic to those who wanted to maintain the sport’s exclusivity.

How many artists actually thought of themselves as “true sportsmen” is difficult to determine. Many artists and writers used the term in their works, but rarely did they directly refer to themselves as such. The term was generally used as a means of exclusion, implying that non-sport hunters were not “true.” Several artists, such as Hays and dead game painter Wakeman Holberton, depicted animals primarily, and were unquestionably conservationists and protectionists; while not depicting sportsmen in their

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art, they would have been understood by others as “true sportsmen.” Sanford R. Gifford, whose art is discussed in Chapter Five, presented small sportsmen and guides in sublime landscapes, and was one of the first sportsmen-artists to visit the Adirondacks for scenes and sport. Others, like Hinckley and Ranney, were part of that culture, but any specific club affiliation remains unclear. Tait does not appear to have been a member of any specific sportsman’s club, and painted pictures of and for every class of hunter, and for display in restaurants and taverns, which were tied to the market. Maurer, as a shooting instructor, would have been considered at the top of gun culture, and most likely identified with sporting culture. Palmer, because of her gender, was not yet allowed to participate in the fundamentally masculine sportsman culture, even as she helped to codify the iconography. Other artists working at mid-century would have identified with the code of “true sportsmanship,” including Thomas Cole, Charles Deas, and William Holbrook Beard. Winslow Homer (1836-1910), an avid angler and occasional member of the North Woods Club, was a late-century example of the “true sportsman.” To be discussed in Chapters Four and Five, Homer avoided depicting the “true sportsman,” preferring to paint his opposite: the lawless trapper of the backwoods.120

The codified image of the “true sportsman” was how many upper-class American sportsmen, and those who aspired to that position, saw themselves. The image evoked wealth, social prominence, and a fraternal connection to other regional sportsmen, who followed certain rules of the chase. Having an image of the ideal hanging in one’s home conveyed to others one’s aspirations, and reminded the owner of the isolation of wilderness and fraternity of fellow hunters that awaited him. Part-reality, part-fiction,

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“true sportsman” scenes depicted the ideal: to be with likeminded brethren and hounds, in a care free recreational setting, bound by a set of rules that gave order, decorum, and tradition to the pastime.

In contrast to the “true sportsman,” the backwoods trapper was closely linked in the mind of well-to-do Americans with the lowly pot-hunter. According to the elite sportsman, the trapper did not follow any gentlemanly code of behavior, ignored game laws, and his activities bordered on poaching and anarchy. Paradoxically, in time, many sportsmen, artists and patrons, began to adopt the apparel of the backwoodsman. In photos, for painting aids, for credentials, and during the occasional western hunting escapade, the elite often enjoyed wearing the garb. Though they affected the elitist culture of England’s hunt, American sportsmen eventually donned the “Boone look” as symbolic of unrestrained freedom. The artist-sportsman, who loved Boone and his story as much as his peers, was thus faced with the task of presenting the trapper as a heroic pathfinder, while underplaying the game-taking, recreation-threatening aspect of the common trapper’s occupation.
On several occasions during his short career, the landscape painter Thomas Cole paid tribute to the lone hunter. Though he died in 1848 – at the beginning of club-led animal conservation efforts – Cole led the way in representations of the nation’s favorite son, Daniel Boone (1734-1820). He was especially intrigued by the frontiersman’s heroic character, and in 1826 composed a painting, *Colonel Daniel Boone at Great Osage Lake*, depicting the pioneer and his hound sitting at the shore of the lake next to a rustic cabin and blasted tree, and below a rather ominous looking sky (fig. A33). In his list of finished paintings, Cole described the scene as “Col. Boone sitting at the door of his hut,” and he composed the scene’s sublime setting largely after Salvator Rosa’s awe-provoking landscapes, for which the artist had a great admiration. It is possible that Cole appreciated Boone for his adventuresome spirit and his intimate relationship with nature, qualities which Cole himself enjoyed. Moreover, Boone’s life was the ideal epic tale to celebrate American history through landscape. In contrast to those for his other heroic figures, Cole’s preliminary sketch for Boone’s face emphasizes the figure’s old age and brooding, almost hostile expression. His Boone sits like a savage hermit-guardian, with gun in hand, confronting the viewer as if to say “stay out.” Although Cole considered the Boone picture to be “one of [his] worst,” he nevertheless returned to the subject of

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121 Thomas Cole MSS, Box 5, folder 3, p. 2. New York State Library, Albany.

backwoodsmen. 123 Cole was just one of a number of American artists to address the subject of the backwoods adventurer, who was so different than the “true sportsman.”

“True sportsmen” believed that backwoods sustenance hunters killed as much game as desired and existed outside of society’s laws. Most literary accounts of this existence take place in the American South and Southwest, and much of the criticism was directed at those regions. A notable exception to this criticism was the heroic backwoodsman adventurer Daniel Boone, the prototypical lone American hunter. Since the late eighteenth century, Americans had an ongoing love affair with the Kentucky nomad, Indian fighter, and military leader. Wealthy American recreational sportsmen, who disdained the common backwoods settler, were nonetheless drawn to Boone and the freedom he represented.124 The historical Boone, and the fictional character based upon him, James Fenimore Cooper’s Leatherstocking (aka Natty Bumppo), were the two most beloved hunter-folk heroes of the day, and were appreciated by all classes of society. Sportsmen recognized in these two legendary figures many positive attributes, including strength, independence, and a natural morality and conservation. Both were self-made men forging a life in the harsh, undeveloped frontier, and survived in isolation largely on their hunting prowess. As Cole and his artistic brethren were well aware, sportsmen of the time could identify with pioneering, mythic heroes like Boone and Leatherstocking, and simultaneously condemn the lifestyle and methods of the real-life market hunter.


Illustrations of Daniel Boone had begun to accompany written tales of his adventures and captivity as early as 1812. Contemporary versions of Boone’s story included those by Timothy Flint (1833, with new editions every few years) and by Robert Bird (1845). The first portrait of Boone was painted “after life” by Chester Harding in 1820. Historical compositions based on Boone’s life usually centered on his physical struggles with Indians or bears, or on his isolated commune with nature, in which he was depicted following European hagiographic precedents as a kind of St. Jerome in the wilderness. The simplistic, early illustrations of Boone featured in his biographies would be recalled in the decades that followed by artists who composed Boone scenes on canvas in a more elaborate mode.

Similarly, illustrations and paintings of the hunter-hero Leatherstocking make up a significant number of the “historical” paintings produced in America during the later 1820s and 1830s. Based loosely on Boone, but also on the squatters that Cooper had known as a child in Cooperstown, N.Y., Leatherstocking, who made his debut in the novel *The Pioneers* (1823), personified both the threat of anarchy in the woods and the author’s patrician voice for animal conservation. While Cooper’s narrative deals ultimately with the validation of various claims to the land, a powerful subtext of his

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126 On hagiographic symbolism of Boone, see Glanz, 11. The group of figures in William Ranney’s Boone “discovery” scene, who lean on their guns, were possibly modeled after a woodcut in Timothy Flint’s *The First White Man of the West, or the Exploits of Col. Daniel Boone, the First Settler of Kentucky* (Cincinnati: George Conclin, 1847), opp. 43. Audubon painted Boone’s portrait (oil on paper, pasted to board, measuring 36 x 31 inches) from memory. It is not dated, and is today located at the Audubon Museum, Henderson, Kentucky. See Constance Rourke, *Audubon* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1936), 132 & 328.
work involves natural resource preservation, and he emphasized the need for
government-enforced game law in his text. The portrayal of the lone frontiersman
as an advocate for conservation may have stemmed from the fact that Boone had
advocated federal game protection. The conservationist views promoted by settlers like
Boone and highlighted through Leatherstocking were disseminated in various media,
influencing generations of American sportsmen. It is within this context that sportsman-
artists were developing their protectionist attitudes and pictorial themes.

Thomas Cole, John Quidor (1801-1881), and Charles Deas (1818-1867) were a
few of the artists who celebrated Leatherstocking on canvas. Paintings of the unlikely
hero generally follow one of three narratives: The hero standing up to the corrupt sheriff
after killing deer out of season; stalking deer in Lake Otsego with his Mohican adopted-
father Chingachgook; or killing the panther to protect Judge Temple’s daughter.

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Temple gives a cogent defense for the need for game law to preserve the wildlife. Later, Temple speaks on
the approaching hour when game and forest laws will be mandatory. See ibid., 229-231.

128 As leader of an immigrant settlement in Kentucky, Boone had presented a bill to the
Transylvania Colony’s governing assembly detailing his plan for protection of bison, see Ted Franklin
Belue, *The Long Hunt: Death of the Buffalo East of the Mississippi* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books,
1996), 109, 163-64; Belue’s sources are: Richard Henderson, May 17 and 20, 1775 (Lyman Copeland
Draper MSS, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison); “The Life of Boone,” incomplete
manuscript (Lyman Copeland Draper MSS, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison); William
Stewart Lester, *The Transylvania Colony* (Spencer, IN: Samuel Guard, 1935); and Herman, 57. For
Cooper’s literary construction of Leatherstocking based on squatters living near Cooperstown, see Alan
“Leatherstocking and the Problem of Social Order,” in *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and

129 Cole’s versions are from the mid to late 1820s, one of which is *In the Catskills* (1827, Arnot Art
Museum, Elmira, NY). Quidor’s three paintings of Leatherstocking are all from 1832, and were analyzed in
Chad Mandelès, “A New Look at John Quidor’s Leatherstocking Paintings,” *The American Art Journal* 12,
no. 3 (Summer 1980): 65-74. Susan Fenimore Cooper owned Quidor’s Leatherstocking’s Rescue (1832),
mentioned in *John Quidor, 1801-1881* (Brooklyn Museum, 1942), 56. Another example of The Pioneers’
popularity for art subjects is William Birch McMurtrie’s *The Chase, based on the Pioneers*, which
exhibited at the AAU in 1845.
Hunting game in Judge Temple’s forest, the character of Leatherstocking is contextually related to the British poacher, a figure perceived both as a Robin Hood type of hero, and as a landless criminal. Cooper was no doubt responding in part to the poacher theme, which was ripe in English art and literature during the nineteenth century. The English artist Edwin Landseer was also fascinated with the topic, and created a number of large-scale works in the early 1830s dedicated to the life of poachers (fig. A34), which he later reimaged as a set of high-end engravings titled *Deer Stalkers in the Highlands* (1846). He was likely prompted to address the theme by the newly-implemented game law in England (1831). That British law, which sought to make hunting more accessible to non-aristocrats through licensing, did little to stop poaching, and as the problem grew, the tensions between landowners, sportsmen and poachers became even more severe.

In America by the 1840’s, the term “poacher” would have reminded citizens of the repressive British hunting law and the monarchy, both of which were ridiculed by Americans as anachronistic and undemocratic. Perhaps because of this, there is a

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130 Poacher scenes by Landseer include *The Poacher’s Bothie* (ca. 1831, Hamburger Kunsthalle), *Poachers Deerstalking* (ca. 1831, Private Collection), and the now missing *How to Get the Deer Home* (1831). In the second example, Landseer was portraying the then-famous poachers, Charles Mackintosh and Malcolm Clarke. See Richard Ormond, *The Monarch of the Glen: Landseer in the Highlands* (Edinburgh, National Galleries of Scotland, 2005), 69-71. On his engraving series, see “Fine Arts,” *(London)* Daily News, December 31, 1846, 4, col. C.


132 For one editors’ take on the distinction, see “Poaching,” *Harper’s Weekly*. He states that in America the term “is only applied to trespassers on forbidden ground.” This report includes the surely-purposeful juxtaposition of a picture of a French poacher who has just killed a small deer, with a traditional “Stag at Bay” scene – by H. C. [Henry Collins] Bispham (1841-1882) – in which the animal is surrounded by wolves.
virtual absence of the word *poacher* in the titles of American art work, except in the case of animal paintings, where *poacher* is frequently used.\(^{133}\) Despite the difference in terminology, poaching was a constant problem in the United States as well. The American “poacher” – the landless, backwoods hunter/trapper – was not quite a figure of praise and was of little interest to fine artists on this side of the Atlantic until the 1840s, the same decade that America’s lower classes began seeking for role models among their own. In contrast to the aristocratic-minded elite in England and the United States, Americans of the laboring class would have recognized the romantic appeal of the poacher; like Robin Hood, he represented the common man against often-corrupt law enforcement and the ruling classes.

Though not generally perceived as criminal by the masses, as a sustenance hunter, Leatherstocking embodied the “poacher” role for land owners who felt personally threatened by trespassing, game loss and land misuse. Toward the end of Cooper’s *The Pioneers*, Leatherstocking is jailed for poaching, but by this point in the novel, it is clear he has a stronger conservation ethic than the book’s “civilized” characters. Cooper’s hero represented different things to different segments of American society.\(^{134}\)

In an ironic twist, the fictional Leatherstocking appeared frequently in the 1820s and 1830s in what amounted to history painting, such as in John Quidor’s *Leatherstocking Meets the Law* (1832, fig. A35), while images of the historical Boone

\(^{133}\)One of the exceptions is an unlocated landscape painting by Henry C. Pratt (1803-1880), friend and companion of Thomas Cole. Titled *The Poacher, A Landscape*, it was shown in 1835 at the American Gallery of Fine Art, Boston; data from SIRIS website [accessed May 1, 2009].

\(^{134}\)For more on the class-based dimensions of the character, see Smith, “Leatherstocking and the Problem of Social Order,” Chapter 6 in Smith, *Virgin Land*, 59-70.
were generally limited to woodcut illustrations in biographies of the adventurer. The painted (and literary) narratives emphasized Boone and Leatherstocking’s innate sense of respect for wildlife and wilderness as well as their prioritization of natural over man-made laws. However, these two figures were considered the exception to the rule, with the common backwoodsman lacking any such forethought or respect.

While bringing to mind Boone and Leatherstocking, the use of the term “backwoodsman” would also have also reminded Americans of literary characters created by an earlier writer, James Kirke Paulding (1778-1860). In both The Backwoodsman (Philadelphia, 1818; a likely stimulus for Cooper’s Pioneers) and Westward Ho! (New York, 1832), Paulding explored the life of New England and Virginian pioneers in Kentucky. Paulding presents these characters in relatively neutral light, but his views were derided by his Knickerbocker colleagues. Like Cooper, Paulding was in part looking back to the heroic Boone, but added the more troubling dimensions of anxiety and insanity that seemed to be emerging in the lawless country. Paulding’s take on backwoods life would appear again with his play The Lion of the West (1831-32), a satire based on a fictitious meeting between Nimrod Wildfire (based on Davy Crockett) and a

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135 Examples include a frontispiece engraving of Daniel and Squire Boone in Marshall’s History of Kentucky, illustrated in Glanz, fig. A6; an engraving of John Gadsby Chapman’s Boone “in the costume of a Western Hunter” in The Family Magazine (Cincinnati) 1, no. 3 (March 1836), 18; and a woodcut by William Woodruff, in Flint’s The Life and Exploits of Col. Daniel Boone (Cincinnati: Morgan, 1850); See J. Gray Sweeney, The Columbus of the Woods: Daniel Boone and the Typology of Manifest Destiny (St. Louis: Washington University Gallery of Art, 1992).


137 Arlin Turner, “James K. Paulding and Timothy Flint,” Mississippi Valley Historical Review 34, no. 1 (June 1947): 105-111. Turner argues that Paulding used Flint’s narrative in Condensed Geography and History of the Western States (1828) and his sections on Boone when writing Westward Ho!
British socialite traveler. Paulding’s opinion of Crockett is summed up in his appeal to
the artist John Wesley Jarvis to “invent a few ludicrous Scenes of Col. Crockett at
Washington.” Paulding’s works added to the popular notion that the Kentucky
backwoods was the site of an ignorant, savage-like populace and a source of humor.138
Paulding’s satirical portrayals of the backwoodsman would heavily influence subsequent
artists, particularly those fellow associates of the Sketch Club, like Cole and Inman.

It should be noted that, in comparison to other nineteenth-century hunting images,
these depictions of Boone and Leatherstocking were relatively sparse; it was difficult to
fashion “common man” role models that would strike a chord among the lower and
middle classes, without distancing the elite. Along the way, artists were forced to reach a
balance between the multifarious notions of Boone and his more questionable frontier
brethren. This ambivalence was conveyed in the art and literature of the time.

**Bad Backwoodsmen**

What is most paradoxical about these portrayals of Boone and Leatherstocking is
that the actual position in American society of backwoods hunters was being questioned
by the same patrons who would ultimately support their depiction. As many scholars
have shown, the trapper/backwoodsman type was a multi-dimensional figure, and was
understood in often conflicting ways. Although middle class Americans generally saw the
trapper in a positive light, as a trailblazer whom future settlers would follow, he was

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138See Melvin Rosser Mason, “The Lion of the West: Satire on Davy Crockett and Frances
Paulding’s Lion of the West,” *American Literature* 3, no. 3 (November 1931): 249-258. Quote from
*Kindred Spirits*, 88. It should be noted that, except for the almanac imagery (1835-1850s), the politician-
frontiersman Davy Crockett was rarely the subject of fine art. “True sportsmen” of the time would have
perceived Crockett as a non-gentleman, and a criminal. Until Theodore Roosevelt’s recognition of him in
the mid 1880s, with the Boone and Crockett Club, gentleman-sportsmen seem not to have praised Crockett
to any extent.
equally perceived by the elite as prone to trespassing, savagery and anarchy. Generally approving of Western types, the author Washington Irving nevertheless wrote in *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville, U.S.A.* (London, 1837) that the free trappers and the mountain men of the Rocky Mountains “have a proneness to adopt savage habitudes…the manners, habits, dress, gesture, and even walk of the Indian.” He finished his description with a warning that free-trappers “may, in time, become the scourge of the civilized frontiers.” It was precisely their existence “beyond the law” that was a concern for “true sportsmen” who were composing and enforcing legislation to protect game and their own privileged status.  

Trappers in the western territories pursued every type of fur bearing animal, but during the 1820s and early thirties, the animal of choice was the mighty beaver, whose skin and fur was used in the making of stovepipe hats and coats. As the demand was over-supplied and as fashions changed, the prices dropped dramatically, so that by the mid-1830s, the beaver market all but collapsed. As fur industry records show, the beaver continued to be trapped, albeit conservatively, as did a host of other animal species in the backwoods of America throughout the nineteenth century. 

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Like *backwoodsman*, the term *trapper* was understood multifariously. Depending on the context, a trapper could be a hired gun for fur companies, a sustenance hunter, or a small farmer protecting his crops and livestock from predation. Elitist sportsmen usually lumped all of these “non-sportsmen” hunters together in their literary attacks, and in the sporting journals *trapper* and *backwoodsman* were used synonymously, sharing classist and sectional connotations. *Pot-hunter* was also used to indicate a subsistence hunter.\(^{141}\)

High-society sportsmen, particularly those from the Northeast, clearly distinguished themselves from such “common” hunters, and while Boone and Kit Carson were celebrated in the popular media, they did not save the majority from upper-class scorn. This ambiguity of reaction to the trapper in popular literature parallels hunting scenes featuring trappers.\(^{142}\)

Artists undoubtedly recognized the economic importance of game hunters; market hunters supplied meat for urban cities on the East Coast, and were thus vital to most sectors of society. Fur was in huge demand, particularly in the Eastern states, where fur-bearing animals were fewer, and where rich urbanites sought the newest fashions. Yet,

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market hunters and “pot hunters” were demonized, ridiculed, and satirized in the art world. In William H. Beard’s (1824-1900) *Hunters’ Evening* (1845), he presents two bumpkins resting by a campfire, about to be attacked by an unseen predator (fig. A36). Artist-sportsmen, who were witnessing firsthand the decline in game populations, and who had unique insight into the issue of conservation, were caught between the heroic idea of the Boone-type trapper and their personal feelings against the non-sportsman hunter. This is most apparent if we compare two images by the Missouri artist George Caleb Bingham (1811-1879), *Daniel Boone Escorting Settlers through the Cumberland Gap* (1851-52, fig. A37) and *The Squatters* (1850, fig. A38). In both paintings, the central figures appear to be on guard. The heroic Boone, however, is moving forward, dressed in bright yellow sporting jacket and matching pants, in the company of other brightly lit characters. The squatters, on the other hand, are static and humbly attired. The two pictures portray the contrasting views of the trapper. In the first, Bingham presents Boone marching before a sublime landscape in an iconic image of heroism and a celebration of expansionism. In the second, the figures, including the dog, look out at the viewer with suspicion rather than triumph. These are folks going nowhere in every sense of the term.143

The rights of squatters had been newly recognized with the passage of the Preemption Act of 1841, allowing settlers on government land to purchase the land at a low price, but this did not take away the stigma of this population. Linking the landless class with the *Loco Focos* – the agrarian-labor political opponents of the Whigs – Bingham saw squatters as taking wildlife away from his moneyed constituents and votes

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from himself.144 Bingham described this feeling when in 1846 he wrote that squatters would irresponsibly kill game “till all were diminished.”145 Such a view helps explain Bingham’s rough and unflattering depiction of his characters in *The Squatters* (1850), and in his earlier frontier scene, *French Trader and His Half-Breed Son* (1845, fig. A39) in which, rifle in hand, the son waits to “recklessly” take more game. In addition, Bingham’s other views of fur trappers and voyageurs should be understood similarly, as what is essentially an elitist and propagandistic slur.

Another of this type, James Beard’s *Western Squatters, or Westward Ho!* (1850, fig. A40) presents a desperate-looking family, surviving on wildlife alone. This painting was originally commissioned by AAU board member George W. Austen, and was reproduced as an engraved print for the Crosby Opera House Art Association in 1866, to be distributed to its well-to-do members.146 Beard’s painting is similar to Deas’ *Long Jakes* in that it represents a problematic subject in a traditionally heroic pose. Here Beard has composed the figures in a triangular arrangement, with the father’s form towering over the group. However, the painting, directed to the elite of the art world, works as a statement of anti-heroism. It shows the problems arising from what many held to be the

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144Glanz, 21.


146Also see Husch, 17 and 38 for more on Beard’s painting and subsequent print. T. D. Booth made the engraving, the print measuring 22 ½ x 30 inches.
careless, unproductive existence of the squatter, living off wildlife and little else. While Eastern art patrons could accept and even celebrate Boone and Leatherstocking, common squatters, poachers, and market hunters, however necessary for the food supply, were socially marginalized.147

**Audubon’s Message to Sportsmen**

One of the preeminent artist-sportsmen of the day, John James Audubon (1785-1851) epitomized the Boone-adoring sportsman, yet, like most “true sportsmen,” was disturbed by the idea of limitless killing of game by backwoods squatters and market hunters. Audubon, like most of the artists discussed here, was known to use the term “true sportsman,” and he most likely considered himself to be in the fraternity.148 Traveling up the Missouri in 1843, he witnessed does being killed by hunters mimicking the fawn’s bleat, and called the act “a cruel, deceitful, and unsportsmanlike method, of which I can never avail myself, and which I try to discountenance.”149 Audubon appeared to be entranced with Boone; he met the elder frontiersman, circa 1820 in Frankfort, Kentucky, and was struck by the colonel’s “extraordinary stature and colossal strength.” After apparently ‘stalking’ Boone down, Audubon wrote of squirrel hunting with him, and of bunking in his abode for a short time.150 He eventually painted Boone’s portrait

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147 On the ambiguity and the blending of trappers’ good and bad qualities, see Glanz, 29-30, 45, 47. Also see Sweeney, specifically 2 & 23.

148 Audubon, *Ornithological Biography... Birds of America* (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1831-39, 5 vols.), 1: 215 [hereafter cited in notes as BOA]. This is found in his section on the Ruffed Grouse, in which he is most explicit in his distaste for killing game birds out of season. Also, see A. [Audubon?], “Woodcock (Scolopax minor),” *ATRSM* 1, no. 6 (February 1830): 302.


Audubon wore frontier garb modeled after Boone’s when selling subscriptions for his bird volumes in Great Britain, and, given the early date (ca. 1826), may have been the first American artist to use this rustic look for art promotion in Europe. However, unlike Boone, Audubon was an artist and scientist, rather than a fur trapper or market hunter, and he had no desire to fight Indians, with whom he had had positive past relationships. He was essentially a proto-conservationist, expressing his distaste for the meat and fur markets, even as he took part in exploitative game hunting for specimen acquisition, and killed an astonishing number of birds during his career.

Eventually, Audubon became something of a hero to artist-naturalists and sportsmen alike. His animated natural history paintings and prints had a pronounced impact on emotive and empathetic portrayals of animals in the century’s second half. Audubon demonstrated that scientific knowledge could be obtained through hunting, and ultimately helped integrate wildlife conservation into popular thought and sportsman culture. Audubon’s narrative and his passionate, unusually animate depictions of game animals were critical factors in the developing conservation movement.


151 Audubon’s portrait of Boone is in the Audubon Museum, Henderson, Kentucky.

152 George Catlin was another who would capitalize on his frontier connections when promoting his art in Europe in the 1840s. The frontier look was what many in Europe expected from Americans. On Audubon using buckskin and western look for promotion in Europe, see Boime, “Audubon,” 729-730.

153 William Jacob Hays was also a noted Audubon disciple, and his emotion-tinged, naturalist-minded compositions come out of his study of Audubon’s scenes. Theodore Roosevelt’s aide George Bird Grinnell grew up on Audubon’s estate, went to school in Lucy Audubon’s home, and founded the National Audubon Society in 1905. Grinnell played a crucial role in Roosevelt’s adoption of game protection ideals. Some of the sportsmen-patrons subscribing to Audubon’s *Birds of America* include Robert Gilmor (vol. 1, appendix, p. 12); John A. Dix, Edward Harris, Stephen Van Rensselaer, and P. J. Stuyvesant (vol. 2, 581-82); Ogden Haggerty (vol. 3, 633); Daniel Webster, James Watson Webb and Henry Clay (vol. 4, 613);
Audubon presented himself as a peculiar fusion of the wild frontiersman and the gentleman-sportsman. In his “official” portrait, painted by his sons John Woodhouse and Victor Gifford (1842, fig. A41), Audubon paid homage to Boone, and displayed his rapport with the wilderness by wearing buckskin pants in what is otherwise a classic gentleman-sportsman portrait.\textsuperscript{154} Audubon wears a fine hunting jacket, blue vest and white shirt. A horse, eyeing the viewer, stands at far left with a groomsman (or game keeper), as a second horse feeds further in the background. All of these elements, including the resting hunting dog, gun, and estate stretching behind him, remind the viewer that Audubon was at once a gentleman-sportsman and a lover of Boone and his hunting lifestyle. He and his sons presented the best of each world to the art consuming public. In time, others would follow in Audubon’s footsteps and present themselves similarly, as a son of Boone, while striving for the pinnacle of sportsmanship.

Despite his admiration for Boone, Audubon expressed concern about the multitude of squatters that lived similarly primitive, anarchical lifestyles. Born in Haiti to a French aristocratic family, and raised as a European gentleman-sportsman, Audubon wrote critically about non-sport hunting. He especially loathed market hunting, off-season killing, and non-sportsmanlike hunting methods. In his two colossal multi-volume works – *Birds of America (BOA)* (1831-39) and *Viviparous Quadrupeds (VQ)* (1845-1848)

\footnote{An engraving after his sons’ painting appeared as frontispiece in Mrs. Horace St. John, *Audubon, the Naturalist of the New World*. New York: C. S. Francis, 1856); a similar arrangement is the portrait by Alonzo Chappel, dated 1866, which, though compositionally akin to the former, leaves out the horses and the other man; it appeared as a frontispiece in several Audubon biographies.}

and, in the introduction of *Viviparous Quadrupeds*, NYSC member J. Prescott Hall is mentioned as a contributor.
Audubon repeatedly addressed the issue of unfair hunting techniques.\footnote{BOA was first published in Edinburgh (1831-39, 5 vols.), then in Philadelphia (7 vols., 1840-1844); Viviparous Quadrupeds [hereafter cited as VQ] was published in 3 vols. (1845-1848).} Both of these publications functioned as natural history treatises, as aesthetic portfolios, and as hunting manuals in the libraries of gentlemen-sportsmen on both sides of the Atlantic. The text for each was written specifically with the gentleman-sportsman subscriber in mind, and frequently addresses the “true sportsman’s” concern over game depletion and misuse.

Audubon repeatedly condemned the poachers he called “Eggers,” within the BOA. Eggers were market hunters of bird eggs, based on the Eastern seaboard of Canada. He also wrote negatively of squatters there, and though generally approving of the squatters along the Mississippi River, Audubon’s very use of the term “squatter” marked him as an elitist gentleman.

In addition to class-based terminology, Audubon and his co-authors wrote on the various methods for killing deer in both BOA and VQ, and expressed concern about many of the current practices. He described the winter-time method known as “Crusting,” in which the stalked animal becomes trapped in the snow, as “an unfair advantage taken of the unfortunate animals…in this manner thousands of Deer were formerly massacred in the North.”\footnote{VQ, 252. He uses the phrase “an unfair advantage” in BOA, vol. 1, 217. Robert B. Roosevelt, in The Game Birds of the Coast and Lakes of the Northern States of America, used similar language to distinguish a cruel hunter from a true sportsman.} Audubon had a similar hatred for “Floating,” in which an exhausted animal is driven to a lake, and then bound, pulled onto the boat, and slain; he wrote that this was “in violation of all rules of legitimate sporting.” Audubon was less critical about the
Southern method of “driving deer,” and actually concludes the essay on “Deer Hunting” in *BOA* by inviting readers to try it.\(^\text{157}\)

The *VQ* authors found “Fire-Hunting” to be one of the worst methods of all. Audubon wrote that this technique, which involved enticing game with a light source, was a “destructive mode of obtaining deer…prohibited by a law of Carolina, which is however frequently violated.” Though he left his “reader to judge whether such a mode…would suit his taste or not” as a means of hunting woodcock, his condemnation of fire-hunting deer was unwavering.\(^\text{158}\) Audubon attributed the decline of deer to this practice and called for stricter enforcement and greater legal restrictions:

> We regret to be obliged to state, that the Deer are rapidly disappearing from causes that ought not to exist…In the Southern States…they would remain undiminished in numbers were it not for the idle and cruel practice of destroying them by firelight, and hunting them in the spring and summer seasons by overseers and idlers. There is a law of [Carolina] forbidding the killing of Deer during certain months of the year. It is, however, never enforced, and Deer are exposed for sale in the markets of Charleston and Savannah at all season. In some neighborhoods, where they were formerly abundant, now none exist, and the planters have given up their hounds.\(^\text{159}\)

After denouncing the state of affairs in the South, and making sure not to include plantation owners in his rebuke, Audubon and company noted that with the passage of game laws in the North, deer were returning:

\(^{157}\)Ibid., 252. While interpreted as the time as Audubon’s thoughts, this text may have been written by Rev. John Bachman, Audubon’s collaborator. The Audubon team – Audubon, his sons, and Bachman – wrote the text, and are referred to as “We” in *VQ*; ibid., 252-3. Audubon took part in “driving deer,” which he found to be a “boyish sport,” and noted was an “exciting and very agreeable recreation.” See ibid., 253.

\(^{158}\)Audubon wrote that, in the South, and mainly on plantations, the woodcock is “slaughtered under night by men carrying lighted torches, which so surprise the poor things that they stand gazing on the light until knocked dead with a pole or cane.” See *BOA*, vol. 3, 475; for Audubon’s thoughts on fire-hunting deer, see vol. 1, 338 & 340.

\(^{159}\)Ibid., 253. This information is probably from Bachman’s pen, as he lived in the Carolinas and understood the sporting and sectional politics there.
In New-Jersey and Long Island, where the game laws are *strictly* enforced, Deer are said to be on the increase...If judicious laws were framed and strictly enforced the Deer could be preserved for ages in all our Southern States, and we cannot refrain from submitting this subject to the consideration of our southern legislators.\footnote{Ibid., vol. 1, 337.}

Whether the law in the New York City region was truly “strictly enforced,” as the writer(s) claims, Audubon’s text was a damning commentary on the regional differences in enforcement of game law and clearly called for protectionist legislation.

Audubon’s opinions concerning the Still Hunt, the stalking tactic that involved tracking, were ambiguous. On one hand, he used this technique himself and found it to be one of the only hunting methods in which woodcraft, skill and knowledge of the surroundings were essential. On the other hand, he wrote of it condescendingly in the *True Hunter* (a title synonymous with “Still Hunter,” and not to be confused with “true sportsman”). After noting that this hunter will be taking deer “all year long,” and will use decoys to trick the animal, he finishes this passage with a harsh critique of the type:

> But we have seen enough of the still hunter. Let it suffice for me to add, that by the mode pursued by him, thousands of deer are annually killed, by individuals shooting these animals merely for the skin, not caring for even the most valuable portions of the flesh, unless hunger, or a near market, induces them to carry off the hams.\footnote{Audubon, “Deer Hunting,” *BOA*, vol. 1, 335. This essay was written in 1827.}

In Audubon’s own words, the Still Hunt is “by far the most destructive” method of those he was familiar with.\footnote{Ibid., vol. 1, 337.}

Although hunting methods did not usually appear in his visual images, a unique illustration in *VQ* (fig. A42), completed by his sons, shows a well-dressed sportsman, having just shot a black-tailed deer. The sportsman, presumably Audubon himself,
appears to be “Still-Hunting,” and stands roughly fifty yards from the struck animal, a distance suggesting fair chase. The bleeding, dying victim, standing in the viewer’s space, is presented empathetically, as it begins to collapse.

In addition to the Still Hunt method, Audubon regularly used traps in obtaining animal models for his art. Yet, when he depicts a trapped animal in a scene that conveys market hunting, as in *Otter Caught in Trap* (1826, fig. A43), he presents the animal in obvious anguish, as if to evoke empathy from the viewer. The animal turns to the viewer with a look of terror, as it struggles to free itself. The *Otter* scene composition was one of his favorites, which he reproduced numerous times, most specifically as the illustration for *Canadian Otter* in *VQ*. Audubon suggests his loathing of the market hunting practices, and by distinguishing the locale of the trapping as occurring in Canada, he highlighted his disgust for Canadian market hunting and the squatters he encountered there.163

Audubon, however, was as paradoxical as the “sportsman’s creed” – he both loved and killed wildlife. In his *BOA* chapter, “Squatters of the Mississippi,” he praised the lone frontiersman who lived off game, yet condemned the multitude of reckless hunters who used the same method in an exploitative, commercial fashion. One explanation for Audubon’s paradoxical narration lies in his outward appeal to his upper-class, well-educated subscribers whom Audubon addresses as peers throughout the text. He repeatedly asks the reader to consider what constitutes proper hunting, and “true

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sportsmanship.” Whether Audubon was ever conflicted in his ethical stance on capturing animals, his critique of market hunting was clear. Whatever his hunting methods, and whoever his companions in the field, it is clear that Audubon wished to be seen as an intellectual scientist, an artist, and a “true sportsman.” The views he presented were shared by other concerned sportsmen, and he helped instill conservationist principles in those that followed.  

Artists after Audubon

By mid-century, a host of artist-sportsmen began to represent the problematic frontiersman, acknowledging the differences Audubon spelled out between “true sportsmen” and those without a code of conduct. Several of these artists presented the frontier trapper as a counterpoint to the urbane, genteel sportsman, a pictorial dichotomy not unlike Landseer was creating in England. Charles Deas, William Ranney, Thomas Cole, George Caleb Bingham and Arthur F. Tait were among those tapping into the nationalist, expansionist mood of the period. These artists introduced Boone or Boone-like characters to give their scenes a “wild” nature. These were not portraits in the traditional sense, but conveyed the artists’ and patrons’ stereotypical understanding of the trapper, who represented the antithesis of the “true sportsman.” Their art was usually sold to (or through) one of the many patronage associations in the United States, such as the AAU and the NAD, organizations which exhibited expansionist art for a popular audience.}

164 Many of the Audubon’s game hunting narratives are reprinted in William T. Porter’s edition of Peter Hawker, Instructions to Young Sportsmen (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1846).

165 See Rachel N. Klein, “Art and Authority in Antebellum New York City: The Rise and Fall of the American Art-Union,” The Journal of American History 81, no. 4 (March 1995): 1534-1561; for the AAU’s popularizing mission, see specifically 1546-1548. In contrast to the AAU, The NAD was founded
established, and designed their works to appeal to the new businessman (which included politicians, lawyers and merchants). These figures held power in the art-unions, and helped create and guide the art market. Sportsman-artists counted themselves among this newly-emerging class and were dealing with many of the same social and financial concerns that other businessmen faced.

**Deas’ Depiction of the Hunter**

One of these artist-sportsmen, Charles Deas, visited Ft. Snelling in 1841, and walked there along the social divide. One of the first mid-century artists to regularly depict non-sportsman hunters, Deas was “a zealous sportsman,” who “found his purest enjoyment when wandering equipped with gun, fishing rod, and sketchbook.”166 Ironically, Deas, who was born into an aristocratic family of gentleman farmers and military officers, rarely if ever painted sportsmen recreating. Instead, he was adept at capturing iconic and sometimes darkly amusing representations of the West through his paintings of trappers who had abandoned civilization. His scenes often mirrored the humorous Southern literature of the period, which poked fun at backwoods hunting folk.

Deas was raised in Philadelphia in an elite family, whose military history went back generations. Deas was the grandson of Ralph Izard, the former diplomat and senator from South Carolina, and was the son of William Allen Deas, a government official with military honors. The artist’s brother George Deas was an officer at Ft. Crawford, where Deas would later spend time sketching. With most of his male family members in the

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armed forces, and brought up with an elitist view of proper gentleman-sportsman behavior, Deas was most likely struck by the contrasts in hunting etiquette in the various regions of America and among various social groups.167

Before becoming a professional artist, Deas travelled up the Delaware River “through the White Hills,” for several months, then headed west to visit his brother George at Fort Crawford. From the spring of 1840 to 1841 he traveled the frontier region of the northern Mississippi River, journeying from Fort Crawford to Forts Winnebago and Snelling (in present Minneapolis, Minnesota). While visiting the forts, Deas hunted with the officers and observed the local white and Indian under-class of hunters, whom he represented in an unlocated painting entitled *Hunters on the Prairies*. Deas also produced a hunting dog portrait (at the Minnesota Historical Society) for Henry Hastings Sibley, commanding officer of the Ft. Snelling fur company, a noted sportsman, and a regular correspondent to the *Spirit*. At the forts, and in the company of such “true sportsmen” as Sibley, Deas would have witnessed the strict sportsman’s code and the separation of sportsmen-officers from the non-military hunters and trappers who roamed the area, and who sold their meat and furs at the fort.168

Many of the emerging distinctions between sportsmen and other hunters in America were first manifested in and around the frontier fort. Officers based in Southern and Southwestern forts, with access to thriving wilderness, sought to create anew the elite


sporting opportunities they were used to. Officers at Fort Gibson formed an early sportsman’s club (circa 1830) in Indian Territory (near present-day Muskogee, Oklahoma). The Fort Gibson Sportsman’s Club seemed intent on introducing a British-style of sportsmanship to the prairie lands, and kept a hunting dog kennel, and a “game keeper,” whose role was to keep an eye out for poachers: in that case, squatters and Indians. During the 1830s and 1840s officers at Ft. Snelling (modern day Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin) supplemented their rations with “the finest woodcock…grouse and ducks and deer and wild geese &c.” Artist/soldier Seth Eastman (1808-1875), for example, served at Snelling during those decades, and enjoyed sport shooting with his pointer dog. As at Ft. Gibson, officers at Ft. Snelling sought to make their life resemble British country living, reflective of the leisure class. By contrast, enlisted men were forced to eat salt pork and other government supplied rations. The limiting of sporting rights in the military based on rank mirrored the class-delineated schism of the nation at large, and artists who visited the frontier forts observed that elite culture.

In 1841 Deas established his studio in St. Louis, the premier frontier and fur trading city, and visited western forts, trading posts and tribal grounds along the Mississippi River. This lifestyle provided him with numerous opportunities to meet

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trappers, traders, and frontier military men, and to acquaint himself with the social
politics. Deas understood the difference between noble sport and market hunting, and
like Thorpe and the satirical writers for the Spirit, Deas came to see western trappers as
ideal subjects for darkly-comic story telling.

Even though Deas probably perceived his own leisure class as superior to those
living hand (and gun) to mouth, he was intrigued by the frontier hunter mystique. Once
settled in St. Louis, he apparently wore outrageous “frontier” costumes and was referred
to as “Rocky Mountains” by some. Whether this was eccentricity or pure salesmanship,
Deas was obviously an astute businessman. Decorated like a prairie lodge, his studio
augmented the appeal of his work for customers. Deas knew where to travel, where to
sell his art, and how to use the growing frontier mystique to his benefit.

Deas’ iconic painting Long Jakes, The Rocky Mountain Man (1844, fig. A44) was a success largely because of the figure’s compelling monumentality, but also because it played on the emerging interest in frontiersman imagery. Deas’ caricaturist bent comes through in this image; the larger-than-life presentation of the protagonist mimics the tall tales of the south. The painting features a large, unkempt horseman, heroically positioned in the picture’s center and filling a good deal of the canvas. The French trapper (Deas’ original title was Long Jacques), with red, swollen face, stops on a rise in a rugged

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173 Deas’ frontier excursions are mentioned by Charles Lanman, Summer in the Wilderness, 15-17; and “Deas,” Godey’s. Since beginning my paper, Carol Clark has published a book on Deas, Charles Deas and 1840s America (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009), that addresses some of these issues.

174 On Deas’ studio décor, see “Deas,” Godey’s. On Deas’ being called “Rocky Mountains,” see Carol Clark, et al., Charles Deas and 1840s America (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009), 91. According to NAD records, Deas was living in St. Louis in 1847, but was working at New York University in 1848. In 1849, Deas’ address in Flushing, New York. National Academy of Design Exhibition Record, vol. 1, 116.

175 Originally awarded to G. F. Everson, the painting was quickly sold to Marshall O. Roberts, the industrialist and AAU manager, known for collecting westward expansion imagery.
landscape, and gazes over his right shoulder with a nervous expression, as if being followed. A familiar portent of doom, a vulture, hovers in the distance, over his horse’s head. The steed, seeming to buckle under the weight of the rider, turns its head downward, with a mournful, beaten-down look, as if it can bear the load no longer. This is not a celebratory image, and Deas’ message may have not been heroic, but a dark commentary on the troubled trappers he encountered on his travels.176

The Long Jakes character emerged at the moment when satire was gaining in popularity and conveyed a sense of the fantastic tales told in the Spirit. During the 1830s and 1840s, writers of the “Southern School” of literature, such as Thomas Bangs Thorpe, Charles F. Noland, Johnson Jones Hooper, and Henry Hastings Sibley, satirized Southern squatter types for both narrative and comic effect. Their quasi-mythic anti-heroes amused all classes of readership across the nation. Like Thomas Bangs Thorpe’s half-satirical “Big Bear of Arkansas,” Long Jakes was larger than life, so large, in fact, he is shown literally breaking his steed’s back.177 Charles Lanman suggested the humorous intent in his review of Long Jakes in June 1846. Deas relayed to Lanman that Jakes was “a literal portrait of a celebrated character of the Rocky Mountains.” This ‘celebrated character’ may have been one Jake Long, who, according to the Whig papers, killed his aggressors, in typical, over-the-top, “Big Bear” style.178 Deas’ representation was a mix of tragedy

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176Deas originally named him Jacques, which was changed to Jakes when the AAU purchased it in September 1844, see Joan Carpenter Troccoli, “Long Jakes: Some Currents in the Mountain Air,” in Clark, Deas and 1840s America, 149.

177Thorpe’s “Big Bear of Arkansas” first appeared in the SOTT 11, no. 4 (March 27, 1841), 43. It was reprinted in William T. Porter, ed., The Big Bear of Arkansas and Other Sketches (Philadelphia: T. B. Peterson, 1843), 13-31. Carol Clark discusses this humor aspect of Long Jakes in her recently published book Charles Deas and 1840s America (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009), 98.

178See “Jack Long; or Lynch-Law and Vengeance,” The American Review.
and dark humor, with a hint of the heroic, all of which were popular among the sportsmen readers.

The horseman in *Long Jakes* recalls the equestrian portraits and genre scenes of European tradition. The steed’s pose closely resembles the white horse in John Trumbull’s portrait of George Washington (1790) then hanging in New York City Hall, a celebrated and publically accessible picture Deas would have known. However, as the art historian Elizabeth Johns suggests, *Long Jakes* may have been read as an ambiguous figure when it was first exhibited; romantically heroic, he displays apparent civilized origins, but has chosen the savage life of a free trapper. *Long Jakes* evokes independence, danger, and what Washington Irving referred to as “the savage chivalry of the mountains.”

Within a short time after the painting’s completion, reproductions of the work emerged presenting a less questionable figure. The cleaned-up version more clearly expressed the figure’s military heritage. The rider’s upright posture and composure conveyed leadership and civilized order, allowing the image to be deemed an acceptable

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179Dawn Glanz and other scholars have suggested a specific precedent, *Napoleon Crossing the Alps* by David (1801), which was well-known in the United States. Glanz, 172, notes that this painting exhibited annually from 1822 to 1829 at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, and that a copy by Charles B. Lawrence was exhibited in 1831. Delaroche’s *Napoleon Crossing the Bernard Pass* may have also inspired Deas’ composition, but there is no evidence he knew of this image. Other possibilities are the bowing horse in Bodmer’s *Travellers Meeting the Minnetarees at Ft. Clark* (1842, aquatint), which Deas may have seen at Forts Crawford or Snelling; and prints after Anthony Van Dyck’s *Charles I* (1635, Louvre), where the groomsmen also casts a mysterious glance off canvas; also see “Deas,” *Godey’s*; and Julius S. Held, “Rembrandt’s ‘Polish’ Rider,” *The Art Bulletin* 26, no. 4 (December 1944): 246-265.

and morally-uplifting narrative. While the mysterious circumstances of the horseman in the original version led to viewer uncertainty, the widespread view of the revised, mass-produced *Long Jakes* was for the most part positive. Refined for popular consumption, the figure revealed “traits of former gentleness and refinement in his countenance,” and struck many as “purely American.”

Henry Herbert (writing under his own name) characterized the painted *Long Jakes* figure as exuding heroic masculinity. The author of romance stories set in medieval Europe, Herbert saw in the figure an air of knighthood and aristocratic nobility, which was less than certain in the oil painting. Cultural historian Daniel Justin Herman interprets Herbert’s praise of *Long Jakes* as a critique of modern civilization; by pointing to the heroically composed, semi-savage trapper as a symbol of independence, with a “sense of individual will,” Herbert was referring to a quality that he believed modern man lacked.

In contrast to Herbert’s romantic interpretation, Deas’ *Long Jakes* also embodied the isolated and precarious life of the trapper. The figure’s appeal may also have been due to the fact that the form of free trapping that hunters like *Long Jakes* engaged in took place in the far West and Southwest – out of sight, and out of mind of the urban sportsman.

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184 Herman, 176.
The year after *Long Jakes*, Deas painted what is believed to be its companion piece titled *Indian Guide* (1845, unlocated). According to a review, the painting depicted a mounted horseman in a composition not unlike Long Jakes. Deas presumably saw this figure as equivalent to the *Long Jakes* character, as an independent, solitary hunter, living outside the strictures of polite society. What is most striking about Deas’ work was his characterization of the complex and evolving tensions between culture and wilderness, an issue embodied in his portrayal of other hunters. His sketch titled *The Hunter* (1845), showing a rugged man on horseback, with dead birds hanging from his rifle, comes as close as Deas would to representing a sportsman; yet the figure is still a loner, moving away from modernity (fig. A45). Deas frequently equated his white hunters with their Native brethren (as in *Trapper and His Family* (1845, Rokeby Collection, Metropolitan Museum of Art) and *Voyageurs* (1846, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston), where they are literally in the same boat, working together to get furs to market). These white hunters have left “civilization” and its laws behind, to fully embrace Native culture, and thus stand in direct contrast to the “true sportsman.”

*Long Jakes* was only one of Deas’ paintings to have a comic slant. During his two years of study at the NAD, Deas exhibited his first painting of note, *Turkey Shoot* (ca. 1838, fig. A46), which was based on a humorous episode in Cooper’s *The Pioneers*. The scene shows a gathering of males attempting to win the proceeds held by Brom, the

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185Mentioned in Clark, “Charles Deas,” 62 and 64; the painting was reviewed in Tuckerman, “Our Artists,” 253; and *Broadway Journal*, April 11, 1845, 254.

186Rutherfurd Stuyvesant, a “genuine Knickerbocker,” purchased the work, which brought Deas attention and more commissions from the New York elite. *Turkey Shoot* remained in that family, and was in collection of Alan R. Stuyvesant as late as 1937. It was purchased by the VMFA in 1985, as part of the Paul Mellon Collection. Other Turkey Shoot scenes based on the narrative in Chapter 17 of *The Pioneers* include those by William Walcutt (1850, Smithsonian American Art Museum), Tompkins H. Matteson (1857, Cooperstown Museum), and J. W. Ehninger (1879, MFA Boston).
gangly, brightly-dressed black man, who supplied the turkeys for the “sport,” and attempts to distract the shooter. Though Leatherstocking is present in Cooper’s narrative of the event, no one resembling the hero appears in Deas’ composition. The scene is an example of business and competition, as Carol Clark suggests in her biography, but like Deas’ other works, it is also a combination of sport and gambling. Deas’ next paintings, The Devil and Tom Walker (1838, from Irving’s 1824 Faustian tale) and Walking the Chalk (1838, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston), in which a group of regulars in a saloon place bets on their favorite barfly walking a straight line, were also intended as satire, pointing out humanity’s foibles.187 When on exhibit at the NAD 1839 annual exhibition, The Devil and Tom Walker was described as being “indicative of much talent, and some vulgarity, blended with not a little of the comic and ludicrous.”188 Another early painting, Hudibras and the Bear-Baiters (ca. 1839, unlocated), based on the seventeenth-century poem by Samuel Butler, depicts a humorous parody on upper-class hypocrites, with the subtext of cruel sport (where religious men enjoy dogs attacking a chained bear).189 Deas’ run of socially-critical, darkly humorous works would continue during his western period, most notably in Long Jakes and the strangely composed, The Death Struggle (1845, Shelburne Museum), both of which deal with trappers whose occupation will be their undoing.

187The story “The Devil and Tom Walker” comes from Washington Irving’s Tales of a Traveller (Philadelphia, 1824), and is a moral on greed. His reliance on Irving bears further consideration in terms of the writer’s western tales and his negative opinion of frontier whites.

188“National Academy of Design,” New-York Spectator, June 20, 1839. Compositionally, the painting (reproduced in McElroy’s Facing History, 1990), looks striking similar to Death Struggle, including the diagonals, with figures falling off into space.

189Butler’s poem was composed in three parts, from 1662 to 1678. See Clark, Charles Deas and 1840s American, 174-175. Clark reads most of Deas’ works, including Long Jakes, Death Struggle and Voyageurs, as stories of economic competition, and believes they may have been interpreted as humorist critiques. See ibid., 98.
Within Charles Lanman’s review of *Long Jakes*, he went on to describe a pair of paintings in Deas’ studio which humorously depicted frontier hunting for sporting initiates. The first represented “a species of American Cockney, who has made up his mind to visit the Rocky Mountains.” Lanman and other “true sportsmen” used the term “cockney” to lambast the amateur sportsman as an incompetent fool; described in these terms, this novice hunter is presented as laughable, but determined to visit the Rocky Mountains with his entourage of “a bob-tailed, saucy-looking pony,” a “jolly servant to be his right-hand man,” and a few covered wagons, among other paraphernalia. In the second painting, which Lanman assumes is a companion piece, the hunter appears transformed by “exposure and hardships,” appearing “comically dressed with nothing but a cap, a calico shirt, and a pair of buckskin pantaloons.” Lanman concludes by noting that “these pictures completely epitomize a personal revolution which is constantly taking place on the frontiers.”¹⁹⁰ Lanman, a novice landscape painter who also considered himself a “true sportsman,” recognized the humor in both images, as well as the unlikely transformation they implied.

**Cole and the Hunter**

Thomas Cole also knew the power of the frontier and the backwoodsman in popular culture. Unlike Deas, Cole was not generally known to be a sportsman, though he seems to have identified with the principles of “true sportsmanship” as laid out by Izaak Walton, who wrote the bible of fishing, *The Complete Angler* (1653), which was included

¹⁹⁰Charles Lanman, *Summer in the Wilderness* (New York: D. Appleton & Co, 1847), 16-17. Lanman notes Deas’ annual visits to various Prairie tribes; see ibid., 15. Lanman wrote several essays for the *Spirit* stressing a protectionist sporting ethic.
in Cole’s library. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, Cole had shown a personal interest in the stories of Boone and Leatherstocking early in his career, and had a lifelong fascination with the theme of hunting. Like Deas, Cole was close to other artist-sportsmen like Henry Inman, William Dunlap, William Sidney Mount and Charles Lanman. Though it is uncertain whether Cole was a “true sportsman” in the recreational shooting sense, the artist nevertheless identified with the conservationist mindset and sporting culture. He seems to have perceived Boone and Leatherstocking in the same vein as he saw Native Americans: as Nature’s noblemen. He recognized the popularity of the characters, and produced a number of images in which they appear. At times it was hard to differentiate in his images between the two men; when Cole’s homage to Boone (ca. 1826, fig. A33) was first exhibited, it was given the title Leatherjacket. The protagonist is presented as a lone, fierce guardian, appearing something between a biblical-like prophet and a backwoods squatter.

Cole came to backwoods hunter subjects from a newcomer’s vantage. He was raised in a middle-to-upper class English home, with all of the cultured training expected of a well-to-do family. Throughout his life, he aspired to upper-class, genteel society, and, at one point, expressed his disgust at being forced to work alongside common

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191 Cole owned a fishing outfit, as well as a copy of Izaac Walton’s Complete Angler, or, the Contemplative Man’s Recreation, the fishing bible for the true sportsman. See Cole MSS, Box 5, Folder 3, 7, 9.


laborers at print works. As Alan Wallach has demonstrated, Cole most likely saw himself (and aspired to be seen by others) as an American aristocrat. Art historian Angela Miller has similarly argued that Cole was “Whiggish” and closely allied with social conservatives, many of whom were gentlemen-sportsmen. Cole had servants, and several of his journal notes and letters reveal him to have had a classist mentality; he seemed to have looked down on those lower on the social ladder. In this respect, he was not unlike his early patrons, among them Philip Hone, George Featherstonhaugh, the Van Rensselaer family, and Robert Gilmor.

Though he lived for several years in rural Ohio after arriving in the States, Cole’s first biographer, Louis Legrand Noble, wrote that Cole “could not himself bear to inflict, nor see others inflict pain upon the meanest animal; and hence he could never be taught to love the sports of the huntsman or the angler.” This statement is perplexing, and suggests revisionist mythmaking on Noble’s part, as Cole was almost certainly an angler. Whether or not he was personally averse to other forms of hunting, Cole had no qualms about placing hunting figures in his scenes to connote pre-civilized nature, or, in other instances, an environment depleted of natural beauty.

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196 Noble, 58. Ibid., 146, tells the story of Cole and his servant Martin attempting to shoot a family staghound for poaching sheep. Noble has Cole handing a pistol to his servant to shoot the dog.
Cole had distinctly negative views of the rural poor. Describing an encounter with a family of squatters during an 1828 excursion into the White Mountains, he noted coming toward “a bark-covered hut, in the midst of burnt trees, with a swarm of unwashed, uncombed, but healthy-looking children, who ran out to stare with amazement.” Cole’s language here sounds similar to, but not quite as pejorative as his patron George Featherstonhaugh’s contemporaneous descriptions of frontier squatters – as “long-legged and dirty,” and their homes as “squalid.” Cole’s “kindred spirit” William Cullen Bryant expressed similar unease with the state of rural poor. In 1832, during a trip to Illinois, Bryant wrote home of seeing: “A fat dusky woman barefoot with six children as dirty as pigs and shaggy as bears. She was lousing one of them.” The disgust felt by cultured Americans like Cole, Bryant and Featherstonhaugh toward those less fortunate should be kept in mind in regard to their art and attitudes toward hunting.

Cole was encouraged to include hunters and game animals in his landscapes by one of his first patrons, Baltimore millionaire Robert Gilmor (1774-1848). Gilmor asked Cole to add “some known subject from Cooper’s novels to enliven the landscape...” or put in “deer or cattle drinking.” In another letter, Gilmor thought the inclusion of an “Indian Hunter” with rifle would “assist the idea of solitude.” Exactly one year later, Gilmor expressly wished that Cole had added to his painting *Sunrise in the Catskills*

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197 Noble, 67. Another negative comment on rural poor is found in Cole’s journal, dated October 8, 1826 (Cole MSS, NYSL, Albany), and reprinted in Noble, 42-43.

198 Featherstonhaugh’s travel writings are not wanting for harsh critiques on America’s poor settlers, which he sarcastically terms the “Sovereign People.” See his *Excursion through The Slave States* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1844), viii, 39, 62, 64-65, 68, 78, 81 & 100.

(1826, National Gallery of Art) “a hunter with his rifle aiming at a deer… (and) another
deer in a contrasting attitude would have been of most use” to contrast with “the gloom”
of the scene. 200 This constant prodding by such an influential figure in Cole’s career
undoubtedly had an effect on the artist’s choice of subjects. In The Hunter’s Return
(1845), Cole finally returned to the subject of the white hunter.

Blood-Brothers of the Hunt

In the Spring of 1844, at the AAU exhibition hall under Long Jakes’ hawk-like
eye, AAU board member George Washington Austen commissioned Cole to paint a
landscape/hunting genre scene. 201 Cole’s The Hunter’s Return (1845, fig. A47) features
the idyllic landscape and Arcadian visual effects that Cole adopted from European
Baroque masters Claude Lorrain (1600-1682) and Gaspard Dughet Poussin (1613-1675).
From these artists he frequently borrowed conventions to stress the notion of unspoiled
nature as Edenic paradise. Cole divided the canvas roughly in two, with a Claudian half
representing the pastoral, cultivated, and “civilized” world, and the other half signifying
untamed, “savage,” sublime nature, inspired in part from the example of another great
seventeenth-century master, Salvator Rosa (1615-1673). 202 On one hand, Cole’s hunting

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200 Letter from Gilmor to Cole, August 1, 1826, reprinted in Studies on Thomas Cole (1967), 44;
Gilmor to Cole, December 13, 1826. Reprinted in ibid., 44. Cole seems to have followed this advice for A
Solitary Lake in New Hampshire (1830, Olana Collection), featuring a Native American resting on a rifle;
Gilmor to Cole, December 13, 1827, reprinted in ibid., 56.

201 Cole referred to him as “a Mr. Austen,” in a letter to his wife in reference to the commission,
suggesting the two had just met. See Letter from Thomas Cole to Maria Cole, New York, May 7, 1844,
Cole MSS, NYSL, Albany.

202 His patron Robert Gilmor pointed out to Cole his similarity to Salvador in a letter dated
December 13, 1827: “Your style...is that of Salvator Rosa, and no inferior imitation of his excellence.”
(1967), 55; on the “imitation” Salvator in Gilmor’s collection, see Parry, The Art of Thomas Cole, 63. For
Cole’s following of Salvador’s style, see Studies on Thomas Cole, 36, 43 & 77. On December 12, 1829,
Cole writes of the preeminence of Claude, Gaspard Poussin and Salvator; Cole repeats this praise in letter
to Gilmor, London, March 1, 1830, reprinted in Studies on Thomas Cole, 69. However, years later, writing
scene tells a story of the possibilities of settlers living the agrarian dream, tilling the soil and hunting game. On the other hand, the picture directly addresses the social divisions inherent in the hunt, and the issue of the depletion of natural resources.  

