

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: 'SIGNATURE DRAWINGS:' SOCIAL NETWORKS AND COLLECTING PRACTICES IN ANTEBELLUM ALBUMS

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Characterized in their own time as “miniature and easily-attainable works of art,” drawings by American artists of the antebellum period were prized by fellow artists as mementi of friendship and by collectors as marks of the artist’s hand. This dissertation presents a broad examination of the social meanings and contemporary contexts of these quietly communicative works of art. Using archival and documentary evidence, it investigates rich spheres of activity in the “social lives” of drawings. Special qualities of the medium and particularities of drawings exchange informed their reception.

In the public sphere of business and social transaction between artists and patrons, drawings functioned as “social currency,” building a community connected through gift-giving and competitive collecting. Albums of drawings reflected social networks and communicated the owner’s privileged access to artists who practiced that particularly intimate form of expression. Drawings were also displayed in the

antebellum parlor, a private setting encoded with aspiration to personal refinement and social position. In that sphere, drawings served a didactic, regulatory function, presenting sentimental and moral themes that provided a visual buffer to the turbulent public history of the time. My study reveals that many of the drawings collected in antebellum albums were originals for images subsequently reproduced as giftbook illustrations or prints. This dissertation demonstrates that antebellum viewers perceived drawing and writing as aligned, complimentary modes of expression; similar motivations thus informed the collecting of drawings and autographs. As the pantheon of eminent Americans shifted to include artists, their drawings were prized as signature works reflecting “temperament and quality of mind.”

American art history has directed little attention to antebellum-period drawings. When it has done so, it has situated them primarily as studio tools or as preparatory works for paintings. I argue that album drawings occupied a different register of value altogether, connected to literature, illustration, parlor entertainment, and the collecting of celebrity autographs during a period of explosive growth in the production of visual imagery and in media coverage of American artists. I propose a social and cultural history of the period centered on drawing collecting as a reflection of individual aspirations and social values.

'SIGNATURE DRAWINGS:' SOCIAL NETWORKS AND COLLECTING
PRACTICES IN ANTEBELLUM ALBUMS

By

Joy Peterson Heyrman

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1815, Ink on paper, 10 5/8" x 6 3/4" William Walters' Album. The Walters Art
Museum
- 2-44. John Neagle. *Brother and Sister* n.d. Mezzotint and engraving by John Sartain,
3 11/16" x 3" for *The Pearl* (Philadelphia, Thomas T. Ash, 1840)
- 2-45. Thomas Webster *The Bubble Blowers* Mezzotint and engraving by John Sartain,
4 1/4" x 3 7/16" for *Christmas Blossoms* (Philadelphia, E. H. Butler, 1852)
- 2-46. Henry Peters Gray *Woman and Child mourning a fallen warrior* 1859
Pencil on paper, 5 9/16" x 8 3/8" William Walters' Album, The Walters Art Museum

Chapter three

- 3-1. F.O.C. Darley *Illustration* Engraved in *The Harp of a Thousand Strings*, 4 7/8" x
3 3/8" (New York: Dick & Fitzgerald, 1858) New York Public Library
- 3-2. Samuel Putnam Avery *Illustration* Engraved in *Mrs. Partington's Carpet Bag of
Fun*, 2 1/2" x 2 3/4" (New York: Garrett & Co., 1855) New York Public Library
- 3-3. Front Cover, 7 9/16" x 4 1/2" *The Adventures of Captain Simon Suggs*
(Philadelphia: T.B. Peterson, 1856/57) American Antiquarian Society

3-4. F. O. C. Darley, *Simon Suggs* Wood engraving for *The Adventures of Captain Simon Suggs*, 4" x 3 1/2" (Philadelphia: T.B. Peterson, 1856/57) American Antiquarian Society

3-5. John McLenan, *Drawings for 'Simon Suggs'* n.d. Pencil and wash on paper, 3 11/16" x 3 3/16"; 4 5/8 diameter; 3 11/16" x 3 1/4" John Mackie Falconer Album, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

3-6. John McLenan *Turning the Jack* 1853 Engraved for *The Flush Times of Alabama and Mississippi*, 4" x 3" (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1853)

3-7. Felix O. C. Darley *Parable of the Faggots* n.d. Ink wash on paper, 4 1/2" x 6 13/16"
William Walters' Album, The Walters Art Museum