One of the few genre pictures in which Cole presented more than two figures, *The Hunter’s Return* is an important work in the artist’s oeuvre, celebrating an endangered lifestyle in New York State. The setting is a small farmstead in the midst of forest. Two male figures emerge from the woods carrying a slain deer on a pole. The men follow an unmarked path strewn with fallen trees, toward a log cabin home and a family gathered to welcome them. Cole’s pencil studies for the painting include one sketch showing two muscular figures in hunting garb, suggesting the artist had always intended to represent two hunters, which makes the single “hunter” of the title somewhat problematic. The contrast in the two hunters’ apparel is telling: the leading, bearded man in vest, blue trousers and white shirt, waves his wide brim hat (with single feather), while the second man is decked out in buckskin and fringe, and armed with tomahawk.

from Florence, Italy in 1832, Cole commented disparagingly of Salvator’s pictures there, which “disappointed” him. See Noble, 125.


204 Angela Miller describes *The Hunter’s Return* as a “nostalgic and retrospective visions of a lost world.” See Miller, *Empire of the Eye*, 52.

205 This pencil on paper sketch, titled *A Log Cabin, Huntsmen Carrying a Deer, and a Man Holding His Hat* (ca. 1845, 10 6/16 x 14 13/16 in.) is at the Detroit Institute of Art, and is illustrated in Parry, “Thomas Cole’s *The Hunter’s Return,*” 9. Other preparatory sketches for *Hunter’s Return* are found at the Amon Carter Museum in Fort Worth.
Based on the number of rifles, and the poled deer, it is obvious that both men have been hunting together.\textsuperscript{206}

As explained above, the story of the heroic frontiersman had long been popular, but was on a crest of popularity with the dual release in 1844 of Boone’s autobiography and the story of Kit Carson, a contemporary frontiersman who had served as guide for the Frémont expeditions (1842-1846).\textsuperscript{207} Cole’s buckskin-clad figure in \textit{The Hunter’s Return} may have brought to mind such heroic hunters. It would have also reminded “true sportsmen” of deer hunting and the threat to wild habitat due to settlement.

Indeed, \textit{The Hunter’s Return} must also be seen in light of the contemporaneous push by sporting clubs to protect game animals from market hunting and unrestricted trapping. See-sawing of responsibility for game law enforcement between the county level and the State legislature was common in most states during this period, and it ultimately fell to groups like the NYSC and the Massachusetts Club to push for consistent laws and provide funding for detectives and enforcement. Conservationist organizations like these were founded on the understanding that it was the responsibility of “true sportsmen” to help enforce established game laws. These metropolitan sporting clubs,

\textsuperscript{206}Parry, \textit{Hunter’s Return}, 15. Cole had always intended two hunters for the scene, as he recorded in his list of possible subjects: “The Hunter’s Return…(with) some men carrying a deer on a pole.” See Howard S. Merritt, “Appendix II: Thomas Cole’s List, ‘Subjects for Pictures’,,” \textit{The Baltimore Museum of Art Annual II; Studies on Thomas Cole, An American Romanticist} (Baltimore, 1967), no.78, p.90. Cole also lists, around 1828, a painting titled \textit{Deer Hunt}, painted on commission. See ibid., 85. Parry suggests Cole personally identified with the bearded hunter in the scene, given the fact that Cole placed his monograph below the figure’s feet, on the fallen tree. I would suggest, rather, that Cole put his monograph there because he identified with the fallen tree. Henry Tuckerman wrote that the setting was “a spur of the White Hills” [or Mountains].

however, were made up of business leaders, lawyers and politicians, who tended to fear and oppose backwoods peoples’ rights to vote, or to use the country’s natural resources. In response, smaller communities came to see metropolitan sportsmen as elitist and undemocratic. The majority of Americans could not afford to be recreational sportsmen, and any concern on their part for game conservation was overshadowed by a need to feed their families and protect their crops and livestock. As Richard Slotkin has shown, the “Metropolis” was presented in popular culture as the antithesis of the “Frontier,” and this duality, was felt by its respective inhabitants.\textsuperscript{208} Sustenance hunters, like the men Cole presented in \textit{Hunter’s Return}, tended therefore to disregard the game laws, which they perceived as nonsensical and/or established by out-of-touch, city-dwelling government officials. Given his friendship with sportsman-artists like Charles Lanman, a frequent contributor to the \textit{Spirit}, and William Sidney Mount, who, in several images, dealt with the dispute between sportsmen and other hunters, Cole would have been aware of the game laws and the debate over them.

Cole presents the wilderness in \textit{The Hunter’s Return} as compromised, with tree stumps – his ubiquitous signifier for the destruction of nature by man – in the foreground, and with downed trees and branches crowding our visual access into the scene. Such symbolic markers remind the viewer of the labor involved in claiming the hunting ground, but given Cole’s past, they also signify the destruction of nature.\textsuperscript{209} Dawn Glanz, in her seminal iconographical study on western art, interpreted \textit{The Hunter’s Return} as

\textsuperscript{208}Slotkin, \textit{The Fatal Environment}, 121-126, 128, 140.

\textsuperscript{209}For a study on this specific iconographical trope, see Nicolai Cikovsky, Jr., “‘The Ravages of the Axe’: The Meaning of the Tree Stump in Nineteenth-Century American Art,” \textit{The Art Bulletin} 61, no. 4 (December 1979): 611-626.
representing Cole’s misgivings towards expansion and the exploitation of natural resources that resulted from rapid development. She interpreted the fallen trees, stumps, and slain deer as connoting the “precarious state” of nature, “vulnerable to man’s usage.”  

Cole had several possible motives for this particular portrayal of the habitat, but the destruction of the primeval forest was a major concern for him, and is repeatedly expressed in his letters, poems and pictures. In his often-quoted *Essay on American Scenery* (1835), Cole expressed that, as God’s “undefiled work,” America’s wild nature was one of the country’s most impressive features, and distinguished the New World from the denuded landscape of Europe. In America, Cole wrote, “Nature is still predominant” and its associations are those “of God the creator.” He believed that industrial progress would endanger unspoiled forests and game animals, but felt that through the teaching of taste for landscape art, it might be possible to elevate the sensibilities of those who threatened the environment, and thus alleviate its misuse.

The recently hewn logs and fallen trees blanketing the foreground in *The Hunter’s Return* suggest Cole in part expressed his concerns about destruction of the forest habitat, what he called “the ravages of the axe.”

By 1845 Cole had been contemplating the theme of the “returning hunter” as well as forested and humble settings for over a decade; he described both ideas in his

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\(^{210}\) Glanz, 75. See also Cikovsky, Jr., “The Ravages of the Axe.”


notebook around 1832, likely recorded on his Grand Tour of Europe.\textsuperscript{213} Cole expressed notions of hunting in isolation and beyond game laws in an unpublished poem titled “Spirits of the Wilderness: A Poem in Twelve Parts” (ca. 1834-1837), in which the main character tries to escape civilization for his own sanity, but after meeting a sustenance hunter who is forced to the woods for survival, he returns to civilization.\textsuperscript{214}

Cole was also exposed to notions of game conservation through the writings of William Cullen Bryant (1794-1878), president of the AAU at the same time that Austen, the AAU treasurer, commissioned Cole’s painting. Bryant had written several poems on the subject of hunting. In each, Bryant explored the psychological ramifications of hunting, both for the hunter and for the hunted.\textsuperscript{215} Published the same year that Cole began \textit{The Hunter’s Return}, Bryant’s “White-Footed Deer” may provide an additional subtext to the painting. It tells the story of a deer that is held sacred by Indians, but is shot by a white boy after his mother has explicitly warned him against it, thus bringing death to the backwoods family in the form of an Indian attack.\textsuperscript{216} Bryant’s poem warns against hunting does and fawns, and argues the need to preserve nature and recognize its sacredness. The white-footed deer carried on the pole in Cole’s painting would have

\textsuperscript{213}Parry, \textit{The Hunter’s Return}, 4-5.

\textsuperscript{214}He concluded the poem in 1837. See Cole MSS, Box 7, Folders 3-5, NYSL, Albany.

\textsuperscript{215}Some of the more famous of these were “To a Water Fowl” (1815), “Hunter’s Serenade” (1828), “Hunter’s Vision” (1835), “Hunter of the Prairies” (1836), and “White-Footed Deer” (1844). As noted above, artist William Sidney Mount had planned on painting a work after Bryant’s “To a Water Fowl,” possibly as a companion piece to “Woodsman Spare that Tree,” a conservationist-theme poem by the editor and art reviewer George P. Morris. See Frankenstein, \textit{Mount} (1975), 147, 174, 198, 240, 245 & 315.

\textsuperscript{216}William C. Bryant, \textit{The White-Footed Deer and Other Poems} (New York, 1844).
reminded the American reader of this popular story, and would reinforce his portrayal of the depletion of nature elsewhere in the picture.217

When painting Hunter’s Return, Cole was a resident of Catskill (since 1836, and a regular visitor since the mid-1820s), situated on the Hudson River, in Greene County, New York. At the time, Greene County was the epicenter for tanneries and curriers, and its factories supplied the major American cities with large amounts of treated hide. The county was also noted at the time for its shrinking deer population.218 Though Cole settled in the area for its rural charm, and because his wife’s family owned property there, the industrial effects of the tanning operations were inescapable with pungent smells and the marketing of deer, both of which were anathema to Cole. In this light, the two deer fleeing in Cole’s earlier painting Lake with Dead Trees (1825, fig. A48) may be seen as the artist’s comment on the connection between declining deer numbers around Catskill and the overuse of hemlock trees for the tanning industry. Cole, his friends, and wealthy patrons all recognized the Catskills, and the White Mountains (which Cole celebrated in several hunting pictures and in his poetry), as ideal for sport hunting, but they also associated the region with the rapid decline in deer and other wildlife.219

217For Cole and Bryant’s artistic kinship and ideology, see Charles L. Sanford, “The Concept of the Sublime in the Works of Thomas Cole and William Cullen Bryant,” American Literature 28:4 (January 1957):434–448; and Donald A. Ringe, “Kindred Spirits: Bryant and Cole,” American Quarterly 6:3 (Autumn 1954): 233–244. Also see James T. Callow, Kindred Spirits: Knickerbocker Writers and American Artists, 1807–1855 (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1967) for a thorough study on this interaction. Cole may have been influenced by another Knickerbocker poet, Charles Fenno Hoffman, whose writings were known to Cole, and who was an avid sportsman. See Parry, Cole, 165 & 324.

218“Multiple News Items,” New-York Spectator (February 20, 1834), col. E; “Wild Scenes in the Forest and Prairie (book review),” The Albion 1, no. 8 (February 23, 1839), 60.

219See Alf Evers, The Catskills, from Wilderness to Woodstock (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1972), 375.
Of course, settler families such as featured in *Hunter’s Return* were a real phenomenon at the time, and beyond any conservationist intentions, Cole’s painting may be read as a Jeffersonian emblem, commending those families on their struggles and perseverance, with little dependence on the staples of modernity. In this sense the painting stands as a symbol of American values, evoking feelings of familial strength. Cole painted *Hunter’s Return* specifically for the managers of the AAU, who, according to scholar Rachel Klein, “wanted to restore morality to class relations…by educating the people’s taste,” and who distributed paintings that embodied “rural harmony,” and would “evoke sentiments that could unite America’s male citizens.”220 The AAU could have read Cole’s figures as men of different social standing coming together for a common goal, each helping to carry the load. Yet, for all of its implied reference to Jeffersonian yeomen, the returning figures in *Hunter’s Return* also could have been interpreted as squatters. Cole’s figures represent both fur-trapping and squatting, and a problem for sportsmen who were concerned about declining game populations.221

**Turning Trapper into “True Sportsman”**

Contemporary with Deas’ and Cole’s hunting and trapper imagery, the artist-sportsman William Ranney became celebrated for portrayals of lone, and seemingly lost frontiersmen. Ranney’s characterizations of backwoods trappers are important to examine since they can tell us much about the perception the “true sportsman’s” antithesis. As

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221A recent study of the squatter as art subject in mid-century is Gail E. Husch, “Poor White Folks and Western Squatters: James Henry Beard’s Images of Emigration,” *American Art* 7, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 15-39. Negative reports by travel writers at the time on white trappers are significant. See Glanz, 29. Austen also bought Deas’ *The Death Struggle* around the time he paid for Cole’s *Hunter’s Return*. 
with Deas’ *Long Jakes*, an air of finality envelopes Ranney’s lone hunter scenes. He seems to have been suggesting the end of the road for this type of hunter.

Ranney’s art, perhaps more than any other of the time, made the frontier trapper appealing to Eastern eyes and tastes. Raised in the South and seasoned in the Texan fight for independence, Ranney had an intimate perspective on the backwoods hunter and he dedicated much of the 1840’s to depicting sportsmen and trappers, and, eventually, an amalgamation of the two. Ranney essentially imbued his trappers with features of “true sportsmen,” complete with dogs and gentleman-like camaraderie. It essentially made his trappers more palatable to Americans, and more similar to the wealthy art patron.

Ranney painted two versions (with slight variation) in 1849 of Boone, his guide John Finley, and his team of scouts taking in their first view of Kentucky (fig. A49). Ranney’s pictures, like the Boone biographies that inspired them, had a dual mission: to present Boone as a model American, and to link the middle-class viewer to the territorial conquest of Manifest Destiny. In his paintings Ranney chose to celebrate Boone as one of many youthful participants who led that conquest. Though guns abound in the scene, the conquest of the wild space is won simply by the party’s viewing it, and hunting is only implied. Ranney essentially turned Boone into a thoughtful, patient trailblazer.

In contrast, Ranney’s trapper images from the early 1850s are usually more foreboding – echoing the Deas model. In the few examples that survive, a lone, rugged and weather-beaten figure often turns his head, and his wary gaze, toward some unknown, approaching danger (fig. A51). The trapper’s horse is often loaded with pelts, hides, and equipment. Another related painting includes tiny figures with feathered

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222Glanz, 16-17.
headdresses barely visible on the horizon, and presumably closing in on the hunter. As
Barsness has noted, such frontier melodramas were not a true reflection of trapping
culture at mid century, where Indians of the Plains often assisted white hunters at the
forts. Sensationalized visions nevertheless persisted and played upon urban fears of
frontier violence. Although not relying on guns for fur trapping, trappers always carried
firearms for protection, to obtain food, and to “bag” larger game animals. These examples
of the pursued fur trapper signal the end of the era of the mountain man and some of the
challenges of controlling the “newly-acquired” lands. The unease that Ranney
emphasized through these trappers’ expressions is telling (figs. A50 & A51). While his
Boone figure claims the land without resistance, Ranney’s lone trappers remind the
viewer that occupation is always more difficult than acquisition.224

Given his western experience, Ranney would have had particular insight into the
excesses of trapping, and the differences between military sportsmen and other hunters.
Meanwhile his literary friends at the Spirit were writing about these same phenomena.
Porter’s sporting periodical contained many stories that compared the hunting in the West
to that “daily witnessed at all the butcheries belonging to New Orleans.” The backwoods
trapper, in the eyes of the Spirit’s wealthy readership, was a problematic bumpkin,
unappreciative of the need for sportsmanlike hunting.225

223Barsness, 10.

224William Truettner, “Ideology and Image,” in The West as America, 42; Gruber, “Ranney’s The
Trapper’s Last Shot,” 98, suggests that Ranney’s The Trapper’s Last Shot was inspired by Long Jakes,
which was accessible to the public through W. G. Jackman’s engraving, for the New York Illustrated
Magazine of Literature and Art 2 (1846).

225Southern hunting methods are described negatively in Audubon, “The Snipe,” in Instructions to
Young Sportsmen, edited by William T. Porter (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1846), 202; “Tale First of
Creole Hunter,” SOTT 12, no.37 (November 12, 1842), 434; and John S. Robb, Streaks of Squatter Life.
Coinciding with his portrayals in the 1850s of “true sportsmanship” (discussed in Chapter One), however, some of Ranney’s market trappers began to take on characteristics of the former, in what resemble sportsmen’s ‘After the Hunt’ scenes. Some of these include The Scouting Party (1851, Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, Madrid), The Trappers (1856, Joslyn Art Museum) and The Pipe of Friendship (1857, fig. A52). In such examples, the trappers are not actually shown taking game, but instead are bonding. Though once pursued like in the Long Jakes model, by the late 1850s, Ranney’s trappers are more commonly shown relaxing like sportsmen, with well-behaved dogs, and sharing a smoke and socializing. Ranney essentially worked to turn trappers into “true sportsmen.” The move from lone, doomed trappers to scenes depicting several trappers relaxing together coincided with Ranney’s onset of tuberculosis and his being more confined to the home; though such images brought a pacified frontier into East Coast homes and picture galleries, a frontier that represented a resource to many of Ranney’s potential patrons, they also reveal a desire for the camaraderie that Ranney was missing at home.

**Tait’s Trappers**

Tait’s trappers, like Ranney’s, revealed the shifting status of the non-sportsman hunter. In his painting Reality (1850), Tait showed a kilted figure appearing anxious after killing a deer, modeled after Landseer’s poacher scenes of 1831. The trappers he painted once he had settled in America were even more heroic than Ranney’s, betraying his working class English perspective. Tait was not educated in the classics, nor brought up with the ways of the “true sportsman,” as understood by Herbert, Doughty and

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*and Far-West Scenes* (Philadelphia: T. B. Peterson and Brothers, [1857]), viii-xi; first published in 1843, Robb’s collection of stories are in the same vein as Thorpe and other Spirit contributors.
Whitehead. Because of his agricultural upbringing and working class background, Tait was restricted during his early manhood in England from the hunting of large animals, fowl and rodents. Biographer Warder Cadbury wrote that Tait would have had few opportunities to hunt, and would have risked “severe punishment” as a trespasser or poacher.\footnote{Cadbury/Marsh, 23. Born in a suburb of Liverpool, the young Tait was sent north to work on his aunt’s tenant farm at Rake’s Head in Hest Bank (on the shore of Morecambe Bay, near the northwestern port city of Lancaster). Around 1830, he was sent to learn a trade in Manchester, the same town from which Herbert [Forester] had emigrated. On Tait’s lack of formal education, see ibid., 69.}

Poachers were ubiquitous among British rural society during Tait’s upbringing, and, as described by P. B. Munsche, due to their animosity toward landlords, were often considered heroes by the locals.\footnote{P. B. Munsche, \textit{Gentlemen and Poachers: The English Game Laws, 1671-1831} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 148.} In such an environment, Tait would have formed a harsh view of game preservation, which denied farmers and merchants any hunting privileges, and he would have gained empathy for the struggling backwoods hunter. Munsche described this philosophy:

Poaching offered a way out…which was condoned not only by their peers but by the farmers as well, the latter having their own grievances against the game preserving gentry. It was, in short, pride as well as necessity which turned men into poachers.\footnote{Ibid, 149.}

Tait entered the United States in 1850 when its own struggle over game and property rights was developing. Although Tait, unlike his role model Landseer, had no business connection to royalty and gentry, he assured that his art would be sought in all sections of American society. He would go on to paint every variety of the act and actor: sportsmen and market-men, poachers and otherwise. Tait produced approximately eleven

\footnote{226Cadbury/Marsh, 23. Born in a suburb of Liverpool, the young Tait was sent north to work on his aunt’s tenant farm at Rake’s Head in Hest Bank (on the shore of Morecambe Bay, near the northwestern port city of Lancaster). Around 1830, he was sent to learn a trade in Manchester, the same town from which Herbert [Forester] had emigrated. On Tait’s lack of formal education, see ibid., 69.}


\footnote{228Ibid, 149.}
original trapper paintings, representing a very small percentage of his total output of over one thousand works. The majority of his trapper scenes were produced in the few years after his arrival to New York, and are the romantic, heroic statements of a new immigrant to the land of the free. *Trapper at Bay – Alarm* (1851), *Trappers Following the Trail – at Fault* (1852, Denver Art Museum), *One Rubbed Out* (1852, Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha), *Trapper Looking Out* (1852, Private), *Trapper Retreating Over River* (1852, Yale University Art Gallery), and *Ready to Fire* (ca. 1852, fig. A53) feature basically the same buckskin-attired and bearded character(s), mainly modeled upon Tait’s own likeness, represented in center of the canvas, and ever-watchful of the horizon. Sometimes we see the threat – non-descript Indian headdresses – but more often, we are left to imagine his peril. They all tend to evoke a nervous tension, where the hero is pursued by some threat, much as in Ranney’s scenes, which Tait knew well and copied thoroughly. It is assumed by many scholars that Tait borrowed actual western items from Ranney when composing these scenes. Since Tait never travelled farther West than Chicago, he was forced to copy elements from nearby sources, public art collections and libraries, and from other artists, such as Ranney.229

Even as Tait worked on American subject matter, he repeatedly recalled British works, especially those by Landseer, and Richard Ansdell (1815-1885), who also specialized in scenes of hunters representing a broad social spectrum.230 Tait so routinely

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229 Cadbury/Marsh, 103.

230 Landseer’s group of poaching images of the early thirties point to the widespread occurrence of poaching in England at the time. His were not nostalgic images, as is commonly held, but rather timely, considering the continuing poacher wars and the Labourer’s Revolt of 1830. See Munsche, 155. Even with the passage of the England’s Game Reform Act of 1831, which included hunting rights to those who could afford licenses, poaching and the illegal selling of game did not slow.
borrowed from such compositions that he was frequently accused of plagiarism.\footnote{A descendent claimed Tait assisted Catlin on his Indian gallery in London. In addition to Catlin’s work, Tait also borrowed compositions from Ansdell; see Cadbury/Marsh, 19 & 21.} He also freely “cited” from the works of other American animal painters, yet, because of the recurring motifs and derivative compositions of the day, it is hard to trace Tait’s animal scenes to any specific American painter other than Ranney. Nevertheless, Tait holds an important place in American art for shaping the myth of the frontier, and for adding to our current understanding of the trapper as an endangered, heroic character.

The transition from the heroic Boone-like early trapper to the troubled and inevitably doomed trapper was a process, and interpretation was based much on the interests of the viewer. While such images tapped into growing popular taste for frontier stories, the trapper figures remained worrisome to East Coast elite because of the low-culture subject matter, and the potential threat these hunters posed to the social order and to game numbers. The hunt in “democratic” America was a multilayered paradox, where the popular symbol of freedom was also a troubling rouge. While betraying their conflicted notions on backwoods hunters, artists like Audubon, Deas, Cole, Bingham, Beard, Ranney and Tait did much to popularize the style of the backwoodsman, adding his rugged appeal to the characteristics of the new American sportsman. While emulating the British sportsman and his strict code of behavior, they were adopting the look of the very hunters they sought to displace. As the first generation of American painters of the hunt, Deas and his artistic brethren were applying the newly-forming cultural view to their scenes. In many cases, their classist background and agendas informed their presentation of both the backwoods hunter and the genteel “true sportsman.” As is apparent in these images, the artist-sportsman was often pulled in opposite directions: by
the “true sportsman”-ideal on one side, and by the more common, more common-place hunting practices that made up American sport on the other. Among these common practices was the market killing of game animals, and artist-sportsmen depicted a convoluted situation, and were forced to walk a fine line between support and condemnation. The fact the popular patronage accepted market killing as a necessary evil only added to the dilemma when their “most noble game” was threatened.
The buffalo gunner in William de la Montagne Cary’s dark and highly charged *Guardians of the Herd* appears crazed and demonic as he clutches his Colt revolver after firing a fatal shot into his victim. Kneeling before the mounted white hunter, the bullet-riddled animal appears to bow down as if in submission. Another guardian is dead. Other figures, including an Indian, fire upon buffalo in the near distance. When the image (fig. A54) appeared in *Harper’s Weekly* in October 1873, Congress was rewriting legislation to put an end to the market killing of buffalo, but the *Harper’s* article makes no mention of the fact. Nevertheless, the artist-reporter Cary (1840-1922) would have been keenly aware of the then-turbulent issue of buffalo skinning. White market hunters were steadily wiping out the herds at the same time that starving Indian tribes were searching for bison for food.232 Although later, in the 1890s, Cary would make a career painting large canvases that depicted whites and Indians coming together, during the late 1860s and 1870s, he was a master of fear-evoking Indian propaganda. His *Guardians* image thus stands out as a transitional picture for Cary, showing Native Americans and whites, often hostile to one another, hunting alongside one another for the hide trade.233 In an interesting composition that recalled the bison hunt pictures of previous decades, Cary portrayed whites and Indians as equally responsible for the slaughter.

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233Gilcrease Institute in Tulsa has the most extensive collection of Cary data, letter, ephemera, etc., and the museum includes over one hundred works by the artist. See Mildred D. Ladner, *William de la Montagne Cary: Artist on the Missouri River* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984), xiv.
Artist-sportsmen were torn when representing the buffalo hunt, considered by many to be the epitome of American frontier hunting, but which, by the 1860’s was little more than market hunting at best and slaughter at worst. By the 1840s buffalo had taken precedence in the hide business, and “true sportsmen” were adamant in their scorn for market hunters, especially when the game in question was visibly in danger of extinction.\textsuperscript{234} The general consensus among gentle-sportsmen was that hunting buffalo was a cruel unsportsmanlike pastime, and not unlike shooting grazing cattle.\textsuperscript{235} Based on earlier “buffalo hunt” compositions, handed down from Catlin, Miller and others, the images created after mid-century of white hunters shooting bison convey both romantic adventure and frontier heroics, but essentially depict this market hunting. Responding to the commercial exploitation of bison, artist-sportsmen created insightful visions, and their personal feelings on animal conservation underlie their paintings. Long considered simple adventure narratives, bison hunt images are complex constructions that reveal a host of contradictory impulses in the hunting/sporting world.

The Buffalo Hunt Motif and Market Hunting

Of the few forms of market hunting depicted for a popular audience or as fine art, images of hide hunters chasing bison had a strange public appeal. At once romantic and gory, sensational and horrific, the frontier phenomenon was a multi-dimensional event. Overtly connected to the market, it went against sportsman’s notions of fair recreation,  

\textsuperscript{235}For statements on the “cruel slaughter” of buffalo by white and Indian hunters, see George F. Ruxton, \textit{Life in the Far West} (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1851), 79 & 110. Gard also has several references to this belief. Robert Barnwell Roosevelt sums up this opinion in \textit{The Game Birds of the Coasts and Lakes of the Northern States of America} (New York: G. W. Carleton, 1866), 9 and 271. Roosevelt writes that the “backwoodsman” who attacks the bison is “less a sportsman than a mighty hunter.” On Audubon’s chastising the hunters for needless waste, see Richard Rhodes, \textit{John James Audubon: The Making of an American} (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 428.
yet it was also closely tied to the original Native American protagonists, and to the mixture of savagery and nobility they connoted to many white Americans in the nineteenth century. The combination of these factors resulted in an ambiguity concerning the buffalo hunt, and an uncertainty as to the sport’s nobility.

As “true sportsmen” fought for their interests, market men during this period pushed hard to protect theirs as well, and had equally powerful political support. One of the most powerful marketing interests of the period – the fur and hide industry – sought to exploit the natural resources of the West, and often paid for artists to go west and celebrate the exploitation.236 In part because of these lobbying interests, the American bison – the “noblest” game animal in the States – had no legal protections outside of Idaho and Wyoming and even in those locales, the laws were seldom if ever enforced. From mid-century on, state legislation intended to protect the bison was passed every few years, yet little funding was allocated for enforcement.237 Federal bills to protect the bison were introduced in the U.S. Congress in 1871 and 1874, however, the first effort died in committee, and the second was never signed by President Grant. The delay in legislation was directly related to the importance of bison as a resource and a commercial product.  

236The American Fur Company supported several artists including Audubon and Catlin. See Rhodes, 420-421; and Catlin, 9-11.

237Palmer, 49. In 1889, the last buffalo in the southern herd was killed in Texas. There were some seasonal protections in Colorado and Kansas in the mid-1870s, according to buffalo hunter John Cook. See John Cook, The Border and the Buffalo: An Untold Story of the Southwest Plains (New York: Citadel Press, 1967), 163.

238The small herd at Yellowstone was finally protected by federal law in 1894. See Palmer, 17-18. Larry Barsness, The Bison in Art: A Graphic Chronicle of the American Bison (Fort Worth: Northland Press in cooperation with the Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, 1977), 11-12, writes that in 1855, the US Congress passed a law protecting the animal in the wake of the Sir Gore slaughter and subsequent complaints. However, this law is not mentioned in Palmer.
Despite these concerns, art and literature fostered interest in the bison hunt. Developing from traditional Native hunter scenes, this genre expanded to images of vacationing sportsmen with well-equipped entourages, to market gunners. In part because of the touristic nature of the imagery, during the second half of the nineteenth century, hunting bison became one of the most popular subjects in western art. Imagery from the first half of the century overwhelmingly connected the hunt with Native Americans, and thus with “savagery.” For Native American hunters, buffalo hunting was a combination of warrior training, meat and skin gathering, and recreational sport. The hunt’s spiritual dimension for the Native Americans was generally ignored by both verbal and visual reporters of the time, who instead emphasized the savage nature of the event.

Thomas Doughty’s sporting journal, *The Cabinet of Natural History and American Rural Sports*, set the tone with an illustration and essay in 1832 noting the bison was a valuable food source for “Indians and visitors of the western regions.” The text, and the image used to illustrate it – Titian Peale’s iconographic buffalo hunt composition (with Native American hunter, using bow and arrow)(fig. A55) – together convey the popular (yet incorrect) notion that the slaying of buffalo was solely engaged in by Indians. During the 1830s and 1840s, buffalo hunting was not yet considered a “sport” by the average American hunter.

As has been observed by many scholars, traditional bison hunt iconography during the early nineteenth century was based on the artistic convention of a stereotypical

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240*The Cabinet of Natural History and American Rural Sports*, edited by Gail Stewart (Barre, MA: Imprint Society, 1973), 102-103 (originally quoted in vol. 2 (1832)). Fellow artist-sportsman Alvan Fisher painted a *Buffalo Hunt* around the time, which was reproduced in the 1835 edition of *The Token*. 
Indian warrior chasing down a buffalo, the two entities united in a primeval struggle.\textsuperscript{241} The trope recalled the iconographic model of St. George slaying the dragon. Like that prototype, the buffalo hunt motif carried notions of noble battle, and portrayed a savagery that evoked a primordial world. In a sense, depicting the Indian vs. Buffalo motif became a rite of passage to becoming a respected Western artist. To advertise oneself as having experienced the frontier firsthand added to the artists’ allure, and the ability to depict the prairies, native tribes, and horses became a mark of the artists’ knowledge and skill.\textsuperscript{242}

Popular writers did their part to inspire fine artists to pick up the hunt theme. Of these, Washington Irving perhaps contributed most to the perception that the buffalo hunt was a savage pursuit, even as he took part in it himself. In the book of his travels among the Osage, titled \textit{A Tour on the Prairies} (London and Philadelphia, 1835), Irving connected the hunt to his Indian guides, while casting himself as a cosmopolitan among a party of world citizens. Irving’s influence on artists of the time was profound, and he helped turn their gaze to the buffalo and the Indian as subject matter.\textsuperscript{243} A host of other writers and travelers of the period added to this perception. Regardless of the slight...

\textsuperscript{241}Dawn Glanz, 103. Rena N. Coen, “The Last of the Buffalo,” \textit{American Art Journal} 5, no. 2 (November 1973): 83-94. Glanz, 104, notes the commonly-accepted link between Indians and Buffalo, and their assumed fate. This was largely due to Catlin’s \textit{Notes}. Also see Barsness, 20.

\textsuperscript{242}The list of artists painting this motif is extensive; it includes, among others, Titian Peale, Peter Rindisbacher, Alvan Fisher, Felix Darley, George Catlin, Alfred Jacob Miller, John Mix Stanley, Seth Eastman, Carl Wimar, Arthur Fitzwilliam Tait, William Jacob Hays, William H. Beard, Walter Shirlaw, Albert Bierstadt, Charles Russell and Frederic Remington.

\textsuperscript{243}See Washington Irving, \textit{A Tour on the Prairies} (London: John Murray; Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Blanchard, 1835). Alfred Jacob Miller, for example, had read Irving’s western books before venturing to the Rockies with Captain William Drummond Stewart. See Lisa Strong, “Images of Indigenous Aristocracy in Alfred Jacob Miller,” \textit{American Art} 13, no.1 (Spring 1999): 80; and Robert Combs Warner, \textit{The Fort Laramie of Alfred Jacob Miller: A Catalogue of all the Known Illustrations of the First Fort Laramie} (Laramie: University of Wyoming Press, 1979), 146.
variations in the hundreds of narratives outlining the hunt, very rarely did the accompanying illustrations depart from the Indian-Buffalo motif.

With the decline of the beaver trade in the mid-1840s, however, the market in buffalo hides grew in importance both on the frontier, and on the eastern seaboard.\textsuperscript{244} Bison scholar J. Albert Rorabacher has noted that, while the American Fur Company posts collectively sent only 67,000 bison robes to St. Louis before 1840, they sent 110,000 robes in 1848 alone.\textsuperscript{245} At mid-century, several competing interests sought to exploit the animal: the market forces (including hide hunters and companies); the United States military (which depended on the animal to feed officers and railroad crews, and which later supported bison slaughter as a remedy to Indian conflict); and adventure-seeking, usually foreign-born, sportsmen.\textsuperscript{246} For a number of reasons, which ranged from imperialistic exploits, a lust for the exotic, and a lack of laws or enforcement, Europeans were especially drawn to the hunting opportunities of the American West. American gentlemen sportsmen, if they chose to look, could immediately see the dilemma; the ease of the market slaughter removed much of the romance and unpredictability that made true sport. These multidimensional aspects of the buffalo hunt set it apart from other forms of game shooting.


\textsuperscript{246}The Goddard Brothers (Cyrus, George and Edwin), Hays City meat suppliers for the Kansas-Pacific rail line, employed professional buffalo hunters such as William Cody. See Cy Martin, 76-77.
Artists Hunting Bison: Catlin and Audubon

Artists were among the first to bring public attention to the need for greater protection for the bison. George Catlin and John James Audubon were instrumental in inspiring future artist-sportsman to adopt western subject matter and travel the frontiers in search of subjects. Traveling alone, or as part of government-led expeditions, the artists who followed these men came into contact with frontier wildlife, including bison, elk and prong-horn antelope, and were witness to the exploitation that these two artists addressed.247

A former Philadelphia lawyer-turned-artist, George Catlin would become the most influential mid-century painter of the buffalo hunt scene. Working primarily alone, Catlin did receive help from military escorts and from American Fur Company officials in his travels within Native American territory in the 1830’s. He often included himself in hunting scenes (especially in paintings made after 1850), but always presented himself accompanied by scores of Indian hunters. Catlin did much to codify the iconography of the buffalo hunt through his hundreds of paintings, the exhibition of his Indian Gallery which traveled in the eastern States from 1837 to 1839, and the publication of his journals in 1841. Although artists in the 1820s such as Titian Ramsay Peale and Peter Rindisbacher had begun to develop the theme, it was Catlin, who set the standard “Buffalo Hunt” motif, in which the Native American is the bison slayer.248

247 DeVoto, 337, notes that Lucien Fontenelle, of the American Fur Company at Ft. Laramie, was sending a load of robes back to civilization in November 1837. Federal protection of bison was nearly achieved in 1876 (House Bill 1719), but died in legislation after President Grant’s pocket veto. Most scholars agree that the bill was opposed because many in government saw the demise of the bison as the solution to the “Indian Problem.” A thorough summary of the governmental action taken is Hanner, “Buffalo Hide Trade.” Also see Gard, 208, 211-214.

248 Thirteen years before Catlin began his travels, the artist Titian Ramsay Peale (1799-1885), as one of two artists on the Major Stephen H. Long Expedition, rendered one of the first views of the buffalo
Even in the late-1820s, Catlin recognized the developing code of hunting ethics in America that would be later promoted by Thomas Doughty as characteristics of the “true sportsman.” One of Catlin’s first paintings to be exhibited, *The Sportsman*, showed at the American Academy of the Fine Arts in 1828 with some of Doughty’s work. Though the painting is missing, the title suggests his knowledge of the nascent sporting culture. Later, in his *Notes and Letters*, Catlin propounded the conservative taking of game and fair chase.249

With the constant exhibition of his Indian Gallery, Catlin was able to show his fantastic depictions of buffalo hunts and Indian rituals to “civilized” society, and relay his personal accounts of frontier hunting to audiences in most major U.S. cities, including Pittsburgh, Louisville, Cincinnati, New Orleans, New York and Washington, DC. His exhibition attracted several artists, including Alfred Jacob Miller and Arthur Fitzwilliam Tait.250

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Gaining a great deal of notoriety on the East Coast, Catlin’s buffalo hunt images surely affected the mid-century American opinion of sporting culture and western adventure seeking. Moreover, Catlin was one of the first sportsmen to report the need for protection of buffalo, as well as for Native American culture – both of which he saw as nearing certain collapse. Catlin and his audience generally equated the two as intricately related, even symbiotic, and in an 1841 treatise, he suggested setting up “a nation’s park” to preserve both entities for posterity. ²⁵¹ Though Catlin’s mission was, in part, to protect them both from extermination, his presentation and his gallery simply increased Anglo tourism and exploitation of the Plains and its inhabitants. As Rena Coen notes in her study on buffalo hunt iconography, Catlin’s early pictures of the hunt embody the excitement of the chase. ²⁵² While Catlin frequently employed bleeding bison bulls falling into the viewer’s space – forcing viewers to empathize with the beast – the multitude of chase scenes from his brush called out to sportsmen to pick up their guns and “Go West” (fig. A56).

Catlin seems to have considered hunting as therapeutic and beneficial, as well as recreational, and he occasionally revealed his knowledge of “true sportsman” culture. He wrote that he was “not so professed a sportsman as to induce [him] to conceal the fact” of slaughtering Prairie hens. “We had a fine pointer, and had legitimately followed the sportsman’s style for a part of the afternoon,” but Catlin was “quite ashamed to confess the manner in which we killed the greater part of them…five or six at one shot.” Though


²⁵²Coen, 88.
at times expressing shame for his lust for blood sport, Catlin did little to change his habits; such passages suggest Catlin recognized the existence of “true sportsmanship,” yet, like many of his less-disciplined sporting brethren, had trouble following such strictures in the West.253

Catlin did, however, see the fate of the bison as tied to the hide trade, and understood that this, combined with wanton killing, spelled the species’ eminent doom:

It is truly a melancholy contemplation for the traveler in this country, to anticipate the period which is not far distant, when the last of these noble animals, at the hands of white and red men, will fall victims to their cruel and improvident rapacity.254

As is made clear in his journal, Catlin hunted alongside his Indian guides “for study,” and for “the best art,” and was only concerned with game protection when the moment suited him, or, more likely, as a romantic afterthought.255 Like many sportsmen who followed his path, Catlin took part in the same slaughter he was an occasional advocate against.

Though finding fault with many of Catlin’s claims about Plains Indians, John James Audubon acquiesced that the bison were in danger due to market killing. In journal notes, letters home, and the subsequent text for Viviparous Quadrupeds, the artist noted that the buffalo was “decidedly the most important of all our contemporary American quadrupeds,” and was “perhaps sooner to be forever lost than is generally supposed.”256

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253Catlin, 281-282.

254Ibid, 259.

255For Catlin’s knowledge of true sportsmanship, see Catlin, 282; Brian W. Dippie, “Green Fields and Red Men,” in George Catlin and His Indian Gallery. Edited by George Gurney and Therese Thau Heyman (Washington, DC: Smithsonian American Art Museum, 2004), 53. Several images by Catlin exist where he shows himself hunting buffalo, yet most of these were done in the 1860s, one being an advertisement for Colt revolvers.

256Audubon and Bachman, VQ, 174 and 176; the three volumes of text appeared between 1846, and 1854, three years after Audubon’s death, but much of the buffalo section is taken verbatim from Audubon’s notes. For Audubon on Catlin, see Ben Forkner, ed., John James Audubon - Selected Journals
He used stronger language in his journal, writing that it was surprising so many bison could still be found, given the numbers…

murdered almost daily on these boundless wastes called prairies…This cannot last; even now [1843] there is a perceptible difference in the size of the herds, and before many years the buffalo, like the great auk, will have disappeared.257

Audubon agreed with Catlin that the growing slaughter was a result of the market, and noted so in his journals. His friend and co-author of VQ, John Bachman, edited these views, toning them down to some degree, while still emphasizing the consumer demand for bison robes and hides. In his writings Bachman concentrated on the means employed by Native Americans in preparing the hides, yet barely mentioned the white hunter’s role – a role that Audubon criticized repeatedly in his journal and letters.

Audubon’s familiarity with the bison market derived in part from his dependence on the fur and hide markets for information, for specimens, and for travel assistance. He traveled free-of-charge up the Missouri in 1843, on the steamboat Omega, thanks to the American (St. Louis) Fur Company. Along the way, Audubon witnessed firsthand the shooting of buffalo from the deck, a common pastime in Missouri River steamboat travel.258 Later, on the prairie, Audubon recorded that “thousands are killed merely for their tongues…their large carcasses remain to feed the wolves and other rapacious prowlers.” He too indulged in this delicacy while in the Dakota Territory, his excuse

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258 Future NYSC secretary William Jacob Hays wrote home of the common practice of shooting them and other wildlife from the steamboat Spread Eagle, which were butchered on shore and brought on board, and consumed. Letter to Hays’ father, dated June 20, 1860, reprinted in Taft, 40.
being that, given the time of year, the other buffalo meat was too rank for his “tender palette.”

The market aspect of the buffalo hunt had a powerful impact on the artist, and his language revealed this concern. Audubon repeatedly referred to the animals as “the poor bison,” in field notes and journal entries; little of this emotional response, however, made its way into the *VQ* text, perhaps because the American Fur Company was helping him accomplish his goal, and he didn’t wish to “ruffle feathers.” His and Bachman’s thoughts on the wasteful practices of fur company hunters, however, are clear: “The process of butchering or cutting up the carcass of the Buffalo is generally performed in a slovenly and disgusting manner by the hunters, and [after the hide is removed] the choicest parts only are saved.” When the hunters, some of whom were in his party, gather to attack the herd, Audubon regrets that “there is no etiquette among Buffalo hunters.” It is clear that Audubon did not see bison hunting as gentlemanly sport.

In July 1843, while staying at Ft. Union, Audubon rode along in hunts when physically able. After finding a small group of buffalo, others of the party shot, while Audubon observed and took notes. His party killed a number of cows and calves during his visit, which he criticized. On final analysis, it appears the aging Audubon (then

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259*VQ*, 178. Audubon describes the free aid given him by the Chouteau family in Maria R. Audubon, *Journals* vol. 1, 454; ibid., 179. On Audubon noting the amounts of hides shipped to St. Louis, see Lucy Audubon, *Audubon*, 423-4.

260*VQ*, 424, 431. The Audubon group was set up at Ft. Union “by the kind permission of the gentlemen connected with the fur trade.”Quoted in Audubon and Bachman, “Townsend’s Rocky Mountain Hare,” ibid., 24.

261Ibid., 179.

262Ibid., 178.
58 years old, but feeling 70, according to biographer Victor Cahalane) participated in little buffalo hunting himself.

Audubon fostered through his art and text an aesthetic and scientific concern for these species, noting frequently (if covertly) man’s detrimental impact on game populations. One example of this sensitivity to the animal is Audubon’s representative *Family of Bison*, plate 57 of *VQ* (fig. A57) which shows startled animals confronting the viewer, in command of their space, and with their young. It is one of the few images from *VQ* to include a family, a common compositional technique in his bird “group portraits.” This family portrait reinforces the accompanying text (in which the authors explain how the animal reacts to hunters, and the market hunters’ wasteful use of the animal’s carcass), and encourages the viewers’ empathy with Audubon’s viewpoint.

**Claiming a Piece of the West**

British tourists in America had a different view of the animal, and saw bison as a noble, worthy target. The majority of bison hunts reported in the media were carried out by aristocratic British and European tourists, who began flocking to America’s frontier in the 1830s, in part because their own countries were depleted of large game. While the British attention to the animal most likely drove many Americans to want a piece of the action, their frontier escapades were the stuff of much humorous derision in the American sporting press. Thomas Bangs Thorpe wrote a series of satirical entries for the *Spirit* on one such British sportsman, the Scottish nobleman William Drummond Stewart, who spent most of a decade of summers living with trappers and traders in the Rocky
Mountain region, hunting bison, and, for his 1837 summer tour, brought a hired artist, Alfred Jacob Miller (1810-1874), to record the exotic affair.263

Thanks to Miller and his flamboyant images of their 1837 tour, Stewart’s adventures reached a wider audience. Miller’s “buffalo hunt” compositions helped solidify the popular notion, and artistic construction, of the hunt as a primarily Indian activity. Pictorially recording Stewart’s visit with mountain men at the annual “Trapper’s Rendezvous” in the Rocky Mountains, Miller’s completed paintings were destined to adorn his patron’s Murthly Castle near Perth. Miller’s images allow a rare glimpse into the trapper life of the 1830s, their behavior, and the hunting techniques employed.264 Miller, who made his living as a Baltimore-area portrait painter, enjoyed shooting recreationally, and would have been familiar with a sportsman’s shooting code from his outings with Southern landowners. Living as a cultured, Southern artist, and moving among elite society, he may have seen himself as a “true sportsman,” but he expressed in his writings no concern when Stewart killed countless buffalo.265

During the western tour, Miller apparently joined in numerous hunts, but for the most part, he involved himself in sketching nervously while Stewart and his right-hand

263 Thorpe wrote this satirical commentary under the pseudonym P.O.F. for his paper the Concordia Intelligencer, from August 1843 to February 1844; it was reprinted in Spirit, vol. 13: 303, 333, 356, 392, 405, 421, 445, 497, 534, 546, 557 and 569; and vol. 14: 33 and 548. The comical episode is detailed in John Francis McDermott, “T. B. Thorpe’s Burlesque of Far West Sporting Travel,” American Quarterly 10, no. 2, pt. 1 (Summer 1958): 175-80; see particularly 179: “Sir William, as rich as a Santa Fe nabob, traveling about, talking Indian, and looking like Robinson Crusoe.”


man Antoine Clement posed for scenes and shot unwilling “models.”

Miller did not depict himself hunting buffalo, though he did present several other camp members taking part. Stewart, it should be noted, had final say in these paintings’ composition and subject, and preferred Miller’s highly romanticized, even fantastic flair. As scholar Lisa Strong recently noted, Miller’s style of fusing portraiture with genre scenes complemented Stewart’s romanticized vision of the natural aristocracy of the Native Americans and their noble sport. In both large oils and smaller watercolor sketches, Miller presents the Scot as a chivalric sportsman, stalking game in a fair, gentlemanly fashion. More often, however, Stewart appears on his white steed, being greeted by or welcoming tribes into his camp, or watching a melee of bison slaughter carried out by Indians. The artist presented his patron in discovery images, entering what seems an uncorrupted Eden, as if he were the first Caucasian in the West.

For Miller on hunts, see Tyler, et al., 25-26, 60; DeVoto, 158-159, makes Miller out to be a nervous artist. In one of the few scenes that Miller depicted himself, he is shown sketching a wounded bison; he is on horseback with a gun lying across his lap as he works. *Sketching from Nature*, watercolor, gouache and graphite on paper, 6 13/16 x 4 11/16 in., Gilcrease Museum, reproduced in Joan Carpenter Troccoli, *Alfred Jacob Miller: Watercolors of the American West* (Tulsa: Thomas Gilcrease Museum Association, 1990), 55; and Strong, *Sentimental Journey*, 203.

Miller would have to wait to work-up his vast collection of sketches until his return to America in 1842, after completing Stewart’s commission. After his stay in the American west, Stewart published his western journals anonymously, under the title *Altowan*; a partly-fictionalized story of interaction between Europeanized Indians and Indian-ized Euro-Americans, *Altowan* was loosely based on Stewart’s adventures and hunting exploits among the then-friendly Native tribes of the Rocky Mountain region. In the work, Stewart made buffalo hunting an overriding aspect of frontier life. In a second semi-fictional publication, *Edward Warren* (London: Walker, 1854), Stewart emphasized the differences between the savage hunting he experienced and gentlemanly or “true” sport. See Troccoli, 12-13. For Stewart having final say in artistic detail, see Tyler, et al., 43.


Before leaving for Scotland to decorate Stewart’s castle, Miller exhibited six of Stewart’s hunting paintings at New York’s Apollo Gallery in May 1839, four of which were buffalo hunts, the others hunt-related. What appears to be the first version of the painting *The Buffalo Hunt* (ca. 1839, fig. A58) depicts Stewart circling a bison in a stage-like space as an extremely romanticized event. The painting stands out as one of the earliest, if not the first, buffalo hunt pictures exhibited to the American public depicting a Caucasian sportsman killing the bison. These hunting pictures at the Apollo show received excellent reviews, and surely led American sportsmen to stand up, take notice and set their sites on frontier adventure.

In the hunt scenes that Miller made years after the Stewart commission, the Stewart figure is usually replaced with a non-specific trapper, whose face is turned away from the viewer. The majority of Miller’s buffalo hunt scenes, however (even those done for Stewart), show Indians hunting bison. The hunts are shown at times in seemingly barbaric fashion, other times in the traditional buffalo hunt format (fig. A59). Though the originals for Stewart’s commission present noble, controlled hunts, particularly when Stewart is leading the hunt (or saving a comrade, as in the case of *Pierre and the Buffalo* (1837)(figs. A60 & A61), Miller’s pictures also display the techniques of frontier hunting that most true American sportsmen would have seen as too “savage” for gentlemen. Two recurring compositions of this latter type portray the “surround” technique, in which a

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270 DeVoto, 36. See Tyler, et al., for other bison hunts including Stewart, including cat. #293 (*Pierre and the Buffalo*) and #68 (*Shooting at Bison fording River*). For full detail on Miller’s *Buffalo Hunt* at Philbrook Museum, see Tyler, et al., 233-234, and text for Plate 44. Stewart appears in a few other bison scenes, but generally plays the gentleman hunter role, letting others do the work; for example, see Tyler, et al., catalogue numbers 101, 118, and 371.

271 “Apollo Gallery- Original Paintings,” *Morning Herald* (New York), May 16, 1939, col. C. Numbers 2 and 3 are both titled *The Buffalo Hunt*, and both feature Stewart chasing the animal from different angles. See Tyler, et al., 233.
group of buffalo are literally surrounded by numerous hunters, where the animals are trapped (fig. A62), and Indians driving the herd off a precipice (fig. A63). Ironically, Miller had great success with these two less-chivalric compositions, painting numerous versions of each; such scenes would help distinguish civilized hunting from the lawless chaos of the Plains for his Eastern patrons.

It is significant that Stewart is presented as mere observer in these chaotic scenes. As Joan Carpenter Troccoli has noted, Stewart, because of his upbringing, wanted to give game animals a “sporting chance,” which was not the case with these techniques. In later notes, Miller suggests that the principles of “true sportsmanship” were generally followed that summer:

[Still hunting] is used only under certain circumstances; - Running [buffalo] being the favorite method from its affording more excitement, with the chivalric idea attached to it of giving the brute fair play, [and] a chance for his life.

Miller seems to have realized that white hunters were contributing to the decreasing numbers of wildlife in the frontier regions he visited. This is suggested by a now-missing multimedia scene on paper, done with various washes, titled *An Indian Complaining of the Whites Having Destroyed the Game in Their Country, Pointing to a Plain, Which was once Covered with Buffalo – as Far as the Eye Could See – Now Without a Sign of Animal Life* (ca. 1837). Miller painted at least three versions of this composition, one of which is owned by the Gilcrease Museum (fig. A64). It shows a group of Native Americans and white trappers conversing in the foothills of the Rockies; the Indian standing at center holds a bison skull as he relays the history of bison in the

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272 Troccoli, 12.

region, pointing down to the empty prairie behind them. The original watercolor was in Stewart’s collection upon his death, and stands apart from the rest of the hunting imagery in his collection.274 One of Miller’s “Rough Draughts,” written in the 1850s to accompany his later watercolors, relates to the scene, and reveals the artist’s awareness of the Indian’s altered lifestyle:

> The Kansas Indians live pretty much now on the recollections of the past…This tribe reverts to a by-gone period, when game was plentiful around them, [and] the skillful use of their bows and arrows gave them an abundance of food…they are [now] in receipt of government annuities.275

Whether or not Miller was personally concerned about the declining number of bison, it is noteworthy that the numerous buffalo hunt scenes he produced after completing Stewart’s commission do not focus on white tourists, but rather celebrate the iconic Indian hunt. Even Miller’s half-breed trappers, which appear frequently in early studies, would become full-blood Indians on canvas for later patrons. Miller would continue to paint Indians hunting buffalo until shortly before his death in the early 1870s, at the very moment buffalo were approaching extinction at the hands of white market hunters.

**Selling the Hunt to Tourists**

Around the time Catlin and Audubon were publishing their predictions of the animal’s doom, bison scenes were being mass produced and seen by Americans in many forms: engraved illustrations, in periodicals like Doughty’s *Cabinet of Natural History*, in adventure narratives, and even on bank notes. Miller’s scenes of Stewart and his Indian

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274 Versions of this painting are mentioned in Sanka Knox, “83 Drawings from 1837 Trek to Rockies Are Auctioned Here,” *New York Times*, May 7, 1966, 28; and Tyler, et al., 225.

275 Alfred Jacob Miller, “Rough Draughts for Notes to Indian Sketches: Number 111, Group of a Mountaineer and a Kansas Indian” Gilcrease Museum, reprinted in Troccoli, 7.
comrades slaying the bison added to the overall understanding of the hunt as a mix of exotic savagery and manly adventure. Western tales and their accompanying imagery helped to crystallize Catlin’s iconic representation of the buffalo chase. Illustrators sought to capture the excitement of the hunt for readers and armchair sportsmen. One image from this period, John William Casilear’s (1811-1893) *Incident on the Prairies* (1844, fig. A65) presented the hunting adventures possible in the West. Featured as an illustration in George Wilkins Kendall’s travel book * Narrative of the Texas-Santa Fe Expedition* (1844), the scene shows a covered wagon, presumably loaded with tourists, being passed by a group of Indians chasing down buffalo. This scene would have appealed to both foreign and domestic sportsmen who longed to make their mark in the Indian’s traditional hunting ground. Another image from Kendall’s narrative, John G. Chapman’s *A Scamper among the Buffalo* (the frontispiece for volume one), shows undisciplined military recruits hunting buffalo, something that, we learn in the text, the commanders advised against (fig. A66).276 Kendall echoed Catlin’s views on the inevitable fate of the Bison, and of that animal’s “nobility:” “The noble race will soon be known only as a thing of the past.”277 What made Kendall’s narrative striking was that the author describes the hunting on the expedition as necessary for survival, rather than as

276George Wilkins Kendall, * Narrative of the Texas Santa Fe Expedition*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1844), 236-241. Kendall, it should be noted, was a good friend of Henry W. Herbert.

277Ibid., 93-94, quoted in Glanz, 100. The Spirit’s William T. Porter, as editor, reprinted the bison hunt section from Kendall, as well as H. H. Sibley’s bison hunt, in Peter Hawker, *Instructions to Young Sportsmen* (1846), 265-273, and 429-438; this features an illustration, based on John Mix Stanley’s *Buffalo Hunt* (1845, Smithsonian Museum). Sibley, in “true sportsman” fashion, closes his tale by stating that members of his party “had fallen in with several droves of buffalo, and might have killed many more, but as the meat could not be taken, they very properly abstained from useless slaughter.” ibid., 273.
sport. Still, mourning the bison’s demise, while promoting the killing, was an all-too-frequent aspect of travel literature after the mid-1840s.²⁷⁸

Such tales of adventure inundated the literary market after the mid-1840s, which made the desire to “Go West” and kill buffalo palpable in the eastern states among middling Americans. This desire was exemplified by the grand “Buffalo Hunts” staged in the East with imported herds. The wealthy socialite and former mayor of New York, Philip Hone, wrote in his diary of such an event, where hundreds turned up near Hoboken to watch the captive bison, who ended up chasing down the gunmen. The American public was obviously captivated by the idea of buffalo hunts, even artificial ones.²⁷⁹

Racking Up Points

It is noteworthy that Stewart’s trip and Miller’s commission occurred during the period when American idealization of the British sporting tradition was at its height. Ironically, this same conservative tradition was being ignored by many British sportsmen/tourists who came to the States, fascinated with “traditional” bison hunt tales as expressed by Sir Stewart, with young Plains Indians portrayed as savage knights battling dragons.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁸One such report is found in Thomas Bangs Thorpe, The Mysteries of the Backwoods, or, Sketches of the Southwest including Character, Scenery, and Rural Sports (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1846):100-101; for similar stories see Barsness, 99; and Peter Hassrick, The Way West (New York: Abrams, 1977), 60.


One such character was Oxford-educated John Palliser, who, after “having exhausted the excitement of European game,” for years ranged the West hunting: “If I wished to shoot from horseback,” he wrote, “a ride of a few miles afforded sport after buffalo.” Though he did not discriminate in terms of species, the buffalo offered Palliser and his ilk a uniquely American experience. As an example of indulgent hunting, Sir St. George Gore, an Irish sportsman of note, came to America in 1854 specifically to kill buffalo; after three years, Gore had slaughtered over 2,000 bison. During the next decade, the Spirit of the Times condemned the similar exploits of another Brit, the Hon. George C. G. F. Berkeley. Though most reports in American journals were the humorous type, some travelers, such as Franklin Langworthy, would perceive hunters of bison to be “senseless or reckless.” However, the 1850s saw British travel literature using the hunting opportunities in the American West, and illustrations of the hunt, to attract willing sportsmen of the Gore type (fig. A67).

In 1860, in an event significant to British sportsman-tourism, the Prince of Wales visited the States and specifically wanted to hunt buffalo during his stay. He would be


282Cy Martin, 71. An image of the hunt designed specifically to encourage tourism and settlement around this time was included in Frederick Piercy’s Route From Liverpool to the Great Salt Lake Valley Illustrated With Steel Engravings and Wood Cuts From Sketches, edited by James Linforth (Liverpool: Franklin D. Richards, 1855); apparently made as a vedute, or a tourist’s view of America – a souvenir detailing what a traveler would soon (or did) experience on their Grand Tour of the West – it was a propagandistic call for immigrants to settle in or at least visit the game-filled region.


285Royal Phelps, longtime president of the NYSC and NYAPG, was treasurer of the welcoming committee for the Prince’s visit to New York; see The General Committee of the Ball in Honor of the Prince of Wales in account with its treasurer (New York, 1860).
followed in subsequent years by other European nobility seeking conquests in the New World. “A scamper among the buffalo,” wrote a reporter for *Putnam’s Monthly* in 1855, “is now the common finish to a sporting tour in America, by the young gentlemen of England, and their Boston and New York imitators;” however, the hunt requires “enough pluck to keep the Cockney’s out.”286

The bison hunt’s appeal to tourists was not limited to actual travelers; the subject was becoming a popular form of “armchair tourism” by the 1850s through a large array of prints, stories and illustration. By the late 1850s, however, British sportsmen were frequently being portrayed in the States as dandies and fools when it came to hunting buffalo. Currier & Ives produced a series of satirical images ridiculing the dandy sportsman “chasing” buffalo. In addition, *Harper’s Weekly*, a barometer of American popular opinion, and early advocate for game protection, included in its July 10, 1858 issue a cartoon juxtaposing “real” frontiersmen trappers, with a group of plaid-wearing British dandies, smoking pipes and relaxing (fig. A68).287 The style of hunt among these tourist sportsmen went against the sportsman’s code in several ways; the desired goal was to maximize the number of animals killed, and within mile-long herds of animals, the hunted no longer had a fair chance to escape.