3-8. Felix .O. C. Darley *Hunting Party* Ink wash on paper, 10 7/8" x 15 3/16"
William Walters' Album, The Walters Art Museum

3-9. Felix O. C. Darley, *Figures Near a Church* n.d. Ink wash on paper, 4 1/8" x 3 1/4"
John Neagle Album, Spanierman Gallery

3-10. Thomas Hewes Hinckley, *The False Lesson*, Engraved by Charles Ball for *Ornaments of Memory*, (New York: D. Appleton, 1854) American Antiquarian Society

3-11. Francis W. Edmonds, *Study for "Facing the Enemy,"* ca. 1845
Pencil on paper, 6 7/8" x 6 5/8" McGuire Scrapbook, Metropolitan Museum of Art

3-12. Nathaniel Rogers, *John Ludlow Morton*, ca. 1829 Watercolor on ivory, 3" x 2 1/4"
Private collection

3-13. John Ludlow Morton *Frontispiece* Pencil on paper, sheet 8 1/8" x 7"
John Ludlow Morton Album, The New-York Historical Society

3-14. John Ludlow Morton, *Frontispiece (detail)* Pencil on paper
John Ludlow Morton Album, The New-York Historical Society

3-15. Asher B. Durand *Cover to The American Landscape*, 1830 Line engraving by James Smillie, 9 3/8" x 7 1/4" The New-York Historical Society

3-16. Asher B. Durand *Kindred Spirits* 1849 Oil on canvas, 44" x 36"
Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art

3-17. Samuel F. B. Morse. *The Serenade*. 1827 Pencil on paper, 2 3/4" x 4 3/8"

John Ludlow Morton Album, New-York Historical Society

3-18. S.F.B. Morse *The Serenade* Engraved by G. B. Ellis for *The Talisman for 1828*, 2 3/4" x 4 1/8" (New York: Elam Bliss, 1827) New York Public Library

3-19. Henry Inman "*I hear a distant sound*" 1826 Ink wash on paper, sheet 8 1/8" x 7"

John Ludlow Morton Album, The New-York Historical Society

3-20. Unknown artist. Frontispiece to *Tales of the Crusades, Eveline*, Engraving, 4 5/8" x 3 1/2" (Boston: Samuel H. Parker, 1825) American Antiquarian Society

3-21. Thomas Seir Cummings. Page of portrait miniatures, Pencil on paper. Sheet 11" x 8 1/2" Thomas Seir Cummings Album, The New-York Historical Society

3-22. Thomas Seir Cummings, *Portrait of a Man (Gustavus Adolphus Rollins)* ca. 1835

Pencil on paper. 2 15/16" x 2 3/8" Thomas Seir Cummings album, New-York Historical Society

3-23. Thomas Seir Cummings, *Gustavus Adolphus Rollins*, ca. 1835 Watercolor on ivory, 2 7/8" x 2 3/8" The Metropolitan Museum of Art

3-24. Henry Inman *Forest Hymn* 1825 Pencil on paper, 5 1/16" x 5 5/8" Mr. and Mrs. Stuart Feld

3-25. Asher B. Durand *River Scene* n.d. Pencil on paper, 4 3/4" x 6" Thomas Seir Cummings Album, The New-York Historical Society

3-26. John Ludlow Morton *Landscape* n.d. Pencil on paper, 4 7/8" x 6 1/2" Thomas Seir Cummings Album, The New-York Historical Society

3-27. John Ludlow Morton *Landscape* n.d. Pencil on paper, 4 7/8" x 6 3/8" Thomas Seir Cummings Album, The New-York Historical Society

3-28. Thomas Cole *Sketch, "Read St. Friday Evening* n.d. Pencil on paper, 4 5/16" x 3" Thomas Seir Cummings Album, The New-York Historical Society

3-29. Thomas Cole, *Shipwreck* 1828 Pencil on paper, 3 3/8" x 4 1/8" on 8 1/8" x 7" sheet

John Ludlow Morton Album, New-York Historical Society

3-30 Henry J. Morton *Dream of Papantzin*, ca. 1829 Pencil on paper, 4 1/4" x 6" Thomas Seir Cummings Album, The New-York Historical Society