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286 Lord Dunraven, the Duke of Beaufort (1824-1899), the Earl of Southesk (1827-1905), and the Russian Grand Duke Alexis (who came in 1872) all wanted a piece of America. Quote from “The Beasts of the Prairies,” *Putnam’s Monthly* 5, no. 29 (May 1855): 526. Hunts by the Red River Hunters (Métis) living in Pembina continued into the late 1850s.

Herbert and the Buffalo

Henry Herbert, who, as Frank Forester, was considered the dean of American conservation and “true sportsmanship,” encountered trouble when attempting to describe the buffalo hunt in a positive light. Though never engaging in buffalo hunting himself, Herbert did note the practice in one of his popular sporting guidebooks, *Field Sports in the United States and the British Provinces*, and followed his discussion of “wild hunting” of bison, moose, elk and deer hunting with a plea for rational hunting, fair chase, and conservation. A skilled draftsman, Herbert composed many of the images that would accompany his early sporting literature; he was well-read in art history and he understood how image and word complimented (or complicated!) one another (fig. A69). When seeing the need for a “proper” narrative, he provided it, as he had with Deas’ *Long Jakes* (see Chapter Two). However, Herbert despised most business sectors of society that were not art-related, and was averse to both market hunting and the business class. He distanced himself from other British sportsmen in America, whom he loathed, and declined all invitations to the St. George Society functions. He wished to be perceived as the quintessential American gentleman-sportsman, but came to be seen by common hunters as the main proponent of British-style sporting etiquette and dress, for good or bad.

In his second book on American hunting techniques and natural history, *The Complete Manual for Young Sportsmen* (1856, New York), Herbert betrayed his lack of

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289 David W. Judd, *Life and Writings of Frank Forester*, vol. 1: 25 & 74. His own art appeared in many of his books, and in his articles for *Graham's Magazine*.

290 Ibid, 33.
knowledge of shooting bison by his sparse advice: he dedicated less than two pages of this large work to bison hunting. He bundled bison hunting with that of deer, moose and caribou, and began his section on “The Forest and the Plains,” by stating there are “no rules, positive, which can be laid down, no instructions which can be of use to the young sportsman” in the area of American big game hunting. He nevertheless concluded his passage on the bison hunt by restating his overarching thesis: it was not the quantity of game taken, but rather the behavior of the sportsman that was essential:

It is not the mere killing of numbers, much less in the mere killing at all; it is not in the value of the things killed…but it is in the vigor, science, and manhood displayed…in the unalterable love of fair play…that true sportsmanship consists.291

Herbert noted that bison “are sometimes stalked but more usually ridden down by mere speed of horses without the aid of hounds, and shot in full career with carbine or rifle, by the hunter galloping side by side with them.”292

When Herbert died in 1858, bison were still numerous on the Plains, and perhaps due to this and his ignorance of the region and the animal, Herbert neglected in his many essays to include bison as game in need of protection. It is possible fellow members of the NYSC were likewise ignorant of the fact; it is more likely, however, that the bison simply did not fit into their limited categorization of “game” (typically game birds, deer and fish).

While the average American living in the East may have found it difficult to imagine that the bison was endangered, a few well-publicized reports had noted their

291Herbert, Complete Manual for Young Sportsmen, 159; ibid, 163. This notion of true sportsmanship was altered by Theodore Roosevelt and his Boone and Crockett Club in the 1880s and 1890s, making big game hunting mandatory to membership in the club.

292Ibid, 161.
precarious state. According to George Frederick Augustus Ruxton, a former English officer who ventured to the Great Plains in the 1830s, the slaughter of bison was “too wholesale a business to afford much sport.” In 1849 *The North American Review* printed *Adventures on the Prairies*, a critical review of three books recently published on frontier travels: Francis Parkman’s *California and Oregon Trail* (1849), Edwin Bryant’s *What I Saw in California* (1848), and the 1849 compilation of Washington Irving’s two western narratives, *A Tour on the Prairies* and *Astoria*. The reviewer mentions how the buffalo “have fled from this fair country, scared by the frequent visits of the hunter, and by the annual swarm of emigrants.” Quoting Parkman, the reviewer notes that the tourist now will see in the ‘Great American Desert,’ the “whitened skulls of the buffalo, once swarming over this now deserted region.” It also suggests that even at this early date, sportsmen recognized the animal as endangered. Another note of caution came in 1850, when Thomas Eubank, U.S. Commissioner of Patents, condemned the “ceaseless war carried on against…the noblest of American indigenous ruminants,” “that if continued, threatens their extermination.”

Western hunting reports touched on this predicament, while, at the same time, portraying the buffalo hunt as only suited for “swells” (British tourists) or “savages.”

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Artists presented it in a similarly sensational manner, removed from civilized sport. American painters continued to celebrate the traditional Indian buffalo hunt with little variation from those that preceded them. Works by John Mix Stanley, revisions by Alfred Jacob Miller, and oil reproductions by Catlin all perpetuated the savage, and Indian specific aspect of the hunt.

**The 1860s Buffalo Hunt**

As the Civil War was beginning, the printing firm Currier & Ives paid Arthur F. Tait seventy-five dollars for a buffalo hunt scene with American frontiersmen as the central actors. The composition of Tait’s *Buffalo Hunt* (1861) was in keeping with Tait’s other frontier/trapper imagery, but diverged by its focus on hide hunting. While calling to mind actual hunting occurring in the western territories, and the ongoing war (one of the hunters wears what appears to be a military cap), his *Buffalo Hunt* is a partially-romanticized view of the reality of skin hunters.

Tait painted at least two versions of the picture within months of each other, an oil on canvas (lithographed by Currier & Ives in 1862 (fig. A70), subtitled *Life on the Prairie*, and a smaller canvas, possibly an oil study. Rather than focusing on Native American hunters or British dandies, Tait presented white market-gunners hunting for hides. While a few illustrations before 1860 featured non-Indian hunters chasing bison, Tait was the first to explicitly celebrate white market hunters using traditional bison hunt iconography. As a published lithograph, the composition eventually reached a massive audience. Tait painted a companion work, also lithographed by Currier & Ives as part of the *Life on the Prairie* series – *Trapper’s Defense, Fire Fight Fire* – which depicts a group of men setting fire to the grass to prevent the larger fire (seen in the distance) from
spreading. Their belongings, including hides, lie in the foreground, as their horses express anxiety at the flames and smoke. These trappers are specifically market hunters, in contrast to his earlier trappers from the early 1850s.

Tait’s *Buffalo Hunt* features two mounted hide hunters working together to take down a charging buffalo. The three entities are composed in an inverted pyramid, with the buffalo in the immediate foreground, and the two horsemen positioned behind the animal and slightly obscured by its massive form. A third hunter appears in the far left hunting his own bull. One of the primary figures wears a military cap and a red woolen shirt, and fires his rifle down into the buffalo’s side. This rider’s steed rears dramatically. The hunter adroitly braces the gun with the back of his left hand while in mid-gallop.

His partner, on the picture’s right, wearing a purple and white patterned turban and fringed yellow buckskin, with highlights of crimson in his sash, collar and saddle blanket, looks down toward the shot’s point of entry, and to the smoke that bellows from the barrel’s end. Blood pools on our side of the animal, implying that this man made the initial shot, before his comrade in military cap rode up to assist. He holds up his rifle like a spear, triumphantly, and confident of success (or perhaps trying to regain his balance). And yet, he is not the hero here; his comrade (who has some connection to the military, and who bears a likeness to Tait) fills the hero’s role, as he rides up to make the critical

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297Cadbury/Marsh, 158-159. The Currier version was for sale at the Snedecor Gallery, December 18, 1863, with its companion *The Trapper’s Defense, Fire Fight Fire*, 36 x 24 in. Harry T. Peters, 25, claims that the *Buffalo Hunt* composition was a collaboration between Tait and Louis Maurer. John Mix Stanley’s *Buffalo Hunt* (ca. 1855, Gilcrease) includes one seemingly-Caucasian figure among a party of Indians hunting buffalo, but his nationality is uncertain. The figure may represent Fort Union’s chief agent Alexander Culbertson (1809-1879) (who befriended Audubon during his 1843 visit to the fort), and accompanied Stanley in 1853 on a side trip to meet Piegans camped nearby. The painting is apparently based on this visit.
shot. Other buffalo, visible in the distance, scatter in all directions, emphasizing the chaos of the herd. Despite the sensational drama, Currier suggests in the print’s subtitle that this was “everyday life” on the frontier. What the image captures, however, is the real beginning of the market-guided, buffalo hide hunter.298

Although an avid hunter, Tait apparently never hunted buffalo and didn’t venture beyond the East for sport.299 He nevertheless had a unique viewpoint on sporting and poaching, due to his background in the hunting-restricted under-class of English tenant farmers. Once in the States, Tait produced images for both “true sportsmen” and for those associated with the game market. As noted in the first chapter, hunting themes were Tait’s specialty and he depicted without critique many controversial techniques as well as more conventional methods. Unlike Ranney, Tait did not seem to identify with what Thomas Doughty and Frank Forester called the “true sportsman.”

For his Buffalo Hunt and many other works, Tait drew from existing imagery, news accounts, and his own imagination. Buffalo Hunt worked on numerous levels, one of which may have been as an advertisement for the possibilities of life in the West and the new demand for buffalo hunters to feed the expanding population of railroad laborers. The business of the buffalo trade, not the ideals of sportsmanship, lie at the heart of Tait’s Buffalo Hunt.

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298 It should be noted that any experienced buffalo hunter would shoot the animal in the neck area, near the spine, and not in the rib cage. Cy Martin notes that the market in buffalo hides began ca. 1860. Hides were still sought, but the robe trade ended by 1875. See Cy Martin, 66.

299 Tait’s only trip west was three months in Chicago during the World’s Columbian Exposition in 1893. It is unknown whether he hunted during his stay or not. See Cadbury/Marsh, 103.
“True Sportsmen” versus the Tourist

A significant change in “buffalo hunt” imagery occurred after the Civil War, in part due to deteriorating relations with Indian tribes. Imagery that glorified the Native American hunter waned significantly, and white gunmen quickly took their place. Coinciding with the new call for game protection in general, these years saw a new concern for the bison’s fate and more concentrated efforts to find a legal remedy for the ongoing extermination. Conservation leaders began to draw connections between buffalo hunters and market hunting, describing the buffalo hunt not as sport but as a grisly business. Long-time president of the NYAPG, Robert B. Roosevelt drew clear distinctions between bison hunters and “true sportsmen.” In *The Game Birds* (1866), he wrote that in contrast to “true sportsmen:"

The daring backwoodsman of the Far West, who follows the fleet elk and timid deer, and who attacks the formidable buffalo or grizzly bear is less a sportsman than a mighty hunter; the man who shoots with a view of selling his game is a market-gunner; and he who kills that he may eat is a pot-hunter.  

In contrast:

the sportsman pursues his game for pleasure; he does not aspire to follow the grander animals of the chase, makes no profit from his success…shoots invariably upon the wing, and never takes a mean advantage of bird or man.  

According to this leader in the movement, “true sportsmen” would perceive shooting animals from trains as a “mean advantage,” unfair and wasteful, and would not even

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300 Robert B. Roosevelt, *The Game Birds of the Coasts and Lakes of the Northern States of America* (New York: George W. Carleton: 1866), 271. As president of the New York City (and later state) Sportsmen’s Club, Roosevelt was a passionate conservationist, attempted to follow the code to the letter, yet took part in pigeon shoots and trap-shooting, which animal protection groups found inhumane.

301 Ibid., 272. Roosevelt uses the term “True Sportsmen” in the book’s first chapter, “Protecting Game.” See ibid, 10-17. Also see idem., *Superior Fishing; or the Striped Bass, Trout, and Black Bass of the Northern States* (New York, 1865), 188-190.
pursue “gigantic wild animals;” this is in stark contrast to what his nephew Theodore Roosevelt would promote decades later.\(^{302}\)

In addition, the construction of the transcontinental railroad beginning in the mid-1860s brought the bison population from millions to mere hundreds. The railroads supplied bison meat for the work crews, and railroad patrons were encouraged to shoot bison from the car windows and on the occasional stop. So many were killed that the train line was marked by miles of skeletons and skulls.\(^{303}\) Once the tracks had been laid, trains brought an endless stream of amateur sportspeople to claim their own memento of the West. In a vicious cycle, the railroads facilitated moving bison hides to market, further driving the slaughter. Images of the actual killing by careless thrill-seekers found their way to the public through illustrated magazines and the occasional book.

Theodore R. Davis (1840-1894) was one of the first artists to show this growing tourist phenomenon of shooting from train cars (fig. A71). One of Harper’s “Special Artists,” Davis illustrated his own full-length reports for Harper’s publications, and spent several summers reporting on hunting prospects in the West. His first trip West in 1865 put him in contact with various hunters and provided opportunities to hunt buffalo; later, in early 1867, Fletcher Harper sent him to report on General Winfield S. Hancock’s infamous Indian Expedition, where he again saw military sporting recreation.\(^{304}\)


\(^{303}\)Hornaday, 501; the Southern herd was gone by 1875, and the northern herd was gone by 1884. See ibid., 512. The total slaughter was estimated at one million a year, from 1870 and 1885.

sportsman of note, of the many artists discussed so far, Davis may have had the greatest insight into the buffalo situation.

Visions of shooters pounding the herd with bullets must have reminded Davis of the Civil War battles he had previously reported on. Davis (who most likely penned the report accompanying the “train-shooters” image) writes the “hunt” (satirically put in quotes) “resembles a brisk skirmish,” with men and women firing non-stop at the confused herd. Tongue in cheek, he concluded, “a more excited party of Dianas it would be impossible to imagine.”

Indicating his hunting experience in several articles, Davis portrayed himself as a seasoned sportsman, who had hunted buffalo with pistols and butchered them for meat. Davis went as far as to claim that “there is not a section of the country in which I have not hunted or fished.” He spoke of his “pet ‘Ballard’,” meaning his trusty rifle, and carried pistols, even making his own cartridges, to get the best shot. In a deliberate way, Davis portrays himself here as an expert, who can (and does) offer sporting advice.

Davis apparently killed his first buffalo in 1865, in still-hunt style, while on his first western reporting mission for Harper’s in Kansas. In the article describing this hunt, published in July 1867, a picture was included of three hunters (one undoubtedly Davis), in a gully, firing towards a herd (fig. A72). At this formative moment, Davis expressed disbelief concerning reports of bison disappearing: “It is said that [the buffalo] are rapidly

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306See Davis, “A Stage Ride to Colorado,” 140; The Weekly Rocky Mountain News, December 6, 1865, quoted in Taft, 64; and Davis, “Buffalo Range,” 155. For more on Davis’ life, see his obituary in New York Times, November 11, 1894, 8.

decreasing in number, but that would seem impossible.” Despite his seeming denial, he noted the constant presence of bison skulls “scattered about the plains,” and included in many of his images the bison skull *memento mori*, to remind the viewer that death is approaching.³⁰⁸ Davis’s train picture contains the same *memento mori* skull, at which a stunned animal gazes, presumably moments before the tourists’ gunfire. Reminiscent of William Jacob Hays’ *Herd on the Move* (1861), the bison recognizing its own demise became a recurring motif, and a fixture at the century’ end in the art of Charles Russell.

Later, in an 1869 essay titled “The Buffalo Range,” appearing in *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*, Davis suggests that he has become aware of the plight of the bison. “That the buffalo is fast disappearing there is certainly no reason to doubt. The Indians tell you that the herds are less numerous; the ‘rancher’ vouches the same fact.” Davis notes here that “the buffalo is certainly decreasing since 1858…and Indians are ever bringing forward the fact…that soon the buffalo will be gone.” He acknowledges that “it is commonly supposed that it is the white man only who kills and wastes buffalo,” which he then discounts, placing the blame for waste largely on the Indian. In self-righteous indignation, Davis writes concerning the driving of bison off of precipices, “I have seen the Indians… slaughtering buffalo, in [this] very easy, but to me cruel, way, for where one buffalo is killed several are sure to be painfully injured.”³⁰⁹ This is a recurring theme with Davis, who appears vehemently anti-Indian, and writes of all problems in the West as caused by Native Americans. He, like many of the frontier military he befriended,

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³⁰⁸ Davis, “Colorado,” 141-145.
³⁰⁹ Theodore R. Davis, “The Buffalo Range,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 38, no. 224 (January 1869): 147-163. Davis’ essay was reprinted in *Ohio Farmer*, in 1869, but they edited out any suggestion that the bison numbers were threatened; Davis, “Buffalo Range,” 152-153, 158.
would have seen the end of the bison as a mixed blessing, but ultimately positive in its importance in keeping the Indian passive. Overall, Davis manages to present a biased view in which white hunters are heroes and Indian hunters are evil incarnate.

Davis also was one of the first western artists to depict images of army officers chasing bison, as featured in his “Buffalo Range” article. In the various images of sport around the fort, Davis presents the military men “running buffalo,” on horseback, and in the lower register, the men are depicted counting tongues. He shows here some knowledge of the code of the sportsman:

Of the various methods of hunting buffalo, the true sportsman will not hesitate to pronounce in favor of that usually adopted by our cavalry officers and the best hunters among the frontiersmen. This is known as ‘running buffalo,’ in which, to be successful, the hunter must be a good horseman and a cool and steady shot.310

He does claim that “still-hunting is a favorite mode…practiced by those who do not hunt so much for the sport as for the meat,” but that “it is regarded by many Plains men as a kind of pot-hunting, that it is not entitled to the name of sport.” By using terms like “true sportsmen” and “pot-hunters,” Davis shows he is aware of the debate, but, as one who took part in “pot-hunting” techniques, he apparently was not a follower of “true sportsmanship.”

Another version of the “shooting from the train” scene was probably by Henry Worrall, but often attributed to Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper “special artist,” Albert Berghaus. The picture shows the train halted on the tracks, but facing the viewer and the bison, which are on the tracks and running helter skelter on either side of the train.

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310Ibid., 154.
Passengers are shown running out of the cars with guns blazing. The image suggests that part of the reason for shooting was to scare the animals off of the tracks, but this factor was seldom conveyed in news reports. Images like this helped turn public opinion against this activity. Leslies’ accompanying report adds to the picture’s disturbing nature, and sums up the popular feeling of disgust at the wanton killing in what is one of the first appeals to the government by a popular journal:

A subject that should occupy the immediate future of our national legislation, is the reckless manner in which the natural stock of game of the plains of the Far West is being depleted by the heedless amateur sportsmen who invade the region…added to [the] freaks of reckless trappers, and still more deplorable, are now the odious murders committed by the new visitors brought into the region by the extension of the railways...It has become the custom…for the engine to be halted, and the travelers allowed the privilege of going out and “having a crack” – in the spirit of indiscriminate, wanton, idiotic, and depraved murder.

It is significant that this text does not come below the illustration of the wanton gunmen, but rather below an illustration by Ludwig Beckmann of a poaching fox with a goose in her mouth, as her young fight over a piece of the noble bird.

**Politics on the Frontier**

For many buffalo hunters, whether western tourists or military officers, the numbers killed, and the number of trophies taken, was the main goal. This glorification of the quantity of game taken went against the code of the “true sportsman.” Many commanding officers encouraged those under their command to practice shooting on moving game, which in most cases meant bison; commandants usually joined in the chase, and, as Colonel George Custer was known to do, initiated contests for the most animals

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311 Western art scholar Robert Taft makes this attribution, based on other art by Worrall, his location at the time (a native Kansan), and the fact that Berghaus’s signature appears on other artists’ originals; See Taft, 91, 123 & 343 (note 18).

312 “Buffalo Shooting on the Plains,” *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, June 3, 1871, 192.
killed in a day. On one hand it was an amusement (or shooting practice), but some officials also saw in the bison’s demise a second purpose – a similar demise in the Native American resistance.

Several political and military leaders, many of whom despised Indians, had come to see the bison’s continued existence as a problem. General Philip Sheridan, commander of the frontier army, stated:

It is a sentimental error to legislate in favour (sic) of the bison. You should, on the contrary, congratulate the skin hunters and give them a bronze medal with on one side the image of a dead bison and on the other that of a distressed Indian. The hide hunters have done more to solve the Indian problem than the whole of the American Army in thirty years. The extermination of the bison is the only way of founding a lasting peace and of favoring the progress of civilization.

Sheridan, commanding the Department of the Missouri during the late 1860s and 1870s, was perhaps the strongest voice in the military against protecting the bison, and he encouraged sportsmen, travelers and market hunters to kill to their heart’s content, if it meant crushing Native American resistance.

Scenes of Hide Hunting

One intriguing allusion to the state of hide hunting ca. 1870 came to Americans in the form of a Currier print. In the early 1870s, at the height of legislative action to protect bison in Congress, Currier produced an altered version of Tait’s *Bison Hunt* composition


In the new lithograph, the gunman in military cap is gone, leaving the exotic looking character at center stage with the bison, with the same pose, in a slightly altered landscape. As in the original, another figure chases down a stray bison in the far background, retaining the group aspect of this hunt. Given the main figure’s wild attire, the scene becomes an anachronistic vision of life of the plains. It was nevertheless a reminder that buffalo shooting continued, and it stood in marked contrast to the conservationist bulletins released in these years. In fact, in addition to the impact of Sheridan’s praise, new economic incentives had developed to support the buffalo market; in 1871 a new technique was developed to tan bison skin into leather, which made the hides valuable, and brought more money to the Plains states.\footnote{Eugene D. Fleharty, \textit{Wild Animals and Settlers on the Great Plains} (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1995), 54. Gard, 90 and 95. Paul Adrew Hutton, \textit{Phil Sheridan and his Army} (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985). 246. Hutton notes that Sheridan, in response to new governmental aims to save the bison, wrote to an Adjunct General on October 13, 1881, stating that if he “could learn that every buffalo in the northern herd were killed I would be glad…if the Secretary of the Interior will authorize me to protect all other kinds of game in the far west I will engage to do so to the best of my ability.” This suggests he would not protect the last remnants of bison at this date. See Hutton. 416 (endnote 4).}

In contrast to Sheridan, a few concerned generals and colonels at frontier posts and forts were among the first to raise public and governmental concern for the bison’s fate in the early 1870s. General William Hazen, Buffalo Bill Cody’s first commander,\footnote{“Buffalo Bill” Cody, who served as Sheridan’s guide for years, and later appeared hunting buffalo in Louis Maurer’s revisionist painting \textit{The Great Buffalo Hunt} (1894), earned his famous nickname working for the Kansas Pacific Railroad as a buffalo hunter (1867-1868), supplying meat for the work crew. He left that profession to serve as a scout for then-General William B. Hazen, at Ft. Hays, a future proponent of bison protection, and a rival of Sheridan. William F. Cody, \textit{An Autobiography of Buffalo Bill} (New York: Cosmopolitan Book Corporation, 1920), 126-128, 143-144. Louis Maurer’s \textit{Great Royal Buffalo Hunt} (1894, Buffalo Bill Historical Center) is a mix of sportsmen and “frontiersmen,” including Grand Duke Alexis in the midst of a herd, alongside William Cody, George Custer (who considered himself a sportsman) and Sioux Chief Spotted Tail. The event was essentially staged heroics, as was the pictorial composition, painted years after the actual event. Interestingly, See \textit{M. and M. Karolik Collection of American Paintings, 1815-1865} (Boston: Harvard Univ. Press, 1949), 90.}
and Indian Superintendent for the Kansas-based tribes during the late 1860s, adamantly disagreed with Sheridan’s slash and burn policy, and wrote letters to Congress pushing to regulate hide hunters and to create a federally-mandated ban for female bison and their calves. Hazen countered claims of worthy sport and Sheridan’s assertion that slaughter would solve the “Indian problem:"

The extraordinary introduction of railroads into and across the wilds of our country has made the vast herds of wild buffalo of the plains accessible to all classes of people, and each year vast numbers are slaughtered for so-called sport, and a greater number by hunters for their hides, which net about one dollar each… The buffalo is a noble and harmless animal, timid, and as easily taken as a cow, and very valuable as food for man… The theory that the buffalo should be killed to deprive the Indian of food is a fallacy, as these people are becoming harmless under the rule of justice.318

Hazen closed by asking that legislative action to be taken to stop the slaughter. As small landowners who were often dependent on local game for survival, Kansans pushed their state representatives to pass legislation, but continually ran up against market interests; the major towns in Kansas gained a large amount of their income through the bison skin trade.319 Legislation therefore was slow to come; in fact, in 1868, stations along the Kansas-Pacific route were advertising the shooting possibilities available.320

Native Americans, who appear to have played a minor role in this final decimation, nevertheless continued to be blamed for the slaughter and portrayed as the predominant killers of bison in popular and fine art. Still, glimpses of reality would occasionally be produced on canvas. One of these was the work of L. W. Aldrich (1848–

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318 Gard, 208. Hazen’s letter, addressed to Henry Bergh of the ASPCA, was reprinted in *Congressional Globe*, House of Representatives, 42nd Congress, 2nd Session, p. 179.


320 Cy Martin, 73-74; and “Buffalo Hunting,” *Harper's Weekly*, December 14, 1867, 797-798.
1938), a South Dakota state senator during the mid-1890s, who in the late 1860s had been an army scout along the route that would become the Northern Pacific Railroad. In an amateurish oil painting, titled *The Great and Cruel Slaughter of Buffalo, in the years 1867 & 68, From Memory* (fig. A75), Aldrich recorded the role of fanatical hide hunting in the species’ decline. A group of five hunters, dressed in white cowboy hats, bushy golden chaps, and ammunition belts, charge at the tail end of a fleeing herd, aiming their rifles ahead and mowing the animals down. Though simplistic in style and composition, the scene nevertheless conveys the ease with which the runners killed, and confirms that those Americans most familiar with the actual circumstances of the decline associated the final destruction of the bison with the mid-century buffalo runner, and not so much with the Indian.321

**The Military versus the Bison**

*Harper’s Weekly* printed an edited version of Davis’s essay on the Seventh Cavalry’s reliance on bison sport, and illustrated the report with images from the earlier *Harper’s New Monthly* essay.322 Though the western forts often relied on bison meat, Davis presents the killing not as a utilitarian pursuit, but rather as an unsportsmanlike gathering of tongues, to be counted as a sign of prowess, with the rest of the animal left to rot. Several images by Davis and Colonel Hazen’s letter were brought before Congress as evidence in the second attempt to pass a federal law to protect bison from

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321Aldrich’s unpublished memoir is at Huntington Library, California, in “Papers of Lauren Winfield Aldrich.” Once a constant feature of the South Dakota landscape, bison disappeared from the state around 1870 in the eastern half of the state, and around 1886 in the western half.

destruction. In addition to these pieces of evidence, Representative R. C. McCormick presented a letter, authored by Col. Albert Gallatin Brackett, Chief of Cavalry in Sheridan’s Department of the Missouri, which, written from the Omaha Barracks, disputed any notion that bison hunting was a noble sport:

What [Hazen] says is strictly true, and there is as much honor and danger in killing a Texas steer as there is in killing a buffalo. All the reports about fine sport and good shooting are mere gammon. It would be equally as good sport, and equally as dangerous, to ride into a herd of tame cattle and commence shooting indiscriminately. The wholesale butchery of buffaloes upon the plains is as needless as it is cruel…it is an abuse of language to call the killing of harmless and defenseless buffaloes sport.

The other major voice for buffalo protection in Congress was Greenbury Fort, representing the Illinois’ 8th district (1873-1881); Fort wrote a number of bills designed to end the “useless slaughter of buffaloes within the territories of the United States.” Complementing these forces were graphic images published in books and illustrated magazines, which made the slaughter real for Americans living in eastern states.

Other reformist-minded sportsmen-artists produced images illustrating the wasteful slaughter. One of the most effective comments against the rising slaughter appeared as an illustration in William E. Webb’s *Buffalo Land: An Authentic Account of the Discoveries, Adventures, and Mishaps of a Scientific and Sporting Party in the Wild West* (Cincinnati, 1872); the picture, reproduced after sketches by Kansas artist Henry

323 On April 5, 1872, in support of his bison protection bill before the House, Richard C. McCormick, former Governor and congressional delegate of Arizona Territory, discussed Davis’s gory image and report on the slaughter, which reprints a letter from Hazen (at Fort Hays) to the ASPCA’s Henry Bergh stating his concern. McCormick led the fight for federal bison protection during the 1870s. See Hornaday, 514; Hazen’s letter was first printed in the article “Slaughter of Buffaloes,” *Harper’s Weekly*, February 24, 1872, 165-66.

324 *Congressional Globe*, House of Representatives, 42nd Congress, 2nd Session, p. 179.

Worrall (1825-1902), consists of five “snapshots,” graphically detailing what the author believed to be the main causes of the bison slaughter (fig. A76). The caption reads “Wanton Destruction of Buffalo: Hi the Poor Bison,” echoing terminology used by “true sportsmen” when denouncing “wanton” market or pot hunting of other game. Though many other authors and artists obviously saw the market aspect of the slaughter as the overriding factor, here, undisciplined sport is presented as the central cause.326

Another dramatic bison hunt image from 1872, which has allusions to buffalo running and the hide market, was William de la Montagne Cary’s Manifest Destiny, illustrated in The Aldine (fig. A77).327 It showed a white market hunter (perhaps based on William Cody) and a Native American, buffalo running side by side. They are not threatening one another, but rather racing neck and neck, to see who will finish off this last buffalo. The title is instructive; the Indian hunter watches his life source being depleted by white hunters, and many were beginning to see the extermination of the animal as necessary to complete the mission of westward expansion. Some pages later in the journal, a similarly-titled poem by R. H. Stoddard, makes the race out to be a race war, which adds a twist to Cary’s narrative of whites and Indians as equally culpable for the bison slaughter. Cary’s knowledge of movements by the federal government towards bison protection seems certain, based on the essays that accompanied his art.328


327 “Manifest Destiny,” The Aldine 5, no. 2 (February 1872), 37. Stoddard’s poem is on p. 47 of this issue.

328 Ladner, 104-5. The survey that Cary’s accompanied reported on the bison carcasses that blanketed the Plains, as reported in “Pictures from the Plains,” Scribner’s Monthly, December 1871, 143-146. Cary wrote some articles for Forest and Stream. See William de la Montagne Cary, “Reminiscences of Old Shokan,” Forest & Stream 87, no. 7 (February 14, 1914): 201-23.
Many of the sporting journals available after 1870 served as vehicles for conservation-minded editors such as Charles Hallock and George Bird Grinnell. As sport historian John Reiger notes, with the publication of the popular sporting magazines *American Sportsman* (1871), *Forest and Stream* (1873), and *Field and Stream* (1874), “a steady stream of propaganda against the marketmen” made its way into public thought, just as the political fight for bison protection was beginning a second round.329 At the same time, liberal and reformist American periodicals, such as *Harper’s* and *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated*, continued to publish damning visions of wastrel sportsmen, and gory or satirical views of the market hunting of buffalo.

Cary, like Tait, could be highly derivative, but as with *Guardians of the Herd - Buffalo Bulls Charging Hunters* (fig. A54), sometimes produced uniquely effective pictures that raised public awareness of issues in the West. The pathos in the *Guardians* is palpable. Bowing down before the hunter, the guardian is exhausted and dying, as is the herd it represents. Like *Manifest Destiny*, *Guardians* also alludes to the rivalry between the Pembina Métis-Scot settlers and the Dakota. In the background, a Native American hunter uses bow and arrow to add to the slaughter, as a wounded bull attempts to gore his horse. Cary’s white hunter, however, is more sinister than heroic. By presenting the passionate bison scene, he was not only fulfilling *Harper’s* editorial demands, but expressing his own shock at the drastic decline in buffalo numbers since his 1861 visit.

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329Reiger, *American Sportsman*, 48. *American Sportsman* was a vehicle for State Association members, while *Forest and Stream* was an organ for the city’s NYAPG. See Tober, 232.
An avid sportsman, Cary journeyed up the Missouri to Fort Benson, a main bison hide outpost, in 1861 with friends Emlen N. Lawrence and William H. Schieffelin, and again alone from 1874 to 1875. During these journeys he experienced many forms of frontier hunting – including buffalo hunting – while collecting images to contribute to the illustrated weeklies, and to work up into oil paintings. Schieffelin and Lawrence, were undoubtedly “true sportsmen;” both well-to-do Manhattanites with family connections to the NYSC, they had all the money and introduction letters necessary for the trip West. Outfitted with a muzzle-loading birding gun and a pointer, the three young men expected some “true” sport in the Forester sense, but Cary was also anxious to meet and hunt with Indians. One picture by Cary, titled *A Surprise Charge*, shows two humorously composed Caucasian sportsmen stumbling in the bushes as a bison moves in their direction. Probably an autobiographical image (Cary wrote of such an event having occurred during his hunting expedition with Schieffelin and Lawrence in the vicinity of Ft. Union), the picture reveals that Cary was not averse to self-deprecation. On Cary’s return to the upper Missouri in 1874, he noted the inconceivable decline in wildlife since his last stay.

After his two lengthy frontier trips, Cary returned to Manhattan and spent the rest of his life converting his field sketches to oil paintings. He apparently once shared a

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331 Ladner, 3, 49-52.


333 Cary claimed in an interview shortly before his death that his desire to hunt with Indians this was his reason for his western travel. See ibid, 17, 76, and 217.
studio with Albert Bierstadt, and seems to have spent much time sporting in upstate New York; he produced a number of Adirondack scenes during his career. Like Bierstadt, and many of his sporting artist brethren, Cary appears to have been deeply concerned with the conservation of wildlife and the abuses by market hunters, and expressed these feelings in his journals and *Guardian of the Herd* conveyed Cary’s unease with buffalo hunters. Cary’s images of white savagery and commercial hunting, from both *The Aldine* and in *Harper’s*, provided further evidence for the government that action was needed.334

**Amateurs and Wastrels**

An illustration titled *Sport on the Plains*, for a March 1874 *Harper’s Weekly* article was a striking condemnation of the “sport” of shooting bison from one’s carriage, be it horse-pulled or train car (fig. A78). Having stepped out of the wagon, an urban gentleman in top hat stands next to a “trapper” in fringed buckskin, and begins to shoot some grazing animals. The article, in reference to the picture, notes that the resulting carcasses are the work of the “professional hunter and amateur sportsman.”335 One particular image must have had a powerful effect on the reader of the day: a cartoon in *Harper’s Weekly* from June 6, 1874 (fig. A79) titled *The Last Buffalo*. The engraving shows a bison bull removing his robe so as to give it to an awe-struck elder trapper. “Don’t shoot, my good fellow!” the bull pleads, “Here, take my ‘robe,’ save your

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ammunition, and let me go in peace.” Through this type of imagery, Harper’s would play an important role in gaining public sentiment for bison protection.

The pointed cartoons of tourist or backwoodsman shooters and Cary’s violent scenes in Harper’s Weekly anticipated what was to be one of the most startling pictures of the hide hunters: an illustration by collaborators Paul Frenzeny (1840-1902) and Jules Tavernier (1844-1889). The picture, which served as the cover for the December 12, 1874 issue (fig. A80), shows a hide stripper with knife in hand, holding up a freshly removed buffalo skin. The skinned bison lies in the immediate foreground, its muscles exposed, its huge head staring forward. Titled Slaughtered for the Hide, the image and the text stresses the waste and butchery inherent in the enterprise. The artists employed stage-like lighting to focus the viewers’ attention on the creature, on its eyes, stripped body, and bloody frame. The single creature symbolizes the remaining herd at its last hour. A darkened and ominous sky casts eerie shadows on the scene and on the knife-wielding hide stripper’s face, which adds an even more sinister quality to the figure’s action. Larry Barsness, in The Bison in Art, refers to the work as “instructive melodrama designed…to stir us against the waste and brutality of hide gathering.” In describing the stripped bison image, the text noted that while the vast amount of such slaughter was caused by professional hunters, “many have fallen victim to the sportsman’s rage for

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336Harper’s Weekly, June 6, 1874, 484.
337Harper’s Weekly, December 12, 1874, cover; description on 1022.
338Barsness, 20.
killing merely for the sake of killing,” but it neglected to distinguish between amateur sportsmen/tourists and “true sportsmen.”

Considering the heated debate in Congress in the mid-1870s, it would seem there would have been more visual commentary produced, but images criticizing the bison slaughter were relatively few and far between. Sadly, what could have been the end of the slaughter was just the beginning; the rise in public awareness of the extermination coincided with new hostilities with those Indian tribes that depended on the animal for their livelihood. After the Battle of the Little Big Horn in June 1876, the military’s desire to eradicate the bison in order to make the Sioux compliant received greater support, and the slaughter continued until the species was virtually extinct.

In the late 1870s, white hunters of bison in periodical illustrations are almost always presented on foot, as still hunters, carrying out the systematic, government-ordained slaughter. These shooters were “hit-men,” one-time hide hunters working as sharp-shooters, and still-hunting in these scenarios was not a display of sporting skill, but rather of methodical killing. An example of its early employment occurs in what may be the last bison image to appear in *Harper’s Weekly*; the illustration, from the March 10, 1877 issue, depicts a number of hunters shooting a herd of anxious animals from a few yards away. The method was described here as being carried out “on foot with a rifle,” for men “who follow buffalo hunting as a business.”

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339 The author of this article was most likely Frenzeny, who with Tavernier, began his tour west in Parsons, Kansas in 1873. Frenzeny and Tavernier probably gained their information, in part, from the Hazen faction at Fort Hays, and not Brackett in Omaha, who would have set them straight on the difference between amateur and “true” sportsmen.

A decade later, a painting titled *The Still Hunt* (1888, fig. A81) was made by a little known artist James Henry Moser (1854-1913), and remains one of the most truthful scenes of the slaughter ever to be rendered. Though similar in format to the 1877 illustration in *Harper’s*, the increase in distance between the shooter and his victims in Moser’s scene makes the dispassionate and systematic aspect of the operation explicit. Reminiscent of Winslow Homer’s Civil War picture *The Sharpshooter* as a statement of methodical sniper-style killing, the scene depicts a single figure lying on his stomach on a snowy bluff, overlooking a herd numbering in the thousands. The gunman aims his weapon upon a puzzled buffalo on the herd’s edge, who stares back unknowingly toward the man; dozens of fallen brethren lay in the midst of the grazing thousands. The hunter is dressed in modern hunting apparel: cowboy hat, brown hunting jacket, black boots, pistol holster, and a belt of ammunition. A second ammo belt lies next to him, as he carries out his job of mowing down the herd. The image was commissioned by Dr. William T. Hornaday, the Smithsonian’s chief taxidermist, to illustrate his exhaustive treatise on the bison’s extermination. Released in 1889, Hornaday’s buffalo census showed that in three decades, herds totaling in the millions had been reduced to approximately five-hundred individuals. As a small engraving for the publication, Moser’s image surely lost some of its impact.\(^{341}\) The original painting, however, which later exhibited at the Cincinnati Exposition in Hornaday’s “Extermination Exhibition,” is striking on many levels, not least of which is the landscape, literally covered in bison, both living and dead.

Moser created the scene at a moment when the few hundred bison that remained were living in semi-protected parks, like Yellowstone and private ranches in Texas,

Montana and Canada. Game laws were finally being enforced in the western territories, and seasons were more strictly complied with; still, poachers continued to cause trouble for the newly-established game wardens in these parks and territories. The Boone and Crockett Club, a sportsmen’s association founded in 1888 by Theodore Roosevelt and George Bird Grinnell, was organized in part to fight this rampant poaching of the Nation’s wildlife. Their club had a strong protectionist agenda, was vehemently against unfair hunting methods, and, after the NYSC, was the most influential sporting club in America, working on a national level, writing and lobbying legislation for federal game law.  

One of most popular bison hunt images of the century, Albert Bierstadt’s *Last of the Buffalo* (1888, fig. A82) was produced amid the backdrop of the Boone and Crockett Club and the conservation movement. German-born and trained, Albert Bierstadt (1830-1902) was an active member of the club, but his association may have been more for patronage than for recreation. Bierstadt doesn’t appear to have enjoyed hunting as a sport; his former friend and travel companion Fitz Hugh Ludlow commented that, though Bierstadt was “a skilled hunter,” the artist “had seen enough buffalo-hunting…to care little for it.” White hunters in his traveling party took pot-shots at the bison in order to present Bierstadt with more dramatic scenes, until he demanded that they “end the

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342 For the guidelines of the Club, see George B. Grinnell and Theodore Roosevelt, eds., *Trail and Camp Fire, the Book of the Boone and Crockett Club* (New York: Forest and Stream Publishing Company, 1897). The Club did keep track of numbers killed, finding this an important part of big game hunting.

suffering.”

Despite these experiences, Bierstadt’s final product was the old romantic standard, complete with Native Americans and primitive weapons, repeating the conventions of Catlin and his artistic progeny.

In defense of the painting, which was rejected by the American selection committee to the 1889 Paris Exposition Universelle for spurious reasons, Bierstadt wrote that he had “endeavored to show the buffalo in all his aspects and depict the cruel slaughter of an animal now almost extinct.” The painting does succeed in conveying cruelty, and even empathy, thanks to the returned gaze of the centrally-positioned fallen bison. However, it was far from the “cruel slaughter” Bierstadt knew it to be. Why did the artist not present the facts? Perhaps it was because the gory topics of hide hunting, skinning, and bone gathering were not suited for fine art – especially with the dominance of French-inspired subjects and styles after the 1860s. Most Americans seem to have wanted to see Indians in the role, doing the dastardly deed in savage, primordial style. It may have also been that Bierstadt had always wanted to paint a full panoramic history painting of the subject. Still, given his insight into the true cause of the slaughter, Bierstadt’s casting the Indian as the culprit is significant; a definite nod to the romanticized buffalo hunt scenes of an earlier generation, Bierstadt’s painting was also


345 Those who painted the traditional composition included: T. R. Peale, Catlin, Peter Rindisbacher (1820s), Felix Darley, John Mix Stanley (1845, Smithsonian Museum of American Art), Carl Wimar (1861, Gilcrease Museum), J. Marx (1869, Kennedy Gallery Quarterly, 5, no. 1 (1964), 11), Ernest Guiset (ca. 1870, Amon Carter), Charles C. Nahl (ca. 1870, Private), William Jacob Hays (1872, William B. Ruger Collection), and J. Cook (1872, Old Print Shop Portfolio 16, no.7, p. 165); in 1873, Peale revised his 1820 sketch that kicked off the convention, an oil on canvas located in the Sheldon Museum, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

346 New York World, March 31, 1889, quoted in Hendricks, 286.
an expression of the circulating views regarding the “Indian problem,” that exterminating the animal would bring an end to the conflict.347

**Final Thoughts**

Even with popular, influential artists like Audubon and Catlin speaking out, protection for the bison would not become a rallying cry for “true sportsmen” until the 1870s, and not gain national concern until the late 1880s, when the bison millions had already been reduced to mere hundreds, scattered across the plains. The popular view that this shaggy animal was a special, even iconic species to be preserved grew gradually over these decades, thanks in large part to American artists and writers, but also to the onslaught of American and European big game sportsmen and tourists into America’s wilderness.

Originally working as propaganda for tourism and potential settlement, early buffalo hunt imagery also glorified the extermination of an animal thought of as a nuisance to development and a liability in terms of what they considered the “Indian problem.” As the century progressed, artists attempting to incorporate white hunters into the traditional iconography had difficulty overcoming the view of the hunt as savage, chaotic and anachronistic. Mid-century “true sportsmen,” standing apart from the frontier pastime, were quick to see the problems with bison as a market commodity, and began to speak out. However, because of the removed nature of buffalo hunting and vocal market interests, this cause had trouble attracting the kind of legislative protection and

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347The irony is noted in *Animals in American Art, 1880s-1980s* (exh. cat., Nassau County Museum of Fine Art, Roslyn, New York, 1981), 4; and in Anderson and Ferber, 103, among other sources. A long list of traditional bison hunt paintings exists for the years immediately following Bierstadt’s production. Some of these include those by A. D. M. Cooper (1889), John Dare Howland (ca. 1890, Nelson-Atkins Museum), G. H. Stephens (ca. 1890, Buffalo Bill Historical Center), Walter Shirlaw (1890, Univ. of Texas, Austin), and Charles Russell (1891, Minneapolis Institute of Arts; 1894, Amon Carter Museum). Produced in the years just preceding Bierstadt’s were Charles Craig’s *Buffalo Hunt* (1882, Pioneer Museum, Colorado Springs), and William Cary’s (ca. 1879, Denver Public Library).
enforcement that game hunting received in the Eastern states. Artist-sportsmen
nevertheless helped shape how well-to-do art patrons understood the actual business of
buffalo killing, essentially by focusing on its market and tourist aspects; yet, by retaining
throughout the century the visual connection and savage subtext of the traditional buffalo
hunt composition, the act of buffalo hunting remained the provenance of Native
Americans, at least in the minds of elite “true sportsmen” and non-hunters.
CHAPTER 4
TEACHING THE NEXT GENERATION

It is late afternoon in rural New Jersey. Two male figures – a boy and an adult – gaze up into the overcast sky at their quarry, their faces revealing determination and an inkling of anxiety. The man – with rugged features, a faded orange bandanna on his head, leather hunting jacket and knee-high boots – crouches down in the brush on one knee, and takes aim with his flint-lock rifle at a distant flock of game birds. Kneeling behind him, his young protégé fixes his eyes on the same flying prize, and waits eagerly with a powder horn, ready to assist the master huntsman. Their setter gazes intently in the same direction, and a pile of recently killed fowl lies at the hunter’s feet. Focusing on a hidden target in the clouds, and with his grounded, heroic posture, the dominant figure seems to represent an American David. Like Michelangelo’s David, the facial expressions on each of the party reveal the introspective tension that precedes the slaying of a foe. Though, here, the battle is man vs. nature. Teaching his pupil a time-honored method of the hunt, the adult figure in William Ranney’s On the Wing (1850, fig. A83) also educates the viewer on the proper role of the patriarch and sportsman in mid-nineteenth century America.

As previously described, Ranney’s frontier scenes usually featured lone trappers pursued by an undisclosed enemy. However, he was equally known as a painter of children, most of whom are depicted assisting an elder in a sporting event. On the Wing carries hints of the wildness of the frontier through the figure’s dress and rugged features, but he is also the heroic hunter-turned-fatherly sportsman. He teaches his young student through example, demonstrating one of the cardinal techniques of “true sportsmen:”
shooting “on the wing,” simultaneously promoting Forester’s idea that greater masculinity resulted from proper sporting behavior.

Childhood had long been a popular theme in American genre painting, and was an especially popular subject at mid-century. Artist-sportsmen were particularly drawn to the subject, as it allowed them to concentrate on seemingly less-violent topics, and create hunting narratives with sentimental or comic overtones. Some artists, such as William Ranney, John George Brown, and Winslow Homer combined their passion for sporting art with youth-centered narratives, and produced art of a more serious nature. The growing interest in this genre coincided with a push by sports writers to reach out to the nation’s adolescents and to teach proper hunting etiquette to the next generation. Businesses that sold recreational sporting goods were also quick to tap into this market, with ads specifically designed to appeal to the young sportsman/consumer.

Herbert, writing as Forester, often addressed young male shooters, and in The Complete Manual for Young Sportsmen (1856), the master of true American sportsmanship spoke specifically of the proper tutelage of the young. They should be “under supervision of a careful, kind, and steady instructor…care being had, never to hurry or agitate the learner…Encouragement is needed, not rebuke.” Forester firmly believed it essential to learn some techniques early, including shooting “on the wing:"

If there be two things on earth, which, to be done well, must be done young, they are to shoot on the wing, and to ride across-country. They cannot be learned old, more than it can ‘to speak the truth.”

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348 For this popularity during the nineteenth century, see Claire Perry, Young America: Childhood in Nineteenth-Century Art and Culture (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); and Elizabeth Johns, American Genre Painting, specifically 47-50, 110-114, 152-157, and 184-196.


Herbert’s instructions for America’s youth had widespread appeal, and if one is to judge based on the frequency his words were cited by the Spirit’s correspondents, his books were a fixture in many sportsmen’s libraries. Interestingly, Herbert describes a (possibly) fictitious painting of a child assisting an adult in the hunt in his first sporting novel, My Shooting Box (1846). The painting depicts a shooter with a pile of game at his feet as his boy helper holds the horse’s bridle. The inclusion of this description reinforces the fact that art played an important role in Herbert’s view of sport, and emphasizes the significance of education in sportsmanship.

“True sportsmen” like Herbert sought to instill in America’s youth an awareness of animal conservation and a distaste for market-hunters and poachers. Artistic representations of children hunting present various stages in the evolution of the sportsman ideal, from the undisciplined trapping and backwoods types, to “true sportsmen.” Included among them are images of the problematic side of hunting, depicting unsportsmanlike children beyond the bounds of control and without proper supervision. “Boys” had been associated with poaching and wanton hunting practices for much of the century, and the term was used condescendingly by sportsmen such as Audubon and Herbert. Artists dealt with this stigma of youthful hunters in their compositions. It was crucial to pass down the masculine ideal and guide youth toward proper sporting etiquette. Part of the moral guidance required of America’s patrician class

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351 Herbert, My Shooting Box, 23-24.

included the provision of outdoor education for the next generation, and art furthered this mission.

**Children with Game and Guns**

Before Ranney took the lead in this genre in the 1850s, an interest in painting children and their development was already apparent in the work of a number of well-known American artists. Asher B. Durand, William Sidney Mount, Francis W. Edmonds, Henry Inman, and a host of others produced highly sentimental, nostalgic images of childhood. The concept of childhood as a unique stage in life was solidified by mid-century. Children were frequently shown involved in age-appropriate activities, or inserted into landscape paintings to add an idyllic innocence to the picture. Proscribed gender roles were already apparent in these compositions, with girls shown almost exclusively in maternal situations (existing in the domestic sphere, caring for younger siblings and pets, and sometimes reading and drawing), and boys mimicking adult males (shown outdoors, fighting, roughhousing, teasing each other, and hunting).

At least one contemporary guide on childrearing was concerned with this mimicking behavior, and outspoken on the evils associated with sport shooting. Catherine Beecher, when discussing proper amusements for children in her manual *A Treatise on Domestic Economy, for the Use of Young Ladies at Home and at School* (first published in 1842), stressed that “when children see grown persons kill and frighten animals, for sport, habits of cruelty…are induced.” When deciding on appropriate games for children, she was firm that “all sports which involve suffering to animals should be utterly forbidden.” According to Beecher, “hunting can never be justified,” though she did allow
for adult hunters in pursuit of food or for their health. Besides Beecher, authors of childrearing manuals seem to have left the subject of boys hunting alone. Child periodicals, however, were a different matter. One periodical that gave much space to such narratives was Robert Merry’s Museum and Parley’s Magazine, founded by the original “Peter Parley,” the author and editor, Samuel G. Goodrich.

Goodrich, who had purchased (and most likely commissioned) Thomas Cole’s 1827 painting of Daniel Boone to feature in his gift book, The Token, relayed his own experiences as a teenage hunter in Merry’s Museum, as well as other possibly apocryphal sporting stories, all of which were essentially moralistic tales. In these, Goodrich routinely expressed the certainty that a lack of shooting instruction by a master, as well as trespassing and poaching behavior, would lead the young hunter to a troubled life and to cruelty. Goodrich was not alone in his warning. In fact, the frequency of “shooting-gone-awry” narratives in children’s literature suggests at once the commonality of sport shooting among middle-class boys, and the anxious concern adult writers had for undisciplined youth who did not follow the sportsman’s code, the ignorance of which the authors linked to immorality and social chaos. Such moralistic sporting narratives coincided with the rise in the visual art production of children hunting.

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353 Catherine E. Beecher, A Treatise on Domestic Economy, for the Use of Young Ladies at Home and at School, 3rd ed. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1856), 244-245.

American artists who painted hunting scenes with children did not have many specific European precedents to follow. European laws forbade many of the sporting situations that were possible in the States, and both the actuality and representation of children hunting with guns and traps was rare in Europe, except in the case of portraits of aristocratic youth. The hunting child appears to have been a uniquely American topic, and artists here had to invent their scenarios largely from scratch. Some childhood hunting scenes appear to be based on personal memories, since many artists began their interest in sporting during childhood, often hunting with older, male relatives.

Child compositions allowed artists to make social and political commentary that might otherwise be seen as divisive or inflammatory. Backwoods poverty (particularly in the post-Civil War South) and immigration were two issues commonly addressed. Barefoot children shown trapping birds and dressed in ragged clothes could be a reference to these or to criminal and non-civil behavior in general. Lower-class boys shown trapping or holding up dead game could be interpreted by some as nostalgic, but, as in James Beard’s Western Squatters (aka Westward Ho!) (1850, fig. A40), it could be social critique, particularly by the middle and upper class viewers who attended art

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355 Weidner, 81, mentions Boys Ferreting Rabbits (1823), the engraving of which appeared in London’s Sporting Magazine 12 (Aug. 1823), opp. 225; and another from 1855, William Hemsley’s Expectation, of three boys and a girl in a trapping escapade, engraved in Illustrated London News (March 3, 1855), 204. Edwin Landseer produced a few portraits of aristocratic boys shown in hunting situations, which were available as engravings, including The Chieftain’s Friends – Lord Richard Cavendish (1829; engraved by J. C. Armytage in 1862), and The Return from the Warren – Ashley Ponsonby (1843; published by Ernest Gambart in 1848). See Stephens, 20, 23 and 80; The Art Journal (London) (January 1862); and “The Parthenon,” New Castle Courant, March 21, 1851, 1, col. E.

356 An earlier print by Baroque master Abraham Bosse depicts two boys as chicken poachers, one shouldering a musket. See Robert Held, Age of Firearms, 70. Similarly, boys shouldering muskets may have signified poaching in American, as Audubon uses this exact description were discussing crow killers. See BOA, vol. 2, 317; also see ibid., vol. 2, 158, where Audubon describes squatter children “tormenting” a siskin. Audubon almost always describes boys as destructive and cruel.
exhibitions and purchased fine art. Children outside of civilized society could signify for sportsmen the dark side of hunting that “true” sportsmen railed against.

**Audubon, “Boys,” and the Market**

Fathers, uncles and other male caretakers were charged with shaping the next generation of the nation’s male youth. For “true sportsmen” this included educating them about the dangers inherent in sport shooting and outdoor life, the importance of following game laws, and the potential threat to their sport by poachers and market-hunters. Perhaps the most significant example of this was of Robert B. Roosevelt to his nephew Theodore. Part of Theodore’s education involved learning about hunting’s connection to natural history, and the great hunter-naturalists that had come before, such as John James Audubon.

Audubon was a role model for many aspiring young artists and naturalists, yet he often expressed ambivalence toward boy hunters. He frequently wrote of boys and amateur hunters as united in their destruction of game. Always the paradoxical figure, Audubon both needed and cursed young hunters. When describing the slaughter of passenger pigeons in Louisville, he complained that boys were shooting alongside adult gunners in a reckless manner, “incessantly shooting at the pilgrims…multitudes were thus destroyed.” Audubon made similar statements about abuses of the American woodcock, by “naughty boys” involved in “barbarous sport,” which, on one occasion, he

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357 Modern texts on nineteenth century gender roles claim that mothers were responsible for the social and spiritual development of boys. This contrasted with the behavior encouraged by fathers, for older boys, which Mintz calls the “Successful Businessman” model. Like the Freudian Id and the Super-ego, Mintz includes another characteristic to the equation: the “Primitive” man, in which the hunter might reveal himself. Mintz, 71; Nancy F. Cott, “Notes Toward an Interpretation of Antebellum Childrearing,” *Psychohistory Review* 6, no.4 (Spring 1978): 4-20. Also see Rotundo, 227-232.

358 “Passenger Pigeon,” *BOA*, vol. 1, p. 321. For New York market, see *BOA*, vol. 1, p. 326. See *Ibid*, vol. 3, 474-5, for Audubon’s thoughts against boys fire-hunting woodcock.
personally intervened to stop. However he also used young hunters to supply him with specimens and wrote that “the boys who go out shooting can bring you a great variety of the birds....”\textsuperscript{359} Audubon demonstrates that gentleman-sportsmen were concerned that boys with no code of conduct recklessly slaughtered game, even as he acknowledged that the undisciplined hunter, though problematic, was at times necessary or at least convenient.

Though presenting few adults and no child hunters in his animal pictures, Audubon had a unique perspective as the father of two boys, whom he raised to be hunter-naturalists and to capture, shoot and draw specimens alongside him. Audubon also employed the young Joseph R. Mason, age thirteen, to hunt and purchase specimens for him.\textsuperscript{360} Audubon realized that without a true-sportsman’s counsel, children would fall into wasteful habits and thus threaten populations of game and song birds. Though his precise impact on the nation’s youth is difficult to measure, one of the most important leaders in the wildlife conservation movement was an early Audubon devotee: George Bird Grinnell. Grinnell went to grade school in the Audubon’s house, and fondly remembered his first experience shooting on the Audubon estate.\textsuperscript{361} Other young


\textsuperscript{360}Mason relayed to Neal that “Audubon use to spend every farthing he could rake and scrape together upon the birds that were brought to market for sale, and had always a number of hunters on the look out for him.” John Neal, \textit{New England Galaxy} 18, no.16 (April 18, 1835), reprinted in Irving T. Richards, “Audubon, Joseph R. Mason, and John Neal,” \textit{American Literature} 6, no.2 (May 1934): 132.

\textsuperscript{361}George Bird Grinnell, “Some Audubon Letters,” \textit{The Auk} 33, no. 2 (April 1916): 119 and 129, and Grinnell, “Recollections of Audubon Park,” \textit{The Auk} 37, no. 3 (July 1920): 372-380. William Jacob Hays was another Audubon follower, who traced his route up the Missouri in 1860. See \textit{Turf, Field and Farm} 2 (March 31, 1866), 202, and (April 28, 1866), 266.
naturalists, some in their teens, like Spencer F. Baird, would send Audubon specimens and data, seek his approval, and develop in his shadow.\(^{362}\)

From the time of Audubon’s first published narratives, particularly volume 2 of *BOA*, which includes most of the negative comments on boys, the theme of child hunters and boys trapping game was popular among artist-sportsmen.\(^{363}\) American sporting artists who came of age reading and idealizing Audubon incorporated his messages about moral instruction for young hunters into their hunting scenes. Some of these pictures may have had some didactic purpose such as Ranney’s *On the Wing* and William Brown’s *Young Sportsman* (1839, missing). Others are less clear in motive, such as James H. Shegogue’s unlocated *Boys with Dead Birds* (1838).\(^{364}\) An intriguing painting from this time is Thomas LeClear’s *The Young Hunter* (ca. 1840, Private Collection), which shows a young girl helping her younger, barefoot brother at archery, as a more humbly-dressed farm boy gazes mysteriously out at the viewer. What is most interesting about many of the pre-1850 imagery is that the children are usually depicted alone, without adults advising or assisting. The children are free to roam as they please, and learn from one another.


\(^{363}\)Some late-colonial and early republic period portraits of boys present them holding firearms, as props to emphasize their military prospects, and to distinguish them from girls. For example, see John Trumbull’s *Philip Church* (1784, San Francisco Art Museums). Volume 2 of *BOA* was published in Boston, 1832.

\(^{364}\)William G. Brown’s *Young Sportsman* (exhibited at AAU in 1839, owned by B. Natham, Esq.) cannot be located, but it may be related to an image reproduced in *Godey’s Lady’s Book* 50 (April 1855)(online version, Proquest), with the title *The Little Sportsman*, a sweet, sentimental picture showing a brother helping a four-year-old aim his tiny bow toward a dead, strung-up black bird. It illustrates a poem by Pauline Forsyth. Düsseldorf-trained Wilhelm Simmler exhibited a painting titled *The Young Sportsman* (ca. 1866) at the Opera House Art Association, in June 1866, which was described in the sales catalogue as “a capital piece of sporting comedy.” See SIRIS, Smithsonian Index online.
Realities of Hunting

At mid-century, both boys and girls were hunting animals as a fact of rural life, particularly in the newly-settled western and south-western territories. However, despite the fact that young females shot and trapped game alongside their brothers and husbands, girls and women would soon vanish from American hunting scenes, and not reemerge until the last decades of the century. The hunt was understood as a masculine rite of passage. Still, depictions of boy hunters carry a wide range of meaning, and had various levels of interpretation. Whether helping an adult, or making the kill themselves, these American children represent industrious youth. The fact that most of these scenes present the boys barefoot, however, is significant; this conveyed rural life and/or poverty, and scenes with such characters may be read as classist commentary. When shown hunting, the child is intimately in touch with the violence of the activity, and is a symbol of both the possibilities of unlimited hunting, and the regional issues associated with taking game from sportsman.

Mount’s Boy Trappers

One of the first and arguably most important American genre painters of the mid century, William Sidney Mount, often included children in his art. Mount’s boys are usually presented in realistic situations, although with a hint of nostalgia and humor. The children wear clothing that evoke rustic charm and the scenes are usually set near his rural hometown of Stony Brook, Long Island. The rural charm of these images may have

365 For examples of boys and girls hunting, see John Faragher, Women and Men on the Overland Trail (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979); and Elliott West and Paula Evans Petrik, Small Worlds: Children and Adolescents in America, 1850-1950 (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1992), 30. Women hunters appear to a small degree as subjects in fine art after 1876 and the Centennial Exposition, though mainly in photographs. See Rotundo, 35 & 44.
conveyed a simpler time, and a contrast to urban blight and corruption. Developing a large clientele in Manhattan, Mount depicted these scenes for both urban businessmen and the rural dweller. Dividing his time between city and country, Mount produced a number of hunt-related paintings of boys who, like the artist, existed between these two extremes. His pictures are essentially contemporary narratives of boys in rural America, made for adult men who, in most cases, came from a similar background.

*Trapping Rabbits*, also titled *Catching Rabbits* (1839, fig. A84) was one such work. Commissioned by Charles Augustus Davis of New York, a Whig politician and one of Mount’s regular patrons, the painting has been interpreted as a humorous scene, filled with political puns. The oil-on-panel scene shows two boys, dressed in frayed suits, working in concert to capture rabbits. One boy resets a trap, as the other holds up the latest catch for the viewer’s inspection. The boys anticipate later depictions of street kids, such as George Henry Yewell’s *The Bootblack (Doing Nothing)* (1852, New-York Historical Society), or the delinquents in scenes by David Gilmour Blythe (1815-1865); like those children, Mount’s trappers are struggling to survive in the outskirts of the city, in the winter no less.

At the time Mount’s pictures were produced, the term “hares” signified potential Whig voters, and so the inclusion of these animals may have been interpreted as a

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friendly jab at the conservative Davis’ party and its methods of snaring voters.\textsuperscript{367} That being said, the scenario was based in reality, as the region was confronting political and economic strife, with farmers struggling with falling grain prices and barren fields that forced many to sell their farms.\textsuperscript{368} In the painting the boys are essentially harvesting the fields for dinner. Whether they were interpreted as scenes of scavengers by Mount’s patrons and Manhattan audience, or regarded fondly as nostalgic visions, Mount’s paintings of young hunters struck a chord, with engravings of them reaching far into America and abroad.\textsuperscript{369}

Mount’s \textit{Trap Sprung, Winter} (1844, fig. A85), painted for Edward L. Carey, a Philadelphia engraver and publisher of gift books, may be similarly interpreted as political commentary.\textsuperscript{370} The painting depicts a snowy bank near a forest, where two boys tramp through the brush. One boy carrying a dead rabbit by its hind feet walks toward a sprung trap. They are several years younger than the boys in the 1839 painting, and not as comical. In addition to the allusion to captive Whigs, these images spoke to sportsmen of the need for legislation against poaching. A companion piece to \textit{Trap Sprung, Bird-Egging (Summer)} (1844) shows a ten-year-old boy walking away with a nest of eggs, as

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{367}As recent scholarship has shown, most notably by Elizabeth Johns, Mount’s pictures may have been read as political statements, with known partisan puns intentionally imbedded in his images.
\item \textsuperscript{369}As advertised in the \textit{Cleveland Herald} (June 17, 1851, col. A), subscribers to the Artists’ Union of Cincinnati received an engraving of \textit{Catching Rabbits}.
\item \textsuperscript{370}Illustrated in \textit{Antiques} vol. 126, p. 1157. Mount exhibited one other trapping image, \textit{Going Trapping} (1862), at the NAD that year, purchased by Charles B. Wood. According to letters between them, the composition included the same basic elements as in \textit{A Dead Fall} (1844). See Frankenstein, \textit{Mount} (1968), 60-61. Also see Laurette E. McCarthy, “Patrons of William Sidney Mount’s Genre Subjects,” in Deborah Johnson, et al., \textit{William Sidney Mount: Painter of American Life} (exh. cat., Museums at Stony Brook with The American Federation of Arts, 1998), 131.
\end{itemize}
his two younger friends (or siblings) cry and attempt to stop him. Such birding (discussed more broadly later in this chapter) was generally common among struggling families but was considered poaching by “true sportsmen.”

Interestingly, Mount rarely depicted boys with guns, but rather as poor ragamuffins, setting traps or holding up game proudly, in stark contrast to his images of finely attired adult sportsmen. In 1862, Mount made another version of the Boys Trapping, which he sold to a faithful patron and friend, Charles B. Wood. Like earlier hunt scenes with children by Mount, his later pictures address political divisions, but they also touch on the realities of rural and city life, where children, many of whom were homeless, struggled to survive. Even children with homes and families often played a critical role in scoring game for their family’s daily nourishment. In his book Kids and Guns (1999), Ted Schwarz notes that on the American frontiers, “Men, women and children all knew how to handle rifles and shotguns so they could kill wild turkeys, deer, buffalo, rabbits, and squirrels…ducks, geese, and other birds.” During the nineteenth century, it was a given that if a father owned firearms and hunted for meat, he encouraged

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371 W. Alfred Jones, “A Sketch of the Life and Character of William S. Mount,” American Whig Review 8, no.2 (August 1851), 124, lists the painting’s title as Birding; the oil painting (12 ¼ x 17 in.) may have been engraved as a gift book illustration. The painting was later in Abraham M. Cozzens’ collection. See Christie, Manson & Woods International, Inc., Important American Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture of the 19th and 20th Centuries…Exhibition and Auction on December 9, 1983, Auction, “Cornelia” 5472, Lot 32.

372 Mount’s Any Fish Today (1857) shows a boy at an open door, enquiring (to the viewer!) whether the inhabitant wishes to purchase some of his catch. A gun is propped up in the doorway, and ducks swim temptingly in the distance. In a letter dated January 1854, Mount wrote that when he was 12 years old, he recalled “catching rabbits for amusement” during the winter after school; reprinted in Frankenstein, Mount (1975), 20. Another Mount scene in which a child assists an adult, Catching Crabs (1865, o/c, 18 x 24 in., Long Island Art Museum) recalls Ranney’s On the Wing composition, an image Mount would have been familiar with. However, obviously, rather than the sky, the figures both focus on the water.

373 Frankenstein (1968), 60-61.
his male offspring to learn to shoot. For farming families, a child who could protect grain harvests and livestock from destructive animals by gunning or trapping was an asset. In both cases, it increased the odds that the family would eat. Urban children, while though not commonly using firearms, also trapped and killed animals for bounties, fur, skins, and/or meat, in order to survive. Ironically, although pointing out these social issues, Mount’s presentation of the boys grinning suggests they are happy in their station and plight, and thus could be read as comical by upper-class viewers. Mount’s images of children hunting could therefore variously be read as political commentary, social commentary, or nostalgia, depending on the penchant of the viewer.

The Hunt as Military Training

American children’s literature has long promoted ideals of independence, freedom, responsibility and morality. Sporting and outdoor stories for boys presented hunting game in this light and as a rite of passage into manhood. Capt. Mayne Reid’s best seller about youthful western adventure – The Boy Hunters (Boston, 1852) – was a mid-century success, for example, and had a major impact on the attitudes of middle-class children. Playing to young males’ fantasies of Boone and of an outdoor, independent existence, Boy Hunters was the first in a string of adventure novels by Reid. This series

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375 Ted Schwarz, Kids and Guns: The History, the Present, the Dangers, the Risk, and the Remedies (New York: Franklin Watts, 1999), 17. Within American cities, children did what was needed to help their families survive, including trapping game. The use of knives (although rarely firearms) as weapons was not unusual by young members in inner-city gangs. The connection between pre-teens and teenagers using weapons for hunting and using them for criminal acts demands further study. See Steven Mintz, Huck’s Raft: A History of American Childhood (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 121.
spoke to the possibilities for America’s boys in the fields of battle and sport, and to the need for adult guidance.

The main premise of the first novel is that a Boone-like trapper helps two Southern backwoods boys track down a white buffalo for their father, who had always wanted the prized robe from that rarest animal but was now unable to hunt. While not addressing game law or “true sportsmanship” in any significant way, the book’s narrative and illustrations show the adult shooting while the children watch from a safe distance (fig. A86). The trapper serves as a surrogate father for the boys, offering them guidance in woodcraft, natural history and proper shooting methods. *Boy Hunters* was just one such adventure narrative dealing with sport on the frontier by Reid and others.

Reid was explicitly passionate about America’s military might and the need for the nation’s youth to support America’s territorial aspirations. In light of the growing sectional crisis and the author’s military background, his text rang of militancy and connected the two forms of “combat” in thousands of young minds, tying hunting and military training together.376 Not surprisingly, Theodore Roosevelt read Reid’s works avidly as a boy, helping inspire him to become a hunter-naturalist, and, perhaps, to see hunting’s connection to military heroics.377

The growth of America’s conservation ethic coincided with periods of war and violent conquest, and this martial mindset, which grew more intense in the 1860s,

376Reid was an American-Mexican War hero. In June 1849, he led five-hundred Americans in the European conflict against Russia. See Mayne Reid, “To the Young Men of America,” *New York Herald*, June 19, 1849, 1, col. E. Reid also sent correspondence to the *Spirit of the Times*, from June 1846 to October 1848, under the pseudonym “Ecolier.”

enveloped most children’s lives, having a powerful effect on the ways in which they related to one another. In his study on nineteenth-century American childhood, Steven Mintz notes that, at mid-century, boyhood was “defined in opposition to the confinement, dependence, and restraint of the domestic realm...It was a world of physicality, dirt and violence.” Mintz writes that after the Civil War, the nation’s youth searched for “moral equivalents to war,” resulting in “an emphasis on competitive sports and a strenuous life, which had a powerful impact on post-war middle-class boyhood.” The war brought out a martial spirit that “infected play.”

Looking back on his own sickly youth in the mid-1860s, Theodore Roosevelt noted that as a seven-year-old, he would play war and “running the blockade.” Hunting, too, helped fill the need for competition and dangerous play, allowing boys to express their “heightened violent nature” and allowing father figures to foster ‘proper’ masculine traits. Hunting was also widely seen as training for military combat.

Promotional literature surfaced around mid-century that encouraged the nation’s young males to take up arms for sport, to build the skills necessary for manhood, combat, and sporting camaraderie. English Lieutenant Colonel Peter Hawker’s Instructions to Young Sportsmen was held in particularly high regard. First published in 1814, but revised by William T. Porter for American readership in 1846, Instructions influenced future generations of sportsmen. The ideas promulgated in these books had been first

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379 Ibid. Forester also noted that because of their great shooting exposure, American boys are “easily convertible into soldiers.” See Forester, Young Sportsmen, 132-33.

introduced in the major sporting journals of the day for an adult readership, such as the *Spirit* and its predecessors – *American Turf Register* (1829-1844) in America, and *Sporting Magazine* (1792-1871) in London – but now were given organization as a reference manual for novices. Another mid-century essential for “true sportsmen” was Elisha J. Lewis’s *The American Sportsman* (Philadelphia, 1855). Not only did these two related texts echo Forester’s concern about pot- and market hunters, game conservation and seasonal limits, they emphasized training youth in proper sportsman techniques and behavior (fig. A87).

**Clonney’s Boy-Sportsmen**

Children’s trapping and shooting of game was also celebrated in the art of James Goodwyn Clonney (1812-1867), a genre painter who styled himself after Mount. In addition to depicting rural scenes, Clonney portrayed lower-class children in urban environments, usually critically, as threatening to the social order. Early in his career, Clonney was closely linked to Thomas Doughty and his periodical *The Cabinet of Natural History and American Rural Sports*. Based on his natural history studies, his later sporting subjects, and his association with Doughty and *The Cabinet*, it is likely Clonney was a sportsman.

In the mid-1830s, Clonney moved to New Rochelle, N.Y., a popular locale for shooting and fishing. Through his sporting connections, Clonney became familiar with

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the sporting art of the day and the ethics of “true sportsmanship” advanced by The Cabinet, which in turn may have inspired him to take up sporting imagery. In 1847, he exhibited his first known scene of children hunting at the American Art-Union, The Young Sportsman (unlocated). Unlike children in his later images, those in the painting are not especially threatening or comical, and they display the dress and behavior of “true sportsmen.” Like Mount’s Trapping Rabbits, Clonney’s The Trappers (1850, private collection) features two boys: a black child holding a dead rabbit, and a white boy resetting the trap. Their costly apparel suggests the white child is of the propertied, gentleman class, with the two most likely in a master/servant relationship. They appear as miniature versions of adult models. Even in surviving sketches for this painting (at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston), both boys appear to be dressed in fine sporting apparel, suggesting wealth and privilege (fig. A88). Such status is a crucial difference from Mount’s sporting children, who are clearly impoverished; Mount’s boys are trapping, Clonney’s are sporting. Clonney presented the different racial types working together, checking traps and enjoying each other’s company, essentially repeating Mount’s Boys Trapping composition. However, the focus on interracial harmony is unique, especially for Clonney, whose art is rarely free from satire and racist stereotyping. His sporting scenes of children do not have that same

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383 Clonney’s The Young Sportsman (no. 182 in the 1847 AAU show) was won or purchased by George W. Payton, of Cedar Grove, East Providence, RI. In correction of past misstatements by writers on Clonney, Clonney’s family emigrated from Liverpool, England, arriving in New York City in March 1818, when the artist was six.

384 Lucretia H. Giese, “James Goodwyn Clonney (1812-1867): American Genre Painter,” American Art Journal 11, no. 4 (October 1979): 26. At the time, Clonney was considered a follower of Mount by the Press. Interestingly, Clonney’s black children are usually positioned above the white characters, in contrast to his adult black figures, which are generally positioned lower in the scene and usually depicted as buffoons, and set in satirical, humorous scenes.
sense of satire, but political allusions can, and have been, drawn. Claire Perry, for instance, has attributed Clonney’s switching of the traditional white-above-black hierarchy in paintings and sketches to the artist’s desire to disturb “even staunchly abolitionist viewers.”

In his painting *Which Way Shall We Go?* (1850, fig. A89), and in the sketches for it (fig. A90), Clonney presents two young sportsmen, perhaps in their early teens, well dressed, and again of different ethnicity. Here, the black youth whittles a stick, while the white boy stands beside him with a gun resting on his shoulder. Sometimes titled *Wayside Conversation* – as if their meeting was completely accidental – the picture presents a peaceful interracial interaction. Other features of the painting suggest that this is not a chance meeting: the black child wears a power horn strapped across his chest, while the white gunner is without. With relaxed postures and attitudes, they are engaged in a dialogue that was rare among adults of different race, yet not uncommon among children at the time. While the white boy has the gun, and thus is the figure more likely in control of the “conversation,” the black boy is whittling a stick with a knife, creating weapons of his own, and leveling the playing field so to speak. Made for a northern audience, this painting also presents the black figure higher than the white. Again in Clonney’s *In the Cornfield* (1844, MFA Boston), the traditional positions are switched,

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385 Claire Perry, *Young America: Childhood in Nineteenth Century Art and Culture* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2006), 81. It is also possible that Clonney was invoking the *omgekeerde wereld*, or “topsy-turvy world” pictures by sixteenth-century Netherlandish masters. A twisting of expected roles, such as game animals carrying guns, or children behaving as adults, these images were employed both for humor and moral guidance. This seems especially apparent in the work of William H. Beard.

386 In the “American Art-Union: Annual Distribution of Prizes,” *New York Weekly Herald*, December 28, 1850, 415, col. B, Clonney’s painting was awarded to one E. Van Sickle, of New York.

387 The painting (oil on canvas, measuring 17 x 14 ¼) was illustrated in *Antiques* (July 1982), p 41, mentioned in a Phillips Fine Art, New York City, advertisement. It was in an exhibition at R. H. Love Galleries, Chicago, in 1988, titled *Sticks and Stones: Children in American Painting.*
with the black boy mounted, the white boy bowing down before him. Clonney’s scenes may have the slavery debate at their core, and the independence of the black child may have been read with interest and concern, but any humor, racial or otherwise, implicit in the sporting episode appears to have been directed to the aspiring sportsman, for those following gentlemanly sporting culture.388

Fences and Trespass

In Clonney’s sketch, the black boy on the fence seems to invite the other to trespass. The fence was a device used frequently by Clonney’s role model Mount to convey property limits and trespass, but could also represent political or ideological obstacles to be overcome, as in The Herald in the Country (Politics of 1852, or Who Let Down the Bars?) (1853, fig. A11).389 In this scene a half-opened fence conveys both property and trespass. A resident of rural Long Island, Mount had an intimate perspective on the growing strife between farmers and sportsmen concerning trespass and property destruction; one of Mount’s earliest paintings depicts a boy sitting on a fence, peering back at the viewer with a suspicious expression. Clonney too was witness to the clash between recreating gentleman and local farmers in New Rochelle. Trespassing was one of the worst sins a sportsman could make, and was condemned by Forester as something

388Perry, 81. Elizabeth Johns, in American Genre Painting, 230, implies that the colloquialism “sitting on the fence,” used in other political caricatures at the time, was the intention of Clonney in these boy-hunter pictures, and that here, the black child was in charge of the political discussion and rhetoric.

389The engraving after the painting, made by Goupil in Paris, was re-titled The Herald in the Country. See Frankenstein, Mount (1975), 32. Frankenstein, Mount (1968), 51, sees the trespassing issue to be of foremost import.
done by idlers and amateurs. “True sportsmen” would have read Clonney’s scene as a warning and reminder of the sporting realities.390

Another follower of Mount’s, and fellow resident of Long Island, William Moore Davis (1829-1920) produced several scenes seemingly inspired by his esteemed colleague-neighbor. As in Mount’s pictures, Davis’ *Drawing a Bead on a Woodchuck* (ca.1850-1860, fig. A91) features a fence to be penetrated. The painting shows a white, barefoot child, with a powder horn stuck precariously in his vest pocket; peering forcefully over a dilapidated fence, he aims his gun through the fence at some unseen game.391 His younger, black companion, stands back with an anxious expression, and covers his ears in anticipation of the explosion; like his friend Mount, Davis regularly dealt with controversial issues, and here presents a mix of amusement and, possibly, a note of sport criticism.392 The implication here is that the shooter is aiming into and will chase his victim through another’s property. Given the prevalence of fences in shooting scenes, it may be listed among the iconographical motifs predominant in nineteenth century painting. The trope continued to be used at the turn of the century to stress the demarcation of property and the potential for trespass both by amateur sportsmen and

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390 Winslow Homer’s *Watermelon Boys* (1876, Cooper-Hewitt Museum, NY) includes a fence to stress trespassing. For the engraving, Homer has added a farmer shouting at the fruit poachers. For Forester on amateur hunters trespassing on farmers’ land, see Forester, “Proposed Alteration to Game Laws,” *SOTT* 15, no. 51 (February 14, 1846): 603; and “The Game of North America,” *The United States magazine and Democratic Review* 18, no. 93 (March 1846), 190-192. Other views on this issue include “Sheep-Killing Dogs and Vagabond Gunners,” *Ohio Cultivator* 6, no. 1 (January 1, 1850), 9; “Game Laws of Orange County, N.Y.,” *SOTT* 20, no.47 (January 11, 1851), 558; and “Grouse Shooting - Cure for Snake Bite,” *SOTT* 24, no. 22 (July 15, 1854), 255.


poaching locals. Jumping the fence would have certainly conveyed trespass and crime to landowning members of the patronage class looking to purchase fine art, and especially to readers of the Spirit.

**Ranney’s Sportsmen in Training**

Clonney’s young sportsmen may have directly inspired William Ranney’s *On the Wing* (1850), which portrayed a young boy learning the art of shooting, but Ranney’s scenes contain no fences. Ranney’s characters, for the most part, exist in an open wilderness suggesting a democratic hunting ground open to all sportsmen (fig. A83). The availability, however, was premised on proper use. The boy in Ranney’s picture is not shooting, but is in charge of powder and ramrod; shooting for him will come in time. The message is clear; adults must pass on the code to the young, while the young must follow and listen to their elder sportsmen in the field.

Critics hailed *On the Wing* as one of the best paintings of the year. It was one of Ranney’s most popular images, copied on canvas over three times, illustrated in the *American Art-Union Bulletin* for October 1850, and reproduced as an engraving for

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393 One example is Arthur B. Frost’s *Ordered Off*, ca. 1903, Henry M. Reed Collection, illustrated in Herman, 267, showing a farmer reprimanding a stereotypical sportsman for trespassing, the two separated by a fence.

394 The original *On the Wing* was awarded to John Broadhead of Philadelphia by the AAU in December 1850. See “American Art Union: Annual Distribution of Prizes,” *Weekly Herald*, 28 December 1850, p. 415, col. B. It was sold around 1858 to Ferdinand J. Dreer of Philadelphia. Another version of the painting was owned by R. B. Honeyman of New York. For provenance, see Bantel and Hassrick, 79 and 82.

395 “Fine Arts,” *The Albion*, April 27, 1850, 201, describes it as “one of the very best pictures in the whole collection…the duck-hunter, with his boy…(whose) timid wonder…is one of the merits;” “The Fine Arts,” *The Literary World*, May 4, 1850, 447, neglects to mention the boy’s presence. The *AAU Bulletin*, May 1850, 21, referred to it as “a blunt, vigorous production, which at once arrests the attention.”
The painting was also featured in *Ornaments of Memory* (1856 and 1857), one of many annual gift books designed specifically to appeal to young readers, and which served as teaching tools on proper social behavior. Through such art and literary vehicles, Ranney’s image became known to many ages and segments of society and remains representative of his work today. The boy helping the older, wiser hunter, who then transfers his knowledge of sportsmanship to the younger generation, resonates even in our present time.

After the success of *On the Wing*, Ranney produced several paintings in which young people are the central characters. They are shown existing in an ordinary world that is nevertheless a place of adventure, and often free from adult eyes. Nearly all of Ranney’s scenes, it should be noted, are serious in nature; even when depicting play, his paintings are free of satire and concerned with teaching through positive, visible example. Though some of Ranney’s early paintings show children acting alone, his later productions convey the need for adult guidance in a boy’s life. In nearly all of the hunt-related scenes in which they appear, Ranney’s boys are helpers or assistants. These didactic pictures stress the moral good in assisting adults (or one another). For instance, while the rugged, outdoorsy adult in *On the Wing* is central to the composition, his young assistant ready with his powder-horn helps animate and give a sense of reality to the picture. Depending on the age of the viewer, *On the Wing* moves from the nostalgic to the didactic. As an example of his original intent, the ink sketch for *On the Wing* reveals a

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396 Bantel and Hassrick, 81. It was engraved by Charles Burt for subscribers. An artist named [Samuel?] Wilson of Philadelphia, painted at least one, and possibly two, copies, one owned by Harrison Earle around 1859. See Bantel and Hassrick, 81-82; and “Domestic Art Gossip: Chicago,” *The Crayon* 5 (April 1858), 116.

more active child, positioned behind the adult, ramming powder and shot into a second
gun (fig. A92). In the painting, by contrast, the boy is holding only the power horn, and
like his mentor, his gaze follows the unseen game. Every version of *On the Wing* stresses
learning through observation, which enlightens the child, and then the viewer, on proper,
gentlemanly sport.

The generational transference of sportsmanship seems to have been Ranney’s
ultimate goal, and is a recurring statement in a vast number of his paintings. In a series of
sporting scenes during the 1850s, Ranney touched on the set of rules that every young
“true sportsmen” must follow. *Wounded Hound* (1850, Virginia Art Museum,
Richmond), for example, shows a male teen holding a gun, with a bearded companion
who checks the hunting dog’s bleeding ear for ticks or shot. They are in the wilderness,
and carry bedding on their back for camping. In *Hunters at the Well* (1851), a boy and
young man stop for water. As his adult companion gets a drink, the boy waits nearby,
holding a dead rabbit. Hunting dogs sniff around and a gun lies nearby with game bag
and sportsman’s hat. In *Duck Shooter’s Pony* (1853, fig. A93), Ranney depicts a
standing adult hunter next to his fowl-loaded horse, preparing to shoot “on the wing,”
while two young males and fowling dogs wait to fetch the fallen. The group stands
next to a duck blind, but rather than relying on this unfair advantage they follow the

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398 Bantel and Hassrick, 191.

399 Ranney’s scene was possibly inspired by Mount’s *Sportsman at the Well* (1848), which, without
the child, looks more suspect, especially given the sportsman’s suspicious glance. There are at least four
versions of Mount’s scene, one of which is at New Britain Museum of American Art, New Britain,
Connecticut. Ranney’s image was bought by John P. Ridner, a AAU committee member, who sold it to the
AAU for $100 on April 29, 1852. See Bantel and Hassrick, 104-105.

400 Bantel and Hassrick, 121. It was purchased, and possibly commissioned, by a wealthy
manufacturer, Henry C. Coit, before it exhibited at the NAD in 1853. It was reviewed in *New York Herald*,
May 8, 1853, 7, reprinted in Bantel and Hassrick, 122.
favored method of the “true sportsman.” In each of these paintings, the child is in the process of learning, and is shown fulfilling a vital function in the hunting act. In paintings that seem to draw on Clonney’s hunting boy scenes, Ranney takes a more serious tack and addresses the important relationship between generations. For several pictures, Ranney concentrated on the teenage helper assisting the adult. For instance, in *Retrieving* (ca. 1857-58), which Mount and Tait apparently completed after Ranney’s death, the artist depicts two males, the younger watching as the elder takes a dead duck from a spaniel.

In *Rail Shooting* (1856/59, fig. A94), three figures hunt in a skiff: a sportsman in nice hunting jacket aims toward a single bird in flight, while an aged pusher (or poleman) watches the shot and guides the skiff. The third figure, a young lad at center, accepts retrieved fowl from hunting dogs in the water as he looks toward the prey “on the wing.” This painting was completed after Ranney’s death by Mount and recalls Mount’s own *Eel Spearing at Setauket* (1845, fig. A95), in which a young George Washington Strong assists his enslaved nanny Rachel in a different kind of hunt. Ranney’s later paintings represent his continued interest in teaching the proper sporting code of conduct through example.

**Hinckley’s Boy-Sportsmen**

Like Ranney, Thomas Hewes Hinckley produced a number of hunting scenes featuring boys. All are related compositionally and may be studies for the final version of

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401 Illustrated in Sotheby’s NY, *American Paintings*, November 28, 2001, Lot 19, and in Bantel and Hassrick, 180; completed as a sketch by Ranney, the picture was completed in oil by Mount and possibly Tait for the Ranney sale. The painting, however, was not listed at the Ranney Fund sale in December 1858. Interestingly, the young helper here wears a Phrygian cap, long symbolic of freedom and liberty, and particularly so in young America.

Rabbit Hunters (1850). In the first, from 1847 (fig. A96), Hinckley presents a youth in “true sportsman’s” attire following his pointer which has uncovered a covey beyond the edge of the canvas. Tall trees in the center bifurcate the scene between the cultivated property of the estate and the wilderness. In Hinckley’s hunt scenes with boy protagonists, the child is always finely dressed and searching for game with the help of hunting dogs. Hinckley’s boys are learning to become “true sportsmen.” In contrast, hunting dogs do not accompany Mount’s boy hunters.

Hinckley continued the theme in The Rabbit Hunters, o/c, (1850, fig. A97) and a number of scenes in the 1860s, such as Hunting Scene in Milton (1861) and Flushing the Jack Rabbit (1868), all with essentially the same setting. In each, a boy and his trusty spaniel attempt to drive a rabbit out of its hole, while two dogs, one tan, the other black, guard the other side. Frank Forester had advised in 1856 that hare hunting “provided excellent sport” for hunting dogs. The dogs themselves signify sporting culture; by appearing well-trained and disciplined, they further suggesting that the youth belongs to the learned culture of the “true sportsman.” The gun and dead rabbit, which cross each other on the rock above the dogs, reveal this to be a sporting chase, and not a trapping/poaching scene. A second rabbit lies on the rock, suggesting this has been a productive hunt.

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403 Hunting Scene in Milton (1861, 14 x 21 in.) is illustrated in Skinner Sales Catalogue, March 2, 2007; Flushing the Jack Rabbit (1868, 36 x 48 in.) is shown in Christies Sales Catalogue, June 22, 2007.

404 Forester, Complete Manual, 316.

405 See Mary Bartlett Cowdrey, American Academy of Fine Arts and American Art-Union, 1816-1852, 2 vols. (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1953), 187. The description does not mention the boy, but otherwise appears to be the same image. The painting was purchased in 1851 by Smith Thompson Van Buren.
The location depicted in *Rabbit Hunters* is likely the area surrounding Milton, Massachusetts where Hinckley lived most of his life. It was a prime hunting locale, and neighbored his favorite haunt, the Blue Hills, for which he titled several works. *Hunting Scene in Milton* (1861) is a more expansive version of *Rabbit Hunters*, with the same hunting props and actors, though smaller, and set in the expansive, dominating rural landscape. The same rock appears in each, and must have been one of Hinckley’s favorite motifs. Also, in many of these dog and rabbit hunt scenes, Hinckley pairs the white and black dogs (possibly an allusion to his abolitionist views), working in unison, pointing out game, flushing the covey, or in this case, waiting to pounce on a traumatized rabbit; as well-trained dogs, they exhibit restraint, another sign of “true sportsmanship.”

**Beard’s Backwoods Boy Hunters**

The Civil War years (1861-1865) saw few images of children hunting game. The idea of children with guns may not have been an especially welcome theme at the time, given that many boys were killing and dying in the War. However, at this time when other fine artists were depicting war-related themes and other more traditional imagery, William Holbrook Beard (1824-1900) created several child-hunter narratives, with the

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406 Sporting paintings by Hinckley at the AAU in 1850 were *Disputed Game* (awarded to J. W. Newkirk, Grand St., New York), *The Leaping Buck* (awarded to John Marshall, New York), *A Point* (to an unknown winner), and *Monarch of the Herd* (awarded to John Lowdry of Michigan); see “American Art-Union: Annual Distribution of Prizes.” Hinckley paid dues to the American Anti-Slavery Society. See “Collections,” *The Liberator* 21, no. 6 (February 7, 1851), 23; “Special Contributions,” *The Liberator*, December 29, 1854, 207; and Maria Weston Chapman, “The Twenty-Fifth National Anti-Slavery Subscription Anniversary,” *The Liberator* 29, no. 7 (February 18, 1859), 26. He worked in Boston from 1831 to 1851, at which point he left on his Grand Tour of England and Europe. He returned to Milton later that year.

same biting satire he put into his animal pictures. According to William Gerdts, Beard began painting pictures of children hunting at his first studio in Buffalo in the early 1850s.\footnote{See William Gerdts, \textit{William Holbrook Beard: Animals in Fantasy} (exh. cat., Alexander Gallery, NY, 1981), 7.} His child hunters are almost without exception backwoods cretins, recalling the simian characters of David Gilmour Blythe’s pictures for the 1850s. His scenes of young gunners are some of the only pictures Beard produced with humans as the central actors.\footnote{Other hunt-related images by Beard include \textit{The Hunters’ Evening Meal} (1845, \textit{Kennedy Gallery Quarterly} 1, no. 4, 102), \textit{Dead Game} (NAD, 1859), \textit{The Fox-Hunter’s Dream} (1859, which exhibited annually until 1866), \textit{Bird Watcher} (1863, Childs Gallery), \textit{The Eagle’s Nest} (1863), and \textit{The Hunter’s Flask} (NAD, 1867). Beard also produced a number of deer scenes in the style of Hays, Hinckley and Tait, including \textit{A Cautious Crossing} (1863, illus. in \textit{Christies Sales Catalogue}, September 28, 1983), \textit{Deer in Forest Glade} (1874), and one simply titled \textit{Deer} (1890). The hunting theme was an undercurrent running in several of Beard’s pictures, and was a favorite theme throughout his career, even before 1848 when his interest in animal satire began.} 

Beard’s \textit{Boys Hunting} (1863, fig. A98), for instance, presents two boys, walking barefoot through the backwoods, stalking game. The smaller boy (approximately age five) carries a barely discernable bird; like the young hunters themselves, the game appears “unfledged and unfit to kill.” He follows another boy (maybe eight) who is armed with a long, antiquated and ridiculously large flintlock rifle. They walk along a trail, but are looking over a rustic fence, possibly spying birds on the other side. The fence is somewhat dilapidated, and a briar patch threatens their unshod feet. Given the date, and Beard’s love for satire and human foibles, the painting may allude to war and the sectional schism, the fence serving as a symbol for the national divide.\footnote{The painting is illustrated and mentioned in Williams, \textit{Mirror to an American Past}, 105.} As in Clonney’s and Mount’s compositions, however, Beard’s inclusion of the fence more likely meant to suggest the young hunters are contemplating trespassing in their pursuit,
which equates them with poachers. Landowners and tenant farmers were outspoken in their hatred of poachers and amateur sportsmen, who would destroy property and crops in pursuit of game. As sporting journals of the time make clear, hunters were known to break down farmer’s fences in their chase after game, and “true sportsmen” like Forester were among the first to condemn the practice.411

Though settling in New York City in 1858, and working alongside other sportsmen-artists such as William Jacob Hays and John George Brown at the Tenth Street Studio Building, Beard began his career in Buffalo. His genre subjects should therefore be viewed with the anti-Southern views and issues of game depletion of upstate New York in mind.412 During the war and its violent aftermath, Beard remained an outspoken supporter of Lincoln and the Union cause, and it is likely that both his animal and child pictures were filled with sectional allusions, both cultural and political. A “life-long ardent naturalist,” Beard expressed his concern for game animals in which the animals get the upper hand against the simpleton hunters.413

**Satire and Sectional Bias**

Humorist imagery had a vibrant history in the United States, and satirical art was especially prominent during the war.414 Most of the satire coming out of New England

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411 Frank Forester, “Proposed Alteration of the Game Laws,” *SOTT* 15, no. 51 (February 14, 1846), 603.


414 See Lilly Martin Spencer’s *War Spirit at Home* (1866, Newark Museum), which has been interpreted as satirical.
studios in the early 1860s made Southerners the butt of the joke, drawing on precedents
dating as far back as the 1830s that characterized the region’s residents as backwards,
backwoods “unsportsman-like” simpletons with out-of-date weaponry. In reality, many
subscribers to “true sportsman’s” journals lived south of the Mason-Dixon line, and
maintained a deep connection to genteel, aristocratic sporting culture. Nonetheless the
unflattering stereotype persisted in the Northeast through the work of numerous satirists
such as Beard and Thomas Nast.415 Beard’s *Stalking Prairie Chicken* (1872, fig. A99),
for example, portrays a raggedly-dressed youth (resembling Blythe’s dirt-coated
children), crawling after game beneath a log, unaware of the bear leaning in above him
and ready to pounce. Beard did a number of this type of picture during his career,
including *Trapper’s Camp* (1845) and *Too Much Game* (1888), wherein the hunter is the
one pursued; here it is the boy – the “prairie chicken” – who is being stalked. Filled with
humor, and perhaps a bit of nostalgia (Beard lived in rural Ohio as a boy), the picture
most likely was made with the intent of satirizing the mundane, pitiful condition of the
backwoods American.416

Fine artists and illustrators were marketing such imagery, profiting by producing
fantasies for America’s patronage class. Based on the wide appeal of scenes showing


boys hunting in the backwoods, the theme struck a collective nerve, irrespective of section. In May 1868, *Harper’s Weekly* featured an illustration and report of a “Virginia Deer-Hunt.” The artist, William Ludwell Sheppard (1833-1912), a native of Richmond, Virginia, showed a child looking on as an older man brings a deer “to earth” (fig. A100). In the background, a runner on horseback and a pack of dogs chase the deer. The deer falls in our space, the hunters picking off the victim with little effort. Though the scene was described as a “favorite mode” practiced in Virginia, it did not depict “true sportsmanship” since the game had little chance of escape. In another portrayal of Virginia hunting in *Harper’s*, Sheppard presents a non-romanticized “fire hunt” night scene in which a young male rower sits in a raft between two sinister-looking hunters, who wait to strike at reed birds (fig. A101). The figures, according to the review, use “a pan of burning pine-knots” to trick the rail, then strike them down with paddles, leaving an “immense number nightly captured.” Night hunting and limitless bags were criminal behavior in the mind of “true sportsmen” and landowners, and the “ungentlemanly way” of striking the birds only added to the poaching nature of the scene. Not only does the illustration portray the antithesis of “true sportsmanship,” such images further stressed the tie between adolescent males, the South, and “unsportsman-like” behavior.

Children’s Literature after Wartime

The drive to teach children utilized both popular literature and imagery, and the decades following the Civil War saw a proliferation of hunting-themed books and dime

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novels written specifically for boys, especially those living in the North. It was the beginning of what has been called the “Golden Age of Children’s Fiction,” lasting until the first decade of the twentieth century. Horatio Alger’s *Ragged Dick* (1868) and Thomas Bailey Aldrich’s *Story of a Bad Boy* (1870) epitomized the male youth fiction of this period, featuring troubled boys in need of help and adult guidance. Popular hunting literature and art also reached America’s young through gift books, annuals, and juvenile periodicals, such as *Our Young Folks* (1865-1873), *Frank Leslie’s Boys’ and Girls’ Weekly* (1867-1884), and *St. Nicholas* (1873-1943).

Perhaps the most beloved novel series in the male youth fiction genre of the post-war era was the “Frank Nelson” series, written by Charles Austin Fosdick, under the pseudonym Harry Castlemon. The cast of characters includes a group of boys from New England accompanied and instructed by two advising elders/guides, both former backwoodsmen of the Leatherstocking variety: racist and simple-minded, but ready to teach woodcraft to “the yungins.” In *Sportsmen’s Club among the Trappers* (1874) and the rest of the series, Fosdick repeatedly contrasts the sporting etiquette of the

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418 For a post-war (yet pre-*Ragged Dick*) view on the state of children’s literature, see Samuel Osgood, “Books for Our Children,” *Atlantic Monthly* 16, no. 98 (December 1865), 724-735. *The Crack Shot, or the Young Rifleman’s Complete Guide* received a brief review in *Scientific American* 19, no. 6 (August 5, 1868), 87. Also see W. G. (William Graham) Sumner, “What Our Boys are Reading,” *Scribner’s Monthly* 15, no. 5 (March 1878), 681-685, who places hunting stories at the top of the list.

419 Samuel Osgood, “Books for our Children,” 724 and 732, suggests that adventure and sports books would help parents control their children by giving them an outlet, and foster stronger values and mental faculties.

420 The “Frank Nelson” series was published by Porter & Coates of Philadelphia. The series was well-advertised in *Godey’s Lady’s Book* and *Harper’s Weekly*, among other periodicals. Others in the series include *The Boy Traders; or, The Sportsman’s Club Among the Boers* (Philadelphia, 1876); and *Snowed Up; or, The Sportsman’s Club in the Mountains* (Philadelphia, 1876). The latter is mentioned in *Godey’s Lady’s Book*, November 1876, which noted that it takes place in the “wilds near Ft. Bolton,” and celebrates the “charms of hunter life.” Fosdick, a veteran of the Civil War, was vehemently anti-South. See Sam Pickering, “A Boy’s Own War,” *The New England Quarterly* 48, no. 3 (September 1975): 363-377.
protagonists with the majority of villainous, ambiguously Southern, “backwoods”
characters in the book.421 The accompanying illustrations by Philadelphia artist Edmund
Birckhead Bensell (1842-1892/3) are informative. At the beginning, a young sportsman is
shown riding a spritely and youthful thoroughbred, with his pack of dogs surrounding the
bear they have chased up a tree (fig. A102). Later in the book, a trapper is shown
knocking the young sportsman unconscious.422 Throughout his writing Fosdick connects
proper sportsman culture with the North (for which he fought), and criminal, reckless
hunting with the South. This anti-Southern vein was equally apparent in the depictions of
the period, even in images by W. L. Sheppard, who served in the Confederate Army. As
many scholars have pointed out, sectional strife did not end in 1865, but continued at
least through the rest of the century, affecting artist and author alike.423 Though the South
had its own “true sportsman” culture and code, Northern artists persisted with the
stereotype of backwoods, Southern hunting, and Southern artists like Sheppard aided in
the characterization.

Brown’s Child Gunners

Working alongside William Beard at the New York’s Tenth Street Studio
building was John George Brown (1831-1913), who no doubt saw Beard’s satirical
images of boy hunters on the easel. Though best known for his successful and

421 Castlemon [Fosdick], Sportsmen’s Club among the Trappers, 162, 171-174.

422 Bensell was a founding member of the Philadelphia Sketch Club in 1860, and illustrated a
number of children’s books in the 1860s and 1870s. A sporting piece by him, reproduced by Louis Prang in
1878, titled Fishing Scene – No Trespassing, shows a landowner chasing an unsuspecting angler off his
property. Like Fosdick and Hinckley, Bensell was passionately abolitionist. See Philadelphia Sketch Club’s

King’s The Great South essays from Scribner’s Monthly throughout 1874 for a highly critical Northerner’s
view of Southern cultures.
sentimentalized portrayals of poor children – mainly shoe-shine boys, Brown’s scenes of boys with guns stand apart; they are serious in tone and lacking in romantic overtones. Only five such pictures have surfaced, one of which, *Claiming the Shot* (1865, fig. A103), includes a boy as hunting assistant. The boy carries gun and game birds and approaches a party of sportsmen who argue over who made the fatal blow to a slain buck.

A decade after his *Claiming the Shot*, and a few other adult scenes, Brown returned to scenes of rural simplicity, and it is in these that his child hunters appear.\(^\text{424}\) Set in the country, in full daylight, on tree-cleared pasture land or farms (and not, it should be stressed, in the dark backwoods), his boys stand armed in a militant stance, as though ready for battle. Brown was a passionate sportsman, and this comes across in his “boy as hunter” pictures; though verging on the nostalgic, these hunting scenes seem didactic in nature.\(^\text{425}\)

Brown’s *Taking Aim* (1875, fig. A104) is similar to Ranney’s *On the Wing*, Davis’s *Woodchuck*, and Homer’s *Sharpshooter*: a gunner aims his weapon to the right, at some object unseen by the viewer. In this image the barefoot boy lies prone on the hillside. No longer the long flint-lock musket of his grandfather, the boy’s rifle here is appropriate to his size, a style of firearm known as a *boy’s gun*, and unlike the scenes by Clonney and Beard, there are no fences and no humor. For Brown, who spent his free-time hunting in the Adirondacks, hunting was morally beneficial and a serious

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\(^{425}\)Seymour Guy, Brown’s friend and co-secretary for the NAD, also specialized in child genre scenes. An interesting study would be a comparison between the work of these two artists.
undertaking; likely Brown followed the sportsman’s code, and wanted children shooters
to as well. Brown’s young gunner appears to be either shooting “on the wing,” or still-
hunting. A similarly-armed child appears in Brown’s *The Anxious Moment* (1875, fig.
A105). Here, the barefoot farm boy is upright, stalking his prey in what looks to be a
military exercise.\(^{426}\) He is cautious, but his smile conveys his enjoyment.

Brown’s *A Sure Shot* (ca. 1875, fig. A106) is related to these two paintings, yet
features *two* rural children, a boy and girl, apparently taking a break from their chores.
The boy aims straight ahead into the distance at an unseen predator, which has evoked
fear in the two. The boy plays the role of protector; adventure and other masculine traits
are all wrapped into this heroic image. In each of these images, Brown suggests a
barnyard environment, where the boy is carrying out an important role, keeping predators
and harmful birds away from crops. The scenes are not about the pursuit of sport, but
rather enjoyable work.

Not long after Brown exhibited his rural gunners, children’s hunting literature
began to mirror fine art. The year after *Taking Aim* was created, Mark Twain produced
the first of his childhood stories based on country boys. *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*
(1876), and its sequel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) were quickly digested
by young and old alike. Harry Castlemon’s *Sportsman’s Club* series (1873-77), as
mentioned before, was popular at the time, and specifically intended for boys; the series
likewise captured the fantasy of wilderness adventure for young urban readers. It also
linked the conservationist agenda promoted by sportsmen’s clubs to America’s young

\(^{426}\) Sarah Burns, “Barefoot Boys and Other Country Children: Sentiment and Ideology in
was symbolic of rural idyll, but ignores the many scenes by Brown of shoeless urban ragamuffins, or the
barefoot cretins by William Beard.
sportsman-in-the-making. Brown’s images and Mark Twain’s novels opened up the possibilities of independent hunting possibilities for all boys irrespective of class.

Brown’s last known boy-as-hunter picture, *A Sure Thing* (1876, fig. A107) is nearly identical in concept and composition to the Brooklyn Museum’s *A Sure Shot*, with the same tree, landscape, and home in the distance. It includes a similarly-attired young miss watching the boy hunter, who is in this image apparently shooting rodents, based on the dead animal nearby. Both children are barefoot, standing at the edge of a pond.⁴²⁷ The figures are not as anxious as in the earlier version, and the boy closes one eye as he peers down the barrel. This and the aforementioned shooting scenes are the only known childhood paintings in which Brown displayed his love for sport hunting, and in each, the boy appears to use the time-honored method of shooting “on the wing.” Produced only a decade after the end of the Civil War, Brown’s images also point to the interrelationship between sport and combat. Sectional tensions remained high, and young boys – often the only males remaining in the family – shown defending women or offering demonstrations of prowess, would have conveyed both patriotism and the ability to provide. Brown’s boys were protecting a way of life and recreation considered in jeopardy.

Brown was certainly aware of the threat that poachers and market hunters presented to the sporting fraternity to which he belonged. However, we know of only one image by him that suggests poaching of game. In *Great Risk, or Bird Nesting* (1878, fig. A108), Brown presents a boy, approximately eleven, climbing a rocky seaside cliff with bare feet to claim a cache of eggs. Like William Sidney Mount’s egging scene, it could be interpreted either as sentimental nostalgia or a moralistic warning against poaching.

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⁴²⁷ *A Sure Thing* (1876) measures 30 x 25 inches, and was reviewed in *Rod and Gun* 8 (April 8, 1876), 23.
behavior in boys. “True sportsmen” and naturalists would be reminded of Audubon’s
denunciation of egging.

**Homer’s Boy Hunters**

When Brown created his “boy-hunter” pictures, Winslow Homer was his third-
floor neighbor at the Tenth Street Studio. Like Brown, Homer was an avid sportsman,
and prolific in child genre scenes. Homer usually placed his young subjects in rural,
idyllic settings reminiscent of Brown’s from the mid-1870s. Generally speaking, Homer
produced three types of child hunting scenes during his career: country boys trapping
birds (in the mid-1860s), Gloucester boys egging (in 1873-4), and Adirondack teenage
guides with slain deer (in the 1880s and 1890s). Though these images may not convey
poaching to most modern viewers, sportsmen of that era (in large part due to Audubon’s
previous commentary) would have read Homer’s egging scenes in that light. In *How
Many Eggs?* (both in the 1873 watercolor (Private Collection) and in the subsequent
*Harper’s Weekly* engraving from June 1874)(fig. A109), the parent birds are visible in
the distance, driven away by the raiders and distressed, their hovering shadows cast on
the cliff face. The boys, who Homer observed in Gloucester, Massachusetts in 1873, were
actually referred to in the *Harper’s* article as “raiders.” This sinister title, and the
inclusion of two more boys in the engraved reproduction, one of whom carries a bag

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428 Annette Blaugrund, *The Tenth Street Studio Building: Artist-Entrepreneurs from the Hudson River School to the American Impressionists* (Southampton, NY: Parrish Art Museum, 1997), 38-39. It should be noted that Homer would have known fellow tenant William Jacob Hays, through their proximity, their friendship with artist Eliphalet Terry, and their Century Club membership; Homer thus likely knew of the New York Association for Game Protection by the mid-1870s.

429 In the earlier, relatively benign *Bird Catchers* from 1865, Homer presents three boys lying in the grass and watching over captive birds. The painting was sold at Christies, *Important American Paintings... from the Thomas Mellon Evans Collection*, May 21, 1998, lot 4). An engraved illustration after this painting appeared in *Our Young Folks*, August 1867, cover.
loaded with eggs, all stress the market or pot-hunting aspect of the event. It was yet another contemporary social issue Homer would address with his journalistic brush.430

Homer tended to present children and older boys acting alone and undisciplined, as in *Bird Catchers*, and *How Many Eggs?* Roughly two decades later, at the height of the conservation movement, Homer returned to the young, independent rural hunter theme with a string of Adirondack hunt scenes. However, in some of these, the young male hunter is accompanied by an older hunter, similar to Ranney’s young pupil assisting his elder. Unlike Ranney’s, Homer’s figures, because they are not in the presence of sportsmen, appear to be market gunners or unemployed guides hunting off-season. Homer’s boys embody independence, and to the average nineteenth-century American, independence would be a positive thing, but to wealthy sportsmen-patrons, the represented independence of local hunters was a sign of anarchy.

In these later images, death seems an overriding presence. Unlike the gunning boys of the preceding decades, Homer’s young hunters are no longer detached from their prey, but instead struggling to lift or carry the bloody carcass. We see the result of the hunt in all its gory detail, down to blood red streaks in the water. Homer placed this prototype in dozens of guide pictures during the early 1890s, and in most he purposefully emphasized the hunter’s transition from boyhood to manhood by finding teenage models.431

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430The painting sold at Sotheby’s New York, May 24, 2000. Homer’s and Brown’s egging scenes coincided with a drive until 1877 by C. C. Haskins, to enlist young “Bird-Defenders,” children who pledged to stop treating birds in a cruel manner. See “Letterbox,” *St. Nicholas* 1, no. 9 (July 1874), 560-561; also see C. C. Haskins, “For the Birds,” *St. Nicholas* 1, no. 2 (December 1873), 72-74. As a matter of note, Homer was a regular submitter of art to *St. Nicholas*, and may have had this in mind when creating his *Egging* picture, published in *Harper’s Weekly* in 1874.

431For instance, see sketch for *Hound and Hunter* (1892, National Gallery of Art). According to scholar David Tatham, Homer’s recurring young hunter was a composite of the eighteen year old Charley
Homer had already spent years depicting rural children imbued with nostalgia and peaceful, silent introspection. This was perhaps a way of representing and celebrating America’s rebirth and calm after the war. His later scenes of trappers and guides in the Adirondacks, while comparatively somber, have a similar sense of rejuvenation – a reawakening of America’s masculinity and promise, which in the 1890s was seen by many intellectuals as being in peril. Homer’s Adirondack hunting scenes have alternately been interpreted as a response to the cut-throat business world that many patrons lived within. While such readings are valid, Homer’s often bloody representations of these young figures detail the questionable hunting practices of the day, such as hounding or floating, suggesting further intent.

One important example, Homer’s Huntsman and Dogs (1891, fig. A110) shows a young hunter standing cautiously still with a bloody deer skin and antlers; it appears he has left the carcass behind. In contrast to the disciplined dogs of Hinckley, Hays and Ranney, the “huntsman’s” dogs are displaying great anxiety, bounding and barking, and appear out of control. The scene’s fusing of chaos and calm mirrored Homer’s own uncertainty regarding unlawful hunters, and is reminiscent of Gustave Courbet’s own

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434Huntsman and Dogs was purchased out of Manhattan’s Reichard Gallery by Edward William Hooper (1839-1901), member of the Saturday Club, though not a sportsman. See Sarah Burns, Inventing the Modern Artist, 215; and Goodrich, Winslow Homer, 123.
haunting scene of deer poaching, *Hallali du cerf (The Death of the Stag)* (1867, fig. A111), which depicts locals of the Jura region illegally hunting in the snow. Homer may have seen this and related poaching paintings by Courbet on exhibit near the 1867 Exposition Universelle during his year-long stay in and around Paris.\(^{435}\) The French critic Théophile Thoré, a defender of the Courbet school of Realism, praised Homer’s Civil War pictures, comparing them to images by the French Realists, of which Courbet was the pinnacle.\(^{436}\)

Homer’s model for the young male hunter, Charley Flynn, worked as a handyman for Homer’s sporting club, the Adirondack Preserve Association for the Encouragement of Social Pastimes and the Preservation of Game and Forests (officially renamed North Woods Club after 1895). As David Tatham notes, Flynn was well-known in the region and was generally liked by the urban, affluent clients of the North Woods Club. He was not a hunter, however, and apparently had a strong aversion to guns. Not only did Homer find a model with a baby face, he apparently shortened the stature of the figure to appear more youthful.\(^{437}\) Homer clearly wanted to represent that liminal state between boy and man. In Homer’s paintings he represents an amalgamation of traits of the rugged

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\(^{436}\) Ibid., 10; and Théodore Thoré, *Salons de W. Berger*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1870), 413.

American youth: a student in the rites of manhood, and, conversely, undisciplined, unsportsmanlike behavior.

Given the “huntsman’s” stature in the watercolor study, the carcass he carries must also be young, which suggests it was taken outside of the strictures of the sportsman’s code. Homer made his views on unsportsmanlike behavior, such as the killing of does, clear; on the reverse of an image showing a recently slain doe, *The Fallen Deer* (1892, fig. A112), Homer scrawled that this was the act of “a miserable pot hunter.”

The figure in *Huntsman and Dogs* was most likely also read as a pot-hunter; given that, and the degraded environment in which he roams, the ultimate reading comes nearer to signifying waste and misuse of nature. This image was a form of propaganda in the Adirondacks class war, created for wealthy businessmen and women.

Scholar David Tatham has interpreted the boyish figure in the *Huntsman* scene as a subsistence hunter, based on his apparel and general appearance, and he believes Homer intended the youth to be read as such. The art critic Alfred Trumble was disturbed by the figure, whom he found “low and brutal in the extreme,” and a “scoundrel,” who “would hound deer to death up in the Adirondacks for a couple of dollars the hide and horns bring in, and leave the carcass to feed the carrion birds.”

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440 Ibid, citing Alfred Trumble’s review of *Huntsman and Dogs*, in *The Collector* 3, no. 5 (January 1, 1892), 71; also quoted in Eleanor Lewis Jones, 59.
Usually admiring of Homer’s figural scenes, Trumble’s harsh criticism ironically reveals the efficacy of the image. In the comparatively gory watercolor sketch for Huntsman and Dogs, titled Guide with Deer (fig. A113), the same youth carries a slain deer on his shoulders, in a clear cut wasteland with no accompanying dogs.\footnote{Exhibition of the Athletic Club,” The Collector 3, no. 11 (April 1, 1892): 163. The watercolor sketch was a Christmas gift to Homer’s brother Charles, and is inscribed so.} Both versions capture the figure’s watchful caution which implies he is treading on shaky ground (perhaps scoring game unlawfully). The absence of dogs in the watercolor adds to the implication of poaching since poachers usually hunted without the use of potentially noisy dogs. The final, oil version doesn’t celebrate death to the extent of the watercolor, but may have conveyed to the owner the conquest of nature and the independence of youth. The oil painting was bought from Reichard’s gallery by Edward William Hooper (1839-1901), treasurer of Harvard University, who was not a sportsman, and may not have recognized the poaching subtext.\footnote{Burns, 215; Stewart Mitchell, “Henry Adams and Some of His Students,” Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society (Third Series) 66 (October 1936): 295.}

Beyond his obvious independence from society’s strictures, there is also a sense that the figure has discovered (even embodies) what Steven Mintz calls “the moral equivalent to war.”\footnote{Mintz, Huck’s Raft, 83.} Like a soldier, he casts a determined gaze down the trail, posed with boot on log (signifying the conquest of nature), and pausing in his watch for the enemy. As will be discussed in the next chapter, there was a societal conflict occurring in the Adirondacks at just that moment between local guides, and tourist and club-member
sportsmen. The gulf between wealthy sportsmen and their backwoods guides was growing, and Homer, as a member and annual visitor of preservationist clubs, would have been aware of the widening rift. Accordingly, the youthful hunting figure would have been interpreted in a number of contradictory ways, particularly by “true sportsmen” organized in the name of wildlife conservation.

It is Homer’s pictures featuring youthful and elder guides together, however, which are most troubling and intriguing (fig. A114). Before Homer, guides were depicted basically as servants of the sportsman; now, they are shown hunting independently. Homer seems to be playing with the idea of “training the next generation” as put forward by Ranney and Brown, by applying it to less acceptable hunting, and to the school of survivalist woodcraft. Homer was a pictorial journalist at heart, and as a member of two sportsmen’s clubs, would have had in mind the schism between sportsmen and guides. It is noteworthy that, as far as can be discerned, these secretive guide scenes were not purchased by Homer’s “true sportsman” peers.

In a related Bear Hunting, Prospect Rock (1892, fig. A115), Homer presents a young, boyish-faced figure and his older teacher peering around a hill, with expressions as anxious as those of Ranney’s lost trappers. It is contextually similar to Ranney’s On the Wing, with the youth watching and supporting the experienced elder from behind. The painting’s title initially suggests that the two guides are performing a noble act, flushing the countryside of predators. But when placed beside his other, bloody images of

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446 Johns, Homer, 87. Burns, Revitalizing, 30; and idem., Inventing, 207. Homer joined the Adirondack Preserve Association [aka North Woods Club] in 1888; the Quebec-based Tourilli Club in 1895.
the two guides, and their suggested occupation as off-season, unemployed hunters, it completes a narrative of poaching. It is in fact the sinister opposite of Ranney’s scene, where instead of “true sportsmanship,” the youth is learning to poach game out of season, which in turn played on the hostilities between sportsman employer and local employee of the early nineties.  

In the watercolor *After the Hunt* (1892, fig. A116), Homer again shows a boyish figure, with an old guide and a slain deer in a raft. The old man pulls a hunting dog from the water. Homer twists the depiction of the young helper from Ranney’s innocent into a poacher. Detailed with blood and gore, it was perhaps disturbing as a picture for public display. However, the “highly respectable” sisters who bought Homer’s similar composition *End of the Hunt* (1892), an equally gory image, did not find the work particularly masculine (the familiar modern interpretation of the picture), and even given the “blood” smudges, saw “nothing objectionable” in the scene. Homer, like Theodore Roosevelt, Owen Wister, and a flock of social shapers looking back to the lone backwoods hunter of the early-nineteenth century, held that setting men free from the home and into nature would renew what was perceived to be a fading masculinity. Perhaps art critics of the time could not get past the “lone hunter” convention to which Homer was alluding; he seems to have been playing with popular expectations.

Still, as a sign of his willingness to adjust his imagery to suit popular taste, Homer painted out a gun and stilled the waters of *Hound and Hunter* (1892, fig. A117) after some spectators felt the deer was still living and thus a victim of human cruelty. Homer

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obviously was moved by public rebuke of unsportsmanlike imagery. What is most apparent in Homer’s “youth and elder guide” scenes is that the visible transference of knowledge is local and survivalist. These are not portrayals of a “true sportsman” passing on conservationist education, or an elitist ideal of guides at the service of sportsman. In contrast to Ranney’s and Brown’s pictures, where the children learn lawful sporting behavior from adults, the elder in Homer’s teaches how to take game despite season and to exist in the forest by woodcraft.