- 3-31. Henry J. Morton *Dream of Papantzin* ca. 1829 Engraved by Peter Maverick in *The Talisman for 1829*, 2 15/16" x 4 1/8" (New York, Elam Bliss & Co.)
American Antiquarian Society
- 3-32. Henry Inman *The Original Sketch of McGeady in the Character of Lear*
Pencil on paper, 5 1/4" x 3 1/4" Thomas Seir Cummings Album, The New-York
Historical Society
- 3-33. Henry Inman, *Judge Furman* Engraved by Asher B. Durand, 3 3/4" x 2 5/8"
Thomas Seir Cummings Album, New-York Historical Society
- 3-34. Henry Inman, *Man Praying* n.d. Engraved by Danforth, 2 5/8" x 2 7/8"
Thomas Seir Cummings Album, New –York Historical Society.
- 3-35. Thomas Seir Cummings *Mrs. Dr. A.C. Castle* n.d. Engraving proof, 4 11/16" x
3"
Thomas Seir Cummings Album, The New-York Historical Society
- 3-36 Henry Inman *Mysterious Lady* ca.1829 Engraved by Gimber for *The Talisman
of 1830*, 3 1/2" x 2 3/4" (New York: Elam Bliss, 1829) New York Public Library
- 3-37. Thomas Seir Cummings *Mrs. John Ludlow Morton* 1829 Watercolor on ivory, 3
3/4" x 3" John Ludlow Morton Album, New-York Historical Society
- 3-38. William Sidney Mount *The Tough Story* Engraved by J. I. Pease, 3 1/4" x 4 3/8"
The Gift for 1842 (Philadelphia, Carey & Hart, 1842) American Antiquarian Society
- 3-39. Alfred Thomas Agate *The Tahitian Chief Otore* ca. 1839 Pencil on paper,
8 1/2" x 7 9/16" Maguire Scrapbook, The Metropolitan Museum of Art
- 3-40. James Smillie *Lime Rock on the Rondout, New York* 1840 Pencil on paper,
6 5/16" x 4 11/16" McGuire Scrapbook, Metropolitan Museum of Art
- 3-41. William T. Ranney *Children under Umbrella* Pencil on paper, 5 1/8" x 4" and
Sleeping Dog Pencil on paper, 3 1/8" x 5" John Mackie Falconer Album,
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
- 3-42. DeWitt Clinton Hitchcock *Plain of Intebuccat, Central America* n.d. Pencil and
wash on paper, 4" x 7 1/4" John Mackie Falconer Album, Museum of Fine Arts,
Boston
- 3-43. DeWitt Clinton Hitchcock *Central Park Looking South from the Observatory*
1859
Colored lithograph with handcoloring, 16" x 26" Museum of the City of New York
- 3-44. James Irvin Glasgow *Fishing* n.d. Watercolor on paper, 4 1/2" x 6 1/4"

John Mackie Falconer Album, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

3-45. Daniel T. Glasgow *Brook* n.d. Pencil on paper, 3 3/8" x 3 1/4" and Edwin White *Seascape* n.d. Pencil with white highlights on paper, 2 11/16" x 4 7/16"
John Mackie Falconer Album, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

3-46. James Glasgow *Battle Windmill near Prescott* n.d. Pencil on paper, 1 5/8" x 2 1/4"
and Edwin White *Woman Reading* 1845 Pencil on paper, 7 3/8" x 7 1/2"
John Mackie Falconer Album, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

3-47. Alfred Jones *Hey, hey!* 1856 Watercolor over pencil on paper, 7" x 5"
John Mackie Falconer Album, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

3-48. Unknown artist. "Beware of the Widders" Wood engraving for *The Harp of A Thousand Strings* 3 3/8" x 2 7/8" (New York: Dick & Fitzgerald, 1858) New York Public Library

3-49. Richard Caton Woodville *Mexican News* ca. 1853 Engraved by Alfred Jones, 20 1/2" x 18 1/2" Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division

3-50. David Hunter Strother *Negro Servant* Pencil with white highlights on paper, 9 1/4" x 5 1/4" John Mackie Falconer Album, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

3-51. David Hunter Strother, *Illustrations for 'A Winter in the South'* Wood engravings, *Gentleman's Gentleman*, 4" x 3" and *Steamboat Cook*, 6" x 4 3/8" *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, December, 1858

3-52. Homer Dodge Martin, *Beaver Brook, White Mountains*, 1862 Pencil and white wash on paper, 3 1/8" x 4 7/8" Magoon Album #3, Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College

3-53 Henry Inman *Nature: Cooper Reading* Pencil on paper, 10 5/8" x 7 1/4" Magoon Album, Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College