In their portrayal of boy hunters, sportsmen-artists ranged from the serious, to the humorous, to the murderous, each allowing the artist to comment upon the presence (or absence) of ethical sportsmanship. The depiction of boys acting without supervision suggested wanton and wasteful behavior and a social problem in need of public attention. Images of ill-proportioned muskets, fences, and dirty, poorly-dressed youths were codes for the backwoods simpleton hunter, who needed to be restricted or arrested. Conversely, artists like Ranney and Brown worked against the widely held stigma of boys as idle poachers by adding a watchful adult, or by focusing on the intent and technique of the young shooter. Adults were ambivalent concerning boys using guns, and their ambivalence comes through in the variations on this imagery. Homer’s boy hunter was a paradoxical figure, commenting on conservation, on wildlife’s role in the local economy, and on sustenance hunting. For locals, this was no game but rather a career. The next chapter looks at the ways in which the local guide was portrayed by the sportsman-artist during the growth of conservation, how the many-faceted relationship between the two entities was presented, and how the guide figure in painting walked the proverbial line between helping and harming the sporting experience.
CHAPTER 5
SPORTSMEN DEPICTING GUIDES

Before his boy-shooter and egging poacher scenes of the 1870s, John George Brown painted one of his earliest known sport-related scenes, *Claiming the Shot* (1865, fig. A103).\(^{449}\) This painting was created at the conclusion of the Civil War, and before Brown had become locked into his financially lucrative (but oppressively conventionalized) subject type of cute, yet seemingly homeless children. *Claiming the Shot* was at once a traditional “After the Hunt” composition, and portraiture, yet it included some unique changes to the familiar format. The inclusion of the young boy helping to carry game into camp, and the three distinct pictorial narratives that divide the canvas, set it apart from Tait’s prior work.\(^{450}\) At the viewer’s left, in the far distance, two figures paddle a canoe back toward the campsite. In the middle foreground, a party of gentlemen sportsmen, framed by an immense boulder, lounge and debate on the likely victor of the slain deer at their feet. The third narrative is shown in less detail: in the shadows behind the gentlemen, a group of guides listen in as they prepare food and ready the camp for evening. The separation of the guides from the gentlemen clients was unmistakable, and it set Brown’s composition apart from earlier examples: it revealed his deep passion for sport and his association with sportsman’s culture, as well as his knowledge of the growing class-based tension between employers and employees of the 1860s.

\(^{449}\) The year before, Brown painted *The Deer Hunter* (1864, 42 x 58 in.)(sold by Sotheby’s NY, December 3, 1998), discussed later in this chapter.

The reviewer for the *Catholic World* noted the separation of the guides in Brown’s scene, describing the group in the shadows as “engaged in preparing supper for the disputants, over whose perplexity they appear to be indulging in a quiet ‘chaff’.” Local hunter/guidesmen were only beginning to develop their own culture in the 1860s, and did little to protect their own interests. As the century progressed, and local hunters began to organize against sportsmen, the guide took on more negative aspects in the art of “true sportsmen,” to the point of becoming portrayed as equivalent to the pot-hunter or poacher. Brown was acutely perceptive of the growing tension, and he was one of the first American artists to clearly capture the division.

As assistant to the sportsman, the guide played an important role in both the recreation and the portrayal of hunting, especially in the latter half of the nineteenth century. As rower, runner, skiff pusher, and cook, the guide labored in various ways, while the sportsman recreated. It was a given that urban-dwelling recreational sportsmen would seek the assistance of local guides when stalking difficult game, and the teaming of the two played a crucial function in the tourist market, encouraging the novice into the field. From the beginning of the sporting phenomenon in America, the pairing of the gentleman sportsman and the helpful guide had been a recurring theme in art. Yet, in the work of some sportsmen-artists, such as Ranney and Tait, the formula was revisited so often it takes on an added significance. The frequent pairing – and eventual segregation of these two characters – are striking features that may be considered to be statements on the state of democratic freedom and America’s “classless society.” Because of this...
dichotomy, hunting scenes are one aspect of American art in which class divisions are clear (fig. A118).

Guides were a necessary part of the “true sportsman’s” recreation, and therefore a natural part of scenes of hunting life. Guides were regional experts, often having been born and raised on the land where the hunt took place. However, while their livelihood was growing dependent on the eastern tourist during the on-season, during the off-season guides illegally trapped and shot game for themselves and the market. These two roles resulted in a symbiotic yet competitive relationship between these two groups, and this tension is clearly expressed in literary and pictorial representations. The artist-sportsman often wavered between praise and classist condemnation when describing the “exotic” guide.452 Over the course of the century, the guide and what he represented to the “true sportsman” became linked to poachers. The visual imagery of the poacher, and classist attitudes inherent in that imagery had been developing for centuries in England and Germany, and these pictorial precedents were used first to depict the lawless hunter, and in time, the guide as well.

Guide/Poacher Precedents

While guides are largely absent from British and European images, artists there had a long history of depicting the pot hunter and poacher. This work emphasized the poacher’s social difference from the gentleman sportsman. George Stubbs, James Ward, George Morland (1763-1804), Richard Ansdell (1815-1885) and Edwin Landseer were the most frequently copied sporting painters in America, and given their high status in England, it is not surprising that the subject matter of their paintings would be applied to

452William James Stillman did this, as did Charles Lanman and Charles Whitehead, though with a bit more of the hero-worship angle. Thomas Cole even described such an encounter with a backwoods character that provided the basis of Cole’s poem “Spirits of the Wilderness.” See Noble, 42-3, 46.
the American experience. Examples of poachers include three paintings by Landseer from the early 1830s (discussed in Chapter Two) and one by Thomas Gainsborough, which are thematically related to poacher life, and would have been accessible to Americans in the form of reproductions. George Morland covered the theme on several occasions; in the oil painting *A Tavern Interior, with Sportsmen Refreshing* (n/d, Faustus Gallery, London), Morland juxtaposes the leisurely landed gentry, knocking back a pint, with market hunters scowling at him from behind a table blanketed with dead game. Another of Morland’s compositions, which became extremely popular as an engraving at the beginning of the nineteenth century, was *Morning, or The Benevolent Sportsman* (1792, fig. A119). This image is the ultimate study in class dynamics: a sportsman on horseback hands out alms to a circle of squatters (or gypsies) as the sportsman’s gamekeeper follows behind, and stands at the butt of the horse. In these examples from abroad, the artists juxtaposed the law-breaking and/or oppressed hunter with the landed sportsman in morally instructive narratives.

In addition to these classist scenes, a minority of hunting art available was more sympathetic to the poacher. The Düsseldorf Gallery, on Broadway, publicly exhibited a number of hunt-related scenes of German origin. One painting, *The Story of the Game*

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453 Landseer’s *Poacher’s Bothie, How to Get the Deer Home, Stealing a March* and *Getting a Shot* were released as prints in 1838. Thomas Gainsborough’s painting is illustrated in *London Studio* 24 (Studio 124) (July 1942), 26.

454 *Morning, or The Benevolent Sportsman* (illustrated on p. 105 in John Barrell, “2: George Morland,” *The Dark Side of the Landscape* (Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 89-129) was engraved by J. Grozer in 1795, and by W. Nicholls (n/d). Morland’s chief engraver John Raphael Smith produced a full-scale catalog of Morland’s work around 1793, which would have been available at his son John Rubens Smith’s drawing school. According to *The American Art-Union Exhibition Records*, a painting by Morland titled *Poachers* was lent to the AAU 1825 exhibition by Mr. Olmstead. In addition, Morland’s *Old English Sportsman* was on exhibit at the New York Gallery of Fine Arts from 1844 to 1850. Morland’s *Gypsy Encampment* was at Derby Gallery, New York, in 1864; this was another title given to *The Benevolent Sportsmen*. See SIRIS.
Laws of Germany by Carl Wilhelm Hübner (1814-1879), was seen by thousands, and reviewed in December 1856 by The Crayon’s editor William James Stillman as being a depiction of social injustice. Hübner’s painting, formally titled The Death of the Poacher (1846, fig. A120), was a melodramatic masterpiece, which, like Landseer’s romanticized poacher scenes, attempted to pull on the heartstrings of middle- to upper-class viewers. Two poachers, one shot in the back of the neck, attempt to seek safety in a forest dwelling while a group of game-keepers on horseback close in. Non-sportsman viewers might tend to identify with the poacher, who grabs his neck in pain, his face full of terror. For gentleman sportsmen, however, the poacher depicted would have been read as a threat and a criminal. The painting’s original title presented the work as a description of the harsh game laws of the aristocracy in Germany, and yet, “true sportsmen” in America were helping to construct game laws of their own.

Until mid-century, sporting authors romanticized guides as latter-day Leatherstockings with all of the backwoods mystique that Natty Bumppo exemplified. These early narratives emphasized the rural guide’s innate conservation and connection to nature, and his desire to instruct the sportsman/reader on woodcraft. As employees, guides undoubtedly played to sportsmen’s expectations, and performed the part of Leatherstocking, stressing rural dialect and echoing conservationist values. Rarely do


these narratives hint at the constant labor involved in serving the sportsman. In the visual arts, guides appear in most “After the Hunt” scenes as servants for sportsmen who, as in Brown’s *Claiming the Shot*, are frequently portrayed in small groups, relaxing by the fire after the day’s sport was finished. The small intimate group on canvas represented, in microcosm, the larger hunting club and the class divisions which were fundamental in their very organization and mission. Similarly, in Jasper F. Cropsey’s *Sportsmen Nooning* (1854), one class recreates, while the other labors (fig. A121). By the 1870s, poaching and market hunting had become dominant issues among “true sportsmen” and their clubs, and artists began to move from celebrating the trapper toward a more condemning presentation. Though guides would frequently appear in hunting party scenes, their predominant role is as servant, their physical position is often low in comparison with the sportsman, and their faces are often hidden. While some sought to distinguish the much-needed guide from the pot-hunter and poacher, most depicted guides as similarly in opposition to the “true sportsman” culture. Regardless, both types of depictions often alluded to the class-based relationship that placed the “true sportsman” on the top of the hunting pyramid.

William Ranney perfected and essentially codified the convention of two men assisting one another in the chase. The two males (at times of different ages) were partners, united in communion with nature, hidden behind a cloak of reeds, and stalking distant, usually unseen game. Ranney’s *Duck Hunters* (1849, fig. A122) and other sportsman/guide scenes were enormously popular at mid-century, and were emulated by William James Stillman, Arthur F. Tait, Louis Maurer and a host of others. In one scene from 1856, *Camping Out: Some of the Right Sort*, Maurer shows a party of near-equals
gathered at camp. Still, the classist basis of the work is expressed in the title; indeed, the member of the “wrong” sort in the foreground is partially turned from the viewer, his face hidden. Maurer’s *Life in the Woods: Starting Out*, lithographed and published by Currier & Ives in 1860, again shows a clear division between the actors, with the guides working, and the sportsmen waiting to be served (fig. A123). “After the hunt” pictures at once presented various relationships between hunting types in the field.

**Claiming the Spoils: the Ownership of Land and Game**

Beyond displaying leisure activities and the social relationships between sportsman and guide, “after the hunt” scenes speak of conquest. These scenes were also about claiming property in the form of land and game. The ownership of the nation’s natural resources was in question, and the sportsmen celebrated in such scenes were those same captains of industry who competed for control of these resources. In response to the perceived depletion of game by off-season guides and other Adirondack locals, the New York Sportsman’s Club worked in 1859 to get a stalled game law rewritten and passed, and the final version outlawed statewide the “killing of deer, partridge, quail, woodcock or snipe” between February 1 and August 1. Upon learning of the law’s passage, The *Spirit* staff, with Thorpe at the helm, expressed satisfaction: “We congratulate the lovers of game and of legitimate sport upon the result.” However, the new law had weakened the former provisions severely. According to NYSC lawyer Charles E. Whitehead, the act was “engineered through the legislature by the lobby men of ‘the common carriers and their agents’:” in short, market hunters and off-season guides.

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Stillman and the Guide

William James Stillman’s (1828-1901) The Philosopher’s Camp of the Adirondacks Club (1858, fig. A124) was a unique divergence from the camp scenes of Ranney and Tait. His least Pre-Raphaelite, and best-known work, The Philosopher’s Camp conveys his rapport with nature. It depicts a now-famous vacation of New England’s leading intellectuals, including Stillman, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Professor Louis Agassiz, among others, at Follansbee (now Follonsby) Pond, near Saranac Lake, in the Adirondacks. Rather than the up-close and lower perspective of Tait’s scenes, the viewer spies the frieze-like arrangement of figures from the river. The camp is divided by a huge maple tree into two parts: an “after the hunt” scene on the left, and a target shoot in progress on the right. Half of the “philosophers” watch as one of the party shoots into the beyond, while the others gather around a stump to converse. All are shown bonding and worshipping at nature’s altar. Stillman described how he arranged the composition, and listed the intellectuals by name, though he neglected to mention the guides included in the scene:

The party is divided in the habit of the morning occupations: Lowell, Hoar, Binney, Woodman and myself are engaged in firing at the target; Agassiz and Wyman are dissecting a trout on a tree stump, while Holmes and Dr. Howe watch the operation; but Emerson, recognizing himself neither as a marksman nor a scientist, is in the position between the two groups, and, pilgrim staff in hand, watches the marksmen, with a slight preference of them to the others.459

Equating American art and science with nature study, Stillman’s camp image also presses the need for a personal relationship with the outdoors through sport. Five unnamed men appear, probably guides: three watching the target-shoot, one man observing the dissection, and one in the far background, perhaps preparing food. Stillman de-emphasizes them not only by neglecting to name them, but also by presenting the backsides of the guides at far right, with their faces obscured.

Other guides were aware of Stillman’s gathering of scholars that late summer. Charles E. Whitehead, then secretary and legal counsel for the NYSC, and Frederick Stoud Stallknecht, a fellow lawyer and later NYSC member, were camping for a month near Follansbee, tagging does and fawns, and with help from their guides – Sam Dunning and Hank Averill – they paid the “philosophers” a visit. Dunning found it humorous that this group of literati, Agassiz in particular, would rather hunt bugs and plants than deer. The amusement no doubt went both ways; it was the ultimate clash of class and culture.

Stillman was a central figure in the mid-century art world connecting artists with hunting culture. As an artist of note, and founder and co-editor of The Crayon, Stillman set the agenda for emerging American artists and helped designate outdoors and hunting imagery as appropriate subject matter. In several early issues the journal reported on hunting and outdoor sport as among the best ways to connect with nature. Briefly

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460[F. S. Stallknecht], “Sporting Tour in August 1858 of F. S. Stallknecht and Charles Whitehead,” Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspapers 6, nos.154-5 (November 13-20, 1858): 378-80, 394-6. According to Stallknecht, 379, his guide Sam Dunning dubbed the group “The Philosopher’s Camp;” Stillman later used the term, but the official name was the Adirondack Club. See Stillman, “An Autobiography,” 619. Dunning’s description of the “philosophers” is found in “Miscellaneous,” National Era 12, no. 611 (September 16, 1858), 148. Thorpe reviewed the painting positively. See“National Academy of Design – No. 2,” SOTT 29, no. 12 (April 30, 1859), 134. By this point, Thorpe was a co-owner and editor of the paper, and wrote the art reviews.
studying under the landscapist Frederic Edwin Church, Stillman was a major mid-century voice for such ideas generally, and for John Ruskin’s art theories specifically.

Stillman’s camp picture is directly related to a European work that was on exhibit at the Düsseldorf Gallery, Karl F. Lessing and Friedrich Boser’s *Bird Shoot at the Grafenberg* (1844, New-York Historical Society). The painting depicts a large group of Düsseldorf artists, some of whom, like Lessing and Hübner, were members of the artists’ association *Malkasten*. With a sole, small boy gazing outward to engage the viewer, the group – all finely-attired, drinking, smoking and conversing – has gathered in the woods for what looks to be a lunch break at a shooting competition; the artists closely resemble the revolutionary militia they would later help form. Stillman most likely saw the painting when reviewing works at the Gallery in 1856. *Philosopher’s Camp* is both compositionally and thematically akin to the Lessing painting; it no doubt inspired Stillman and his brother artists in *The Crayon* circle to incorporate the hunter-artist into wilderness imagery, and deal with the hunting camp scene. Though there are no guide figures in the *Bird Shoot* scene, given its juxtaposition in the Düsseldorf Gallery with Hübner’s *Poacher’s Death*, comparisons in class and hunting rights could not have been avoided.

At the actual “Philosopher’s Camp,” each of the ten intellectuals had a guide, with Stillman, although an elite hunter in his own right, serving as Agassiz’s. Stillman clearly

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461 Marion F. Deshmukh, “Between Tradition and Modernity: The Düsseldorf Art Academy in Early Nineteenth Century Prussia,” *German Studies Review* 6, no. 3 (October 1983): 459. Deshmukh states that Lessing and Hübner were among the eleven artists chosen for a Düsseldorf militia in 1848.

wanted to display his knowledge of the wilderness to impress his fellow intellectuals, which he seems to have accomplished. When describing this camping experience, Emerson referred to the guides as “doctors of the wilderness,” and called Stillman a “guide’s guide.” Stillman was pleased to be seen by his idol Emerson as the romanticized guide type of the early century.\footnote{Paul F. Jamieson, “Emerson in the Adirondacks,” \textit{New York History} 39, no. 3 (July 1958): 224; and Ida G. Everson, “William J. Stillman: Emerson’s ‘Gallant Artist,’” \textit{The New England Quarterly} 31, no. 1 (March 1958): 35. Stillman, “The Philosopher’s Camp,” 600-602.} Although Stillman claimed he was his own guide during the Philosopher’s Camp – he helped build the bark shanty under which they slept – his regular guide, Steve Martin was likely present; twenty-five years later, Stillman wrote that Martin was probably the only man who could find the camp site. While he had great respect for Martin, Stillman had a less romantic view of the local guides of the Adirondacks. In most forums he was condescending of guide culture and the backwoods locals, “the humanity of the backwoods,” which he felt lived “on a lower level than that of a New England village.”\footnote{Stillman’s written narrative of an earlier hunting trip, titled “The Wilderness and its Waters” (featured monthly in \textit{The Crayon} during most of 1855) was aimed specifically at the sportsman-artist and sportsman-patron, and presented backwoods guides as ignorant in all but woodcraft. Stillman dedicated many pages to the guide in this narrative; here, the penultimate guide “Mike” was, according to Stillman, “of the Leather-Stocking order,” who helped teach city-folks the proper ways to appreciate and conserve nature, while the average local guides were portrayed as...} Stillman’s written narrative of an earlier hunting trip, titled “The Wilderness and its Waters” (featured monthly in \textit{The Crayon} during most of 1855) was aimed specifically at the sportsman-artist and sportsman-patron, and presented backwoods guides as ignorant in all but woodcraft. Stillman dedicated many pages to the guide in this narrative; here, the penultimate guide “Mike” was, according to Stillman, “of the Leather-Stocking order,” who helped teach city-folks the proper ways to appreciate and conserve nature, while the average local guides were portrayed as...
immoral, ignorant drunkards. Similarly, Stillman’s 1900 retrospective in *Atlantic Monthly* highlighted the savage and simplistic nature of the guide, his lower-class speech, and his amoral behavior. It should be stressed, however, that Stillman took part in some of the same destructive acts regularly attributed to bad guides, such as fire-hunts. He justified this killing by acknowledging that “unsportsmanlike” methods were used when meat was needed, and in the event that a poor shot (Emerson, in this case) missed.467

After a few seasons in the woods, Stillman began to cast himself in the mode of the heroic, Leatherstocking, writing that, “My only guide was the course of the stream.” Stillman even earned money as a guide himself in 1861 when he found himself in financial straits.468

It is interesting to speculate what words of “true sportsmanship” Charles E. Whitehead, the recently-elected counsel for the NYSC, had to impart while visiting the Philosophers’ Camp. That season Whitehead captured, marked and released fawns, and when their guide was preparing to slaughter a captured fawn Whitehead convinced him to let it go. Whitehead also made sketches during the trip which illustrate his published

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466See Stillman, “Wilderness and Its Waters. V. The River,” 1, no. 16 (April 18, 1855), 242; and “IX. The Hunter’s Home,” 307, for examples of this negative view.

467Stillman, “The Philosopher’s Camp,” 601-602. Whitehead and Stallknecht also took part in a fire-hunt this same season, but according to the story, Whitehead was only an observer, seated between the guide and Stallknecht. See Stallknecht, 394.

account in Leslies; many of the pictures depict the guides in their company.469 “True sportsmen” like Whitehead still relied on guides to explore the relatively-unmapped forests. At the same time, these sportsmen were responsible for deciding how to represent guides to conservationists; Whitehead did just this in a series of “Camp-Fire” tales written for the Spirit. Interestingly, he relocated the Adirondack guide, complete with Leatherstocking speech, and many of the northern events that occurred, to the Southern outback of the Everglades.470 Here, Whitehead’s guide extraordinaire, Injun Mike, is the ultimate conservationist, living among backwoods simpletons (fig. A125). Like his prototype Leatherstocking, Mike is adamantly against the needless killing of “creeturs,” against using reckless methods, and for protecting the wilderness from undisciplined hunters. It is significant that even the “true sportsman” Whitehead, when speaking to a popular audience on proper game conservation, employed the voice of his fictional backwoods guide; the sons of Leatherstocking had become popular spokesmen of conservation to match that of Frank Forester. Of course, not all backwoods types were so kindly represented.

Since the majority of fine artists worked in the larger cities on the East Coast, with wealthy patrons and periodicals in mind, their output was generally biased towards recreational sporting scenes. Such images show urbanites bonding with their male peers in lakeside camps or hunting clubs in the forest. However, middle-class Americans also began to be drawn to the outdoor life at this time due to a combination of the nature-worship literature (such as Stillman’s The Crayon) and the later tourism-propaganda of

469 [Stallknecht], 379. Whitehead drew the illustrations that accompany these two articles.

Rev. William H. H. Murray’s *Adventures in the Wilderness* (1869). These influences led many to believe that outdoor life was beneficial for one’s health, for increasing one’s physical potency, and to regain lost masculinity resulting from life in a soul-sucking, disease-causing metropolis.\(^{471}\) This influx of the middle-class was both a blessing and a curse for locals in the Adirondacks and similar backwoods destinations. Guides were in high demand among sportsmen and tourists, but gradually, they had their common rights to game and land outlawed by elitist sporting clubs who wished to distance themselves from new, amateur tourist/sportsmen, and local pot hunters, and to keep game for themselves. For Stillman and others it was the combination of reckless tourists and the “more reckless and careless guide” who were destroying paradise.\(^{472}\)

**Tait’s Guides**

As discussed in Chapter One, the prolific Arthur F. Tait produced images of every aspect of the hunt, and most of these are presented in a reportorial fashion. He gives what appears to be truthful account of dress and behavior in the Adirondack outback, both in terms of urban tourists and local guides. On first glance, one does not get a sense that he had any particular leaning in the conservationist debate. A few images, however, speak directly on the issue, such as *The Regretted Shot* (1867, fig. A29), mentioned in Chapter One, and *A Random Shot* from 1872, which, according to Tait’s checklist, depicted a “dead doe and fawn.”\(^{473}\) Though unlocated, the second resembles in context Landseer’s *A

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\(^{472}\)Everson, 39 and 42; and Stillman, “An Autobiography,” 599.

\(^{473}\)“Checklist,” Cadbury/Marsh, 196-197; the painting measured 25 x 30 ½ in., and was purchased (and possibly commissioned) by Thomas P. Crook, an Albany flour merchant. There was an earlier version – *The Regret* – dating 1863. It was exhibited at NAD 1865, and owned by Isaac B. Wellington of Brooklyn, though was destroyed in 1953; the second was painted with help from James M. Hart. ibid., 168.
Random Shot (1848, fig. A169), a scene similarly conceived with pathos and sentimentality, in which the fawn attempts to suckle the mother killed by a reckless hunter. Such scenes marked a turning point for Tait, at which he began reaching for a broader clientele with barnyard scenes and more animal family groups. It is telling that after 1875, Tait produced only four scenes depicting upper-class sportsmen, and six scenes depicting guides (without sportsman). The two hunter types had been separated in Tait’s mind and art.

Tait relied regularly on the assistance of guides while traveling through the Adirondack wilderness, and used them as models in his scenes or as teachers in the ways of woodcraft. Like Stillman, Tait immersed himself in backwoods life and seems to have understood most methods of taking game as legitimate. His actual guides included Anthony Sprague, the Bellows brothers – Lewis, Hiram and Francis – and one of the most famous Adirondack guides of all, Captain Calvin Parker, who was Tait’s neighbor when the artist lived at Long Lake. If Tait could not experience the western frontier of his mentor Ranney, he would capture this more convenient version a mere two days travel from Manhattan. In scenes commissioned by Currier & Ives, Tait revised Ranney’s duck shooting pictures in nearly identical compositions, substituting deer for fowl in the majority of examples. Many of these depict then-questionable methods of hunting, ones

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Wellington’s distant cousin Aaron Holbrook Wellington was a member and director of Blooming Grove Park Association with Charles Hallock, an NYAPG member. Random Shot (1872, oil on panel, 10 x 12 in.) was painted for William Schaus, who owned a Manhattan picture gallery. Schaus commissioned other sentimental deer pictures from Tait in the 1870s. See Cadbury/Marsh, 220-221.

474 For Tait’s relationship with these guides, see Cadbury/Marsh, 40-41. Interestingly, both Charles Whitehead and Tait employed Captain Calvin Parker as guide while hunting at Raquette Lake, and he remained Tait’s favorite guide into the 1880s. In a June 1858 memorandum (in the Tait Register, Adirondack Museum), Tait noted his desire to buy a “night lamp for hunting,” suggesting he fire-hunted. Only one sketch by Tait, in wash on paper, depicts the method, however. See ibid., 48 and 319.
that “true sportsmen” resisted. Tait was apparently taught to use these controversial methods by his guide friends, like Lewis Bellows, who was reported to use them. His apparent friendship with these locals, however, did not prevent Tait from revealing a class bias when depicting guides.475

Popular lithographic reproductions of Tait’s camp scenes are generally innocuous in terms of class dynamics. The originals however, specifically *The Return from Hunting: Halt in the Woods* (1853), *With Great Care* (1854, Louis Madeira Collection), *A Good Time Coming* (1862, Adirondack Museum) and *Going Out: Deer Hunting* (1862, Adirondack Museum), clearly portray class division. In *With Great Care*, for instance, Tait depicts himself in fine hunting coat, at the top of the compositional “pyramid,” inspecting a bottle of wine. At the bottom, his guide Anthony Sprague is shown, taking hooks out of fish and smiling up cheerfully. Tait regularly depicted himself in his camp scenes, as a sophisticated, knowledgeable member of the party. For the most part, Tait’s sportsmen in both his hunting and “after the hunt” scenes are relaxed yet formidable in appearance. They are regularly shown at rest: lounging, chatting, and drinking. In contrast, his guides are set in awkward positions: bending over, with backs turned to the viewer, and laboring. They are meant to be read as subservient to their employers. This is not surprising, given that Tait was painting for the patron who wanted a favorable narrative of his recreation with friends.

In *Going Out: Deer Hunting in the Adirondacks* (1862, fig. A126), Tait shows a sportsman (possibly Tait himself), standing erect as the gun he leans on, and calling out to his companion; his guide, whose face is covered by his cap, bends over awkwardly to

475 A writer for the *Spirit, Naturalist* (“A Trip to the Chateaugay Lakes; Letter II,” *SOTT* 20, no.44 (December 21, 1850), 517) referred to Lewis Bellows as using the “unfair” method of floating.
ready the canoe for the hunt. *Going Out* was produced after Tait’s long legal fights with locals and guides over property, unpaid bills, and possible embezzlement. Tait, apparently acting as a treasurer in raising funds to buy Mrs. Bellows an artificial leg, came up short. The court case lasted from fall of 1855 to February 1857, and the judge found that Tait owed the Bellows family roughly $278 for guiding services, room and board. After settling the latter case, Tait never returned to the Chateaugay Lake region.

Not surprisingly, any equality that was hinted at in his pictures between sportsmen and guides before 1857 is gone.\(^{476}\) Given his British upbringing and mindset, Tait appeared to have been unable to put class divisions behind him, even if he himself was considered of a lower station than his wealthy, land-owning patrons.

Tait’s coupling of sportsmen with guides continued into the 1870s, closely resembling Ranney’s pictorial convention. However by the 1880s, Tait’s rugged-appearing guides, like Homer’s, go it alone, and the images take on a darker mood. Likewise, in later scenes, Tait’s well-dressed sportsmen are portrayed without guides. Accompanied only by hunting dogs, and generally set in grassy, settled pasture land, they recall Fanny Palmer’s pictures from the 1850s. This division in subject types shows that Tait was aware of the growing social divide taking place in the woods, and that his patrons preferred the new imagery of class separation.

For his guide scenes of the 1880s, particularly his six versions of *An Anxious Moment* (1880, fig. A127), Tait returned to one of his most successful compositions – his *Deer Driving* scene (ca. 1857), titled *A Good Chance* for the Currier & Ives print. This original was colorful, both in terms of landscape and dress, evoking springtime, good

\(^{476}\)Tait’s son later said that the bending figure was meant to represent Captain Parker, which if so, is striking, given that Parker was among Tait’s favorite guides. For the lawsuit, see Cadbury/Marsh, 47.
spirits, and recreation. However, by the 1870s the practice of driving deer had become a controversial technique, and was banned by the 1880s in many wilderness areas. These revised versions are, on the whole, darker, and suggest covert hunting. Tait made detailed descriptions of paintings in his checklist, and for *An Anxious Moment* Tait specified that the hunting figures in the canoe were “two guides,” an interesting addendum, and informative given the patrons of these works, like Flint, were game protectors and elite sportsmen. Unlike his early pictures for Currier & Ives, the two figures in the canoe are dressed as locals, appear rugged, and are clothed in browns and blacks, rather than the earlier reds and blues. When Flint bought *An Anxious Moment*, the sale also included a companion piece, showing two small deer on the alert, titled *View on Long Lake* (1880, Bronson Trevor Collection). When hung together, the story of unfair killing is complete; as with Winslow Homer’s guide scenes of the 1890s, the absence of urban sportsman suggests the guides are hunting out of season, and they are about to shoot what appear to be a fawn and doe. Another Tait painting owned by Flint was titled *Still Hunting in the Snow, Adirondacks* (1881, Shelburne Museum), and describes the result of “crusting,” considered by elite preservationists to be a cruel and unfair method. Flint appears to have wanted imagery that would provoke debate. The darker presence of Tait’s guides during the 1870s and 1880s may be due to his past legal problems with locals in the region, but it is an interesting change considering this was the beginning of the flood of urban,

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477 Of the five or more versions of *An Anxious Moment*, two are dated 1880 (one bought by Dr. Luke Corcoran, Springfield, Massachusetts, the other by Charles R. Flint, a NYAPG member), two are dated 1881 (one made to pay off loans to Dr. Perkins of Albany), and one from 1882 (to F. M. Bird, again to pay off a loan). According to Tait, these show two guides in a canoe in a moment of suspense, and set at Long Lake. Two others, *Deer Driving in Fog* (1880, 14 x 22 in.) and *A Slight Chance* (1883, 20 x 30 in., sold by Vose Galleries) include the same canoe and men. See Cadbury/Marsh checklist, 252-255. On Tait’s two paintings for Flint, see Cadbury/Marsh, 253.
amateur sportsmen into the Adirondacks resulting from Murray’s “groundbreaking” work.  

Guides in the Shadows

Driven in part by Ranney’s and Tait’s success in the field, but also Stillman’s glorification of the outdoors experience, other sportsmen-artists took up the theme of the hunter’s camp, and guides are essential characters in the resulting scenes. Sanford Robinson Gifford, who first recommended that Stillman travel to the Adirondacks, created several landscapes that contain barely-perceptible hunting scenarios. Reflective of his own recreational interests, Gifford’s scenes capture the physical rapport with one’s sublime surroundings. Gifford was one of earliest Hudson River School artists to sketch and hunt in the Adirondacks and the White Mountains, and as a member of the NYAPG was also a link between the art world and animal conservation. His Mount Mansfield (1859, fig. A128) includes two sportsmen with dog and guns at center, beholding the majestic mountain, as two other figures at far left, who almost certainly are guides, stir a camp fire. The scene implies that the elite sportsman can take in the commanding view, but the paid guides must labor and are relegated to the shadows.

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478 According to Cadbury/Marsh, 41, the Bellows brothers passed on their hunting techniques to Tait. For the court case, see ibid., 47. Tait had stayed regularly at the Bellows’ Lake House, until this financial dispute. On Flint’s paintings by Tait, see ibid., 252-254.

479 Stillman, “An Autobiography,” 473: Gifford “gave me the clue of the Labyrinth,” i.e., the maze of the Upper Saranac Lake system.

480 In an earlier oil and pencil study for the painting, measuring 7 x 14 in. (1858, George Walter Vincent Smith Art Museum), Gifford shows the central figures in less detail, and the artist has not yet added the guide figures. This version was first owned by Joseph H. Higginson. In 1860, Irving Browne is listed as owning the larger Manoogian painting (30 ½ x 60 ¼ in.), and then from at least 1864 to 1876, the owner is Robert Gordon, a NYAPG and St. Andrew’s Society member. Gifford later produced two camp scenes of this same location; one is a night scene, located at Adirondack Museum, dated ca. 1868, and looks to be the same shanty that appears at far left in the 1858 painting. This may actually be the painting exhibited at the NAD in 1859 as Camp on Mansfield Mountain, owned by the Democrat mayor of Troy and later congressman of New York, John Augustus Griswold (1822-1872). See Cowdrey, National Academy
Other sportsman-artists tried their hand at representing the guide. In addition to his painting *Claiming the Shot*, John George Brown produced *Deer Hunter in the Woods* (1864, fig. A129), showing a solitary figure dressed in blacks and browns; like Gifford’s hunters, this figure is barely perceptible in an expansive background of birch trees and boulders. Like the guides in *Claiming the Shot*, this character is similarly cast in the shadows. The hunter peers from behind a rock towards his victim, but his solitary, stalking pose may suggest the secretive activity of a poacher. It is in fact reminiscent of the European poacher images shown in illustrated periodicals.\(^{481}\)

Another less well known hunt artist was Frederic Rondel (1826-1892), thought to be Winslow Homer’s only art teacher. Rondel’s *Batkins Club in Camp in the Adirondacks* (1856, fig. A130) may have also inspired Stillman’s frieze-structured camp scene, and Homer to pursue the sporting theme. Two of the figures stand out as guides; while the sportsmen converse and enjoy their time away from the city, the guides are positioned visibly apart from the others. Like Homer, Rondel was an avid angler, and was probably a member of the enigmatic Batkins Club.\(^{482}\)

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\(^{481}\) This painting measures 42 x 58 in., and sold at Christie’s New York, Dec. 3, 1993, cited on Askart. Hoppin, 33. The scene may have resulted from a sketching excursion in New Hampshire. In “Science and Art,” *The Knickerbocker Monthly* 62, no. 5 (November 1863), 477, Brown is noted as having “a stay at Gorham.” When human poachers are depicted in the States and titled so, they are almost without exception represented as European or English. See, for example, *French Poacher at Bay*, in *Harper’s Weekly*, March 7, 1868, 152, and *Poaching in England*, in *Harper’s Weekly*, October 24, 1874, 881.

\(^{482}\) Rondel’s *Hunting Party in the Woods* showed at NAD in 1857, which may refer to the same Batkins Club he painted in 1856. A possible teacher of Homer, Rondel worked in Boston until the late 1850s, where he met Homer. They worked together in New York in 1861, when Rondel exhibited *Snipe Shooting* at the NAD. See David Tatham, “A Drawing by Winslow Homer: Corner of Winter, Washington and Summer Streets,” *American Art Journal* 18, no. 3 (Summer 1986): 48; and Cikovski, *Winslow Homer*, 19.
Albert Bierstadt, the famous western landscape painter, also produced a number of scenes upon his return to America showing figures that are likely guides, in camps, or alone in wooded settings. These images include *Hunting in the White Mountains* (ca. 1857, Columbus Museum, GA), *The Trapper’s Camp* (1861, fig. A131), and *Moose Hunter’s Camp* (1878, MFA Boston). Both paintings are forest studies, with overpowering tree trunks, while at the bottom center, becoming one with the monumental landscape, are solitary, buckskin-dressed figures, toting guns. The hunter depicted may have been one of Bierstadt’s guides, and the figure appears so low in the picture, literally obscured by his surroundings, that the depiction is far from celebratory. Like the guides in paintings by Stillman and Tait, they are “hidden” in the wilderness. The majority of figures in Bierstadt’s works are little more than staffage, but he also included free trappers and guides in a few works for associational value; in the examples where he includes them, however, the trappers appear dark and threatening and are placed in eerie camp settings at night.483

**Guides and the Civil War Era**

The Civil War cast a haunting chill and pessimism over most cultural expression, and this sense of doom finds its way into hunting art as well. One artist-sportsman who used light and the oncoming night to add mystery and melancholy to the hunt scene was Sanford Robinson Gifford. Three Civil War-era works by Gifford particularly stand out for their inclusion of working guides: *A Lake Twilight* (1861, fig. A132), *Evening in the*

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483Bierstadt’s *Hunting in the White Mountains* is illustrated in *American Art in the Columbus Museum* (Columbus, GA: The Museum, 2003), 45-46. Before the museum’s accession, it was owned by Dr. Louis Hazouri, of Columbus. Bierstadt seems not to have been an avid sportsman, and would only kill for food or fur, but was played up to be a big game hunter by Roosevelt so that he could remain a member of the Boone and Crockett Club. See Eric W. Nye and Sheri I. Hoem, “Big Game on the Editor’s Desk: Roosevelt and Bierstadt’s Tale of the Hunt,” *The New England Quarterly* 60, no. 3 (September 1987): 457. On Bierstadt as seeing backwoods guides as ignorant, see ibid., 459.
Adirondacks (1862, private collection), and *A Twilight in the Adirondacks* (1864, fig. A133). The first shows a lone hunter either lifting a slain deer out of a skiff. The event takes place below the ominous Green Mountains of Vermont, and the lighting, dead trunks at the lakeside, and the dead animal, convey an eerie stillness. The painting has been interpreted as “a foreboding reflection on the coming of war,” which, given Gifford’s role in the Union army, it may have been. Gifford, however, as a conservationist and member of the NYSC, may have had the more regional issue of guides taking game for market in mind.484 *Evening in the Adirondacks* (1862) is similar both in terms of the lakeside landscape and humble shanty at the right, and is presumably set at Lake Placid below Mt. McIntyre.485 Though the figures are hardly visible, we may assume this is a guide’s camp, based on its isolation and rugged quality.486 What is

484 Andrew Wilton and Tim Barringer. *American Sublime: Landscape Painting in the United States, 1820-1880* (exh. cat., Tate Britain, London, 2002), 116; also see John K. Howat, et al. *American Paradise: The World of the Hudson River School* (exh. cat., Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1987), 221, for its interpretation as a menacing scene. For Gifford’s love of the Adirondacks, see Ila Weiss, *Poetic Landscape: The Art and Experience of Sanford R. Gifford* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware, 1987), 98. Gifford is listed as a NYSC member beginning in 1872, but given the lack of surviving member rolls before this year, he may have joined as early as the mid-1860s. See NYAPG Papers, box 6, folders 202 and 204.


486 The painting is oil on canvas, and measures 24 x 36 in. Another Civil War-era painting by Gifford, *A Gorge in the Mountains*, aka *Kauterskill Clove* (1862, Metropolitan Museum of Art), also includes a hunting figure with gun and dog. The majority of critics at the time did not even note their inclusion, and one reviewer who did called them “unobtrusive, blending…with the dark rocks,” and thus not “objectionable.” See Gerald L. Carr, “Sanford Robinson Gifford’s *Gorge in the Mountains* Revived,” *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 38 (2003): 225-226; Carr cites review by Barry Gray [Robert Barry Coffin], “Gifford, The Artist,” *The Leader* (New York), December 27, 1862, 1. Unlike Doughty, Gifford regularly hid his hunters within natural elements. For the Lake Placid theory, see Avery and Kelly, 167. Gifford visited the site with William Hubbard and Jervis McEntee in 1863. See Avery and Kelly, 245.
especially striking is the difference of these pictures from his *Mount Mansfield*, where the
sportsman is clearly separate and distinguishable from the guides. ⁴⁸⁷

Gifford’s lakeside hunting images coincided with the beginning of land removal from local, common hunting ground into private hands; many Northerners profited from the war, and they used their wealth to buy tracks of relatively undisturbed wilderness. The exclusion of local guides from their previous hunting grounds began with the building of private game preserves in New York and neighboring states. The “parks” were owned by hunting clubs or individual sportsmen for their private enjoyment, and included land that had previously been free commons. ⁴⁸⁸ One example, the Pike County, Pennsylvania-based Blooming Grove Park Association employed full-time game-keepers, and regional guides were not allowed on club grounds; trespassers were given fair warning in *Forest and Stream.* ⁴⁸⁹ In the two decades that followed, private hunting grounds sprang up in most undeveloped areas, removing access to hunting opportunities that locals had relied upon for generations. In response, guides and other rural hunters often ignored signs and fences, and risked their lives and freedom poaching animals that the upper-class land owner claimed as his property.

⁴⁸⁷ Other hunting scenes by Gifford include *Duck Hunting in a Marsh* (1866, Vose Gallery), *Fire Island Beach* (1878, Private Coll.) and an oil study for it (ca. 1878, Edward P. Swyer Coll.) the latter two illustrated in Avery and Kelly, 223-224.

⁴⁸⁸ In addition to Rondel’s “Batkins Club,” there were several other exclusive organizations on Long Island, the Suffolk Club (founded in 1858 by August Belmont) and the Southside Sportsman’s Club (founded in 1866) being the most prominent. “Sport on Long Island,” *Forest and Stream* 61, no. 15 (October 10, 1903), 277. The first “Suffolk Club” was founded by Daniel Webster in 1827. See South Shore Estuary Reserve Council, http://www.estuary.cog.ny.us/access_guide/site48.html [accessed April 3, 2010]. The Pike County, Pennsylvania-based Blooming Grove Park Association – founded in 1870 by the future editor of *Forest and Stream*, Charles Hallock, and Genio C. Scott (both NYAPG members) – was another example.

⁴⁸⁹ “Game Protection,” *Forest and Stream* 8, no. 7 (March 22, 1877), 101; “Blooming Grove Park,” *Forest and Stream* 9, no. 20 (December 20, 1877): 386.
After the Civil War, even as “true sportsmen” retreated to their preserves, a growth in amateur sportsmen increased the need for guides. With the surge in middle-class shooters flocking to the Adirondacks in the late 1860s, especially after the publication of Rev. William Murray’s sport-tourism best-seller, *Adventures in the Wilderness, or Camp-Life in the Adirondacks* (1869), the market for guides was assured. Murray commented, however, on the problem of finding competent guides who were not “ignorant, lazy, low-bred,” in order to have a successful adventure.490 “True sportsmen,” it should be noted, hated “Murray’s Fools,” the amateurs led like mice to the Adirondacks by Murray’s fife, and Murray was mocked in the sporting press which those sportsmen controlled. The new demand for guides gave a much-needed infusion of cash to the backwoods locales, but it made “true sportsmen” tremble. Conservation-minded sportsmen were fearful that the beloved game would be depleted, and that wildlife might be shot by some novice sportsman. Guides, who had rarely been depicted pictorially with high esteem, dropped to an even lower level than before the war years.491

A view of the isolation undoubtedly felt by guides may be seen in Levi Wells Prentice’s *After the Hunt* (1879, fig. A134). Like Beard and Bierstadt before him, Prentice (1851-1935) depicted the working class in their private evening moments, where the firelight casts shadows and adds to the scene’s melancholy mood. Prentice’s guides

490 William H. H. Murray, *Adventures in the Wilderness*, ed. William K. Verner (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1970), 32. His whole section on guides (pp. 32-40, and 84-87) is amusing and instructive. In his appendix, in response to his critics, Murray warns of “ignorant sportsmen,” who have to learn to shoot once in camp, and scare the deer away. He suggests learning to shoot before leaving for the Adirondacks, and finding guides early, so as to secure those well-trained. See Murray, “Appendix,” 85-89. Those against Murray included Thorpe and Hallock.

lie about in a darkly set camp, in isolation; without the finely-attired sportsmen of Tait’s pictures, Prentice’s painting is a dark version of the “after the hunt” picture. Born and raised near the borders of today’s Adirondack Park, in Lewis County, New York, Prentice’s many landscapes portray that northern wilderness at the moment of heated public discussion of protection of the Adirondack forests. He made at least four trips to the area in the 1870s, his last in 1877, producing studies to be worked up back in his Syracuse studio. The setting of After the Hunt is most likely near Schroon Lake or Smith’s Lake (modern Lake Lila) in the Adirondacks, both of which dominated Prentice’s attention at the time. During 1878 and 1879, his last years in Syracuse, Prentice depicted both gentlemen-sportsmen’s permanent camps (in sunlight) and the more humble guide-constructed type (in shadow or sundown). The latter type is depicted here. Though seemingly a traditional “after the hunt” picture, this scene is exceptional in its realistic depiction of the exhaustion from a day’s labor. The scene is unique for Prentice, who often did not spend much attention on human figures, but rather focused on daytime landscapes. As in his seven other camp scenes, the figures do not interact or converse with one another, but are each in deep contemplation. One of the few genre pictures Prentice created, it captures the still calm of the evening, with figures frozen in time. The men appear exhausted, one sinking into his hammock, the others arranged on the ground and near sleep. They are all humorless and dressed alike, in plain dark garb and hats, and mirror the photographs of guides taken at the time. These are the servants of


493Ibid., 39.
the sportsmen, resting up for another long work day. The viewer is not immediately welcomed into the camp, but rather beholds a “behind the scenes” glimpse of guides congregating.

Eakins’ Guides

One artist intrigued with the mystique of the guide and his lower-class lifestyle, was the Philadelphia artist Thomas Eakins (1844-1916). Like many sportsmen of his day, whether consciously or not, Eakins equated shooting with masculinity and power, and owned dozens of guns. He described himself as a skilled rail [marsh bird] shooter, and had a personal connection to the sport which began during his boyhood, and which was fostered by his domineering father. Eakins went so far as to depict himself as a skiff pole-man or pusher for his gunning father, which has led to some confusion regarding his intent.

Eakins apparently knew hunters from the lower-classes, and recreated among them. He frequently hunted the polluted and stagnant areas known as the “Neck” and the Ma’sh,” where the Delaware and Schuykill meet and where locals pursued reed birds. These were haunts for local, lower-class shooters, as well as some determined middle-class children. These locals nonetheless served as guides, boatmen and pushers for

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495 William I. Homer, Thomas Eakins: His Life and Art (New York: Abbeville Press, 1992), 51 and 68, writes that Eakins’ vacation home near Fairton, New Jersey, was near the Neck, where he learned to shoot rail. Also see Alan C. Braddock, “Eakins, Race, and Ethnographic Ambivalence,” Winterthur Portfolio 33, no. 2/3 (Summer-Autumn 1998): 150 and 152. In a letter from Eakins to Gerome, ca. March 1874, in the Bregler Collection, Eakins writes that he had recently “caught malaria pursuing this same hunt…the doctor forbids me to go hunting this year even though I have been used to going there since childhood.” Reprinted in Marc Simpson, “The 1870s,” Thomas Eakins; organized by Darrel Sewell, to accompany exhibition held at Philadelphia Museum of Art, October 4, 2001-January 6, 2002 (Philadelphia: The Museum, 2001), 30.
hunters. The Ma’sh was a free-for-all; this is where Eakins occasionally hunted, and was the main locale that he depicted in his series of hunting images.\(^496\) In 1881, two of Eakins’ rail-shooting scenes from the 1870s were used, presumably with the artist’s blessing, to illustrate an essay in *Scribner’s Monthly*, which spoke poorly of the lower classes living “in the Ma’sh.”\(^497\) One is an engraving after Eakins’ painting of Will Shuster (an Eakins’ family friend) and Dave Wright, an African-American pole-man, titled *Rail Shooting on the Delaware* (1876, fig. A135).\(^498\) The other, an engraving after a portion of *Pushing for Rail* (1874, Metropolitan Museum of Art), depicts the lone black pusher, standing in a triumphant pose and gazing toward the viewer, as though claiming the marsh as his own. The original oil version of *Pushing for Rail* was one of Eakins’ first hunting pictures and exhibited at the French salon, essentially introducing Eakins to the European art world.\(^499\) Both men in the scene appear of the same class, but their different race is a crucial factor for Eakins and for his viewers. Eakins’ rail hunting pictures

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\(^496\) See Maurice F. Egan, “A Day in the Ma’sh,” *Scribner’s Monthly* 22, no. 3 (July 1881), 346-347.


\(^498\) Also titled *Will Schuster and Blackman Going Shooting*, the painting was bequested to Yale by Stephen Carlton Clark, B. A., 1903. Eakins seems to have had other classist issues, describing in letters his hatred of rich people, especially those gaining favors because of wealth. See Milroy, 88 and 100. Perhaps this is why he praised common men in commanding roles. In terms of politics, Milroy notes that Eakins was “a confirmed Republican and Unionist;” see Milroy, 64. Eakins included Dave Wright’s name in a preliminary sketch for the painting, but his name did not make it to the painting. See Kathleen Foster, *Thomas Eakins*, 366-367.

\(^499\) In 1874, Eakins sent two hunting pictures to Gerôme, *Pushing for Rail* and possibly *Starting Out After Rail*, which were probably the two hunting pictures shown at the Salon the following year; also, in 1875 *Whistling Plover*, sold at Goupil’s in Paris; see Darrel Sewell, *Eakins*, xxix, 30 & 99; and Lizzie W. Champney, “Varnishing Day; American Artists at the French Salon,” *The Independent* 27 (June 3, 1875), 4. *Whistling for Plover* was on exhibit at the American Society of Painters in Watercolors, New York City, Spring 1875. See “Eighth Exhibition of the Water-Color Society,” *Scribner’s Monthly* 9, no. 6 (April 1875): 762-764; and “An Unusual Number,” *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, March 6, 1875. For the positive response by French critics to his hunting scenes, see Alan C. Braddock, “Eakins, Race, and Ethnographic Ambivalence,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 33, no. 2/3 (Summer/Autumn 1998): 148.
themselves may be considered neutral, unbiased views of hunting, but the accompanying text in *Scribner’s* casts the figures in a darker light. Together the imagery validated the idea that the Ma’sh was a dirty, disease infested and poor location, to be avoided.

In *The Artist and his Father Hunting Reed Birds on the Cohansey Marshes* (ca. 1874, fig. A136), Eakins positions his father Benjamin in the foreground, the boat (and his aim) moving at a diagonal across the picture plane, while Eakins stands in the rear, pushing the boat and, judging from his expression and pose, exerting a great deal of labor. Modern historians have read Eakins’ hunt scenes in the same light as his other sport scenes, as the artist celebrating masculinity, and masculine action. However, if Eakins wished to convey manliness, he could have picked any sport other than rail shooting, which was disregarded by many “true sportsmen” as child’s play, or “female hunting” since it was one of the easiest forms of sport shooting.\(^{500}\) Due in part to its ease and availability, rail shooting represented one of the last sports that the common man could afford, and thus came to be seen as a low point in the sporting hierarchy. Despite the societal perceptions, perhaps the rail hunt did make Eakins feel powerful, as hunting did for a majority of Americans. But for him, the rail hunt was something more personal – an activity his controlling father encouraged. His hunt scenes were also documents of Eakins’ personal and social life, and of class relationships. Beyond obvious class issues, by placing the guide (as pusher) as the critical participant in the hunt, Eakins elevates his status. This image could also be read as a commentary on his relationship with his father.

\(^{500}\)Specifically *The Artist and His Father Hunting Reed Birds on the Cohansey Marshes* (1873-74, o/c, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond). Forester, *Complete Manual*, 312-314. The “for female hunters” comment is in Bob Hinman, *The Golden Age of Shotgunning* (New York: Winchester Press, 1971), 7. Even Frank Forester thought it “a poor pastime,” and wrote that the bird was “not true game.” He further wrote that “all the skill in the sport lies in the pusher…he pushes the boat, marks the fallen, and retrieves them.” Forester, *Complete Manual*, 312-314.
In representing himself as the pusher, and his father as the motionless gunner, Eakins was making a statement on his primary importance to the sport, to his father’s pleasure, and for his approval.501

Eakins’ rail pictures, where guide/pushers lead the sportsmen through the marsh, were praised internationally, particularly at the Paris Salon of 1875, and domestically when variations appeared in the States that year. The other image exhibited in Paris, *Starting out after Rail* (1874, fig. A137), shows two hunters – Harry Young and Sam Hellower – in a sailboat, preparing to cast off. Though it is uncertain whether he is meant to be read as a guide, one is shown controlling the rudder, while the other turns toward us with an enigmatic look, his gun lying beside him. Many of Eakins’ hunting scenes directly engage the viewer through use of the returned gaze. This was commonly employed by artists wishing to grant their subjects humanity and to build empathy in the viewer, but it could also evoke fear and concern in the viewer, particularly when the confrontation went against cultural norms.502 Such is the case here, where the expressions, off-kilter boat, partially-hidden gun, and backwards gaze of the sailors all work to provoke suspicion and to separate the viewer from the subjects, both physically and psychologically. It is unclear to which class these hunters belong, but Eakins use of the gaze suggests he intended to emphasize the division between the presumably upper-class viewer from the protagonists.

One last related work, in which Eakins depicts the hunting of marsh birds, is *Whistling for Plover* (1874, fig. A138). A unique image in American art, it may be the

501 On the troubled relationship between Eakins and his father, and Eakins’ own racist, classist and sexist behavior, see specifically Adams, 34-35, 65, 135-136.

first painting by an American artist to show a black hunter engaged not as a guide or pusher, but as the hunter himself, in this case, of a popular game bird of the Ma’sh, the yellow-legged plover. Further, the fact that this image showed a black man preparing to fire his gun in the viewer’s direction was novel, provocative and potentially threatening. One reviewer noted that the picture was “remarkably unconventional.”\textsuperscript{503} The picture was also exhibited widely and praised in Europe. No longer at the service of the white hunter, the man is acting alone, which suggests pot-hunting. Even more intriguing is the fact that the hunter, is essentially focusing out into the viewer’s space.\textsuperscript{504} He is in the very process of shooting what is presumably the white beholder of the painting. The viewer becomes the victim.

Eakins was undoubtedly aware of the hunting laws concerning rail shooting, and of the all-too-common abuses by poachers; a Pennsylvania newspaper reported on the state of affair using loaded terms to shame the lawbreakers:

A few years ago, our State Legislature enacted a law prohibiting the shooting of rail until the first of September, but as yet its provisions have never been carried out. Men calling themselves SPORTSMEN, were here from the city, before the close of August, and destroyed the birds in large numbers. [The birds] were poor and utterly unfit to kill – but neither the law nor the quality of the rail was a bar to the poachers who visited this place to shoot.\textsuperscript{505}

\textsuperscript{503}“ Eighth Exhibition of the Water-Color Society,” \textit{Scribner’s Monthly} 9, no. 6 (April 1875), 764.

\textsuperscript{504}Eakins supposedly identified the figure as “William Robinson of Backneck.” His name was noted in Carol Clark and Allen Guttmann, “Artists and Athletes,” \textit{Journal of Sport History} 22, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 96.

\textsuperscript{505}“Rail Shooting,” \textit{Delaware County Republican}, September 11, 1863; Also see “Rail and Reed Bird Shooting,” \textit{Delaware County Republican}, September 3, 1869, for the extension of the seasonal restrictions.
Like other game laws, the statute regarding rail was constantly ignored, and local commentators at the time attributed this slaughter to amateur city sportsmen like Eakins, who were described derogatorily as “pot-hunters:”

The Provisions…[are] daily violated by gentlemen from Philadelphia, who would scorn to be called hunters. And yet they come into our midst, weeks before the time expires, and kill and carry away birds half fledged and almost as thin as a cob web. The law is defective, inasmuch as there is no penalty for its infringement, and these gentlemen pot hunters know it. No true sportsman would be found hammering over the marshes for the rail before the birds are fit to shoot.506

By this point, it had become common practice for the sporting media to shame amateur sportsmen by equating them with poachers. Eakins’ many rail shooting scenes must be seen in light of public debate on game laws and their being ignored by the average hunter.

Whether Eakins was the expert guide and hunter he represented himself to be, he was no doubt familiar with the inequities between guides and sportsmen. In this short but significant run of hunting scenes (1874 to 1876), Eakins depicted guides as necessary participants in the sport and black hunters as strong and independent. In his other works, Eakins’ guides remain helpers to the sportsman. When he depicts himself as the subordinate pusher, guiding the skiff for his unmoving, apparently uncompromising father who holds the gun low and phallic-like, he appears to be getting in touch with the underclass, but this is a false assumption.507 Eakins, like his father, was a classist

506“Pot Hunters,” Delaware County Republican, August 21, 1868.

507This was Eakins’ first depiction of his father, which Adams reads as “expressing (Eakins’) Oedipal conflict” with his father, in a “joyless” and “tense” bonding experience. See Adams, 187. These shooting pictures were the first images Eakins exhibited in Paris, and he may have had Courbet’s hunting scenes in mind when deciding to cover this topic. Eakins was influenced by Leon Bonnat, who knew Courbet, and fought for his inclusion in the Paris Salon of 1872. See Milroy, 257. His father Benjamin hunted with Thomas Eakins into old age; see Milroy 37. Benjamin was possessive, demanding, yet financially supportive of his son.
patrician. Although he appears to have loved hunting as a form of recreation, and occasionally hunted with his sister Frances, after the late 1870s he basically abandoned the hunting theme. It appears that rather than a noble depiction of American democracy, Eakins used hunting imagery and the black hunter as a vehicle for evoking criticism and controversy, which he relished.  

Eakins’ greatest output of sporting scenes coincided with the emergence in 1873 of one of the most significant vehicles for conservationist ideology in America: *Forest and Stream*. Carrying on where the *Spirit* left off, *Forest and Stream* “from its outset carried the torch for game preservation all over the United States, showing special concern for events in New York.” The editors and reporters were not only watchful of common poaching, they were just as interested in exposing hunters with ties to the meat market. Their commitment for game protection spread out to the journal’s vast readership. Eakins was no doubt familiar with the journal, which had become a signpost of the sporting lifestyle and a necessary part of a gentleman hunter’s library. It marked a new stage of popularity for both outdoor sports and the principles of conservation.

**Guides in Popular Imagery**

The look of the local hunter/guide continued to be shaped by artists throughout the nineteenth century, and their productions were most accessible by the broad public through print. *Harper’s Weekly, Harper’s Monthly, Leslie’s Illustrated, Scribner’s*

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508 Suspicious of democracy, Eakins “dismissed the common man” as a “nincompoop,” and “too stupid to govern himself.” He seems to have developed this class-based hatred, and racial bigotry, from his father. Interestingly, before commencing these sporting images, Eakins nearly died of malaria, which he apparently contracted while hunting in the Cohansey marshes with his father. See Milroy, 324. He memorialized the event in the self-portrait with his father hunting.

Monthly, and a host of other illustrated journals used various compositional forms and devices to present the guide in a negative light. As with the painted examples by Tait, Gifford and Brown, illustrators often employed the traditional devise of extreme chiaroscuro, to set the scene’s mood and to contrast good from evil; sportsman-artists’ perspectives on questionable hunting practices follow this same format of light and dark. Scenes of guides also tend to express a sectional bias. For instance, southern hunters, who earlier in the century had been lampooned in humorist literature, once again become the foil to the “true sportsman.”

*Harper’s Weekly* made a point of illustrating many controversial hunting techniques of the time, including fire hunting. Guides often took sportsmen on such nighttime expeditions, almost as a rite of passage. The practice was also linked to the Southern sportsman (thanks in part to Thomas B. Thorpe, writing for the *Spirit* and *Harper’s Monthly*, and intimately familiar with Louisiana cultural habits), where it was more commonly employed; yet, as the *Spirit of the Times* noted in one of its first issues, fire hunting reached all areas.510 In addition to W. L. Sheppard’s haunting *Rail Hunting in Virginia* illustration for *Harper’s Weekly*, mentioned in the last chapter (fig. A101), Theodore R. Davis, one of Harper’s “special artists,” produced a similarly dark and disturbing “fire hunt’ scene for the publication, titled *Floating for Deer in the Adirondacks* (fig. A139). The view is from the hunters’ position, and we see the brilliant white “handsome buck” about to be shot, visibly stunned by the jack light. Davis, as the

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510 “Deer Hunting by Lamp Light,” *SOTT* 1, no. 15 (March 24, 1832): 3. Other negative responses to fire-hunting in the *Spirit* include [William Tappan Thompson], “My First and Last Fire Hunt,” *SOTT* 15, no. 2 (March 8, 1845), 13. In this fictional account, set in Georgia, Thompson notes that “the Legislature had recently passed an act prohibiting that mode of hunting,” but his backwoods acquaintance, Samuel Sikes, insists Thompson (a lawyer/planter) join him in his favorite “hobby.” Fire-hunting is repeatedly connected here with the squatting class.
hunter at the boat’s bow, described the quiet scene as “indescribable…I am only waiting Max’s [Max Treado, the guide] signal.” After shooting the deer, Max, who, in Davis’s narrative, uses stereotypical “Leatherstocking” speech, states: “Bustin’ out over the Plains after Buffler an’ the like ain’t took none of the shoot out off you, that’s sure.” Max, the illiterate guide, clearly encourages Davis to try the method, thus promoting unfair sport. Davis prided himself as a premiere sportsman, perhaps even a “true sportsman,” but he makes no mention of fire-hunting as being anathema to “true sportsmanship;” with the “expert guide” praising his skill, he depicts himself as the consummate hunter. Davis would eventually express his distaste for tourist-sportsmen, which, in a sense, is what he was paid by the Harpers organization to be.511

Homer’s Guides

Winslow Homer produced a slightly humorous sporting scene in 1884 for Harper’s that presented the two extreme types, the gentleman sportsman and the backwoods guide, in the same boat. Titled A Distinguished Fisherman Enjoying His Well-Earned Vacation (1884, fig. A140), it depicts the guide assisting a sportsman in the angling experience. Though not a shooting scene, it offers a glimpse into Homer’s mindset concerning guides, the relationship between the two types, and the social divisions inherent in the Adirondacks. The guide is not the evil hunter, but is still shown in a negative light. The sportsman is a gentleman, finely-attired and composed; a “true sportsman,” the figure is almost certainly modeled after Eliphalet Terry, Homer’s friend and fellow artist. The difference in class and labor is captured through dress and physical appearance, as well as position: the wealthy sportsman sits comfortably in a low chair,

while the grinning, bearded guide waits with a net to receive the struggling fish. Coming roughly a decade before his well-known series of independent guide scenes of the 1890s, the picture is telling; Made for a popular audience, the social division between the two figures is striking and apparently intentional on Homer’s part.512

As mentioned earlier, when Homer chose to depict the sport of shooting, he employed locals for his models, and rarely did he portray the actual sportsman-members of the club, nor did he show sportsmen shooting.513 Though many Homer scholars have interpreted his hunting pictures as expressing independence, ultra-masculinity and man’s dominance over nature, the independence shown in his guide pictures was akin to anarchy. The boy guides in Homer’s series of Adirondack scenes attest to this. The overriding subtext of the majority of Homer’s art is that Nature will have the last laugh, and many of his later works may be so interpreted. A third way of reading them, as addressed earlier, is as statements against poachers. A few scholars have inquired into the possible conservationist intent of his work, but the idea of the “guide as poacher,” and Homer’s views on poaching, have been relatively unexplored.514 Homer, as frequent visitor to the Adirondacks since the 1870s, had particular insight into guide culture.

Though Adirondack guides had been grouping into local associations since the early 1880s, at the end of that decade they began to organize against what they saw as

512The picture is a wood engraving, from Harper’s Weekly, August 16, 1884, 535. Homer’s painting of Eliphalet Terry Fishing (1874, w/c) is in the Century Club collection. For Homer as an angler, see Beam, 33, 35, 37 & 40. An Adirondack Guide (ca. 1870), Trappers Resting (1874, Portland Museum of Art, Maine) and The Two Guides (ca. 1875, Clark Art Institute) were Homer’s first finished paintings of guides. See Tatham, 24 & 34, n. 30.

513One exception might be Right and Left (1909, National Gallery of Art), but the identity of the gunner is not explicit.

514David Tatham, “Winslow Homer and the Great Forest.” Tatham has brought up the idea, yet stopped short of suggesting Homer was against Adirondackers poaching. Eleanor Lewis Jones, 63, comes closer than Tatham in representing Homer as a conservationist.
unfair wages and restrictions on their own ability to hunt. While newspapers were reporting that guides were threatening game and resources, guides were placing blame on the recklessness of the amateur sportsmen and the land-grab of the upper-class sportsman.\textsuperscript{515} In 1891, the Adirondack Guides’ Association was formed, bringing together over 200 guides to fight against elitist sportsmen and their control of game.\textsuperscript{516} Locals, in general, relied on healthy wildlife populations throughout the year for their survival, therefore while often ignoring game laws, they were not wasteful in their hunting practices, killing only as much as they could eat or sell. Guides knew which animals could be killed at what time, and were critical in this respect; they grew angry when sportsmen did not seek their assistance in the woods, and local news reports reflected this hostility.\textsuperscript{517} Locals regularly formed clubs to spy and report on sporting tourists involved in unlawful hunting.

When the Adirondack Park was finally established in 1892, and the Forest Preserve Act was passed, guides were vilified by most of the wealthy “true sportsmen” who helped forge the bill. The message behind the Act, and the protection movement as a whole, was specifically against off-season guides and other local poachers of lumber and game. Though most sportsmen relied on guides for help in navigating the wilds of the Adirondacks and in stalking game, their mutual distrust is suggested in depictions of the time. A photograph from 1891 by S. R. Stoddard, showing Adirondack guide Al Dunning.

\textsuperscript{515}Morton S. Parmelee to the Editor, \textit{Albany Evening Journal}, February 5, 1891; \textit{New York Tribune}, September 17, 1893; and \textit{New York Sun}, September 9, 1894. As Marvin Kranz writes, protecting deer populations in the Northeast “continued to occupy the efforts of conservationists during the 1890s.” See Kranz, 437.

\textsuperscript{516}Jacoby, \textit{Crimes Against Nature}, 68.

\textsuperscript{517}\textit{Boonville (N.Y.) Herald}, November 9, 1882, quoted in Jacoby, 61.
with a cautious stare as he stands with gun and dead fowl in hand, is one such example (fig. A141).

Because of his work as an illustrator for the reform-leaning Harper’s Weekly, Homer had already spent a great deal of his career depicting the underprivileged classes of America. Homer was especially insightful in his depictions of New York’s homeless, and his disturbing views of the various working masses for Harper’s, including adult and child factory workers. 518 Like Jacob Riis at the end of the century, Homer is counted among the few American artists in the second half of the nineteenth century who attempted to address (and perhaps protest) society’s ills through illustration. 519 Though coming decades later, Homer’s working-class guides may also be interpreted as a depiction of class difference and the plight of the common man. However, Homer’s notion of “true sportsmanship” may have overridden any intention to promote guides as an oppressed class.

The two recurring figures in Homer’s guide scenes from the 1890s were portraits of locals: Charley “Farmer” Flynn, and the older Rufus Wallace, a guide in real life. Appearing in numerous scenes, the two hunting together may be interpreted as the elder passing on knowledge to the younger (see Chapter Four), or alternately as an off-season market hunting excursion. The latter is more in keeping with Homer’s sporting past, his New England mindset and his following of “true sportsmanship.” In the bulk of Homer’s pictures of the two they are not assisting sportsmen, but are hunting alone, possibly due

518 These Harper’s Weekly images include Station House Lodgers (February 7, 1874), 132; New England Factory Life: Bell Time (July 25, 1868), 472, and The Morning Bell (December 13, 1873), 1116.

to the fact that by that time elite, club-affiliated sportsmen did not want to be seen as reliant on guides. In *Bear Hunting, Prospect Rock* (1892, fig. A115), the viewer stands in the way of the hunters. In Homer’s other guide scenes, the foe is a deer, which is often presented low, in the viewer’s space. Like Courbet before him, Homer was playing with the idea of poaching culture and class, perhaps in order to shake up patrons’ expectations, and lead them to question their own views on game conservation. It is as if the guides are preparing to attack the sportsman-viewer.

On his first trip to the Adirondacks with Eliphalet Terry in 1870, Homer recorded scenes that appeared in *Harper’s Weekly*; one shows two guides/trappers during off-hours, apart from sportsmen, and trapping game, an activity falling outside of their regular job as servants, another simply depicts a lone guide, apparently after a day’s work. Titled *The Trapper* (1870-90, fig. A142), it shows a tall, thin, bearded figure, much like a younger Al Dunning, standing on a white log with his single oar, and looking away from his boat, which has in its bow a jack lamp, used in fire-hunting. Despite the title, the presence of the boat and the man’s apparel suggests he is a guide as well as a trapper. Some of Homer’s other early trapping scenes were owned by one of his most faithful patrons, Thomas B. Clarke, an avid sportsman and member of the exclusive Suffolk Hunt Club on Long Island; these included *The Two Guides* (ca. 1875), *Camp-fire Miow*.

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521 *Trapping in the Adirondacks* (December 24, 1870), 849, and *Camping Out in the Adirondack Mountains* (November 7, 1874), 920. On Homer’s first exposure to Adirondack life with Terry, see Beam, 32. Terry, Homer Brown, W. H. Beard, and W. J. Hays were all members of highly esteemed Century Club, as well as being residents of the Tenth Street Studio. See Annette Blaugrund, 75 & 85.
(1880), and *Canoeing in the Adirondacks* (1892). Clarke played a major role in bringing public attention and patronage to American artists during the last decades of the century. In addition to his patronage of Winslow Homer, Clarke supported other sportsmen-artists, specifically Wakeman Holberton and William Holbrook Beard. One of Clarke’s first purchases was Holberton’s *Brook Trout* (ca. 1872), which he kept in his enormous collection until its final sale in 1899, because of “sympathy as a sportsman.” Clarke was a member of many clubs, and like Homer, most likely used his network of “friends” in the cause of selling art. Clarke’s collecting interest shows he was intrigued by guides, at least on canvas. Clarke’s collecting interest shows he was intrigued by guides, at least on canvas.522 While Homer presented an ambiguous vision of guide culture, and walked a middle ground between approval and attack, other artists were less restricted in their condemnation of guides and increasingly depicted them as pot-hunters and poachers.

**The Transformation of Guide to Poacher**

After mid-century, the hunter-naturalist craze was followed by many who sought to give scientific justification to their thirst for blood-sport, yet artist-naturalists often had a different mission from the average amateur. In addition to scientific accuracy, artists tried to convey stories, emotions, aesthetic beauty, and political commentary in their hunt scenes. American artists were thus forced to consider how they might represent the law-breaking hunter in their own woods. The reduction in reliance on guides by the elite sportsman, the increasingly negative view of off-season guides, and the equation of these figures with the “outlaw” hunter led to a merging of the representation of guides with that of pot-hunters, poachers, backwoodsmen, squatters, or simply the frontier poor.

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Scribner’s Monthly addressed the topic of non-sportsmanlike duck hunting in a harsh article, and one illustration in particular speaks to the growing mistrust of these rural hunters. Titled The Nefarious Pot Hunters (1877, fig. A143), depicting fire-hunting, this image came on the heels of Eakins’ series of questionable guides and hunters. In light of images like Rail Hunting in Virginia and Nefarious Pot-hunters, other illustrators began to address the non-sportsman guide/poacher character in similarly disturbing ways.

Arthur B. Frost (1851-1928), who was Eakins’ student during his “rail shooting” period, published several images for Harper’s Weekly during 1884 that represented the non-sportsman hunter. In two of these, A Pot Hunter (fig. A144) and Unsportsmanlike Slaughter: No Chance for Life (fig. A145), Frost addressed the dark side of hunting, and summarized his feelings on the state of sport. The figures are cast in shadow, and are involved in controversial activity, the latter picture showing a guide and shooter floating a deer. Known more for his humorous illustrations, these pictures stand out for their serious commentary on the topic. Frost’s images emerged in the context of a renewed surge in game law enactment, and in time would be seen as connected to Theodore Roosevelt’s literary celebration of big game hunting, Hunting Trips of a Ranchman, which Frost illustrated in 1885. Between the appearance of these two images, a third picture by Frost, Rail Shooting (1884, fig. A146), was published in the September issue of Harper’s Weekly, which is tied to the other two in its negative portrayal of the non-

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sportsman hunter. Compositionally identical to Eakins’ railing shooting scene with his father, an image Frost would have known, the picture is more direct in describing the debased quality of the hunt, by showing unhealthy appearing hunters raggedly dressed, chasing tiny rail, and is no less effective in its psychological exploration. This type of hunting was the polar opposite of Roosevelt’s health-based big game hunting, and Frost highlights the point; next to his signature Frost includes several tiny rail birds, their size emphasizing at once the pitiful nature of this pastime and the artist’s kinship with the water fowl. In addition, the poverty of the characters is conveyed through the jagged quality of the engraving, as well as the apparel of the figures: the guide wearing shrunken pants, the gunner not quite meeting the picture of the gentleman sportsman. It is a picture of humorous criticism against unjust sport and the hunting underclass.525

In 1893, Frost, who began studying under William Merritt Chase (1849-1916) a few years before, produced a more directly scathing representation of local hunters/guides as pot-hunters in The Rural Pest (fig. A147); here, Frost presents a group of five men dressed in rags, sitting around a camp fire, with melons, tomatoes, corn and dead fowl piled in the picture’s corner. A shanty is seen in the background, where, we might imagine, they all congregate at night, much like those workers in Levi Prentice’s After the Hunt.526 Given Frost’s interest and participation in hunting life and fowling, he most likely looked unfavorably on this squatting class, which threatened game and his beloved lifestyle. Soon after creating his Rural Pest picture, Frost produced a series of sporting prints dealing with various relations between farmers and amateur sportsmen,

525Reproduced in Harper’s Weekly, September 13, 1884, 602.
526The picture came to be owned by Albert Bacheller Wells (1872-1953), a wealthy capitalist living in Southbridge, Massachusetts, who was chairman of the American Optical Company.
and the notion of trespassing.\textsuperscript{527} These are at once humorous and insightful, and illustrate the social reality of amateur sportsmen acting against the law. In total, Frost’s pictures are statements for “true sportsmanship” and against law breakers and unfair practices.

A little more than a year later, Frost’s teacher William Merritt Chase featured a lone huntsman in \textit{The Pot Hunter} (ca. 1895, fig. A148), which beyond the questionable behavior depicted, is unlike Frost’s more explicit narrative. Chase’s two works with this title, produced around the same time, are basically typical Chase landscapes, with small gun-toting figures included for context. The viewer has to be told this is a pot-hunter stalking game, since it is not obvious. Chase most likely wished to address the hunting theme in response to Tait, Homer and Frost’s success in the area, as well as the European fascination with the lawless hunter. Chase’s pot hunters are set in the same Shinnecock Hills where he taught summer school.\textsuperscript{528} He places the poacher out in the wide open field, like Bierstadt’s Anglo hunters, where nature envelopes the figure. Unlike Homer, Chase comes right out and gives the painting a “poaching” title, which immediately adds a dark, unconventional subtext to what appears to be a typical impressionistic landscape. By that point in time, the derogatory catch phrases – pot hunter, poacher, game hog – all conveyed the reckless and wasteful non-sportsman hunter to the public at large. Guides at

\textsuperscript{527}Christie's New York, \textit{Important American Paintings}, May 30, 1986 (lot 99), 110. Frost was also keenly aware of the social tensions between farmers and sportsmen, which he depicted in \textit{Ordered Off} (n/d) and \textit{The Conciliator} (ca. 1900, Private Coll.), where the sport offers some alcohol to the stick-wielding farmer. Though true sportsmen would ask permission, many sports simply trespassed in pursuit of game. Frost was not a deer hunter, and the one time he did, he killed a young buck, and wrote to his wife that he felt ashamed. See Henry M. Reed, \textit{The A. B. Frost Book}, 101; originally cited in Henry W. Lanier, \textit{A. B. Frost, The American Sportsman's Artist} (New York: Derrydale, 1933).

the century’s end was similarly lumped in with the rest, and carried much of that same stigma.

**Final Thoughts on Guides in Art**

Through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the depiction of guides transitioned from British Poacher, to Hunter’s helper, to Leatherstocking/independent hunter, to despicable pot-hunter. This transition was driven largely by the changing political and social dynamics surrounding land use and hunting rights, as well as a mutual perception by locals and elite sportsmen of each other as responsible for overhunting and the decreasing supply of game. “True sportsmen” began to dissociate themselves from guides and created exclusive sporting parks that did not require guides; amateur sportsmen took the place as the employers of locals. These changes were expressed in fine and popular art, and guides finally became associated with “pot-hunters” and “poachers” in the minds of the “true sportsman” and the press.

Artists seem to have had great admiration for their favorite guides, even heroicizing them at times, while at the same time seeing the majority as threatening their recreation. Not only were human poachers depicted as devious, so too were animals which represented the poaching class. Predatory animals, particularly after the Civil War, became surrogates for actual poachers in art. The next chapter looks at this recurring theme, and how different sportsman-artists represented the noble and the ignoble beast, often in a struggle for survival.
CHAPTER 6
THE NOBLE GAME: THE HUNTED AS HERO

Thomas Hewes Hinckley’s *Disputed Game* (fig. A149) was an overwhelming success at the AAU exhibition in 1850. It was reproduced in the *Bulletin of the American Art-Union* and described as a “masterpiece” in a subsequent issue.\(^{529}\) It was especially enjoyed by the opera singer Jenny Lind when AAU president Abraham M. Cozzens escorted her through the exhibition. She was reportedly “delighted with an admirable picture...A fox has seized a partridge, the possession of which is disputed by a hawk, who is flying down, at the left, fully prepared for a contest.”\(^{530}\) A reporter for the *Boston Daily Atlas* also felt the painting was “admirable…the individuality of character in the fox and hawk is wonderfully preserved…So sensibly do we feel the resemblance to nature.”\(^{531}\)

The painting would have struck many observers as a combination of Audubon’s theatrics and Edwin Landseer’s emotionality. Hinckley held both artists in high esteem, and actually left for London after this exhibition in order to study Landseer’s work up close.\(^{532}\)

Conflict scenes were not Hinckley’s usual fare; he was known more for majestic deer scenes and rural idylls with cattle and horses. Rather than some random grouping of wildlife, however, *Disputed Game* can be interpreted as juxtaposing noble and ignoble

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\(^{529}\) *Bulletin of the American Art-Union* 8 (November 1850), 123. The painting was reproduced in the June issue, opposite pg. 33.


\(^{531}\) “The Gallery of the Art Union,” *Boston Daily Atlas*, December 16, 1850. The painting was awarded to James W. Newkerk of New York at the annual distribution.

\(^{532}\) “Obituary,” *Boston Daily Advertiser*, February 17, 1896, 8, col. F. It is noteworthy that Landseer would produce late in his career two fox vs. noble game scenes: *Morning* (ca. 1855, engraving reproduced in Ormond, 105), and *An Event in the Forest* (1865, missing, illustrated in Ormond, 124), both strikingly similar in narrative terms to Hinckley’s *Disputed Game*, with fox and raptor disputing over the fallen deer.
animals. The game, a fallen ruffed grouse (a favorite of “true sportsmen”), is being fought over by two “hunters”: a hawk (historically considered a noble animal by sportsmen and closely associated with the aristocracy), and a fox (a predatory animal of ill repute, seen largely as vermin, and sought by hunters). In the scene, the hawk appears to be analogous to the “true sportsman,” the ideal hunter, who is losing his catch to the thieving wily fox. In many ways *Disputed Game* signified the human conflict between “true sportsman” and the market hunter/poacher, and typifies how foxes and wolves symbolized the poacher in art.

During the Civil War period (1861-1865) and in the decades that followed, American fine artists, and sportsmen-artists in particular, made a turn from concentrating on the hunter to addressing hunting from the view point of the animal victim. A combination of factors, from the changing attitudes regarding life and compassion after the war, and the effect of Darwin on views of animal emotion and intelligence, to the ASPCA’s promotion of animal rights, readied American artists and their public for emotional animal scenes. In addition, patrons of sporting art were expressing a new interest in the French aesthetics coming into dominance in American exhibitions in the 1870s. This shift in national mood away from human violence can be seen in part in the production of canvases depicting seemingly passionless narratives: passive children in rural and urban settings, flowers and gardens, motionless women embedded with a floral background, and tranquil interiors and landscapes, most often painted in a Fontainbleau style.\(^{533}\) The post-war demand for paintings conveying introspection and contemplation created a dilemma for artists of the hunt, of how to depict and sell imagery of an

inherently violent pastime. Sportsmen-artists, in their perception of themselves as hunter-naturalists, and as painters of game animals, seized upon this shift in taste.\(^5\)

The move away from human violence as appropriate subject matter had been growing in fine art even before the sectional conflict turned into all-out war. Judging from artist-sportsmen’s output through these decades, the desire to buy and display recreational shooting pictures had already been diminished by the relative pause in the expansionist storm. Some artist-sportsmen like Tait and Hinckley turned exclusively to depicting barnyard scenes of happy cows and hens, while others including Hays, Wakeman Holberton and John Dare Howland concentrated on America’s wildlife. One phenomenon resulting from the change in taste was the replacement of images of the heroic human hunter with images of noble animal victims.

**From Human Hero to Animal Hero**

The noble animal stalked by predators was a recurring theme, and one that applied especially well to America’s representative noble beast: the “doomed” bison. In such scenes the heroic animal is often the victim, a reminder of the importance of preserving good, non-predatoral game animals, and of their endangerment. Though the thematic format has peculiarities unique to American painting, such animal conflict scenes stemmed directly from European precedents: from the prototypical master of the hunt, Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640) to the eighteenth-century British master of sporting art, George Stubbs (1724-1806). This genre was also influenced by near contemporary artists such as Eugene Delacroix (1798-1863), the French *animaliers* Antoine-Louis Barye (1795-1875) and Rosa Bonheur (1822-1899), and the contemporary English animal

\(^5\)C. W. Webber, an Audubon devotee, coined the term with his 1852 book of the same name. Webber uses the book to update Thomas Doughty’s bringing together of natural science study and shooting game as a “true sportsman.”
painters Landseer and Richard Ansdell. As with many other thematic subjects, the pictorial theme of animals in conflict was long in the making. This was a fruitful theme in Europe, and was seen by American artists as a well-established avenue for expression and social commentary.535

The transfer of emotive power from heroic hunter to animal hero-victim has been called a phenomenon of the late nineteenth century, but in fact, the conventional depiction was long in developing.536 A major reason for this generational growth was the artists’ personal identification with the animal subject. The presentation of animals as romantic, and anthropomorphic (adopted from earlier masters like George Stubbs, and from contemporaries Landseer and Rosa Bonheur) assisted in communicating this identification to the viewer. The two main factors involved in developing this empathic portrayal were the artist’s hunting lifestyle, and conservationist ethic. Both literature and art toward the end of the century suggested that hunters, particularly market hunters, identified with the wolves and bears they killed. This was already being expressed earlier in the century, by writers like Thomas B. Thorpe, who were making this empathetic connection visible, and accessible to the general public in the 1840s. “The last animal” legends of the century’s end, discussed by historian Jon T. Coleman, were preceded by decades of heroicizing the animal victim. Thorpe’s Big Bear of Arkansas (Philadelphia, 535Of course, the earliest conflict scenes we know of are found on the Lascaux cave walls. There are also several examples from the Sumerian period in Babylonia (2500 B.C.E.). Winslow Homer’s Sharpshooter (1863, Portland Museum of Art, Maine) was the exception to the war-period’s unspoken boycott, but note that the implicit victim is not shown. Homer’s Veteran in a New Field (1865, Metropolitan Museum of Art) references the violence of the war. The battle scenes that appear in illustrated journals (many of which were produced by Homer for Harper’s), and Matthew Brady’s famous photographs of carnage from the battleground are other exceptions to the rule.

1845) is a literary prototype, in which hunter and prey are spiritually bound and the game animal ultimately becomes the real hero. In contrast, sportsmen-artists tended to identify with threatened, non-predator, game species such as fowl, bison and deer. What is certain is that both poles of the hunting world – “true sportsmen” and professional market hunters alike – recognized themselves in their quarry; the artist-sportsman went further by making that identification visible for viewers.

**Precedents of the Conflict Scene**

Historical precedents depicting the struggle between animal species are numerous and vary in purpose. Artists of the western world represented scenes (whether from mythology, fable, fantasy or fact) that expressed animal pathos, fear and trauma. Equine master George Stubbs, for example, produced several horrific animal conflict pictures such as *Lion Devouring a Horse* (1769, fig. A150) and *Horse Affrighted by a Lion* (1770, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool; 1788, mezzotint, Tate Gallery, London). His images were available to artists in the sporting world, and many were reproduced by sporting periodicals in America and available as prints. Stubbs had achieved fame on both sides of the Atlantic, particularly among sportsman-artists, with the publication of his monumental treatise *The Anatomy of the Horse* (1766).

Edwin Landseer had an even greater influence on American sporting artists and on their scenes of game animals. His paintings of combat between species (fig. A151), which drew compositionally from Netherlandish masters Frans Snyders (1579-1657) and

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538 Samuel G. W. Benjamin, in *Art in America: a Critical and Historical Sketch* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1880), 86, writes “Colonel T. B. Thorpe, an amateur with artistic tastes, in such semi-humorous satires as *A Border Inquest*, representing wolves sitting on the carcass of a buffalo, struck a vein peculiarly American in its humor, and carried to a high degree of excellence by William H. Beard...”
Jan Fyt (1611-1661), were a common element in his *oeuvre*. Landseer employed emotion, expressions and gestures in his pictures of dogs and stags reminiscent of the empathetic portrayal of stalked game produced by Jean-Baptiste Oudry (1686-1755). Landseer and his English contemporaries produced dramatic pictures of deer being stalked by wolves or dogs, also with European precedents. Dutch, French and English pictures of this type were available to American artists in the form of prints, and occasionally (most notably Richard Ansdell’s *Stag at Bay* (1846)) paintings available for study in New York.  

Landseer’s mastery of these images was proclaimed by *The Crayon*, the leading American art journal in the middle decades of the century. Regarding Landseer’s 1855 solo exhibition, *The Crayon*’s London correspondent specifically noted the artist’s preeminence, and opined that it was due in large part to his ability to give animal characters sympathy, and “elicit the sentiments of their life.”

Landseer was also closely connected with the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA). Founded by religious leaders in 1824 and endorsed by Queen Victoria, the RSPCA was publicized to a large degree by Edwin Landseer, particularly with his dog paintings *Saved* (n/d) (a depiction of Milo, a Newfoundland that

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540 William M. Rossetti, “Correspondence,” *The Crayon* 3, no. 1 (January 1856): 24; Joseph Rishel, “Landseer: Queen Victoria’s Favorite Painter Copied in America,” *Nineteenth Century* 7 (1981), 42; F. Sigmund Lachenwitz’s *A Stag Attacked by Wolves* exhibited for years at the Düsseldorf Gallery in New York, beginning in 1850, which was accessible to American artists like Ranney. See Bantel and Hassrick, 165. Landseer’s *Stag at Bay* was available as an engraving, by Charles G. Lewis, and published in 1868 by Fishel, Adler and Schwartz. Edwin’s brother Thomas Landseer engraved the picture as well, and titled it *Defiance*. 
had rescued children from drowning) and *A Distinguished Member of the Humane Society* (1837, Tate Gallery), depicting a large white-coated Newfoundland dog with black head named Paul Pry. Paul resembled another famous Newfoundland named Bob, who had also saved numerous people from drowning, and who served as the model for Landseer’s image. The embodiment of protection, the dog rests on the dock and looks out toward the viewer, as waves ripple in the foreground, and sea gulls soar behind. Similarly, Landseer’s wildlife genre scenes of the 1840s had a new, empathetic quality lacking in his earlier work, revealing his own ambiguities regarding the hunt. Although he and his patrons hunted themselves, his images of slain or stalked deer were particularly effective in raising public opinion and compassion towards wildlife. A notable example is Landseer’s *A Random Shot* (ca. 1848, fig. A169), of a fawn suckling her dead mother, who lies against the bloody snow. The narrative and composition of this image was “borrowed” by, among others, Arthur F. Tait and Gustave Courbet, after both artists had shifted from human sporting heroics to celebration of the animal hero. In addition to Landseer, the French animal painter Rosa Bonheur was a member of the RSPCA, and was known for a more sympathetic, even empathetic portrayal of animal subjects. The popular view of European animal artists as public supporters of animal rights and other reformist causes undoubtedly had an effect on their American colleagues and their art. By the time Henry Bergh founded the American SPCA after the Civil

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541See *Newfoundland Club of America website*, http://www.ncanewfs.org/ history/pages/landseer2.html. [accessed September 1, 2010].

542Henry Bergh struggled with the New York State Association for the Protection of Game during the mid-1870s over the enforcement of game laws and to prevent animal cruelty, such as with trap contests. See *The New York State Association for the Protection of Game 23rd Annual meeting* (Brooklyn, 1881), 25-27. The State Association, as opposed to the City group, was controlled largely by the game meat market, restaurants, and by sellers of sporting products. On the Royal SPCA, Brian Harrison, “Animals and the State in Nineteenth-Century England,” *The English Historical Review* 88, no. 349 (October 1973): 786.
War, artists, and art patrons like NYSC and ASPCA member August Belmont, were primed and ready for such compassionate animal imagery.

The ability to capture the animal subject’s emotion became a goal for American artists, and those who worked in the animal genre would be compared with the British master Landseer; many, including Hinckley, Tait and Hays, even gained the attribution “The American Landseer.”\textsuperscript{543} American artists searched for examples of animal narratives and conflicts that could match or rival the English paradigm, and they turned to America’s own unique and often endangered wildlife species.

At first observation, these violent animal scenes appear to be modeled directly after examples by European masters such as those mentioned above; portrayals of domination by the stronger species over the weaker, and made to elicit horror and pathos in the spectator. Further reading, however, uncovers an unspoken subtext regarding the conflict between “true sportsmen” and market hunters, and the prevalent social discord between class, section and culture. Game birds, deer and bison, among other “noble” animals, came to represent the artist’s cultured class and clientele. Predatory animals, on the other hand, such as fox, panther, bears and wolves, were understood by all “true sportsmen” as a threat to their sport. Bounties were established to save wildlife and livestock from destruction. Predictably, these predators were seen and described as “poachers,” and as members of the lower, “criminal” class, stealing and devouring noble game. Occasionally the noble animal is depicted as the victim of the poaching animal, but

more often, the struggle is psychological, with wolves closing in on a bison herd, or foxes and panthers about to take game birds. Like their human counterparts, these four-legged poachers were seen as a scourge and a threat to the future hunt.

**Audubon’s Animal Fights**

The mid-century naturalist movement spearheaded by Audubon was one of the most important influences on sportsmen which led towards a greater identification with the animal victim. Audubon’s empathy for his animal subjects was translated through his imagery, and transferred to the viewer.

Though most of Audubon’s work was accomplished before the mid-1840s, it was with the release of *VQ* (1846-53) that his empathetic portrayal of game animals first struck his reader/viewership in a significant way. His work began to influence fellow artists, specifically those who incorporated natural history in their sporting life. His ability to grant his subjects sentience, anguish, and pain made his productions highly influential on future animal painting. He had a unique sensitivity to the pain inflicted upon both prey and predatory animals. Many of his pictures of predators show them caught in traps, in mortal encounters with other animals and terror stricken as in *Common Mocking Bird and Rattlesnake* (in *Birds of America*), and *Osprey and Otter fighting over Salmon* (1844, fig. A152). Edwin Landseer’s influence on Audubon comes through in this painting, even though Audubon expressed little admiration for his British contemporary – he no doubt wanted to distance himself from Landseer, the preeminent animal painter of his time.\(^{544}\)

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\(^{544}\)Lucy Audubon, ed. *The Life of John James Audubon* (New York, 1873), 71. Landseer is a logical origin for his emotional, empathetic portrayals, but Audubon would never admit any relationship, and was in fact harshly critical of most animal painters.
Reviewers could not help but see the similarities between Audubon’s expressive style of animal depiction and that of England’s favorite son. Discussing the recent release of *VQ*, and praising Audubon’s elevated natural history illustration as “into the rank of Highest Art,” a writer for the *American Review* noted the two artists’ similarities: “The celebrity of Landseer in depicting the passions and characteristics of Domestic animals – the high value even of engravings from his Paintings, shows what an impulsion the rare Plates of the *Birds of America* has given to the taste for this sort of illustration lately.” The two men were gifted in giving their animal subjects attitude and passion, and their collective influence on American animal and sports painters was great. The writer also noted the growing demand among the American viewership for sentient animal subjects:

Men are beginning to take curious and sympathetic interest in expositions of the life, passions and habits of the lower forms of animal existence, and to feel how graphically they illustrate their own…the *Quadrupeds of America* as much surpass any efforts of the same kind which have yet been given to the world, as the Paintings of Landseer, in Domestic and Semi-Domesticated Animals surpass those of the Dutch, or any other school.”

The reviewer was careful to give each artist his own arena, so as not to “ruffle feathers.”

Audubon knew of Landseer’s work; after his visit to the Royal Institution in Edinburgh on February 10, 1827, he described Landseer’s sensational conflict scene, *Death of the Stag at Glen Tilt*: “I saw much in it of the style of those men who know how to handle a brush and carry a good effect; but Nature was not there, although a Stag, three dogs, and a Highlander were introduced on the canvas.” He was critical of what he saw as false characterizations, particularly compared to his own animal depictions:

The stag has his tongue out and his mouth is shut…The Principle dog – a greyhound! – holds the stag by one ear as if he were a loving friend. The young

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hunter is in the attitude of a ballet dancer and laces the deer very prettily by one horn; he is about to cast a noose over his head…What a farce!\textsuperscript{546}

Audubon added “not so here however,” presuming all Scots liked Landseer’s overly dramatic effect. He at once revealed his artistic jealousy and his pretention regarding sport.

Perhaps this experience in Scotland and England had more impact on Audubon than he cared to acknowledge. He became more interested in stressing animal emotion, as in \textit{Canadian Otter}, or \textit{Otter in Steel Trap} (fig. A43). The composition was among his favorites, and one of the earliest to be worked out and find its way as a plate in \textit{VQ}. Not surprisingly, it was also a favorite among Audubon’s British patrons, who had a special fondness for violent and emotional animal imagery in the style of Landseer. While working in Edinburgh and Liverpool, Audubon produced a number of oil versions of the \textit{Otter} scene, at least six, to great approval.\textsuperscript{547} With his \textit{Otter} painting hanging in the Royal Institution, Audubon and his portraitist John Syme (1795-1861) went to visit Mr. William Nicholson, co-founder and Secretary of the Royal Scottish Academy of Art, and there saw “a picture from the far-famed Snyders, intended for a Bear beset by dogs of all sorts. The picture had great effect, fine coloring, and still finer finishing, but the Bear was no Bear at all, and the dogs were so badly drawn, distorted caricatures that I am sure Snyders

\textsuperscript{546}Constance Rourke, \textit{Audubon}, 215; and M. R. Audubon, \textit{Journals}, vol. 1, p.210. Not to be confused with Landseer’s \textit{Death of the Stag} (ca. 1833, Tate Gallery), published in \textit{Art Journal} (1851, engraving), this \textit{Death of the Stag at Glen Tilt} (ca. 1824), an oil study now at the Walker Art Museum, Liverpool, was most likely the painting Audubon saw in 1827. It is illustrated in Orland (2005), 48, and Audubon’s reading of the exaggerated composition is just.

\textsuperscript{547}Audubon referred to it as “My favorite subject;” see M. R. Audubon, \textit{Journals}, vol. 1, 165. Duff Hart-Davis says Audubon presented the first \textit{Otter} to Mrs. Rathbone, who sent a letter of thanks on August 21, 1826; see Hart-Davis, 64. Hart-Davis probably meant Mrs. Roscoe, because on September 17, 1826, he gave an \textit{Otter in Trap} to Mrs. Rathbone, which was not well received due to its violent imagery; her husband Richard apparently gave it to the Royal Institution in Liverpool. See M. R. Audubon, \textit{Journals}, vol. 1, 120. Another, presumably, went to Mrs. Basil Hall; see ibid., \textit{Journals}, vol. 1, 207.
did not draw from specimens put in real postures, in my way. I was quite disappointed, so much had I heard of this man’s pictures of quadrupeds.”

His British comrades wanted Audubon to see artistic examples of European animal painting, which they saw as stylistically akin to his own. Yet, again, Audubon saw little similarity between his art and theirs. On January 11, 1827, in the company of William H. Lizars and Professor Michael Russell, he went to see a painting by the famous Dutch animal painter Melchior d’Hondecoeter (1636-1695). D’Hondecoeter’s forte, like Audubon’s, was depicting expressive animals, usually birds, in dramatic situations. As with Snyder’s work, Audubon found d’Hondecoeter’s picture “destitute of life; the animals seemed to me to be drawn from poorly stuffed specimens, but the coloring, the finish, the manner, the effect, was most beautiful, and but for the lack of Nature in the animals was a picture which commanded admiration and attention. Would that I could paint like Hondekoeter [sic]!”

These European examples, which Audubon found unnatural, may have affected his future compositions by encouraging him to emphasize violence and the animals’ emotional states, but in naturalistic ways. In early 1827, he began work on *Pheasants Attacked by a Fox*, a colossal painting measuring nine by six feet, and symbolic of the poaching predator (especially in Great Britain) threatening noble game. Later that year, Audubon exhibited one of numerous versions of the *Trapped Otter* at the Liverpool Academy of Art Exhibition, along with four bird paintings in oil (Hawks, Ducks, etc.).

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548Ibid., 174-5.
549M. R. Audubon, *Journals*, vol. 1, 204.
550Hart-Davis, 105. This was made as a representative example for the Scottish Society of Artists exhibit. Though generally ambivalent regarding predatory animals, Audubon sometimes dreamed of being a hawk, one of the few noble predators and one connected to royalty. See *The Audubon Reader*, 189.
and one titled *Tame Rabbits*. The reviewer for *Liverpool Mercury* wrote most favorably of the *Otter* scene, finding it “particularly harmonious, and although the subject to some fastidious tastes, may appear not pleasing, it must be considered as a most true and powerful delineation of animal suffering, and proves Mr. A.’s intimate acquaintance with the animals he undertakes to present.”

The need to convey the animal’s terror became strong for Audubon during and after his European trip, and he began to use the animal’s outward gaze and emotional state to elicit the viewer’s empathy. This can especially be seen in the *VQ* images like the *Otter* and *Black-Tailed Deer*, but was already apparent in plates for the *BOA* (as in the *Labrador Tern*).

What is peculiar about Audubon’s viewpoint is that he took issue with the ‘unnaturalness’ of European examples despite the fact that he often used the same dramatic effects and wired his specimens in similarly unnatural positions. Audubon was clearly responding to these masters of animal conflict painting, and using their example to shape his own art.

By mid-century, in large part due to Landseer and Audubon’s popularity, artists in the United States began to create similar animal conflict scenes. Thomas Hewes Hinckley’s *Disputed Game* was one such response to their work. Hinckley’s composition is closely reminiscent of Audubon’s example of the three-party conflict: *Osprey and Otter fighting over Salmon* (1844, fig. A152). The osprey and salmon are noble, but the otter is seen as a troublesome predator/competitor, and, as shown in the *Trapped Otter*

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552 Ruthven Deane, “Audubon’s Labrador Trip of 1833,” *The Auk* 27, no. 1 (January 1910), 47. As Audubon notes, the tern was specifically set up to cast a look of terror.

553 Another conflict scene Audubon made while in Great Britain was *Cats Fighting over Dead Squirrel* (unlocated), which he mentioned completing on January 6, 1827 to be shown at the London Exhibition that March. See M. R. Audubon, *Journals*, vol. 1, 188-90, where Audubon describes killing these cats in a gruesome manner.
composition, is connected to the hide trade. One of the two “hunters” will win; this same challenge between hunter types was echoed in the true sporting culture. Hinckley produced a few other similar scenarios, including *Hound and Fox* (1843, unlocated), and *Survival of the Fittest* (1856, Butterfield and Butterfield Auction).\(^{554}\)

Audubon and Hinckley seem to have identified most closely with the predatory birds in their paintings. Ospreys, hawks and other raptors surely called to mind that icon of American independence – the eagle – and Audubon was nothing if not nationalistic. He spent great effort on his *Bird of Washington*, depicting a bald eagle. As is clear in both his images and accompanying text, Audubon depicted his birds as heroes who expressed human-like emotion, and showed them in graphic detail defending themselves and their young from predatory animals.\(^{555}\) Audubon killed birds for his own survival, for food and for use as artistic models, and perhaps this dual dependence reinforced his identification with them. However, in a strange, possibly metaphoric painting *The Eagle and the Lamb* (1828, fig. A153) made during his stay in London, Audubon presents the bird attacking a defenseless lamb, which has been abandoned atop a cliff. Storm clouds pass above the unfolding drama. It is possible that given the lamb’s Christian symbolism, the painting has a religious subtext; however, since Audubon identified with birds of prey, the true meaning of the painting may simply be the might of the national bird in

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\(^{554}\) *Hound and Fox* was owned by British-American Stephen Liversidge of Boston. Based on the titled, the picture sets up a conflict between the sportsman’s friend and his enemy. Information of *Hound and Fox* is from SIRIS; *Survival of the Fittest* is illustrated in Butterfield and Butterfield, *Selected American and European Paintings and Sculpture*, Auction Catalogue, sale 3845P, November 12, 1987, lot 2232. The painting depicts a terrier biting a weasel who was attempting to make off with a dead hare. Its measurements are 32 ¼ x 44 in.

\(^{555}\) Albert Boime, “John James Audubon: A Birdwatcher’s Fanciful Flights,” *Art History* 22, no. 5 (December 1999): 728-755. One early example of this conflict is *Common Mocking Bird and Rattlesnake*, lithograph, from *BOA*, 1840-44.
defeating the weak. The terrified expression of the lamb as the bird’s talons spread to
grab it makes this one of Audubon’s most disturbing works. He would repeat the
composition some years later, this time with a hare as the victim, having its eye gouged out.556

Audubon’s use of anthropomorphic animal conflicts, which comes directly out of
Stubbs’ works like *Lion Devouring a Horse*, and Ruben’s *Lion Hunt* (ca. 1621, Alte
Pinakotheek, Munich), at once helped give greater realism to his scenes through animated
interaction, and was used to appeal to his audience of outdoorsmen, who sought historical
associations and “truth” in nature studies. Before guidebooks explicitly covering hunting
techniques emerged, gentleman-sportsmen looked to Audubon and his nature treatises for
statistics on species and habitat; his folios and images had a major impact on the next
generation of artist-naturalists. Audubon and the naturalists that followed him gave a
scientific rationale for blood sport, which in turn gave the recreation of shooting far
greater validity among the general, non-hunting public.557 Following Audubon’s
eexample, the majority of future artist-naturalists came to identify with their animal
subjects, and were often identified by the public with their heroic protagonists. The
animated presence and “humanity” of Audubon’s birds and mammals, at once heroes and

home at Minniesland. Upon finishing the work on December 23, 1828, he showed it to Sir Thomas
Lawrence, president of the Royal Academy, who called it “a fine picture.” See ibid., 341. On his
identifying with eagles, see Richard Rhodes, 373. He wrote to son Victor that he wanted to draw the new
golden eagle he purchased “tearing a young fawn or a northern hare;” see ibid., 375-376. This composition,
though without the Audubon figure sketching the episode in the background, would serve as plate 181 for
*BOA*. Another scene by Audubon in which a poacher steals a noble bird is *Fox and Goose* (ca. 1835, Butler
Institute of Art).

557Popular acceptance of hunting would increase tenfold in the late-1860s, with the publication of
Rev. William H. H. Murray’s *Adventures in the Wilderness* (1869) which ignited the sporting vogue of the
1870s and brought a multitude of amateur sportsmen and women into the Adirondacks, a change loathed by
tue sportsmen.
victims, would be repeated in American animal scenes for years to come – by Hays, Beard, Bierstadt and Hinckley among others – and the game animal’s role as hero, in many cases, replaced that of the lone backwoods hunter. The heroic animal victim had its own nemesis, an antihero that brought tension to the pictorial drama: the poaching predator.

Empathetic Connection to the Hero

As art historian Arlene Arday Garrett has so astutely summarized regarding European animal art, “A common denominator unifying this multifarious imagery is the extraordinary degree of empathy existing between many artists of the [nineteenth century] and their animal subject matter.”558 This empathetic connection between the artist-naturalist and the animal subject was equally a part of American painting and the identification was enhanced, on both sides of the Atlantic, with the release of Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* (London, 1859). In the intellectual circle of artists and scientists, Darwin’s findings on evolution and natural selection supported the position of many naturalists, and validated their own thoughts on the kinship of animal-kind, as well as the struggle between species for survival. Still, the impact of Darwin on animal art in America, while blatant in a few examples (such as those satirical scenes by William Holbrook Beard (fig. A154)), was not significant at least until the 1870s. While it is easy

558 Arlene Arday Garrett, “Transformations in the Relationship of Man and Beast in Nineteenth Century French and British Art and Thought” (PhD diss., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1977), abstract. There is a definite link between the emerging justification for social Darwinism in the 1870s, animal (human) aggression, and the new sportsman of the Theodore Roosevelt variety, who felt masculinity depended on killing at least one member of all big-game species. This new attitude went against the advice of earlier “true sportsmen,” such as Teddy’s uncle Robert, Frank Forester, and Thomas Doughty, who were content shooting fowl and deer.
to read animal conflict scenes as Darwinian in subtext, the popularity of this type of imagery pre-Darwin suggests otherwise.559

Many conflict scenes created during the century do have a commonly-expressed anthropomorphic quality, often resulting from an attempt by the artist to give the animal subjects more heightened expression, which mid-century art critics were advising artists to consider. The widely influential British art theorist John Ruskin, in volume 3 of *Modern Painters* (1856), termed such anthropomorphic attribution the *pathetic fallacy*, whereby inanimate natural objects are given human emotions and sentiment in order to speak and appeal to the human imagination and empathy.560 Though he does not specifically include “lower” animals, this is, by implication, understood. And while stating that he was against relying on the *fallacy*, Ruskin was not above enjoying it himself, as evidenced in his appreciation of the humanized faithful dog in Landseer’s *The Old Shepherd’s Chief-Mourner* (1837, Victoria and Albert Museum).561 Ruskin’s vocal admiration for Landseer and his repeated acknowledgement of Landseer’s work in *Modern Painters* helped assure his acclaim in the United States. Ruskin especially


561 John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, vol .1 (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1873; volume 1 originally published in 1843), 8. In volume 5 (originally published in 1860) in relation to the nobility of dogs and their being used in chase scenes, Ruskin states: “I know no pictures more shameful to humanity than the boar and lion hunts of Rubens and Snyders, signs of disgrace all the deeper, because the powers desecrated are so great.” See Ruskin, *Modern Painters* (1987 abridged version), 564. He continues “the prevailing tendency is marked by Landseer,” which “leads to a somewhat trivial mingling of sentiment, or warping by caricature.”
praised Landseer for expressing the animal’s soul, “which has been explained…in modes hitherto unfelt and unexampled.”

William James Stillman’s art journal *The Crayon* was the major vehicle for Ruskin’s art theories, and as one of the only art periodicals in *antebellum* America, Ruskin’s views on animal painting, as well as on the need for artists to be “true to nature,” could not help but strike a collective chord among American artists. This move by the journal paralleled landscape painter Asher B. Durand’s call (also published in *The Crayon*) for a celebration of American nature, which was immediately answered by his fellow landscape painters. Animal painting, too, began to surge, in part because of this growing interest in nature and its truthful depiction.

Years before *The Crayon* began to push its Ruskinian agenda and promote the need for wildlife artists to move past the romance to celebrate uncorrupted nature, the conservationist-leaning *Spirit of the Times* featured several articles of the state of animal art in America, and pressed the need for artists to take up the genre. Most importantly, *Spirit* writers suggested the use of animal “expression” in order to be “true to nature,” and to create successful pictures. Over a decade before *The Crayon* began speaking directly to artists and intellectuals on the need to uncover and celebrate the divine in nature, as well as holding up Landseer and Bonheur as models, the *Spirit* was calling for a national “animal art,” and prescribed Audubon (and occasionally Landseer) as the paradigm to follow.

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562 *The Works of John Ruskin*, eds. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (Library Edition) (London: George Allen 1903-12), 4:302. A drawing of Landseer’s *Death of a Stag* was exhibited at the Artist Fund Society in Philadelphia, in 1845, and a large number of mezzotints based on Landseer’s paintings were on display at Goupil’s Gallery in 1848.

Audubon’s identification with his avian heroes in conflict scenes is paralleled, or, more correctly, counterposed, in the art of another Old World role model, the French master Eugene Delacroix. Delacroix’s influence can be detected in several western American paintings, including those made by George Catlin, Alfred Jacob Miller, and William Ranney. Delacroix’s fixation with the predatory feline antihero is a constant feature in his scenes of animal struggle, and his imagery added to the field of artists seeking dramatic tension in animal genre scenes. Though Delacroix’s reasons for employing specific animal species differ in each case, his choices seem to have been made based on what psychological battle he was attempting to express at any given time. He composed his animal groups by referencing the iconography of classical sculpture, and the animal conflicts by Rubens, Stubbs, and others. He used animals both symbolically (with meanings coming out of the medieval bestiary tradition), and metaphorically, to capture the struggle for existence in nature, and the strife between body and soul. Though generally limiting his scope to great felines and horses, Delacroix was above all interested in the relationship and similarities between human and animal aggression, and good versus evil. Horses were, for Delacroix, the epitome of nobility, yet they are often shown fallen and about to be slain. In contrast, the artist seems to have personally identified with the vicious killer, the lion, or at least enjoyed inverting the traditional roles and symbolism.\textsuperscript{564} Considered only a part-time \textit{animalier}, Delacroix was representative of the nineteenth century animal artist for his identification with his

\textsuperscript{564}See Nancy Ann Finlay, “Animal Themes in the Painting of Eugene Delacroix” (PhD diss, Princeton University, 1984); and Eve Twose Kliman, “Delacroix’s Lions and Tigers: A Link Between Man and Nature,” \textit{Art Bulletin} 64, no. 3 (September 1982): 446. Kliman notes Delacroix’s identification with lions and tigers. Interestingly, in terms of hunt scenes, which abound in the work of Delacroix, the artist painted at least two \textit{St. George} scenes.
subjects, and for using them to express greater conflicts in humanity; this certainly had an effect on American animal painters and painters of the hunt. Like Delacroix, several American artists selected an animal they identified with to paint, and the species became a topical vehicle used to express various personal and societal issues.

One of the first American artists to speak of game animals as being “noble,” was George Catlin, and his perception had major ramifications for animal representation and game conservation.\(^{565}\) His writings and depictions helped solidify the notion of noble beasts against those of less apparent worth or “class.” The majority of Catlin’s animal scenes are of dying animals, or those about to fall from the attack of a predator, whether man or wolf. In letter 31 of his *Notes and Letters* (released in 1841 and reprinted in 1844), Catlin talks of “white wolves chasing poor bison,” and mentions this as correlative to the killing of bison by white hide-hunters. In letter 44, he notes the “wasteful slaughter” of western game by army officers and hangers-on at Camp Kanadian, Texas. Though Catlin produced numerous versions of the “buffalo attacked” scenes, one image stands out for its tragic narrative, and for addressing the very conflict described. In a ca. 1840 lithograph made in England after his original oil painting titled *Buffalo Hunt: White Wolves Attacking Buffalo Bull*, Catlin depicts an older straggler, perhaps wounded, and left behind after the herd has moved on; it is surrounded by a crazed and starving wolf.

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Having successfully killed a few of his tormentors, the shaggy bull appears to have run out of energy, and stares out toward the viewer in desperation, a convention Catlin used numerous times to heighten emotion and viewer empathy. Catlin often expressed his hatred for trappers and traders, whom he saw as having a negative influence on Native Americans, and whom he took to be simply “liquor sellers” and “liars;” the white wolves tormenting the bull may have served as an analogy for the human predators threatening noble game. By mid-century, Catlin and Audubon had become the two main prototypes for American sportsmen-artists, and the artists in turn assumed their role-models’ sympathies as well as the graphic and empathetic portrayals of “noble” game they promoted.

**Illustrating the Conflict**

Due in large part to the pre-1850 hunting literature and the influence of Audubon, Catlin, and others, representations of wild animals had generally fallen into the same two diametrically opposed categories in which hunters found themselves: the noble vs. the nefarious. The scenes often showed a carnivore dominating over an herbivore. The animal opponents, like human hunters, were set in a binary relationship, a hero/villain dialectic, and if the scenes do not immediately make this identification clear, their titles do. The bad animal, often referred to as “the poacher,” could be easily equated with its human equivalent, especially if the picture was made or possessed by a “true sportsman.”

After Hinckley’s *Disputed Game*, a queue of artists took up depicting such struggles. Ranney did at least one such scene of violent conflict, portraying wolves pack (fig. A155). The original oil painting is dated ca. 1832, and located in the Library of Congress.

566 On Catlin’s views of trappers, specifically see his Letters 11 and 34. For Catlin on “noble” animals, see Catlin, Letter 31, pp. 250 & 259. Catlin’s *Buffalo and Wolf* (1844, hand-colored print, Alex C. Pathy Collection) is another representative of the animal conflict scene.
attacking a bull, entitled *The Victim* (1856, fig. A156) and based on the *Stag at Bay* prototype. Choosing noble livestock, rather than a traditional game animal to play the part of victim, Ranney accentuated the rapacity of the wolves, while appealing to the regional, cattle-raising farmer, rather than the romance-seeking businessman. Gasping for air, with its tongue hanging out of its mouth, the doomed bull looks to heaven as blood-thirsty, anthropomorphized wolves move in for the kill. This was one of the last paintings Ranney completed before succumbing to the ravages of consumption (tuberculosis), and some scholars suggest this image was his metaphorical representation of his struggle against the illness.\(^{568}\) It is striking that Ranney chose the animal conflict theme at this time of his life, when he had rarely painted such violent scenes before. As an avid sportsman, Ranney understood the wolf to be symbolic of unjust death and wanton destruction. In the majority of images of this type, the poaching animal is a single wolf or a pack working in conjunction to take down the noble animal. The prey could be any game animal, from bison to fowl, that was commonly pursued by sportsmen.\(^{569}\) Such an image would strike the heart of a “true sportsman.”

For those artists who did not hunt, animal conflicts often signified human strife. The artist and future Episcopal priest Johannes Adam Simon Oertel (1823-1909) used animal conflict scenes to symbolize the battle between good and evil in a spiritual sense.

\(^{568}\)Bantel and Hassrick, xxi and 164; Bantel mentions that the picture may have been metaphorical, a visualization of Ranney’s psychological troubles stemming from his tuberculosis. Ranney’s studio is described in his obituary in *The Crayon* 5, no. 1 (January 1858), 26.

\(^{569}\)There were precedents for equating animals with certain social classes. In the 1830s and the 40s, the French writer Honoré de Balzac employed specific animals to correspond to different classes of human society, as in his *Scenes of the Private and Public Lives of Animals* from 1842. Paris was rife with such jargon at the time of Delacroix: “panthers” meant prostitutes, a “lioness” meant a clever and androgynous woman, etc. See Finlay, 71-73. Lions were traditionally equated with nobility, while tigers were associated with base cruelty. Wolves and foxes were associated with scavenging, maliciousness and fraud. See Susan Koslow, “Law and Order in Ruben’s *Wolf and Fox Hunt*,” *The Art Bulletin* 78, no. 4 (December 1996): 680, 689.
Even though he created it before gaining the priesthood, paintings such as *The Persecuted* (1852), featuring dogs attacking a stag, and *Horse Pursued by Wolves*, of the same year, acted as visual sermons for the artist. These presented the urban audience the good and noble animal as a potential “martyr” stalked by wickedness. Completed the year after Oertel’s marriage, and before his highly productive period of more blatant religious imagery, these two works nonetheless capture his ideas of a growing spiritual conflict in America, and may symbolize other conflicts as well.

Unlike Ranney and Oertel, for whom such scenes were relatively rare, Arthur F. Tait was preoccupied with animal conflict narratives, especially in the 1850s and 60s. His negative relationship with certain Adirondack guides, some of whom were connected to market hunting, may be at the core of his painting *The Poacher* (1858, fig. A157), which depicts a fox hiding behind a rock, preparing to pounce on a covey of grouse; Tait undoubtedly had a human wastrel in the back of his mind when he chose the title. His reasons for creating such a narrative with animals rather than human characters is not difficult to surmise, given the popular belief at the time that poachers were a British phenomenon, as well as his preference for animal imagery. Subtitled *Anticipation*, the scene vaguely resembles his hunting dog pictures, except for the fact that the fox is hiding. Obviously modeled after Edwin Landseer’s *The Poacher* (fig. A158), depicting a fox stalking flying game birds, it also recalls Audubon’s *Fox and Goose* (1835, fig. A159) and the threat to noble game. Like Landseer, Tait often gave his animal paintings suggestive, human-specific titles; several titles explicitly convey human emotions, such as *Solitude, Anxiety, Anticipation, Perplexity* and *Jealousy*, while others describe human occupations. Almost two decades later, Tait produced an apparent sequel to *The Poacher*
titled *Cunning: Not to be Caught* (1875, location unknown). In this painting, according to Tait’s own master list, the fox is “stealing ruffed grouse out of a trap in the snow.” The fox, then, is attempting to take the catch away from the human trapper. On a basic level the picture conveys two types of poacher working against one another. As noted in previous chapters, Tait grew up on a farm, and was very comfortable turning to animal depictions as his main means of income after the war. Even before the national conflict, he had balanced his annual production between scenes of hunters and animal narratives. Some of his animal narratives show animals living happily in nature or on the farm, others, especially in the 1850s, present them as dead, hanging from a door, or in the midst of being pursued. Pursued deer would become one of many repeated themes for Tait.

The number of animal conflict scenes rose in America during and after the Civil War for obvious reasons. Part of this increase may have to do with the growing popular knowledge of Darwin’s theories pertaining to animal struggle. In addition, the increased demand for game animals, the growing decline in game numbers, and the repulsion to violent images of human warfare in fine art circles all helped to encourage their creation. Images of the war were few and far between; while there was some self-censorship at play it was also influenced by the powers that be. The selection committee for the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, for instance, refused to accept any Civil War pictures. Artists were “encouraged” to avoid depicting the war even in international

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The Poacher is illustrated in Cadbury/Marsh, 143. Cunning is described in ibid., 232. An earlier scene, titled The Robber (1852, George Arden Collection), showed a bear stealing honey from a tree and getting stung in the process; illus. in ibid., 120.
exhibitions. In a very real sense, animal violence replaced the horrific scenes of reality that occasionally made their way into the public’s view.\textsuperscript{571}

Such conflict scenes ultimately need to be seen in light of the drive for protectionist legislation after mid-century. As noted in Chapter One, after the formation of the NYSC in 1844 (and renamed the NYAPG in 1873), similar game protection organizations began to spring up in other regions. Many states passed their first (although often ineffective) game protection laws during and after the Civil War.\textsuperscript{572} “True sportsmen” were the one segment of society fighting for stricter game law, were often the authors of said legislation, and used their power and money to influence politicians and pay for detectives and informants. Based on their editorials and books, such protection groups had the poaching, market hunter in mind. Those artists painting after the war who sought to comment on the unjust killing of game continued to employ the poaching, predatory animal as villain; a surrogate for the unseen, yet always-present human agent.

Illustrating two narratives for a February 1867 article in \textit{Harper’s Weekly} on American snow-birds, Henry Walker Herrick (1824-1906) produced a dark, chilling picture titled \textit{The Poacher} (fig. A160). The picture depicts a rural snow-covered farm, with tiny makeshift fence in the distance, and a dominant slanting pine tree that frames the central action. A fox, standing on a fallen log, gazes upon a snared bird (as if hanging

\textsuperscript{571}Susanna W. Gold, “”Fighting It Over Again”: The Battle of Gettysburg at the 1876 Centennial Exhibition,” \textit{Civil War History} 54, no. 3 (September 2008): 277-310. The committee was made up of NAD members.

\textsuperscript{572}Notable firsts include the first game law in Nevada (1861), the first law prohibiting sale of protected game during closed season, in New York (1862), the first license law in New York (1864) and the first game law in Washington State (1865). See Palmer, 25-27.
from a noose) which may be a snare to catch the fox. The picture, like Tait’s of the same
title, addresses two poachers, the fox and the non-present human trapper.573

Primarily an illustrator for periodicals and books, Herrick began his career as an
 engraver in Manchester, New Hampshire. For further study he began taking classes at the
National Academy of Design in 1844, and before the year was done, was engraving
books for Appleton’s. He taught wood engraving at New York’s Cooper Institute for six
years, and made extra money reproducing images by other artists, Darley among them.
He became one of the most skilled woodcut engravers working in the United States
before returning to New Hampshire, where he took up watercolor painting.574 During his
work in New York, Herrick only exhibited one hunt-related painting at the NAD: Snaring
the Rabbit (1863), another trap-oriented scene. Backwoods, or non-sportsman-like
hunting, was his subject of choice.575

Hays and the Bison at Bay

Another artist who turned to animal suffering and conflict was William Jacob
Hays (1830-1875), animal painter and, beginning in the late 1860s, secretary/treasurer of
the NYAPG. As noted in Chapter One, Hays’ earliest animal scenes were sporting
narratives with pointers and terriers, many of which are shown in the act of “flushing the


852; New York Times, October 15, 1858, 5, col. 6; and “Lithographs and Woodcuts: Art at Home and
Abroad,” New York Times, April 25, 1915, SM22. Early history on Herrick is from George Franklin
Willey, Willey’s Semi-Centennial Book of Manchester, 1846-1896, and Manchester edition of the Book of
 Nutfield (Manchester, NH: G. F. Willey, 1896), 309-310.

575 Maria Naylor, The National Academy of Design Exhibition Record, 1861-1900, vol. 1, 430. His
colleague and fellow engraver, William J. Linton (1812-1897), also produced hunt-related engravings for
books and periodicals.
covey” for the sportsman. Yet by late 1860, after his summer trip up the Missouri River, Hays began to combine genre scenes with natural history, often composing and producing pictures on a monumental scale. During the war years his animals became actors performing in their own regional conflicts, usually set in the West. He is now best known for a triptych of large buffalo paintings – *Herd on the Move* (1861, Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa), *The Stampede* (1862, Glenbow Museum, Calgary) and *A Bison Herd Crossing the Missouri River* (1863, fig. A161) – in which he shows the migrating herd set in the expansive prairie landscape. Based on their monumental scale (each measuring 36 x 72 inches), Hays surely intended these animal narratives to be interpreted as history painting. Reviews suggest they were seen as such, and as wildlife analogies to the then-ranging military conflict:

In his “Herd on the Move,” Mr. Hays represented the advance of one of these grand armies…In the foreground the shaggy and veteran victors of a hundred fights were depicted with a vigor of drawing and color that…[gives] the spectator a feeling of the dormant force and almost irresistible power of the animal.

Individually, each painting is a brilliant fusion of natural history illustration and fine art; together, they tell a grand narrative of migration, power and the enormity of the herd and the space they fill. Some of his large bison scenes, like *A Group of Buffalo* (1860, fig. A162), were exhibited in the American Museum of Natural History in New York preceding the exhibition of animal dioramas. His most famous work during his

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576 Joni Kinsey and Gerald Carr have both referred to Hays’ three large paintings as a triptych, and the paintings were spoken of as being connected at the time. See Joni Kinsey, *Plain Pictures*, 62-63, 216.

577 “Fine Arts,” *New York Times*, June 14, 1862, 3. When this was written, *Herd on the Move* was on exhibition at the English Exhibition for All Nations; it was ultimately sold in England. Hays made a lithograph after the painting, published by Goupil, and was apparently having *The Stampede* engraved for release in late 1863; see “Fine Arts,” *New York Evening Post*, September 25, 1863, 1.

578 Now missing, it measured 58 x 36 in.; another Hays painting mentioned by Taft, 48, as being at the American Museum of Natural History in 1950s, was *The Stampede*, one of the triptych alluded to
lifetime, however, was not this majestic herd, but an individual bison being tormented. It was a conflict scene, created ca. 1864, at the height of the Civil War.

*Bison Bull at Bay* (ca. 1864-65, fig. A163) was well-publicized and reported on at the time, which was somewhat of an anomaly for the often reclusive Hays. The colossal painting, measuring 6 x 8 feet, was still gaining media attention in 1876, when it was featured in a prominent position at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia the year after Hays’ death. Its large size was reportedly the reason it was denied by the American committee for the Exposition Universelle in Paris. Like Ranney’s *The Victim*, another tragic scene of death approaching in the jaws of predators, the painting may be Hays’ pictorial response to his advancing disease. The scene of a centrally-placed bison, with blood gushing from its arrow-pierced side, looking over his shoulder at the stalking coyotes, is to modern viewers the height of pathos. First exhibited at Thomas McLean’s Gallery in London during the summer of 1865, it was on display in his studio until his death. At the end of 1866, it received a short but positive review in the American Art Journal, the reviewer noting the good/evil dynamics at play:

The galled, half defiant expression of the bison is very telling, while the sneaking cowardly action of the hungry wolves form a good contrast to the dignified figure of the wounded hero.

above, and now owned by the Glenbow Museum, Calgary. As of today, the AMNH owns no work by Hays, and does not have information on when these two were deaccessioned.

579 *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, December 22, 1866; *Turf, Field, and Farm* 2 (March 31, 1866): 202; (April 28, 1866): 266; and (May 26, 1866): 330; and *American Art Journal* 6 (1866): 149. Some of these reviews are reprinted in Robert Taft, 49 and 291. After the Centennial Exposition, the painting went to the Corcoran Museum for about two years. See letter from Mrs. W. J. Hays to Mr. Macleod, December 6, 1876, Corcoran Archives. Thanks to Marisa Keller, Corcoran Archivist in 1995. An engraving of the painting was included in the visitors guide to the Exposition. See *Frank Leslie’s Historical Register of the United States Centennial Exposition* (New York: Frank Leslie’s, 1876), 231.


The constant display of the painting brought out both admirers and critics. The art critic for the sporting journal *Turf, Field and Farm*, writing under the pseudonym “Rembrandt,” found that Hays was erroneous on several pictorial details, but Hays swore to the painting’s truthfulness in a series of letters. Though relying on sentimentality for effect, it was actually a step back from the melodrama of Catlin’s *Dying Bison* (fig. A164), shown bleeding profusely from its mouth and nose, and gazing out for our sympathy. *Bison at Bay*, as well as Hays’ earlier herd pictures, may have brought to mind the wartime armies marching on the frontline and the nobility of Union soldiers being hunted down by Confederate scavengers. The scene can be read as an analogy of human conflict or of Hays’ constant battle with tuberculosis, which he contracted as a child. However, once we consider Hays’ place in conservation history, we are forced to reevaluate the importance and meaning of the scene.\(^{582}\)

Hays’ responsibilities as secretary for the NYSC/NYAPG included corresponding with New York State legislators, writing press releases, and contacting violators of game law. Hays’ concern for wild animals and their decline is made explicit through a number of articles he wrote for naturalist journals. In one, he specifically addressed the decline of bison and other “big game” animals since the arrival of Europeans to America. In this article he echoed the views of the proto-ecologist George Marsh, and fellow NYAPG officers Robert Roosevelt and Charles Whitehead.\(^{583}\) Reading the paper before the New

\(^{582}\) *London Weekly Times*, June 20, 1865, 5; and *London Daily News*, June 19, 1865, 7. Apparently, Hays also saw war symbolism in these, when he described the bison in *Herd on the Move* as “a solid column,” and “nothing to deter their onward march.” From an early exhibition catalogue, reprinted in Tuckerman (1867), 495; and Taft, 47. Goupil and Co. published a lithograph of *Herd on the Move* in 1863. See Taft, 49.

York Lyceum of Natural History, Hays detailed in a scientific tone the decline of many of the species he was celebrating on canvas: bison, moose, deer, caribou and others:

The Common Deer…is still found, although in greatly diminished numbers…As many as two hundred and fifty thousand have been shipped from Angostura in one year…The Wapiti…it is now probable that not one could be found east of the Great Lakes…The Bison…at the rate at which they have been driven back and destroyed, it is probable that they are soon to be known only in history…the number destroyed by man each year [is] not less than half a million.584

In this small essay, Hays argued repeatedly that it is the white man’s hide trade that is causing the overall decline. He asserted that in the robe trade “the skin of the cow only is preserved,” which hastens the decline. He also noted that in comparison to carnivorous animals, which seemed to be surviving well, “the [bison] have been driven so far back from the Atlantic Coast.” Though not explicitly mentioned in the paper, Hays’ notions regarding the role of the “true sportsman,” and his Association’s prosecutory function were clearly the stimulus behind the report.585

While Hays’ concern is expressed in Bison Bull at Bay, in which the animal hero confronts a predator, it is often more forceful in scenes where the foe exists off-canvas, in the viewer’s location. Such is the case in A Group of Bison (1860, fig. A162), Herd of Bison (ca. 1862, fig. A165), Deer at Dawn (1865, Gerald Peters Collection), American Elk (1868, Kennedy Galleries), Virginia Deer (1870, National Museum of Wildlife Art), and A Family of Deer (ca. 1872, Brooklyn Museum). His subjects are almost always soon-to-be victims, and, in most cases, are portrayed as sentient creatures. These animals are visibly aware they are being stalked, and are shown gazing out toward the viewer. Art

_American Naturalist_ 3 (June 1869), 180-181; and idem., “Description of a Species of Cervus [Deer],” in _Annals of the Lyceum of Natural History_ 10 (1872), 218-219.


585Ibid., 390.
historians refer to this as the returned or “mutual gaze,” where the depicted subject and the viewer are relating to one another, as if in a conversation between two sentient entities. In this way, empathy for the depicted subject is elicited and equanimity is formed. Hays’ deer and bison groups are thus reminiscent of Catlin’s *Dying Buffalo Bull* and Audubon’s *Family of Bison* plate from *VQ*, an image with which Hays was likely familiar.  

One reason for depicting the animal as a sentient subject was to present the sportsman-patron with an intelligent opponent in the field, and a noble victim worthy of killing. On the other hand, depicting the victim’s pathos, an aspect of Romanticism still alive in American art in the century’s middle decades, was another way the artist could celebrate the animal hero, and connect the wild creature with the sportsman’s “noble” cause. Hays was a master at this, especially when portraying bison, the animal he became identified with. A description of his studio in 1868 gives an idea of how he was selling his art, and how the gazing animals on his canvases spoke to the average visitor:

> “Mr. Hays’ studio is another room fascinating us by its complete isolation from the outer world. The giant antlers and head of the moose and the elk, the great soft skins and branching horns and skeletons of deer and buffalo, frame the pictures of the same grand animals that confront us from the canvas, in fierce attack or in motionless dignity.”

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586 Taft, 50, reprinted a now-lost letter from Hays to the editor of *Turf, Field and Farm*, S. D. Bruce, dated April 29, 1866, in which Hays’ describes why Audubon’s plate should not be used as verification of habitat or even anatomical features, since Audubon did not have the animal’s skeleton. He mentions many facts, showing he had detailed information into Audubon’s making of *Family of Buffalo*. For more on the “returned gaze,” see Margaret Olin, “Gaze,” in *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed. R. S Nelson and R. Shiff (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 208-219; and Doyle Leo Buhler, “The Bison’s Gaze: the Mutual Gaze in Animal Art of Victorian America” (MA Thesis, University of Denver, 2000).

The reviewer concluded the visit by noting the historical import of Hays’ work:

When the tide of human life in its westward flow has swept away every vestige of these wild dwellers on our prairies and among our mountain ranges, we shall realize the service that such men as Mr. Hays have done us in preserving for us on canvas their noble portraits.  

In presenting *Bison Bull at Bay* as a history painting, Hays expressed recognition of the growing dilemma facing the species, its importance to the nation, and to his own career. He certainly identified with the bison, and the picture came to be associated with the artist by the New York art buying public. It is mentioned in his many obituaries.

As a statement against market hunting, and one painted by someone so close to the conservation movement, *Bison Bull at Bay* begs many questions. Coyotes stand in for humans, which is understandable, given that animals were always Hays’ actors of choice. In fact, the artist only painted humans once that we are aware of, in *Buffalo Hunt* (1872) (which shows Indians versus bison in the traditional iconography of Catlin, and which was likely a commission). The arrow in the bison’s right flank suggests the presence of an Indian hunter, ‘off-stage.’ The bison may have been shot hours before, and escaped from the hunters, only to be discovered by the pack of poaching coyotes. Though some of

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588 Ibid.

589 The painting was exhibited at McLean’s Gallery in London, June to August 1865, and, according to some accounts, was at the Paris Exposition in 1867, although it does not appear on the list of American paintings that went in *en masse.* After returning to the States, the painting showed at the Chicago Interstate Industrial Exposition in 1874, but it never appeared at the Nation Academy of Design. It was referred to as *The Wounded Bison* when reproduced in *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated* (December 22, 1866), 216. On this painting being in his studio at time of death, see Obituary: William J. Hays,” *The Art Journal* 1, no. 4 (1875): 127. The previously mentioned *A Border Inquest*, by Thomas B. Thorpe, in which the wolves sit upon the fallen bison, may be from this time. The painting is mentioned in Benjamin, 86. For the British take on *The Bull at Bay*, see *The London Times*, June 20, 1865, 5, col. 6.

his paintings, like *Bison Bull at Bay* and *Buffalo Hunt*, would suggest Hays placed the bison’s fate in the hands of the Native American hunter, Hays recognized, as few other artists of the time did, that the major threat to the nation’s wild game was the white market hunter and his industry.\(^{591}\)

A number of artists may have been inspired to depict animal conflicts after seeing Hays’ *Bison Bull at Bay*. The following year, Otto Sommers painted a scene titled *Stag at Bay*, which was reviewed positively in *Watson’s Art Journal*. In 1868, H. C. Bispham’s *Wolves Attacking Stag* appeared in *Harper’s*, reminiscent of Hays’ picture and Landseer’s 1846 *Death of the Stag*.\(^{592}\) The artist-sportsman William M. Cary painted a scene similar to Bispham’s version, titled *Buffalo Attacked* (n/d, fig. A166), in which coyotes or wolves are chasing the bison through the river, again reminiscent of Landseer’s *Stag at Bay* composition. Like Hays’, Cary’s images are based on events he apparently witnessed along the Missouri and while staying at Fort Union and other garrisons. As previously noted, Cary took two trips up the Missouri, where he made hundreds of sketches and oil studies. Getting his start as a teenager drawing illustrations for *Harper’s* and *Appleton’s*, as an adult Cary produced numerous images for *Harper’s*, *Leslie’s* and *Scribner’s*. Most of these were based on his 1861 summer-long hunting expedition, and an 1874 expedition with the Northern Boundary Survey. Cary’s paintings, many of which were made in the late 1880s, often refer to factual narratives he recorded decades before in his journal.\(^{593}\) Cary produced a number of scenes of wolves

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\(^{591}\) *Buffalo Hunt* (1872) is an oil painting on canvas, 25 ½ x 47 ½ in., and exhibited at the Century Club, February 1872. It is now part of the William B. Ruger Collection.

\(^{592}\) “Mutual Art Association Exhibition,” *Watson’s Art Journal* (Feb 1865): 259-60.

stalking or attacking bison, at a time when he expressed in his journals his awareness of the bison’s decline. Considering the way the artist regularly positioned wolves as stalking non-threatening bison, at the very moment that Harper’s was reporting on the cruel and wasteful practices of market hunters, wolves seem to represent for Cary those human predators.594

The Perfect Shot

As Hays’ and Cary’s threatened wildlife scenes reveal, American sportsmen-artists were able to express concern for a species’ health by presenting game animals more compassionately and, at times, more anthropomorphically, with little or no obvious violent struggle. Conflict, however, was still at the heart of these images, but not as overtly. While before the victim represented threatened nobility in nature, ready to fall to a wildlife predator, these latter images portrayed the victim as a similarly stalked and pursued animal, but the predator is more often suggested, with the hero confronting it like a true competitor. Giving greater awareness to the animal victim may have been largely strategic, creating an intelligent, sentient challenger for the sportsman’s skill. The use of the “returned gaze” in these scenes had the effect of appealing to, and gaining the viewers’ sympathies, as well as sportsmen’s commissions.

that in the early 1890s, “Cary turned from the field of illustration to making oils on speculation for purchase through the time-honored route of exhibition, sales gallery, and art patron.” Mildred D. Ladner, William de la Montagne Cary: Artist on the Missouri River (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984), xiv. The bulk of his undated paintings, like the one shown here, were most likely produced at this late date.

594Another Wolves Attacking Buffalo (n/d) by Cary, measuring 54 x 82 in., was illustrated in Ladner, 147, and American Heritage 12, no. 2 (1961): 51; it shows a group of wolves preventing the bison group from crossing the river. A bison skull in the foreground is the ever-present momento mori, which, as Dawn Glanz noted, Hays used in 1861 to foreshadow the species’ fate in Herd on the Move. Cary’s painting, and the majority of his larger pictures, is owned by the Gilcrease Museum in Tulsa. Theodore Davis also produced a similar scene of wolves attacking the herd for Harper’s, which accompanied the congressional report on the bison slaughter of 1872. The wolves here specifically represented the white hunters, which Davis left out of the picture.
Artists specifically positioned the animal to stare out from the canvas, as though it were sensing danger; a danger that was the sportsman-viewer himself. Sportsmen-patrons must have especially loved this pictorial format, because it was reproduced time and again throughout the period under study, by Hays, Hinckley (fig. A167) and others, and conventionalized by the 1890s, most prominently in the wildlife paintings by Carl Rungius. In such pictures, humans rarely appear; rather, the animal looks from the canvas directly at the viewer as hunter.\textsuperscript{595}

Some influential paintings depict game animals at rest, though alert and sensing danger. These include George Stubb’s \textit{Red Buck and Doe} (1792, Buckingham Palace), a painting apparently made for King George IV. Catlin too was a master at presenting this type of sentimental picture, and may be the first American artist-sportsman to use the “returned gaze” pictorial device as a means of appealing to the viewer. Catlin’s \textit{Dying Bison Bull} and his other similarly-conceived paintings were designed to strike the viewer as the epitome of cruelty, and, perhaps, convince the public of the inhumanity of the meat and hide market. The returned gaze of the soon-to-be victim, directed at the viewer, helped to evoke the viewers’ empathy for the slain or stalked hero. This heroicizing, made more explicit through the use of the returned gaze, began to be used more often with the growth of conservation in America; whether intentional or not, it played a role in connecting the general public with endangered game.\textsuperscript{596}

\textsuperscript{595}Before his \textit{Last of the Buffalo} (1888), in which he places a dying, gazing bison at center, Bierstadt produced another return-gazing animal – \textit{Albino Doe and Two Fawns} (n.d., Syracuse University) – in which the mother deer is on alert, and ready to run, as she looks in the viewers’ direction.

\textsuperscript{596}As evident in Oertel’s art, the animal symbolism may have been religiously-inspired. G. Deiker, “The Pine Martin,” from \textit{The Aldine} 6 (May 1873): 102 (reproduced in Welsh, \textit{Adirondack Prints}, 103) shows a martin about to attack squirrels, which appear to be praying.
After the Civil War, images of game and domesticated animals filled the gap left by the pause in shooting scenes; animals were presented realistically and undisturbed in forested settings or on the farm. Animal life, and, occasionally, animal death, were sentimentalized on canvas to an extreme. Wildlife paintings by Tait with *Maternal* in the title numbered in the dozens and were produced every other year, evidence of the pervasive sentimentalizing. Whether doe with fawns, or hen with chicks, Tait’s scenes spoke of the popular desire for the peaceful, pastoral life, and also the realization that wildlife was in danger of extermination by unsportsmanlike behavior. For *Maternal Solicitude* (1873, fig. A168), Tait was certainly recalling Landseer’s tragic wildlife pictures, such as *A Random Shot* (ca. 1848, fig. A169). *Maternal Affection* and *Maternal Anxiety* were equally repetitive titles for Tait after the war, and these to a great extent replaced scenes of hunters in the field.

The passage of game laws increased during these decades, but other issues concerning animal life were reaching public attention. The emergence of Henry Bergh’s ASPCA in the mid-1860s had a definite impact on American’s perception of animal life, of recreational killing, and of hunting’s connection to masculinity’s survival. Many Americans, especially those who did not hunt, began to view such killing as murder, and animal protection groups began to spring up in several major cities. The lone hunter was now pictured negatively, and the frontier hunter images were falling out of fashion, to be almost wholly replaced by animal heroes. Toward the end of the century, artists like Arthur B. Frost, who trained under Eakins and Chase, and Philip Russell Goodwin (1882-1935), would re-fashion and revise the image of the lone hunter. He was now often cast fighting against bears and other seemingly-dangerous opponents, and made primarily for
advertisements and calendars. The *postbellum* period was one in which the noble victim controlled the scene, spearheaded the action, and fought valiantly for the viewer’s empathy. Reformist organizations like the ASPCA and the NYAPG assisted in this shift in public attitude toward animals, as did the imagery.

**Beard’s Conflict Scenes**

Another to use the returned gaze in animal paintings was Hays’ studio mate and friend William Holbrook Beard. In addition to his familiar scenes featuring anthropomorphic animal actors, Beard depicted naturalistic wildlife which would gaze out of the canvas, in order to elicit a sympathetic reaction from the viewer. Noting the unusually serious nature of Beard’s *Startled Deer* (1863), which was hung at the end of a long gallery at the NAD show that year, one reviewer was particularly taken by the animals’ gaze: “Looking right out of the canvas, they command a view adown the apartment, and attract in return many fair eyes.”597 Another non-comical production by Beard that has conflict as its subtext is *Experience* (n/d), which depicts a fawn on our side of a creek, and an ominous looking wolf on the other. Wolves and foxes generally play the role of the deceiver in Beard’s art, a foil to the lordly bears. Soon after, Beard painted *The Bear and the Foxes* (1865, Dana E. Tillou Collection), in which the sly foxes steal the rambling bear’s pile of dead game, a conscious nod to the sportsmen in his circle.598

When the conflict is between wildlife and human subjects, Beard satirically flips the traditional animal conflict scenario on its head and casts his familiar bears as the victors. In the 1880s he shifted from the backwoods hunter to the amateur sportsman as

597 *Experience* is illustrated in Gerdts, *Animals in Fantasy*, 48. *Startled Deer* (1863) was reviewed in *The Albion* 41, no. 18 (May 2, 1863), 213.

598 Illustrated in Haverstock, 168.
the butt of the joke, applying his usual twisted humor to the subject. *Making Game of the Hunter* (fig. A170) and *Too Much Game*, both exhibited at the NAD in 1881, were Beard’s way of addressing the contemporary debate over hunting rights, the undisciplined crowds swarming into the Adirondacks, and the debate over animal rights. In *Making Game of the Hunter* the animals are in charge, and the sportsman and hound depicted as victims; one bear is trying out the gun, with the barrel pointed towards the man’s head, a second bear rifles through the game bag for goodies, while a third bites the dog’s ears. The remaining bears point and laugh at the hunters’ misery. Beard, who normally painted non-human animals, usually bears, or the occasional grotesque human, here brings them together in a dark comedy. On the most obvious level, this was simple comedy and satire, which may be said for the majority of his art; on a deeper, social level, the picture raises questions of the right to hunt, and of the undue suffering caused to sentient creatures. He was commenting on the “game” of it all in both senses of the term, the enterprise of killing as a major form of entertainment, and as in his other works, he appears to be on the animals’ side. *Making Game* closely resembles the central sections of Paulus Potter’s *Life of a Hunter* (ca. 1650, fig. A171). In this image a party of game animals, led by a bear, have tied up the hunter, and, in the frame beneath, roasted him and hanged the hounds. It belonged to the Netherlandish tradition of topsy-turvy world pictures, where inverting norms are used to humorous effect, and to teach the viewer – here perhaps used to preach on the evils of reckless killing.599

Beard’s stinging indictment of so-called sportsmen would be borrowed by conservationists at the turn of the century such as William Hornaday. Hornaday worked

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in the years of federalization against these same poaching and pot-hunting sportsmen, whom he and others called “game hogs.” In *Too Much Game*, an armed party of bears stalk a gathering of sporting-tourists lounging in a forest clearing, an image similar in plot to Beard’s *Stalking Prairie Chicken* (1872, fig. A99). Beard’s amusing scenarios seem to have struck a nerve, and were surely enjoyed by his sporting friends at the Tenth Street Studio Building.600

Beard’s “hunter as victim” paintings coincided with the public drive for greater game conservation and natural land protection. After much work by conservation groups like the NYAPG, for example The Adirondack Forest Preserve was established in 1885. With a similar message, Beard uses humor to instruct his fellow sporting-colleagues on the issues underlying their recreation. Beard apparently loved animals, and though probably a sportsman himself, he prided himself in not keeping caged animals. Given his precise anatomical depictions, and his treatise on animal drawing, *Humor in Animals* (New York, 1885), Beard was obviously a naturalist in his own right.601 Beard’s several non-humorous images of noble game staring out of the canvas, much in the style of Bonheur, Hays and Tait, reveal a true love and compassion for wildlife.

**Howland and the Animal Conflict**

Like Hays before him, sportsman-artist John Dare Howland (1843-1914) especially identified with the noble bison and was outspoken in his hatred for predators. A Denver artist who made a career painting bison groups that confront the viewer in

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defiance, “Jack” Howland had come to maturity living and working among the various Siouan tribes during the late 1850s and early 1860s; he began working at Fort Laramie as a fur trader at the age of fourteen, was taught to hunt bison from his Indian friends, and came to learn the importance of the bison for them. After acting as a commission clerk at several peace treaties during the late 1860s, Howland became more intimate with other tribes, and realized their shared reverence for the bison. His pictorial celebration of the animal as a knowing, sentient being is expressed in paintings such as *The American Bison* (n/d), *After the Storm* (ca 1879, Ute Museum, Melrose, CO), *Group of Buffalo* (1888, fig. A172), and *The Rear Guard* (1893, Colorado Historical Society). Howland painted similar compositions with elk and deer, but devoted most of his art to the bison and is known today mainly for this subject. Though his images would not be considered conflict scenes in the traditional sense, like Hays’s paintings, they are suggestive of a threatening presence off-canvas, and patrons could have seen themselves in the works’ implication hunting (and being confronted by) the big game. The protagonist turns to the viewer with a forceful warning stare.

Howland was creating these emotionally powerful scenes in the 1880s when the bison’s fate was almost assured, but he had come west during the 1860s and had seen

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602 Nolie Mumey, *The Art and Activities of John Dare (Jack) Howland: Painter, Soldier, Indian Trader and Pioneer* (Boulder, CO: Johnson Publishing Company, 1973), 9. Report titled “Pictures of Western Life,” Rocky Mountain News, June 19, 1877, 4, noted that Howland “passed several years of his boyhood among the Sioux.” Howland does not specify the precise tribe of Sioux that befriended him, though it may have been the Brulé Sioux, whom later in life he expressed great reverence for, particularly Spotted Tail, a Brulé chief. He translated for the Brulé at the Treaty of Fort Laramie, 1868. See Howland MSS, Western History and Genealogy Department, Denver Public Library, CO.

firsthand the business side of buffalo hunting (apparently taking some part in it). His series of *Frontier Inquest* paintings (at least three from the early 1880s), showing a jury of bison surrounding a dead or dying hunter, speak to his feelings on the matter. In the second two versions, one of the jury turns to the viewer for a response. It should be noted that in Colorado, buffalo and elk poaching continued into the 1890s, even after protection laws and game wardens were in place, and this image would have appealed to those supportive of game protection. Colorado was unique in having one of the last free-roaming bison herds left in America, nestled in the mountains above Golden, and Howland’s imagery kept the animal in the public eye. *Frontier Inquest* (fig. A173) was a composition he had been contemplating and sketching since his work as a trader, as if haunted by the thought of being judged by the animal. He had sketched this image in 1862 and nearly twenty years later he found a ready market for it among wealthy sportsmen. After he painted the original oil for New York Union League member and Colorado state senator Henry R. Wolcott in 1880, others saw it and wanted their own versions. They became so popular that another artist, Astley D. M. Cooper, made and sold over a dozen copies of the composition, with only slight variation.604

Howland did produce a few paintings where conflict is more direct, and in these, the predators (coyotes for the most part) represent poachers. Wolves and coyotes appear to have been employed metaphorically by Howland. Describing them as “constantly on the prowl to destroy,” Howland positioned coyotes in a moral way, as an evil threat to

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604 Upon his death, Wolcott’s version went to the Denver Country Club; see envelope 7, Howland MSS. Another (1881-82) was bought by Sir Moreton Frewen, whose Powder River, Wyoming estate was frequented by noted sportsmen, including Howland. He invited Howland to his estate, in a letter dated June 12, 1881, in Howland MSS. The third and last version is entitled *A Western Jury* (1883, Joslyn Art Museum). Astley D. M. Cooper painted nearly a dozen *Inquest of the Plains* (two of which include a ca. 1885, Christie’s East sale, June 10, 1992; and 1890, Norton Art Museum), all of which are copies of Howland’s original.
harmless creatures.\textsuperscript{605} His \textit{Dying Buffalo} (1880-81, Denver County Club) and \textit{The Last Stand} (n/d, Harmsen Collection) are both reminiscent of Hays’ \textit{Buffalo Bull at Bay} and Catlin’s \textit{White Wolves Attacking Buffalo Bull}, in which open-mouthed wolves surround a wounded bull as raptors circle overhead. In \textit{Maternal Solitude} (ca. 1888, Colorado Historical Society), Howland depicts a mother cow protecting her calf from two speckled coyotes. A version of the painting was given to local Reverend Myron W. Reed by his congregation, and the image became the basis of his sermon on predatory behavior and evil habits.\textsuperscript{606} In another work, mentioned in a 1913 article, Howland depicted a wounded elk, with a party of wolves “waiting patiently in the background…[the painting] is the greatest argument for government aid in protecting the elk that has ever been offered.”\textsuperscript{607} According to his daughter, Howland was an expert hunter but only hunted when in need, and not for amusement.\textsuperscript{608} Howland said that he “would much rather paint these beautiful creatures than to kill them. Like human beings, animal life is beset with death and danger not only from man, but also from other animals as the vicious prey upon the more gentle ones.”\textsuperscript{609} It is interesting to note that Howland commonly used the phrase “shoot the wolf,” his expression to not give up and to keep on painting. For Howland and his audience, wolves and coyote were a threat, and one that translated well into the human world. Ironically, because of bounties, the wolf in America became endangered, and was

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\textsuperscript{605}Charles, “Captain John D. Howland,” 178.

\textsuperscript{606}Rocky Mountain News, December 21, 1900, clipping in Howland MSS. Howland called this second version \textit{Stay Close to Mother}; After Reed died, it was owned by E. S. Matteson Jr. see envelope 2, Howland MSS.

\textsuperscript{607}“Ni Wot Reporter,” \textit{Denver Republican} (1913), 7, clipping from Howland MSS.

\textsuperscript{608}Charles, “Captain John D. Howland,” 136.

\textsuperscript{609}Ibid., 79.
brought to the brink of extinction. Later, at the end of the century, the animal painter and
writer Ernest Thompson Seton (1860-1946) expressed his sympathy with the predatory
wolf, which grew in part out of his past as a wolf bounty hunter, but also because of his
naturalist tendencies. A passionate conservationist, Seton did not paint animal conflicts,
per se, though he wrote and illustrated numerous books for children that did set up
rivalries between animals, and, in a sense, gave nobility to several species traditionally
seen as evil, like the wolf. While living and hunting in New Mexico, Seton realized the
importance of wolves to the western ecosystem, and helped foster public concern for the
wolf and several other endangered species though his illustrated stories.610

The “game striking back” imagery by Beard, Howland and Seton coincided with a
major force in the history of game protection, the political activity of the Boone and
Crockett Club, instrumental in getting tough legislation passed for the protection of
wildlife. Founded by Theodore Roosevelt (after returning from his “frontier life” in the
West) and Forest and Stream editor George Bird Grinnell, the Club fought for legislation
against “hounding” (the driving of deer into bodies of water using dogs) and worked
toward legislation against this controversial hunting technique.611 Through the magazine,
Grinnell promoted the Club’s agenda, specifically their stance against the poaching of
endangered wildlife, including buffalo, elk and pronghorn.

One late, but effective example of the artistic use of “turning of tables” is
Winslow Homer’s Fox Hunt (1893, fig. A174). Like Beard’s picture, the roles here are

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610H. Allen Anderson, The Chief: Ernest Thompson Seton and the Changing West (College

611On the Boone and Crockett Club’s early mission, see George Bird Grinnell, ed. “Brief History
of the Boone and Crockett Club,” 403.
reversed, with birds chasing the traditional poacher of fowl, but interestingly this image is
more ominous than Hinckley’s bird/fox stand-off. The fox is struggling to escape in the
snow, and appears trapped, as ravens close in. Homer had a unique perspective on
conservation and on the natural struggle of animal versus nature, and this picture follows
Homer’s man-versus-ocean scenes. The animal trapped in snow would have recalled the
crusting method of taking deer, which was anathema to “true sportsmen.” The theme of
the trapped fox was one that European master Gustave Courbet regularly used, and
Homer may have been responding to Courbet’s take on the common hunter. 612 Courbet,
who described himself as a poacher, most likely identified with the hunted fox; the
opposite is true for Homer, who was generally against poaching behavior. Beyond
representing a poacher, the fox was a game animal for British-inspired hunt, and as such,
is associated with aristocracy and wealth. The ravens have long been symbolic of death,
which adds to the depiction of dread. The scene definitely evokes thoughts of “survival of
the fittest” and the destructive powers of nature delineated in the work of Darwin.
Though some scholars believe Homer may have identified with the fox, “true sportsmen,”
including Homer, would have enjoyed this image of a predator on the run. 613

Another artist drawing upon Darwinian ideas was Edward Kemeys (1843-1907)
whose animal conflict sculpture recalls the work of the French animaliers, and
specifically the highly dramatic struggles by Antoine-Louis Barye (1796-1875).
Kemeys’ work shows predators attacking noble prey, yet often with an American theme.

612 Homer was in Paris at the time of Courbet’s exhibition of poacher scenes.

613 Guttzeit, 36, includes The Fox Hunt as an example of Darwinian thought and nature’s
destructive power. Guttzeit cites Henry Adams, “Mortal Themes in Winslow Homer,” Art in America 71
(February 1983): 113-126.
Known today as “America’s first sculptor of animals,” Kemeys became intrigued with depicting animal conflicts after the Civil War, and produced his life-size hunt scene in Central Park, called The Still Hunt, while working with the Civil Engineering Corps. In 1876, when the news of the failed buffalo legislation was still in the air, Kemeys produced Buffalo Attacked by Wolves (fig. A175), one of his many violent animal conflicts, including Locked in Death: Panther attacking Stag (1877) and Wolf at Bay with its Kill (1878). He also exhibited one terra cotta sculpture, Wounded Bison and Grey American Wolves, at the NAD in 1879, evidence of the subject matter’s continued appeal with an American audience hungry for French-inspired art. In general, however, Kemeys dedicated his production to American wildlife, and not to exotic European species. In 1880, he exhibited In the Throes of Death: American Condor Shot through the Lungs, at the NAD, and in 1886, he chose non-North American subject matter, but no less violent: Grappling His Game: Jaguar and Peccary.614 In 1894, he produced a series of four bronze bas-reliefs of that prototypical poacher, the American panther: Feeding, At Bay, At Play, and the only surviving example, Still Hunt. At this late date, the stalking panther was more associated with competitive business practices and cut-throat capitalists than with sportsmen, but among “true sportsmen,” panthers and other predatory hunters remained signifiers of crime, exploitation and wanton destruction. Like hunting enthusiast and trompe l’oeil painter Richard LaBarre Goodwin, Kemeys moved to

Chicago in the 1890s, “to work on the decorative program for the World’s Columbian Exposition.”

Patrons after the Civil War found animal conflict scenes, of both the blatant and covert variety, compelling for many reasons. As examples of a traditional genre going back centuries, aesthetically-appealing images of majestic animals spoke to the general audience and “true sportsmen” alike. In addition, artist-sportsmen tended to identify with their particular animal victim, shaping the narrative beyond general animal depiction. Sportsmen-artists at mid-century, and particularly after the war, helped spread the idea that certain game animals were noble, and thus worth saving. Though perhaps not recognized at the time, their animal genre pictures positioning the two combatants in a moral clash spoke to the American audience, allowing sporting and non-sporting citizen alike a chance to empathize with the wildlife victim. In this way, the artists and their work played a major role in the conservation movement. Artists such as Audubon, Catlin, Hays, Holberton and Seton, who wrote on the market threat to game animals had an added impact, and their artwork further pushed their conservationist agenda.

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On *Still Hunt*, see Lewis I. Sharp, *Notable Acquisitions (Metropolitan Museum of Art)*, 1965-1975: 11-19. Christies New York, *Important American Paintings* …catalogue # F6142 (May 30, 1986), 133. This was Chicago’s Field Museum’s deaccessioning of twenty bronze pieces by Kemey. Many of the bronzes cited above were listed in this sale, and it is possible they had remained in the Chicago area from the time of Exposition.
CHAPTER 7
A BRACE OF COCKS:
THE APPEARANCE OF CONSERVATION

Before becoming secretary and treasurer of the NYAPG, William Jacob Hays had produced nearly one hundred hunting-related images, a few of which were trompe l’oeil dead game pieces. In 1856, he exhibited a game piece of hanging ducks at the Brooklyn Athenaeum’s first annual exhibition, and also that year, at another exhibit, a hanging quail (in oval frame, 18 x 14 in.); in 1857 he painted two more game pieces, now at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, which are a little smaller than life size, but nevertheless have the illusive quality of a deception (fig. A176).  

His studio is mentioned as having “groups of game” on display in January 1859, and he continued to produce dead game pieces into the 1860s. A December 1864 art review notes the finished dead game pieces in Hays’ studio, of “ducks, snipe, etc., painted with rare skill.” In the majority of these Hays depicted a small grouping, usually two or three birds, often hanging from their beaks; others, like the Corcoran piece, are uniquely arranged. Such pictures, suggestive of limits in a day’s bag, served as a reminder that the owner of the painting hunted in a conservative manner.

Hays’ first two hanging fowl pieces (ca. 1854) were purchased by Dr. Benjamin Brandreth (1807-80), who allowed them to be exhibited at the NAD in 1855. A giant in the American pharmaceutical industry and an investor in railroads, Brandreth was also a

616“Domestic Art Gossip,” The Crayon 5, no. 1 (January 1858), 24. This article states that Hays had game pieces finished and in progress “in his best manner” in his studio. The finished piece may be that exhibited at the National Academy of Design in Summer 1857, owned by Berry; see The Crayon 4, no. 7 (July 1857), 224. Hays painted A Water Fowl, possibly a hanging game piece, for William Cullen Bryant’s seventieth birthday bash at the Century in 1864. The 1857 pair at the Corcoran Gallery of Art were purchased by Clifford R. Berry, and given to the Corcoran by his wife in 1974.

noted sportsman, nature lover, and, like Hays, a member of the New York Sportsman’s Club. In 1851, Brandreth purchased 26,000 acres in pristine Adirondack forest which he named “Brandreth Park.” This kicked off the movement among New York’s moneyed class to buy up huge sections of that region for exclusive hunting. Brandreth’s son-in-law, NYAPG member Edwin A. McAlpin, inherited a large section of the park when his benefactor died in 1880 and maintained the land as a private preserve. Whether hanging at Brandreth’s home in Ossining or adorning his hunting lodge at the exclusive Park, Hays’ game pieces were literally symbols of “true sportsmanship.”

While small-scale still-life prints were a common feature in American households (and department stores) after mid-century, the buyers of high quality trompe l’oeil hunting images were often well-to-do sportsmen, and the large hunting images found their way into hunting lodges, club houses, private libraries, dens and studies. These upper class sportsmen used a relatively cryptic terminology when describing species and numbers of fowl bagged that was virtually unknown to non-sportsmen, with descriptive words employed as a means of exclusion and separation. Elisha Lewis, in The American Sportsman (Philadelphia, 1855), an early text for “true sportsmanship” that complimented Henry Herbert’s works, made the conservative, recreational vocabulary of game part of the common parlance, i.e., a brace, a covey, a wisp, and so forth, all of which stressed both limitation and exclusivity. Like the terminology, the imagery showing this

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618 The information on Brandreth Park is from John Adamski, “Franklin Brandreth: Ten Thousand Acres are All in the Family,” Adirondack Life 31, no. 5 (July/August 2000): 84-85. Edwin A. McAlpin, also a member of the NYAPG, was married to Benjamin Brandreth’s daughter Annie, and inherited a section of Brandreth Park in 1880. Possibly in response to Currier & Ives’ scenes of game birds hanging from nails (after Tait’s 1854 versions), and the growing demand for game pieces as dining room décor, Hays adopted the genre in late 1854, though, in comparison to his specialized genre of wildlife, they are few in number. Though technically proficient in trompe l’oeil pieces, Hays chose to dedicate his time to scenes of “living” wildlife.
conservation in action – the small bag of fowl, the single dead bird hanging by a leg, or a brace of birds, with carefully arranged accoutrements of the hunt – was a mark of the “true sportsman;” their public display helped to set them apart from the exploitative game-wasters in their midst (fig. A177).

Given the specific subject matter – dead game animals – which were designed and understood in the context of sporting, one should be reminded that still-life painting was historically a sign of vanitas: of human impermanence and the temporality of the world. Memento mori still-life paintings were produced over the centuries, particularly among the religious cultures of Europe, to remind the owner of this fact and to help him or her live a humble life. Such a subtext in sporting still-life painting seems unlikely at first, but the belief of many sportsmen of the time that game animals and their beloved recreation were being threatened with extermination, suggests a blending of the traditional with the modern. Dead game pictures preserved a day’s bag forever. It preserved the sport, or the memory of the sport, long after the guns, horns and hunting pouches were hung up for good. The transition from utilitarian items to mantelpiece décor and painted subject matter is a curious development and one filled with paradox, particularly for the maker of such images and the sportsman-patron. The sportsman-artist, in contrast to the average consumer, was often compiling objects used in his or her personal pastime, then put to canvas, but for a similarly-public display, and as a means of selling more art. They brought to fine art, and to sporting patrons from every segment of society, the notion of the picturesque inherent in the game trophy and in the game animal’s life and death.

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The *trompe l’oeil* game piece was an especially favored type of still life painting among American sportsmen patrons. Named for its ultra-realistic presentation, often fooling the viewer into believing the painted objects on the canvas are real, *trompe l’oeil* took hold in America in an era of increasingly conspicuous consumption. While actual dead game normally had to be consumed in relative haste, at least during warm months, pictures of hunting bags and accoutrements could continue to signify the owner’s skill as sportsman and his leisurely lifestyle for years or even centuries to come. This artistic style also flourished at a time of heightened self-fashioning, when *nouveau riche* businessmen and those rising up the social ladder sought symbols and visual codes that would identify them as such to visitors. *Trompe l’oeil* pictures of hunting paraphernalia and a day’s humble bag of game could simultaneously symbolize the elitism of the “true sportsman” and the taste of a connoisseur. Like their historical precedents in the Netherlands and Italy, American dead game still-life paintings were in vogue among a public which wanted to live the life of leisure and to hunt game for sport. Unlike those created in the first decades of the century, however, the works of the second half of the century most specifically represented the goals, lifestyle and political stance of the “true sportsman” as artist.

**History of the Dead Game Piece in America**

Though popular from its beginnings in the Renaissance period, negative attributes had been associated with *trompe l’oeil* painting, or “deceptions,” during the eighteenth century, due in large part to the Royal Academy’s first president Sir Joshua Reynolds, who believed deceptions “stalled artistic progress,” “hindered art’s mission” of morals and taste, and should be left for the “meaner artist.” However, academic training in the
United States and abroad included the drawing and painting from models of dead game and the style was embraced. These images also conveyed a conservative sportsmanship, as well as making for good kitchen and dining room décor.

One of the most important early American artists, John Singleton Copley, painted a dead *Wood Duck* (exhibited at the Columbianum Exhibition in 1795); it remains uncertain however whether Copley intended this to be a *trompe l’oeil*, where the game is generally presented hanging against a flat surface, such as a door or wall, to make the illusion more convincing. His contemporary Charles Willson Peale (1741-1827) and several of Peale’s progeny were fascinated by *trompe l’oeil* scenes and created numerous variations, which were extremely popular among the Philadelphia elite, though specific “dead game pieces” by family members are as of yet unknown. The Peales’ interest was embraced in Philadelphia, and the style remained a favorite of its citizens throughout the century. The rural regions surrounding Philadelphia were great areas for sport, and the *trompe l’oeil* paintings revealed the lifestyle of the artists living there.

In the first decades of the nineteenth century, Charles Bird King (1785-1862), whose first studio after leaving Benjamin West’s London workshop was also based in Philadelphia, produced a number of *trompe l’oeil* paintings. Though best known for his

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620 Most artists trained in academies, it might be noted, produced at least one still-life as part of their learning, with game pieces being a favorite among them. Eugene Delacroix’s *Trophies of the Hunt* (Louvre) is one example. For an in-depth history of the seventeenth-century Dutch development of game pieces and their evolving meaning, see Scott A. Sullivan, *The Dutch Game Piece* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1984). For Reynolds’ opinions against *trompe l’oeil*, see Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses on Art*, ed. Robert R. Wark (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), 50.

series of portraits depicting Native American chiefs who visited Washington, DC, King had a lifelong passion for creating still-life pieces, and, in 1806, he produced Dead Game, his earliest known painting (fig. A178). Revealing King’s interest in the seventeenth century Dutch painting style of Jan Weenix and Rembrandt van Rijn, the painting is not a traditional trompe l’oeil, but rather a finished oil study done under Benjamin West’s direction at the Royal Academy. King and the Peales created their images at a time when the deceptive style of trompe l’oeil was finally beginning to gain acceptance by the leaders of the art world. A few dead game scenes featuring dead rabbits also appeared, such as John Archibald Woodside’s Dead Rabbits (1840s, Philadelphia Museum of Art), which was made as a study when designing a shop sign for a Philadelphia restaurant. Though traces of its earlier negative reception surely remained, these post-colonial American masters enjoyed its use and gave the style legitimacy for the next generation.622

John James Audubon, who was influential in so many ways to the nation’s sportsmen-artists and their creation of hunt-related scenes, also produced a number of game pieces, some of which were of the “hanging game” variety (fig. A179). When he first arrived in the Pennsylvania “backwoods” of Mill Grove, Audubon, as he noted in his journal and his “episodes,” started out painting birds hanging by one foot, and he felt these were “good for poulterer signs.” Decades later, he painted a few more scenes of dead game with hunting dogs keeping watch (fig. A180). Audubon’s game pieces, however, are signs of hunting prowess rather than “true sportsmanship” or conservation:

622King’s Still Life – Game (1806, o/c, 14 x 11 in., IBM Corporation Collection) is illustrated in Gerdts’ American Still Life Painting, and in Andrew J. Cosentino, “Charles Bird King: An Appreciation,” American Art Journal 6, no. 1 (May 1974): 55. For Reynolds’ negative views on trompe l’oeil, see Wendy Bellion, “Illusion and Allusion,” 35, cited from Sir Joshua Reynolds, Discourses on Art, 50. Interestingly, the ancient Greek trompe l’oeil artists Zeuxis and Parrhasios are first mentioned in American newspapers around this time, suggesting a growing interest in the style.
by depicting numerous species of game birds hanging in a mass from a tree, or in a pile, these images are reminiscent of poaching pictures. Other still-life pieces were done on speculation while traveling in the South and in Europe. However, Audubon was never really known for representing dead game, but rather built his career illustrating “living game,” working tirelessly to animate the dead. On those rare moments when he did depict dead animals, he usually had a predator or hunting dog playing a key role in the scene.623

Arthur Fitzwilliam Tait also played an important role in reacquainting the American public with trompe l’oeil dead game pieces (fig. A181), thanks in large part to Currier & Ives, which published inexpensive and widely accessible copies of Tait’s images. Realistic hanging dead game pieces thus became popular as lithographic prints, and the theme was adopted by other reproduction companies. Most famous of these was the L. Prang and Co. of Boston, which released a print called Dead Game in the mid-1860s; decades later Prang reproduced one of best-known trompe l’oeil paintings of the nineteenth century, one of William Harnett’s three, similarly composed After the Hunt paintings (1884, fig. A182), each of which feature an assortment of antiquated German hunting paraphernalia.624 However, it would be wrong to assume there was any pause in trompe l’oeil creation between Tait and Harnett. Indeed, there were many artists who turned to this small, convenient art form of scenes displaying the results of a sportsman’s

623Maria Audubon, Audubon, vol. 2, 523. Audubon’s Dead Game and Hunting Dog (1830) is mentioned in Alice Ford’s 1964 biography on the artist. Originally in William Bakewell Shaffer collection, Cincinnati, OH, it was owned later by Gerald Peters Fine Art Gallery in Santa Fe, and later by Kennedy Gallery. It was illustrated in Magazine Antiques (September 1980): 407, and also on SIRIS.

624Harnett was most likely inspired by the similarly-composed photographs by the German artist Adolphe Braun (1811-1877). Though not a hanging still-life, Braun’s Still Life with Game (ca. 1865, carbon print) is nearly identical to Harnett’s in terms of objects, composition and arrangement. Braun’s print is located at Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. See Antiques (August 1990), 248-9. Harnett’s near-photographic detail and his study of photography in Germany needs further study. Thomas Cole painted a Dead Game piece, which was included as no. 83 in his Memorial Exhibition, and at the time owned by J. J. Elliot, and cited in Parry, The Art of Thomas Cole, Appendix 1, 371.
recreation, including Cole and the Beard brothers. Harnett did complete a few dead game pieces during the 1880s, one of a hanging rabbit, another of a hanging merganser (fig. A183), which may have been made as studies for his larger After the Hunt images. Harnett did produce another hanging bird piece, though not of game; it shows a plucked chicken, its foot tied to a nail (For Sunday’s Dinner, 1888). Generally known for his bachelor still-lifes which featured books, pipes, violins and reading glasses along with an occasional letter or note to give the viewer some idea of the owner of the things depicted. Generally speaking, Harnett’s patrons were self-made businessman, with lower to middle-class backgrounds, and with “extremely conservative” artistic tastes. While his many subjects convey masculine pastimes, the relative scarcity of dead game pieces by Harnett suggests his patrons were not as interested in hunting themes, or did not identify themselves as sportsmen.

Tait’s dead game pieces are nearly all of hanging ducks, against what appear to be flat, nondescript walls, and generally designed for an oval frame. From his checklist of paintings, it appears that Tait painted the majority of hanging game pieces in just two years (fig. A181). The first six, created between 1853 and 1854, went to his regular patrons John Osborn and James Clark of Brooklyn, Tait’s brother Mortimer in Oporto, 626

625 Scenes of dead game by Americans abound in the second half of the century, including those by Tait (1853, 1854, 1863 and 1866), James H. Cafferty (1869), and Thomas Sedgwick Steele (1870s). Many were titled Hanging Game, as in John William Hill’s undated watercolor (20 x 14 in.). One of the earliest hanging game pieces in America was by Edward Walsh (1756-1832), a watercolor study dated April 16, 1804 (University of Michigan, Clements Library, Ann Arbor, MI, 9 ¾ x 14 ¼ in.). See SIRIS website. Harnett also painted a lone Hanging Mallard Drake (1883, National Gallery, Canada) while working in Munich; measuring 34 x 20 ¾ in., which is illustrated in Antiques (November 1980): 1016.

Portugal, and the gallery at Williams, Stevens, & Williams. One *Ruffed Grouse*, from 1854, was purchased by J. K. George of Baltimore, another three (two of ducks, one of grouse) went to Charles A. Davis, Esq. in 1853, and one was bought by Dwight Townsend. Several more from this period were made to sell at William Stevens & Williams, rather than made on commission; Tait’s paintings and the prints after them were ideal for restaurant and tavern décor, and other various public sites of the market place. At least four of these were bought by Currier and lithographed for mass consumption. The actual number of works produced in these years, and whether they were commissioned or not, is uncertain due to great overlap in Tait’s list (often citing one work three times) and other issues. Tait would paint a few more over his career, but most of these were produced on speculation, and not commissioned.

By the 1860s, a number of artists were creating non-*trompe l’oeil* game pieces as well. Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze’s *Dead Game* (1860, fig. A184) was amazing for its textural qualities and academic perfection. Made for the art patron Robert L. Stuart, who may have commissioned it after seeing a similarly grouped pile of game in Leutze’s history painting, *The Founding of Maryland* (1860, Maryland Historical Society), it was nevertheless wonderfully conceived, but would have been read as a European-style pile of dead game that symbolized excess. Lilly Martin Spencer (1822-1902) also painted a

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627 Cadbury/Marsh, 124-126.

628 Dead game pieces by Tait seemingly painted on commission include *Dead Game* (ca. 1853-54) painted for James Clark or John Osborn, illustrated in Cadbury/Marsh, 124-125; *Canvas Back and Wood Duck* (1858, Newhouse Gallery, NY) by Dwight Townsend, illustrated in ibid., 144; Tait painted three dead game pieces in 1863, two intended for Louis Prang in 1868 (which are noted as being “not approved;”), one in 1884, and a few in 1873.

629 Leutze’s *Dead Game* is illustrated and described in Annette Blaugrund, *The Tenth Street Studio*, 21 & 27.
similarly titled work, dating to the late 1860s, but since unlocated. In any case, what might be called the American style of hanging game piece, often featuring a small grouping of game birds, took precedent over Leutze’s “pile of game” type of image, or the “hanging deer” type imported from European masters like Fyt, Snyders and Weenix.

The artist-sportsman Thomas Hewes Hinckley also produced a number of hanging game scenes, including Hanging Jack Snipe (1870, fig. A185); stark and unadorned, the lone snipe stresses the sense of crucifixion and martyrdom. The main feature that distinguishes these American versions from their European precedents is the smaller number of game presented. These images often focus on a single bird hanging by its leg and tied by a string to a nail, a means of bleeding the animal done to keep the meat fresh. Also, the lack of hunting implements in the pictures of this period is significant. Tait, Hays and Hinckley, among others, saw the value in these humble pieces, and kept the style alive for Harnett’s generation.

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630 Woodside’s Dead Rabbits (23 ¼ x 18 3/8 in.) was illustrated in Gerdts, American Still Life, 48. For Spencer, see Robin Bolton-Smith, Lilly Martin Spencer (1822-1902): The Joys of Sentiment (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institute, 1973). Spencer’s Dead Rabbit (ca. 1865-69, o/c, 15 7/8 x 11 7/8 in) was last recorded in a Montclair, New Jersey art gallery, but is now unlocated. Another Dead Rabbit, by F. M. Kelley, and dating to the 1880s, is today at the Manchester (NH) Historical Association.

631 Marjorie Shaw, Thomas Hewes Hinckley: Artist to a Generation (Milton, Mass: Milton Historical Society, 1985). Another artist known for presenting “living” animals, William H. Beard, like Hays, Hinckley, and Tait, covered all areas of hunting culture, and he too produced a painting titled Dead Game in 1859. It was displayed at the NAD that year, and commissioned by Peter A. Porter. Interestingly enough, the painting is not mentioned in the art review from the Spirit of the Times, but does make the list of notables in other newspapers reporting on the show. The Albion regretted that it had been “hung so high,” and hard to make out; see “Fine Arts: The National Academy of Design,” The Albion 37, no. 22 (May 28, 1859), 261. The majority of images titled Dead Game by American artists appear to be hanging game pieces.

632 Two others by Hinckley are Hanging Grouse (21 x 14 in., Hirschl & Adler Gallery) and Dead Grouse (1871, 19 x 14 in., private). Other hanging bird pictures include those by Andrew J. H. Way (1826-1888), from the 1880s, illus. in Sotheby Parke Bernet auction cat. no. 4690m, Sept. 23, 1981, lot 15; Henry H. Cross’s two Hanging Game Birds (1837-1918) are illus. in SPB auction cat. 4479m, Nov. 21, 1980, lot 6; and Bruce W. Chambers, Selections from the Robert P. Coggins Collection of American Paintings (exh. cat., Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester, NY, 1976), 88; Andrew Way’s After the Hunt (hanging game) (34 x 24 in.) illustrated in Adam A. Weschler and Son, sales cat., May 23-26, 1974, lot# 1363); William Aiken Walker’s Hanging Rabbit, Duck and Quail (1869), illustrated in August P. Traveioli
The Woodcock as Emblem of Conservation

Among all the species of wild fowl to depict, the American Woodcock was a favorite. It was an important game bird for sportsmen to show their knowledge in the field and their skill at hunting. In addition, beginning in the 1840s the woodcock was a highly-prized species seen to be in need of conservation, and was a commonly-used symbol of the early conservation movement. Frank Forester dedicated a long article to the bird, and stressed the need for citizen and government protection to preserve the woodcock. It was considered a “noble” animal, with many sportsmen placing it above all other game; especially for gentleman hunters, or “true sportsmen,” who rarely shot anything but game fowl, the woodcock was a heroic bird, worthy of killing, and protecting. “The Woodcock” was also the name of the hall where the first meetings of the New York Sportsmen’s Club took place, a shop owned by Mr. Robert Sinclair, located at Houston and Broadway; the meetings were advertised in New York Herald, and the Spirit of the Times. Through these connections, the woodcock became synonymous with game conservation and enforcement – both for the sportsman and the general public.633

This iconic game bird became the official emblem of the New York Association for the Protection of Game. As secretary after Hays’ death, Wakeman Holberton (1839-1898) created the official seal for the club, in which the bird is shown in flight, resembling Herbert’s Flying Woodcock from 1856. The decision to present it in flight instead of hanging was perhaps in order to present the club as protective of life, and not

and Roulhac Toledano, William Aiken Walker, Southern Genre Painter (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1972), 103; George T. Hobbs’ Hanging Ducks (30 x 20 in.), illus. in SPB auction cat. no. 4048 (1977), lot 485; and F. Harold Hayward (1867-1945), who created a number of hanging game pieces in the 1890s, and reproductions of which are at the Macomb County Historical Society, Mount Clemens, Michigan.

633See SOTT 15, no. 12 (May 17, 1845), 138; for Club by-laws, see SOTT 15, no. 14 (May 31, 1845), 161.
as a bunch of wealthy killers. Perhaps unintentionally, Holberton’s use of the bird as the Association’s emblem paid homage to a founder of the Association, and of American conservation itself, Frank Forester, who first granted the woodcock such nobility. Given the ubiquitous nature of the subject, it seems the very painting of the woodcock was akin to shooting the bird: a prerequisite to designating oneself as a sportsman-artist.\textsuperscript{634} The quiet simplicity of a single woodcock hanging on a door conveyed the artist’s and the owners’ frugality, patience, and a sportsman’s awareness of the need for limits in the field.

One might ask how “true sportsmen” justified the killing of their favorite bird when they knew it to be endangered. Part of the answer lies in the protective measures put in place after Frank Forester’s appeal to sportsmen to limit their bags and follow his own seasonal restrictions. The bird became the noble symbol of the movement essentially because of Forester’s warning and use of the species as an example of responsible hunting.

One of the most effective dead woodcock still-life pieces is an ink drawing by Herbert made as an illustration for My Shooting Box (1846). Not a trompe l’oeil by any means, Herbert’s Dead Woodcock (1856, fig. A186) is possibly even more startling than the realistic hanging bird pieces in its ability to convey loss and emotion. Here, Herbert presents the corpse lying prostrate, not unlike a dead human corpse. With its head turned away from the viewer, it has an essence of sorrow, and none of the reward associated with the sport. It is as if Herbert was saying goodbye to a loved one at a funeral service.

\textsuperscript{634}A search of “woodcock” on SIRIS resulted in these examples, with even more found with odd titles. Tait’s 1866 Woodcock was illustrated in Christie’s Sales catalog “Chris 5165” (1982); and Alexander Pope’s Hanging Woodcock (n/d, 18 x 10 in.) is illustrated in SPB auction cat. no. 3923, November 18-20, 1976, lot # 317. Both are currently unlocated.
Drawn roughly a decade before Herbert committed suicide, the picture, with its heavily sculpted feathers and vertical position, conveys the artist’s ongoing depression and suggests he identified with the fallen hero.

The number of painters representing the woodcock, often depicted dead and hanging, is noteworthy. In a sense, the dead, yet noble bird, sought by self-proclaimed “true sportsmen,” conveyed the entire species, as well as being a memento mori in its traditional meaning, signifying for the artist and owner the past hunt, and the potential end of the species and the hunt. Examples besides those already mentioned include: Sarah Stone (1784, private collection), Eliza I. Brown (ca. 1840, Lynn Historical Society), Edmund Elisha Case (n/d, 18 x 15 in., Museum of Fine Arts, Springfield, MA), Thomas Dury, Thomas Hewes Hinckley (1849, unlocated), John William Hill (1850s), W. J. Hays, James H. Cafferty (1863, unlocated), S. J. E. Jones, Edward C. Leavitt (1868, Old Print Shop), A. Treat (1869, Private Collection), George Nelson Cass (ca. 1870, 16 x 12 in., Childs Gallery, Boston), Henry W. Herrick, Richard LaBarre Goodwin (Private Collection), Alexander Pope, George Cope (1907), Arthur B. Frost, and Albert Bierstadt (fig. A187). Arthur F. Tait also did several pictures featuring the noble bird; the majority of these are chase scenes with hunting dogs pointing out a living brace of woodcock, while others show woodcock families living peacefully in the woods.

Trompe L’oeil, Masculinity and Femininity

Trompe l’oeil paintings have been the focus of much research and speculation as of late, and perhaps the most intriguing of these studies have looked at their creation in light of the age of consumerism and what some writers, both then and now, refer to as the “feminization” of American culture. Hunting still-life paintings, featuring dead game and
hunting accoutrements, make some sense in this regard, being overt and potent symbols of supposed masculinity. Not surprisingly, such scholars tend to ignore those female artists who produced game pieces during the century. Of all the sporting themes that female artists tended to leave for their male counterparts, painting dead game pieces was not one of them, perhaps in part because of the role the images played in art instruction. The number of women who adopted the genre is indeed large, and those who exhibited at the NAD annual shows does give some hint of the growing interest of the topic for women: Virginia (Molly Lee) Granbery (Pair of Teal, 1859; and Dead Birds, 1860), Emma C. Church (Game, Buffle Ducks, 1867, owned by John Crosby Brown), Emma S. Gilbert (Snipe and Teal, 1867), Helen L. Searl(e) (Study of Game, 1867), Elizabeth W. Horton (Game, 1869), Ida Elkins (Wood Ducks, 1876), Helen L. Williams (Study of Game, 1876), M. Adeline Knapp (Study of Game, 1877; and Game, 1879), Louise Glen (Quail, 1880), Alice M. Bradbury (Game, 1887), Mollie Lee Granbery (Results of a Day’s Sport, 1887; and Sportman’s Luck, 1890). Granbery (1831-1921) sold her Dead Birds picture to Mary L. Hastings of Sing Sing, which shows that the purchasers of these images were not just men adorning their dens and lodges with signs of their masculinity.

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635 Martanie (Janie) Snowden was painting game pieces in Omaha during the last quarter of the century, and Myra Miller was painting trompe l’oeil hanging game pieces in the early 1900s; see Joni L. Kinsey, “Cultivating the Grasslands; Women Painters in the Great Plains,” Independent Spirits: Women Painters of the American West, 1890-1945, edited by Patricia Trenton (Berkeley: University of California Press for Autry Museum of Western Heritage, 1995), 259-262. Claude Hirst (1855-1942) also painted at least one hanging fowl piece (1895, Private Collection), and though currently unavailable for viewing, given her style, it presumably was a trompe l’oeil. See Martha M. Evans, Claude Raguet Hirst: Transforming the American Still Life (exh. cat., Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio, 2004), 47-48.

636 These artists and their work were found in the Naylor, National Academy of Design Exhibition Records, 1860-1900.

637 Granbery was a teacher at the Packer Institute in Brooklyn, and lived with her sister, the artist Henrietta Granbery, until her death in 1921. See Askart.com; Naylor, vol. 1: 191; and “New York Tax
Scholars such as Annette Stott and Kenneth Ames have looked at how certain examples of nineteenth-century material culture, in this case game pieces, functioned in the home, and how they were understood by the home’s inhabitants and their visitors. Like their seventeenth-century models, still-life scenes with hunting paraphernalia and dead game spoke of social status and ambitions, whether real or imagined. As mentioned above, up until the 1870s game pieces were commonly found in domestic spaces such as dining rooms. Yet around this time, a movement by domestic guides, who sought a more civilized interior space, banished such imagery to the home’s “male” spaces: the den, the study, etc. Kenneth Ames explores the use and reception of mid-nineteenth century sideboards carved with hunting imagery, and how these served as signs that expressed class aspirations, and at the same moment celebrated “a predatory impulse and implied that the produce of the world was at humanity’s service.” Like game pieces and other hunting-themed imagery of the time (including trophy heads and racks), such sideboards were phased out of kitchen and dining décor by the mid-1870s, in large part due to the domestic guides, like Harriet Prescott Spofford, author of Art Decoration Applied to Furniture (New York, 1878). Guides like Spofford preached “civility and refinement,” and led the movement away from masculine themes in traditionally feminine spaces. And what became of the sideboards? Perhaps they too


ended up in the den. Dead game pieces as dining room décor would come back into fashion in the first decades of the twentieth century. In the meantime, true-sportsmen artists and their patrons sought more modern statements of their recreational interests and manly prowess.640

One recent scholar has fostered the notion that trompe l’oeil still-life game pieces are “fictionalizations,” representing nostalgia for an imagined or long-gone past. He has posited that these images had little bearing on Gilded Age reality, and were intended specifically for male consumers who longed for such a lifestyle, but were not able to hunt.641 Such revisionist art historians tend to read these American trompe l’oeil paintings as representing anti-modernity, featuring aged objects and pre-consumer goods, “negligible in economic value.”642 But these interpretations assume hunting was obsolete when the art was produced. Of course, during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, it was anything but. Sport shooting had actually grown more popular with each decade. Wild fowl, like the other animals featured in American trompe l’oeil, had great economic value in the meat and feather markets, and would thus not have been interpreted as worthless at all. In addition, wildlife encouraged tourism and thus an added to the state’s revenues and local businesses. Relatively small paintings showing one (or a brace) of


641Lubin, Picturing a Nation, 277-78.

642Ibid., 281.
birds hanging from a humble door or wall may be seen, in fact, as a response against conspicuous consumption, as a symbol of game and resource conservation.

The many factors in a picture’s production and function – the actual subject matter depicted, the patron, the artist, and their respective mindset – must be considered for an accurate interpretation. As with their Dutch precedents, American game pieces served as markers signifying the owner’s lifestyle (whether actual, nostalgic, imaginary, or otherwise). Many of the hunting still-life pictures feature an aged, weathered and rustic backdrop, such as a cabin door or wall, even in those examples from the 1890s. Artists wanted to give the impression of a rugged outdoor lifestyle long in the making, which may explain the “aged” representation. Hanging game from weathered cabin doors and walls allowed trompe l’oeil artists to apply their full talents at feigning reality.

Simultaneously, the rough and aged background of these scenes reinforced the “truth” of the situation described, where moneyed sportsmen leisured about in the hills and forests, and slept in hunting lodges. Weathered, then, may not denote the past, but instead signify a contemporary existence lived in the great outdoors. Though some were nostalgic visions, most were not; rather, they conveyed simplicity, frugality, and healthy sport in a modern world that otherwise encouraged wasteful habits and the exploitation of natural resources. Albert Bierstadt, known for his colossal landscapes and grand machines that celebrated the expansionist spirit of the day and the possibilities of the edenic West, was also known for his early conservationist mindset, and in this regard he

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painted a number of spare hanging game pieces. Their simplicity is especially striking when one considers his grandiose landscapes; it is indeed the polar opposite in terms of nature worship. One of these hanging bird pictures (fig. A187) is relatively small, but celebrates the noble woodcock and the humble nature of the sport. Bierstadt saw no need for romanticizing the bird’s beauty, and thus it was a successful trompe l’oeil piece.

**Holberton and Dead Game**

In the early 1870s, before becoming secretary of the NYAPG in 1875, Wakeman Holberton exhibited several pictures titled *Dead Game* along with other sporting scenes at the NAD; unfortunately, none of Holberton’s dead game pieces have come to light. In 1875, Holberton produced a hanging game piece in the trompe l’oeil fashion. Titled *Hanging Game*, it shows three prairie hens or quail in that familiar style, bunched together and hanging by a single, stiff foot.644 Later in the decade Holberton would turn his attention to dead fish scenes, and he designed, patented, and sold a wide variety of fishing tackle, naming them after his fishing companions. His *Dead Game* pictures, however, celebrate the long American tradition of a simple, emblematic composition, and his images found their way on to many a dining room wall. Interestingly, by the 1870s, when sportsmen wanted such humble pictures to convey a host of masculine characteristics and conservationist ideals, those same pictures were being removed from dining room walls, and began to be displayed privately in male-specific quarters.645

Holberton came from a wealthy New York family, and was a frequent traveler to Europe and other distant areas at a young age. He was educated in New York and

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644 This painting (20 x 17 in.), was sold by Mystic Fine Arts, *American and European Prints*, September 23, 1993, lot 172.

645 See Annette Stott, “The Dutch Dining Room,” 227; and Ames, *Death in the Dining Room*.
England, and at the age of fifteen traveled from London to New York aboard the ship *Ocean Queen*, one of the few passengers sleeping in a private cabin. After his father, John W. Holberton, died in the early 1860s, Wakeman served in the Civil War as a commissioned officer. Wounded and discharged on June 13, 1862, he took up “sketching and painting.” He wrote a number of sporting books that were well-received nationally: in 1880, he edited *The American Archer’s Handbook and Guide to Correct Shooting*; in the late 1880s, he produced two books, *The Art of Angling: How and Where to Catch Fish* (1887) and *Angling Recreation* (1889); he went on to write several articles on hunting big game as a correspondent for sporting magazines such as *Forest and Stream* and *Outing*, both known for conservationist ideas. Holberton was a consummate sportsman, considered in his later years to be one of the best marksmen in the United States, and was an outgoing advocate for the conservationist cause. He wrote often to the *New York Times* in his role as NYAPG secretary, making statements and announcements for the Association, and report on changes in game law. He was also president of the Oritani Archers Club, and the secretary of the Neversink Club, a group of New York anglers. In addition, Holberton was part owner of a sporting goods store in New York City, which outfitted every type of hunting and fishing need. He was known to

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648 Harold Hinsdill Smedley, *Fly Patterns and Their Origins* (Muskegon, MI.: Westshore Publications, 1941) briefly discusses Holberton’s role as designer of flies, and artist of game.
paint game bird and fish pictures for members of the Southside Sportsman’s Club of Long Island, but it is also likely his images found their way into the homes of members of the NYAPG, and were probably on display in the windows of his shop. Though none of Holberton’s dead game pieces have come to light, his fish scenes suggest that they would have been respectable examples of the genre (fig. A188).

Holberton traveled extensively to Newfoundland and Labrador to hunt big game and fish. He wrote extensively of the need for sportsmen to follow each locality’s game law and proper seasons. Describing a caribou hunt in Newfoundland, Holberton reminded the reader that caribou “are killed in great numbers by the settlers, and many of them are allowed to rot. The law limits the killing of five bulls and three cows but of course it is rarely enforced. Except in case of actual necessity the cows should not be killed…forty or fifty rounds of ammunition is enough, unless for the game butcher and they are not wanted.” Holberton made appeals in *Forest and Stream*, as an “artist and sportsman” to farmers and country-folk to follow game laws, which, he wrote, don’t reach “the mass of people” without access to newspapers. On another trip to Newfoundland in 1894, Holberton was injured while hunting caribou. Though he brought back “a big array of antlers,” he also returned with injuries that ultimately led to his death. After having been “almost an invalid for four years,” he died at his home in Hackensack, New Jersey.

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649 *Forest and Stream* 14, no. 10 (April 8, 1880), 186. The review notes Holberton’s picture’s truth to nature.

650 Wakeman Holberton, “A Trip to the White Hills,” 336. He was a frequent contributor to *Forest and Stream*. See *Forest and Stream* 3, no. 26 (February 4, 1875), 409, for his appeal to farmers and countrymen. An amusing article in this vein, in which Holberton’s skills at angling (and conservative shooting) are compared against backwoods anglers; see “The Artistic Angler vs. the Bare-Foot Boy,” *Forest and Stream* 19, no. 1 (August 3, 1882), 1.

651 Besides being “an unerring shot,” Holberton was a bit of an eccentric. In 1890, many leading papers reported that he had written and illustrated a book of “101 quarto pages,” yet not meant to be
Sign of the Sportsman: Guns, Game and Garb

While the single, hanging game bird piece remained a favorite among sportsmen-artist throughout the century, beginning in the mid-1870s artists began to include items in the scene, including trophy heads, apparel and sporting accoutrements, all of which extolled big game hunting. The late 1870s was marked by overwhelming growth in the number of citizens (and communities) becoming concerned about game conservation, as well as an increase in the number of sporting clubs being founded. Several sporting journals were outspoken for the cause, especially *Forest and Stream*, the premier conservationist-leaning magazine. This found a welcome audience and led to regional sportsmen coming together to push for state action. George Bird Grinnell, as chief editor of *Forest and Stream* from 1876 to 1911 (and who, from the time he was a child, was captivated by Audubon), used his magazine as a vehicle for shaping popular opinion, in hopes of converting all American sportsmen, amateur and novice alike, into “true” sportsmen.652 Through this popular publication, and with the birth of the Boone and Crockett Club, which he co-founded with Theodore Roosevelt in 1887, Grinnell was able to reach influential upper-class gentleman-sportsmen, while simultaneously promoting game conservation ideals among the public at large. Sportsmen-artists, in turn, became stimulated as never before to celebrate the game animal, to speak to the initiated on the importance of the “sportsman’s code,” and to depict the often-costly accoutrements and dress of the “true sportsman.” *Trompe L’oeil* paintings mirrored this change in direction duplicated. Based on his sporting adventures, the single edition was made solely “for his children.” See Holberton obit, *New York Times*, January 6, 1898, 6.

652 Michael Punke, *Last Stand: George Bird Grinnell, The Battle to Save the Buffalo, and the Birth of the New West* (New York Smithsonian Books, 2007), 102, notes that in 1875, the year before assuming his editorial position at *Forest and Stream*, Grinnell served as naturalist with Col. William Ludlow’s expedition to Yellowstone, and noted the horrific poaching that was taking place there. He would continue speaking out against this for decades.
and aided in shaping the national mood. Hanging game pictures were and would remain a favorite among the sporting fraternity and the closet hunter, but artists and patrons began to desire images that might stand as more obvious markers of their leisurely, recreational lifestyle.

Artists often combined dead game with these “instruments of destruction,” as Audubon was known to call them, varying from symmetrically organized to seemingly random groupings. The latter suggested the nearly-constant use of the items depicted, and therefore conveyed a freedom from work, or work that depended on killing game. Game and accoutrement scenes became more popular in the age of the new Teddy Roosevelt-type of sportsman, who favored the danger and risk of big game hunting over the quiet and relaxed shooting of fowl, and combined the two pastimes.

Goodwin’s Game

One artist who helped popularize the trompe l’oeil style in America by adding modern hunting accoutrements to the standard dead game composition, was Richard LaBarre Goodwin (1840-1910), a master of what came to be known as “cabin door pictures.” An avid sportsman and the son of the painter and passionate abolitionist, Edwin Wyburn Goodwin (d. 1845), Richard began as a portrait painter at the age of twenty. Though he was not directly trained by his father, who died when Richard was only five, he was no doubt taught the family values of civil reform and freedom. He served in the Civil War as a volunteer with a New York regiment, and was wounded at the first Battle of Bull Run.653

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653 For more on his father, see Stanley Harrold, The Rise of Aggressive Abolitionism: Addresses to the Slaves (Lexington: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 2004), 44-45; and Agnes Halsey Jones, Rediscovered Painters of Upstate New York, 1700-1875 (Utica, 1958). For R. L. Goodwin’s early history, see William T.
During his career, Goodwin traveled across the United States on expeditions with his wife Belle Norton, and the two lived in numerous cities, including New York, Chicago, Colorado Springs, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Portland, Oregon. He began painting the *trompe l’oeil* game pieces for which he is best known while in Syracuse in the early 1880s. These arrangements typically featured rustic and traditional hunting objects hanging against a wooden door, and compositionally mimicked the style of Harnett. It should be noted that Harnett’s only hunt-related still-lifes, four of which are titled *After the Hunt*, feature out-moded hunting paraphernalia from Europe, where Harnett painted them, between 1883 and 1885. Goodwin may have seen one of Harnett’s works in New York, or perhaps a print after one, but he completely altered the meaning and purpose of the hanging game picture away from Harnett’s recollection of the Old World.


654 Examples include *Woodcocks* (illus. in Sotheby Parke Bernet sales cat. 280 (June 23-24, 1980), lot 358); *Hanging Birds* (1882, Pastel, illustrated in SPB sales cat. 3981 (1977), lot 473); *Hanging Game* (1885, 19 x 14 in., Harold and Peggy Samuels, Locust Valley, NY); *Hanging Bird* (1888) (illus. in Christie’s East sales cat “Clare 159,” Jan. 30, 1981, lot 79); and *Dead Game* (illus. in SPB sales cat. 529 (1944)). More images exist, but are not dated, are currently unlocated, and have not been reproduced. See SIRIS online.

655 The art historian Alfred Frankenstein gave Goodwin this title. For a brief biography on Goodwin, see “Delaware Water Gap, PA, Tompkins Co., N.Y., and Luzerne Co., Pa., Goodwins,” *William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine* 8, no. 2, supplement (October 1899), 66; One of Harnett’s *After the Hunt* (1885) versions was painted in Paris for that year’s Salon, then was sold to Theodore Stewart, where it hung at his Warren St. saloon in Manhattan, and seen by thousands. See Doreen Bolger, “The Patrons of the Artist: Emblems of Commerce and Culture,” in Bolger, et al., *William M. Harnett*, 81. As Frankenstein notes, Harnett was influenced by Adolphe Braun’s dead game and hunting paraphernalia photographs, at least during his Munich period of the 1880s. See Alfred Frankenstein, *After the Hunt; William Harnett and Other American Still Life Painters, 1870-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 66-67. Gerds sees a stronger influence on Harnett coming from Johann Hasenclever and Ludwig Knauss (p.142). In any case, the German influence is paramount to this style. Goodwin’s own *After the Hunt* was originally owned by Charles Shean, and on display in his Hotel Charles, in Springfield Massachusetts. See Frankenstein, *After the Hunt*, 91.

656 Theodore Stewart paid $4,000 for the 1885 version to hang in his saloon. It is possible Harnett’s ultra-masculine hanging game piece was in response to a proliferation of taste and moral books put out by
In the mid-1880s Goodwin was traveling “from Maine to Florida and out to the Sierra Nevada,” and then “for the shooting and fishing grounds of northern Wisconsin and Michigan.” At this time he produced a number of simple, Tait-like hanging duck pictures, without accoutrements of the hunt. Gradually, Goodwin replaced the older, ca. 1840s hunting objects, like the powder horns and weathered bags, with modern sporting items, such as breech-loading guns, racks, hunting jacket and cap.

Most of Goodwin’s trompe l’oeil pictures were undoubtedly made with the sportsman and his recreational lifestyle in mind. Some of his early examples, such as Cabin Door Still Life (1889, Smithsonian American Art Museum), were composed using older hunting props that Harnett was known for. Goodwin borrowed from Harnett traditional trompe l’oeil devices like the partially torn letter (here stuck into an upturned piece of door), the feather falling from one of the dead fowl, and the artist’s monograph seemingly etched into the door. However, unlike Harnett’s After the Hunt, Goodwin conveyed typical American objects. He came close to Harnett’s aged assortment with female authors like Ella Rodman Church, who condemned game pieces as violent, uncivilized and unsuited for home décor. Game pieces and all other hunt-related décor were at the time becoming relegated to the den. See Annette Stott, “The Dutch Dining Room,” 224. Harnett painted a few studies for his After the Hunt pictures, one of which shows a lone quail hanging from its beak, set against the same rustic door and rusted metal ornamentation as featured in the final versions (1885, oil on wood panel), illustrated in Antiques, and once held by Hirschl & Adler. Another depicted a single rabbit hanging against a wooden door, today in the Carnegie Institute.

One is dated 1886, at Everson Museum of Art, accession number 74.9.

Goodwin’s hanging fowl pictures produced after 1884 include: Canvas Back Duck (1885, James D. Julia, Maine, April 20, 2002), Hanging Game (1885, Christie’s East, June 13, 2001), Hanging Wood Ducks (from Lake Mipissing, Canada) (1889, cited in Butterfields sales cat. June 12, 1996), Still life with Ducks (1888), and Hanging Game and Pouch (mounted against old door) (1889), on sale in Bourne Auction, Massachusetts, August 9, 1988.

Goodwin’s Cabin Door Still Life (ca. 1889, Smithsonian American Art Museum) measures 56 3/8 x 44 in., and is illustrated in Elman, Plate 21. The Milwaukee Art Museum’s version measures 52 ½ x 32 ½ in.; See Guide to the Permanent Collection (The Milwaukee Art Museum, 1986), 111; and yet another version, titled Cabin Door Trompe L’oeil (ca. 1898, 58 x 35 in.), was owned by Wunderlich & Company in 1991, and is now unlocated.
The Huntsman’s Door (ca. 1890, Hunter Museum of Art) and the similarly composed Cabin Door Still Life (fig. A189). Here, Goodwin arranged a more simplistic scene, with game birds hanging from a weathered surfaced, rut worn from the swinging door latch, and with metal fixtures rusted into place. It is reminiscent of the aged, anti-modern aesthetic conveyed by Harnett, but represents the American actuality of a shooter living in the woods. We may assume, based on the title, that this is not the door of a “true” sportsman, but rather that of a frontiersman like Kit Carson, existing on the edges of civilized society. Though it cannot be certain Goodwin himself titled the work as it is known today, it would not be unlikely. Goodwin normally picked simple, descriptive titles for his still-life paintings, and his canvases of rural doors usually contained personal items and references, of his own or the patron. In light of the fact that his trompe l’oeil cabin door scenes at times allude to actual personalities, like Theodore Roosevelt, it is highly likely that his earlier compositions were also meant to symbolize and personify the patron and his lifestyle. His recurring use of powder horns and fringed knapsacks, for

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660 For more on this image, see William T. Henning, Jr. A Catalogue of the American Collection, Hunter Museum of Art, Chattanooga, Tennessee (Chattanooga: The Museum, 1985), 70-71, 95. The painting was a gift to the museum from Mrs. Otto K. LeBron, of Chattanooga. The work measures 50 ½ x 30 ¼ in. Another of Goodwin’s Hunter’s Cabin Door (1890, Museum of Fine Arts, Springfield, Massachusetts) (81 ¼ x 42 in.) is illustrated in Frankenstein, After the Hunt, fig. 115.

661 Another Cabin Door picture by Goodwin, dated ca. 1890, is held by the Genesee Country Museum, Mumford, New York. See Victoria Sandwick Schmitt, “Sporting Art in the Genesee Country Museum, Mumford, New York,” Antiques (November 1984), 1223. Schmitt was the curator of the John L. Wehle Gallery of Sporting Art there. Goodwin painted Roosevelt’s Cabin Door, exhibited at the Lewis and Clark Exposition in Portland, Oregon, in 1905. In 1984, the painting was at Vassar College Art Gallery, Poughkeepsie, New York; a smaller version of Roosevelt’s Cabin Door is owned by the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (after 1905, 20 ½ x 12 in.), accessioned in 2006 as part of the Donald and Jean I. Stralem Collection.
instance, suggests either another time, or a modern sportsman who, like Roosevelt, is
fascinated with the trapper culture and the past glories along the frontier.662

**Signs of the “Other” Hunter**

A number of artists took up the “deception” call during the late 1880s, and tried
their hands at the style, some of these more interested in the traditional meanings and
uses of dead game *trompe l’oeil* (vanity and worldly deception) than hunting and
celebrating the recreational sportsman’s lifestyle. Others seem to have been more driven
by a desire to out-Harnett Harnett, producing pictures modeled after his frequently-
referenced prototype while delving into the various aspects of the modern sporting
culture. Jefferson David (or J. D.) Chalfant (1856-1931), of Wilmington, Delaware, was
one such artist.

Chalfant did show some interest in sport shooting during his career and may have
been drawn to the Harnett-style game pictures for that reason. In the late 1880s, he was
listed in *Forest and Stream* as a competitor in a Wilmington shoot, at which he placed
third out of over twenty men. He thus was a skilled shooter, knew the members of the
sporting community, and most likely sought them out as possible patrons.663 Although
known more as a painter of musical instrument *trompe l’oeil*, which often featured
violins, Chalfant painted a few game pieces, one of which was titled *After a Day’s Sport*

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662 Roosevelt’s actual cabin door from the Dakotas was on display at the Lewis and Clark
Exposition in 1905, where Goodwin saw it. Gerds (in *American Still-Life Painting*, 156) notes that
Roosevelt’s door was from his hunting excursion to the Dakotas in 1890, and Goodwin chose the door for
the background. A group of Portland citizens attempted to buy Goodwin’s painting to give it to Roosevelt,
but the project failed. Though outside of the parameters I have set, the story should be re-investigated. Also
see Gerds and Burke, *American Still Life*, 145. From 1890 to 1893, he was working in Washington, DC,
although he was in Chicago during the Columbian Exhibition in 1893. Goodwin exhibited one of his cabin
door *trompe l’oeil* works there. After their extensive travels through the West, and some years in Portland,
Oregon, the Goodwins returned to Rochester, New York in 1908. The artist died two years later, in Orange,
New Jersey.

663 “Wilmington, DE,” *Forest and Stream* 31, no. 8 (September 13, 1888): 152.
– *Game Prices* (1886). The painting (now lost) is a grouping of out-moded and worn hunting equipment, similar to that found in Goodwin’s work, but with a gunner’s gear, aged bag and beaten hat that reveals itself as being from the margins of sporting culture. It is a unique twist on the Harnett “Old World” model, using American items that similarly evoke a humble existence. The painting was exhibited at the Cincinnati Industrial Exposition in 1886 with this peculiar, seemingly contradictory title. Sport and the market were commonly understood at the time as being at odds.664

On February 5, 1886, shortly after completing his first known sporting *trompe l’oeil*, Chalfant felt it necessary to assure a future owner that he had not copied Harnett in creating the work, writing a letter to accompany the canvas stating that “this painting of a gunner’s outfit and game…is entirely original and painted by me from the objects placed in the position as shown on the canvas.” He even had witnesses sign the letter swearing to the painting’s originality. Chalfant left the note folded around a review of Harnett’s *After the Hunt*. As Alfred Frankenstein showed, Chalfant created another *trompe l’oeil* that was even more compositionally derivative of Harnett’s famous *trompe l’oeil*.665 However, Chalfant’s description of the object as a “gunner’s outfit” is revealing in terms of his intent. A gunner was common parlance for market hunter.

The subtext of Chalfant’s picture is critical to this discussion, being one of few *trompe l’oeil* still-life paintings specifically displaying a market hunter’s kill and possessions. The costume of a market hunter, in contrast to the “true sportsman’s,” was worn and aged, as was the condition of the hunting accoutrements. Perhaps, like Harnett,  

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665Chalfant’s letter is quoted in ibid., 126; Chalfant’s *After the Hunt* (1888), now lost, was reproduced in ibid., fig. 67.
Chalfant had arranged actual objects belonging to the patron for the work. His agent and manager, H. Wood Sullivan, may have pushed Chalfant to seek out patrons among the sporting community around Wilmington, Delaware, his home town, and likely advised the artist on fruitful, contemporary topics. Chalfant produced one other known hunt-inspired picture, his own *After the Hunt* (1888, fig. A190), made the same year as his success at the shooting competition. It is this image which may reflect more closely the cultured wares of his sportsmen colleagues in Wilmington than had the 1886 picture. In any case, it was to be his last in this field. In 1890, his major New York patron, Alfred Corning Clark, paid for the artist to travel to Paris, and train under A. W. Bouguereau and J.-J. LeFebvre. While in Paris, he switched from still-life painting to figure painting and portraiture, and never again, it seems, attempted hunting *trompe l’oeil*.

John Haberle (1856-1933) was another *trompe l’oeil* master and follower of Harnett who, though not usually associated with hunting trophy pieces, produced one image that was similar to Goodwin’s cabin door pictures. *Grandma’s Hearthstone* (1890, Detroit Institute of Arts) is intriguing on many counts, but like Goodwin’s hunter’s door, it is mostly nostalgic, supposedly a display of the patron’s family heirlooms. The newspaper man James Terry Abbe (1849-1907) commissioned the work and most likely selected the objects that would adorn the fireplace. With a coon’s tail hanging in the middle, a rifle, a revolver, a sword, and ram horns, it speaks of another time and place – not the turn-of-the-century Massachusetts where Abbe worked, but a comfortable place

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666 Chalfant also painted a flintlock pistol, again, inspired by Harnett’s *Faithful Colt*. See ibid., 126.

667 Interestingly, Chalfant’s agent H. Wood Sullivan, was a businessman who worked with the firm of Blumenthal and Company, dealers in leather. See Jefferson David Chalfant papers, Helen Farr Sloan Library, Delaware Art Museum.
experienced in his childhood. Like the majority of Harnett’s pictures, Haberle’s may be read as an anti-modernist statement.\textsuperscript{668} Whatever the case, it is certain that someone’s past was being celebrated, a hunting past that no longer served such a primary role within the Abbe family. Most of these images by non-sportsmen seem overall concerned with capturing a nostalgic mood that most Americans could identify with.

**Pope and Cope: Game against the Wall**

One sportsman-artist who made his living painting \textit{trompe l’oeil} hunt-related scenes was Alexander Pope Jr. (1849-1924). Like Goodwin, Pope was a consummate sportsman, and “an ardent animal conservationist.”\textsuperscript{669} He began his career painting super-realistic hanging game pieces, such as one from 1876 (George W. Thompson Collection) and done in the mode of Goodwin. During the 1880s and 90s, in his own version of the “cabin-door painting,” Pope often combined trophy racks with hunting guns and gear in a deceptive montage, signifying in its entirety the ideal, modern sportsman, and a hunter of big game. Partly nostalgic, they also conveyed the contemporary sportsman lifestyle of the artist, his colleagues and friends. Another work from the same year, titled \textit{The Oak Door} (1887, Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY), an oil painting on panel, includes similar items rearranged on a square door. The image conveys a quiet, spacious simplicity.

In his book \textit{The Reality of Appearance} (New York, 1970), Alfred Frankenstein described Pope as among “the back-slapping, club-going variety” of artist, and “a society painter.” The artist briefly studied sculpture with Boston painter Walter Rimmer, but


\textsuperscript{669}Gerdts and Burke, 156. He joined conservation clubs in his hometown.
abandoned it in the 1880s for painting still-lifes, as well as pictures featuring live
animals, dogs and fowl.\(^{670}\) In 1891, an art critic visiting Pope’s Phillips Building studio in
Boston noted that the “paraphernalia of the sportsman is beautiful here, the walls being
decorated with a grand variety of fishing rods, baskets, nets and huntsman’s outfits.”\(^{671}\)
Like many of the artists in this study, Pope was seen by his community as an “American
Landseer,” and he moved easily among the elite and embraced many of their concerns,
particularly those in common with the sportsman: conservation of wildlife. Pope was a
passionate advocate of the movement, and worked towards the establishment of a
zoological gardens in his city.\(^{672}\)

Pope is best known today for his emblematic trophy pieces, symmetrical
compositions meant to symbolize a certain time, place or person, rather than to suggest a
real or random grouping. One of Pope’s many similarly titled After the Hunt scenes (n/d,
fig. A191) contains the same elements featured as Harnett’s versions, but each object is
hung on a rustic door in its own space, and as such, lacks the random reality of the
Harnett model. It closely recalls the precisely-organized symmetry, horizontal
arrangement, and antiseptically-separated hunting paraphernalia rendered by the Baroque
master of hunting gear *trompe l’oeil*, Jacobus Biltius (1633-1681). While extremely
illusionistic, Biltius’ paintings have the appearance of a miniature *wunderkammer*, a

\(^{670}\)He was especially fond of painting scenes of hunting dogs with pheasants in their mouths, and

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cabinet of curiosity for the sole pleasure of the nobility. Pope’s *trompe l’oeil* paintings were also designed for nobility – America’s nobility – the patrons’ class from the upper echelons of society, who would buy into the deception of a sportsman’s conquest. It was doubly a deception because it belied the disorganization and the random nature of an actual sportsman’s space. Whether or not Pope was acquainted with this Baroque master’s work, he created his own, American *trompe l’oeil* by combining the symmetry of Biltius with a compilation of seemingly-personal, used hunting articles.

Pope’s *Sportsman’s Still Life* (fig. A192) is another of this type: representing older sporting equipment, but arranged in a symmetrical, iconic fashion, upon a relatively fresh wooden wall. His 1887 *After the Hunt* (measuring 34 ½ x 56 in.) is an oil painting on oak panel, and is more naturally, though still symmetrically composed. Pope completes the conservationist message by including a woodcock hanging by its leg, as well as a wood duck. Warmth is conveyed by the employment of rich wood tones, again distinguishing it from more rustic, humble backgrounds. Though not recalling the past, the rugged items, arranged in a horizontal format, suggest the cabinet in a sportsman’s forest cabin, and the accoutrements of a conservative sporting lifestyle. In addition to these more complex compositions, Pope occasionally painted pairs of hanging birds into the 1890s, evidence that the more humble, conservative grouping of game was of interest to the new sportsman (fig. A193).

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673 Pope’s *After the Hunt* was in the Mint Museum of Art, Charlotte, North Carolina in 1970, but its present whereabouts is uncertain. Biltius’s *Hunting Weapons* (1666), once owned by the eighteenth-century art collector Henry Blundell, is illustrated in *Art and Auction* (January 2004), 111. Pope’s *Sportsman’s Still Life* is illustrated as fig. 72 in Frankenstein, *After the Hunt*. Pope did at least one hanging woodcock picture, mentioned on Askart [online], perhaps a sign of his conservationist credentials. Pope’s *Hanging Game Bird* (w/c, 12 x 9 in.) was for sale by Richard A Bourne Company (Hyannis, MA) sales cat., August 12, 1980, lot 82.
Like Pope, George Cope (1855-1929) was an avid sportsman specializing in the *trompe l’oeil* style of hunting still-life, who set about depicting the bags, tools and garb of the modern big game sportsman. This really set him apart from the more humble, dead fowl painters. Born on a farm near the Brandywine Creek in the southeast corner of Pennsylvania, in western Chester County, Cope, a son of Quakers, became intimately familiar with animal life and hunting in that region, and this knowledge is clearly shown in his art. Spending the majority of his career around West Chester, Pennsylvania, Cope was a devoted sportsman and spent long hours fishing and hunting in the Brandywine River Valley. After a brief study in Philadelphia from 1881 to 1883, he returned to his beloved West Chester to teach art, hunt and paint. Even his emblematic picture *Buffalo Bill’s Traps* (1894, unlocated) has a modern crispness about it that betrays the illusion. Like aristocratic portraiture, or today’s fantasy air-brushed photos, they are perfect, and unreal. Cope had spent a good deal of the 1870s in the far West and got as far as the Washington Territory. He returned to West Chester just as the state of Pennsylvania began making significant progress towards enacting real, enforceable game legislation. The 1890s saw the creation of the Pennsylvania State Sportsmen’s Association, modeled after New York’s equivalent. Pheasants were introduced to the state in 1892, and a game commission was formed in 1895, complete with paid commissioners, who pushed for stricter regulation and tighter enforcement of existing state game law. Cope’s game piece/hunting accoutrement paintings were made in this climate.

Though he made a number of animal/dead game pieces of ducks and woodcocks, particularly in the late 1890s, Cope’s *trompe l’oeil* scenes of the late 1880s and early

\[674\] *Buffalo Bill’s Traps* is illus. in Frankenstein, *After the Hunt*, fig. 68.
1890s often focus on the sportsman’s apparel and gear. In 1887 Cope produced *Hunter’s Paraphernalia*, a cabin wall picture featuring a shotgun, hunting belt, tan cap and jacket falling from a deer rack. The items actually suggest the form of a buck’s head. Modernity is implied by the slightly worn, yet still modern, jacket, which Cope included in several of his scenes, and the latest and finest fishing equipment of the day. *The Hunter’s Equipment* (1891, fig. A194) is similar in subject and substance. As Robert Elman notes in *The Great American Sporting Prints* (1972), Cope captured here a transition in sporting gear and dress, a “new era in breechloaders and self-contained ammunition.” That “new era” was concerned with acceptable behavior in the field and fair sporting practices and Cole’s pictures would have spoken directly to the indoctrinated, and adherent of the sportsman’s code.

At the turn of the century, Cope painted more minimalist scenes, one of which harkened back to decades before: specifically to the lone duck, hanging from a nail. The image stands as an example of Cope’s own ideal of game conservation. By this point, however, the style and vogue for hunting trompe l’œil had all but passed, and Cope and his ilk were fading from memory, or at least from popular taste. However, if Cope’s titles are any indication – he used the terms *sportsman* and *hunter*...

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675The main source for Cope biographical information is Joan H. Gorman and Gertrude Grace Sill, *George Cope* (Chadds Ford, PA: Brandywine River Museum, 1978), but a larger interpretive study is long overdue. A Cope painting titled *Dead Game* was sold by Sotheby Parke Bernet (sales cat. no. 2531)(1967), its measurements being 16 x 12 in., the traditional size for game pieces.

676Illustrated in Elman, Plate 23. Elizabeth Jane Connell wrote a short essay for the Butler Art Museum on Cope’s *Fisherman’s Accoutrements* (1887), in which she mentions his repeated use of the hunting jacket during the 1880s and 1890s; see www.butlerart.com. See Chester County collections, historical societies, etc. for more on Cope. Museums holding Cope’s work include Allentown Art Museum, Brandwine River Museum, Butler Institute of Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art. Frankenstein, *After the Hunt*, 138, reprinted some clippings of contemporary reviews of Cope’s art; one of these from January 1, 1891, describes When I Was a Boy, a trompe l’œil.

677Illustrated in *Antiques* (October 1962).
indiscriminately – he saw little difference between these types of game shooter, or perhaps he used them in the hope of reaching the majority by using inclusive terminology. Like Roosevelt, he used common speech and a calculated “celebration” of the backwoods trapper of old in order to unite the diverse populous, to promote a national program of masculine development and health in the great outdoors, and to save America’s wildlife from the modern trapper/poacher.

In response to art such as Goodwin’s, Pope’s and Cope’s, as well as the cultural movement toward a more encompassing game law, a host of artists at the century’s end were drawn to the sporting accoutrement and game compilations of these pictures. These artists also incorporated the narrative aspects of the non-sportsman trompe l’oeil pictures, such as those by Haberle and Harnett. George W. Platt’s (1839-1899) background at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts during the late 1870s most likely introduced him to the trompe l’oeil traditions linked to Harnett, and the Peales, who were closely tied to the history of Philadelphia and its art academy. Platt recognized the story-telling dimension of trompe l’oeil and infused his pictures with that personal narrative. His After the Hunt (1893, fig. A195), was inspired by Harnett’s but was unique in several aspects. Harnett’s was an antique grouping, conveying an Old World past. Platt’s simplistic and rustic background includes a collection of fowl and gun hanging below an upside-down horseshoe (traditionally an inauspicious sign meaning “out of luck”), all set against a weathered wall (in the mode of Goodwin), an aged tin cup on a nail, and slips of paper, one of which reads “For Sale, Prices.” We may assume the items for sale were

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678 Illustrated in Antiques (September 1985), 428. According to Frankenstein, Pratt’s Wild West and Hanging Quail were owned by Eldon P. Harvey of El Paso, TX, during in the 1970s, though where the pictures are now is unknown. Pratt’s After the Hunt has a copyright painted on it, in the event that it be used as an advertisement, which many of these hunting trompe l’oeil scenes were.
gained though hunting, and the hunt was literally, and figuratively, finished. The painting appears to contextually recall Charles Bird King’s *trompe l’oeil* painting *Poor Artist’s Cupboard* (ca. 1815), but here, the objects depicted point to the end of unrestricted market hunting. Such wasteful hunters were “out of luck.” In contrast is Platt’s *Wild West* (1894, Eldon P. Harvey, El Paso, TX), a purely celebratory arrangement, and thought to be a trophy piece based on John Wesley Powell’s survey expedition. While Platt’s views on game conservation are uncertain, by that point in time, the educated population of America and the majority of sportsmen were on the conservation bandwagon. In the capital of Pennsylvania, intellectuals like Platt would have been keenly aware of the rising tide of conservationist thought.

In addition, the popular market for hunting art (the mass dispersal of imagery in the form of calendars, posters, packaging and whatnot, depicting dead game pieces, hunting dogs pointing fowl, and even *trompe l’oeil* painting reproduced as lithographs) completed the democratization of the sportsman culture. The century’s end saw the implementation of a federal game law, the Lacey Act (16 United States Code SS 3371-3374); signed into law in 1900, it instituted numerous protective measures for sportsmen and market hunters to follow, in order to prevent the unlawful trade of game animals, and provided official commissioners and game wardens to enforce the law. Most importantly, the new law forbid the import and export of illegally killed game (and even many species of plants) over state lines, and merged together all the various codes. The penalties and enforcement put into effect gave added weight to the new law, routing out much of the market killing of wildlife.

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679 *Wild West* is illustrated in Frankenstein, *After the Hunt*, fig. 71. A Platt painting titled *Vanishing Glories* may be the same image. It is mentioned in Gerds and Burke, *American Still Life Painting*, 156, and includes the same western objects: a sombrero, cowboy outfit, bowie knife, etc.
The two types of *trompe l’oeil* discussed here, and followed over the century by these artist-sportsmen, were in fact two extremes – in one sense, polar opposites – on the scale of the sportsman’s code and related conservationist ideals. Though both forms revealed a conservationist stance, they paradoxically stood (actually, hung) in contrast to one another. Expensive depictions of humble catches of game existed in stark contrast to the cheap photos of market hunting exploits in the century’s last quarter, just as they were in contrast to seventeenth century paintings of Flemish tables loaded with game (fig. A196). On the other hand, groupings of expensive, modern hunting equipment, aesthetically arranged to please, were a conscious display of possessions, examples of conspicuous consumption. As noted above, game pieces were not always created in the “deceptive style,” and some non-*trompe l’oeil* pieces are even more potent examples of the vestments of the rich gentleman sportsman: complete with trained pointers and setters guarding piles of game, set in America’s own propertied estates and restrictive game parks. However, the quiet simplicity of the *trompe l’oeil* examples touched upon above were better suited to reaching and affecting the greatest number of American viewers, of all sections and classes. These images spoke on an intimate level to sportsmen and non-sportsmen alike about the importance of limits and protocol.

What can be said of the known patronage of *trompe l’oeil* pictures is that the owners were, more often than not, business leaders, and the images connoted their mastery of their world. These leaders often had corporate and commercial interests that depended on the exploitation of nature: logging, fishing, mining and hunting. One might imagine that such figures would have favored market hunting and fewer hunting regulations and seasonal controls, but many of these were avid sportsmen, and aware of
the precarious state of wildlife and the threats to their recreation. The 1880s and 1890s, the decades of the ultra-realistic hunting still-life paintings, saw an increase in the passage of game laws on a national level; it was no longer simply a New York phenomenon.\textsuperscript{680} By the 1890s, new rulings against the selling and transporting of off-season game were surfacing every year. By the mid-1890s, the fight to protect game had become a national issue.\textsuperscript{681} Roosevelt brought a spotlight to the problem in 1894, by pointing to the exploitation of wildlife occurring at Yellowstone National Park and he and his Boone and Crockett Club pushed legislation to curb these abuses. He made conservation a personal issue for the American public. Dead game pieces and scenes of hunting paraphernalia in the last quarter of the century spoke of, and to, a distinct class of hunter – a class that was intimately tied to the cause of game conservation and that actively worked to spread that ideology to all sectors of American society. How such scenes were interpreted by the non-sportsman, the market hunter, or the backwoods sustenance hunter remains unclear. However, if the Dutch seventeenth-century precedents are any gauge, we might assume that hunters of every economic level bought into the romance of the scene, as most could relate to seeing those objects depicted as symbols of their past, present and future hunting prospects.

\textsuperscript{680} From the 1840s to the Civil War the movement had been based primarily in New York, but after the War, and especially with the 1875 \textit{Phelps v. Racey} case, each year saw the movement spreading to neighboring states.

\textsuperscript{681} Important game law cases of the time include \textit{Phelps v. Racey} 60 N.Y. 10 (1875); \textit{Magner v. People}, 97 Ill. 320 (1881); \textit{State v. Farrell}, 23 Mo. App. 176 (1886); 2 \textit{Blackstone’s Com}. 533, Chase’s ed. 1890; \textit{Ex parte Maier}, 103 Cal. 476, 483 (1894); \textit{State v. Rodman}, 58 Minn. 393 (1894). These rulings are discussed in “Validity of Statutes Regulating the Sale and Possession of Game,” \textit{Columbia Law Review} 1, no. 8 (December 1901): 548-549.
CONCLUSION
1894 AND NATIONAL CONSERVATION

1894 was a year of triumph for “true sportsmen” and other game protection advocates. That year, Yellowstone National Park’s wildlife was at last protected, with threat of severe penalties, due in large part to the efforts of the Boone and Crockett Club. With Theodore Roosevelt and George Bird Grinnell at the helm, and with help from Congressional sponsors such as John Fletcher Lacey, who would a few years later author the eponymous bill that became the first national wildlife act, the Boone and Crockett Club brought a national urgency to wildlife conservation, as well as much needed clout and publicity. As historian Theodore Whaley Cart has shown, passage of the Lacey Act in 1900 took the concerted effort of sportsmen, naturalists, nature lovers and humanitarians.682 Sportsmen of the Teddy Roosevelt variety who continued to recognize the need for game legislation and enforcement followed the long line of conservationists and sporting clubs of the mid to late 1800s. While sporting clubs were often seen as being in opposition to the animal humanitarian groups, such as the ASPCA, the divide was in actuality not so clear. Some members, like the wealthy art patron August Belmont, were able to bridge the gap between the NYAPG and ASPCA, and members of the sporting clubs were instrumental in establishing humanitarian pounds for lost hunting dogs. However, the paradox remained – Roosevelt fought for and achieved game legislation, all the time keeping a tally of the thousands of animals he had killed. He was a new breed of sportsman, where his victim, generally speaking, had to be human-size or larger. He nevertheless saw the importance of conserving the animal and preserving the hunt. A

recent study on the images that resulted from the Boone and Crockett Club’s investigation of Yellowstone’s bison herd and the poaching problem there shows that artists remained vigilant in their personal war against the poaching class at the century’s end.\textsuperscript{683}

Buffalo Bill Cody’s Wild West show was also at its height in the early 1890s; a wildly popular performance, it was fundamentally a nostalgic glorification of the passing frontier, its wildlife, and the western frontier trapper/buffalo hunter. 1893 was particularly lucrative for Cody’s traveling show; performing part of the year for crowds in Chicago just steps from the entrance to the World’s Columbian Exposition. As scholar Joy Kasson writes in \textit{Buffalo Bill’s Wild West: Celebrity, Memory and Popular History} (2000), the juxtaposition of the two events “was one of those perfect opportunities that cultural historians dream about, revealing much about the deep structure of this popular entertainment and highlighting its relationship to American culture in its time and our own.”\textsuperscript{684} Just inside the gates of the exhibition, the Boone and Crockett Club’s exhibit celebrated the frontier hunter’s life, on a secluded island in the lagoon, complete with backwoods cabin, antique guns and traps, and a real-life hunter from Yellowstone, Elwood Hofer, who lived on the island for the duration of the fair. Speaking in Leatherstocking style to the intrigued crowds, he wrote to the \textit{Forest and Stream} staff that he “give[s] as good a game as they do me.”\textsuperscript{685}


In a strange twist of fate, another major player in American history, Frederick Jackson Turner, was in Chicago in 1893 at the same time as the Boone and Crockett’s exhibit and Cody’s show, speaking at the American Historical Association meeting taking place at the Exposition.\(^{686}\) While Roosevelt wascondemning and arresting poachers at Yellowstone (yet celebrating the frontier hunter at the exhibit), and the public was glorifying the past market hunter Bill Cody, Turner was delivering his now-famous paper, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” which noted the closing of the frontier and the critical role of the frontier hunter in paving the way for westward expansion, the same “frontier hunter” who was greeting visitors to the Boone and Crockett island.\(^{687}\) Roosevelt congratulated Turner on his “First class ideas,” saying that he “put into shape a good deal of thought that had been floating around rather loosely.”\(^{688}\) Cody and Roosevelt would agree that the days of limitless hunting were drawing near, but both extolled the heightened masculinity they saw in the hunter’s persona and clothed themselves in the aura of the past. Kasson even suggests that Roosevelt, who was searching for a western look, based his fringed buckskin-clad trapper persona on Cody’s appearance. After traveling to North Dakota’s Badlands in 1884 and “roughing it,”

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\(^{686}\)Robert V. Hine and John Mack Faragher. *The American West: A New Interpretive History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 493, states that the meeting was at the World’s Fair.

\(^{687}\)See John Mack Faragher, ed. *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner: “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” and Other Essays* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999). Theodore Roosevelt went to Chicago to make the arrangements for the exhibit, and George Bird Grinnell was on a committee of five “in charge of the exhibit.” Roosevelt may have visited the fair in progress, though it is not certain. See *New York Times*, April 18, 1892; *Forest and Stream* 40, no. 3 (January 19, 1893), 49; and *Forest and Stream* 38, no. 16 (April 21, 1892), 372.

\(^{688}\)Kasson, 117. Roosevelt wrote similar ideas in “Frontier Types,” *The Century* 36, no. 6 (October 1888), 831, and cleaned up the types to be noble specimens of manhood.
Roosevelt produced his series of travel memoirs *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman* (1885), *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail* (1888), and in 1889, his four-volume history *The Winning of the West*. In his writings and by cloaking himself in the guise of the “reckless” hunters of old, Roosevelt helped to redefine the view of the trapper for a new generation toward the positive.

One of the most significant new developments at the turn of the century in sporting culture ca. 1894 was that of the “sportswoman.” Women came into their own as hunters in the last years of the nineteenth-century, before which there were only a few well-known women hunters. Some of these trailblazing women were acknowledged conservationists, such as the sport-shooter Martha Maxwell (1831-1881). Maxwell, also a taxidermy artist, who brought her Rocky Mountain Museum to the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition in 1876, claimed her mission was to educate Americans on the nation’s wildlife. Maxwell represented the entrance of women into the world of sport shooting. Though not as well known, a few early sportswomen-artists made names for themselves, such as Helen Martanie “Janie” Snowden, working around Omaha after 1890. According to scholars Glenda Riley and Mary Zeiss Stange, the adoption of hunting by women coincided with their push for suffrage. Women demanded the same rights as men, in all aspects of life, even in recreation. For these “sportswomen,” hunting was, in part, a feminist act.⁶⁸⁹

On the flipside was Roosevelt’s ultra-masculine Boone and Crockett Club. Directly inspired by the New York Sportsman’s Club and Teddy’s uncle Robert B.

Roosevelt, the Boone and Crockett Club was especially concerned with the separation between sportsmen and game wasters, and between manly sport and what they perceived to be the feminization of American society.\footnote{It should be noted that, while many clubs took the name “Leatherstocking,” “Forester” and “Audubon,” Roosevelt’s club seems to have been the first to use the name “Crockett.” See Charles Hallock, \textit{American Club List and Sportsman Glossary} (New York: Forest and Stream Publishing Co., 1878), 33-37, 61-67.} Ironically, Teddy Roosevelt was obsessed with the quantity of game taken in the field, filling hunting lodges with trophy heads and racks from the American West and abroad. As discussed previously, the Boone and Crockett Club had been active since 1888 in pushing for stricter game legislation, and had a number of successes in this area. It was one of, if not the first, sportsman’s clubs to adopt Crockett as a positive role model for the sportsman’s code of conduct. Up until this time, Crockett had been a divisive character of satire – a symbol of backwoods simplicity and southern humor, especially after the \textit{almanacks} of the 1840s. However, sculptors of American myth like Roosevelt, who had praised frontier and backwoods hunters as pathfinders and “a dying race” of “reckless, dauntless Indian fighters,” saw Crockett, with his over-the-top theatrics, as a model American male. This was a distinct departure from the view that mid-century sportsmen artists had had of the frontier figure.\footnote{Theodore Roosevelt, “Frontier Types,” \textit{The Century} 36, no. 6 (October 1888): 831.}

As shown here, artist-sportsmen through the latter half the nineteenth century found various ways of addressing the need for game conservation, from presenting genre scenes that exemplified “proper” hunting methods, to displaying the excesses of the market bison hunt, to producing still life game pieces conveying a conservative catch or bag. In some of the images, the exclusive nature of the elite sportsman’s club comes through, particularly in the “After the Hunt” pictures. Club-affiliated artists seem to have
used their club membership as a way of reaching a broader patronage and audience. While the drive for animal protection continued after the turn of the century, the conventions for conservation art had been set by the 1890s.

Market hunting figured into art in many ways, including images of otter trapping, birding, and egging, but the buffalo hunt pictures discussed here were perhaps the most common. As shown in this study, images of bison hunting were intimately connected to market hunting, and referred to as such during the nineteenth century. Despite the contemporary popularity of the bison hunt for many European and East Cost American armed tourists, artists attempted to visually separate the business nature of this slaughter from any semblance of true “sport.” Nineteenth century artist-sportsmen presented the buffalo hunt in either a romanticized past (the buffalo hunter as an American Indian, or a frontiersman clothed in antiquated skins and turbans), or in more modern, chaotic scenes of slaughter.

The development in conservation over the century’s second half was significantly tied to class and elitist aspirations, and artist-sportsmen merged these social prejudices with their agenda for game conservation. The presentation of the “true sportsman” and his characteristics emphasized upper-class dress and habits, and was solidified as a visual code by the 1880s. This ideal was used as a counterpoint to the unsportsmanlike character, which was presented as a disturbing or comical figure. Portrayals of the pot-hunter, poacher, and backwoods sustenance hunter were almost exclusively negative, as exemplified by scenes of pot-hunters dirty, trespassing, or cloaked in shadow. The use of comical portrayals of frontier and backwoods hunters could also be used to criticize both undisciplined hunting methods and lack of culture. The market/trapper figure (the very
figure Roosevelt and fellow Boone and Crockett member Wister Owen placed on a pedestal), was generally presented as an ambiguous personage – a fallen or hunted hero. This reflected the “true sportsman’s” hope – that the market hunter would be relegated to the past. A few artists were paradoxical, such as Theodore R. Davis, depicting the callous nature of target shooting bison from the train as well as picturing himself as taking part in a fire hunt, and Eakins, portraying himself as poacher/pot-hunter in his rail hunting scenes. What is clear is that no sportsman was perfect, or “true,” even as they wished to be seen as such. The images of “true sportsmanship,” thus, may be seen as idealized and romanticized images of the elite sportsman’s (and many times the artist’s) view of his place in society.

Images of guides represented the employed workers who supported the elite hunter during their forays, but who also existed as market or pot-hunters during the off-season. Although images of guides were originally classist, though fairly neutral, with the increasing social and political rivalries over the century even they became associated with the poacher type. A recent article by scholar Tina Loo describes the similarly structured relationship between big game sportsmen and aboriginal guides in British America during the late nineteenth century, and draws similar conclusions regarding the differences in class and status, and the prejudice that resulted between elite hunters and their paid employees.692 What we have seen in this study is that this periodically violent relationship had not only been rising in the States since the 1860s, but that artists were in tune to the conflict from its outset, and were often part of it.

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“True sportsmen,” at least those who thought of themselves as such, were an insular and exclusive group of hunters, with the means, time, and financial independence to adopt this lifestyle. As much as they wished to distance themselves from the British model of hunting law and aristocracy, they were essentially the same, and came to see game as the exclusive property of the landed. The original “true sportsmen” as exemplified by Robert B. Roosevelt and Frank Forester separated the gentlemanly pursuit of fish and fowl (with limits) from big game hunting, which, by the 1880s, had come to epitomize the masculine extreme. As seen here, art work by artists with aspirations of “true sportsmanship” followed a series of conventions that in time were understood by the public as pro-conservationist. Illustrations in popular journals and books by Homer, Frost and Beard were primarily responsible for spreading the picture of conservationist hunting to the populace.

“True sportsmanship” was also a key aspect of wildlife art produced during this era. As shown here, artists drew upon traditional oppositions and combat scenes in presenting American animals in moralistic terms, as good versus evil, which allowed visual artists to address the problems with market hunting without the use of human actors. By using poaching terminology and titles, and placing predatory subjects, like foxes, wolves, and wild cats, against “good” or non-predatory game, animal painters created scenes of heightened pathos and sentiment which suggest the conflict in sporting culture.

Depictions of children as hunters also figured into the growing divide between “true sportsmen” and everyone else. Boys were employed in hunting imagery for a range of purposes. Depictions of boys assisting and learning from their elders could signify the
training considered essential to become a “true sportsman.” Boys hunting without adult supervision, on the other hand, were used to suggest the untrained, undisciplined hunter, in order to damn disobedience and poaching behavior, and to equate youth with ignorance.

As we have seen, sportsmen-artists had a deep connection to both the subject matter and to their patrons, and their art traced many aspects of the growing conservationist movement. The connection that many artists had to “true sportsman” culture was exemplified by a wide variety of painting genres; the art was both a response to and a means to promote the conservationist cause. The class-based imagery was influenced in subtle ways by the social changes of the century. A broadened understanding of the significance of sporting art to the conservation movement expands our interpretation of the many related dimensions of nineteenth-century American development and society, and reveals both artistic agendas and motifs that carry on into the present.
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