3-54. William M. Hart, *View Down the Androscoggin*, 1859 Pencil and white wash on paper, 12 3/8" x 18 7/8" Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College

3-55. William M. Hart, *Moonlight on Mt. Carter, Gorham*, 1859 Pencil and gouache on paper, 12 3/8" x 18 7/8" Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College

3-56. William M. Hart, *White Mountain Range from Jefferson Hill*, 1859 Pencil and gouache on paper, 12 3/8" x 18 7/8" Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College

3-57. Page of architectural drawings, 18" x 13" Magoon Album #3, Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College

- 3-58. Alonzo Chappell *Village Scene*, 1849 Pencil, charcoal and gouache on paper, 11 ¼” x 16 7/8” Magoon Album #3 Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College
- 3-59. Alonzo Chappell *A Woman Leading a Horse with a Dog* n.d. Watercolor and pencil on paper, 4 7/8” x 3 ¾” Magoon Album, Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College
- 3-60. Jasper Francis Cropsey *Seated Woman, Abruzzi*, Nov. 20th, 1847 Pencil and watercolor on paper, 11 3/8” x 8 ¾” Magoon Album, Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College
- 3-61. Jasper Francis Cropsey *Ravello*, 1848 Pencil and watercolor on paper, 8” x 6 ¼” Magoon Album, Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College
- 3-62. David Hunter Strother *Moorfield* October, 1854 Pencil on paper, 6 5/8” x 9 1/16” William Walters’ Album, The Walters Art Museum
- 3-63. David Hunter Strother *Berkeley Springs*, June, 1855 Ink wash and white gouache on paper, 6” x 7” William Walters’ Album, The Walters Art Museum
- 3-64. David Hunter Strother *Otium Cum Dignitate*, 2 ¼” x 4 3/8” Illustration for ‘*A Winter in the South*’ series. Wood engraving for *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*, May 1858
- 3-65. David Hunter Stother *Mr. Heartease Flies Away on the Wings of Norma* Wood engraving for John Esten Cooke, *Ellie: or the Human Comedy* (Richmond: A. Morris, 1855)
- 3-66. Frederic Edwin Church *Morning in the Tropics*, 1858 Oil on canvas, 8 ¼” x 14” The Walters Art Museum
- 3-67. Frederic Edwin Church *Twilight in the Wilderness* 1860 Oil on canvas, 4’ 1” x 6’ 2” The Cleveland Museum of Art
- 3-68. Frederic Edwin Church *Our Banner in the Sky* 1861 Chromolithograph, 17 ¾” x 20 ½” Goupil & Co., New York
- 3-68. Samuel Putnam Avery *Illustrations to Omnibus Riding*, 1854 Wood engravings for *Mrs. Partington’s Carpet-Bag of Fun*, 5 3/8” x 3 3/8” (New York: Garrett & Co., 1854) New York Public Library

3-70. Samuel Putnam Avery *Illustrations to Omnibus Riding*, 1854
Wood engravings for *Mrs. Partington's Carpet-Bag of Fun*
(New York: Garrett & Co., 1854) New York Public Library

3-71 Honore Daumier *The Omnibus* 1864 Black crayon, watercolor, and ink on
paper,
8 3/8" x 11 7/8" The Walters Art Museum

Chapter four

4-1. Asher B. Durand *The Pool* 1859 Cliché verre, 8" x 6"
Autograph Etchings (New York: W.A. Townsend & Co., 1859) New York Public
Library

4-2. F. S. Cozzens, Poem "illustrating" *The Pool*
Autograph Etchings (New York: W.A. Townsend & Co., 1859) New York Public
Library

4-3. John Frederick Kensett *Autumn* 1859 Cliché verre, 8" x 5 3/4"
Autograph Etchings (New York: W.A. Townsend & Co., 1859) New York Public
Library

4-4. James Russell Lowell, Poem "illustrating" *Autumn*
Autograph Etchings (New York: W.A. Townsend & Co., 1859) New York Public
Library

4-5. Asher B. Durand *Frontispiece, Chapter VII* Wood engraving, 12" x 9 1/2" sheet
The American Drawing Book (New York, W. J. Widdleton, 1847)

4-6 Thomas Crawford *Frontispiece, Chapter X* Wood engraving, 12" x 9 1/2" sheet
The American Drawing Book (New York, W. J. Widdleton, 1847)

4-7. Thomas Cole *Illustration* Wood engraving, 4" x 4 1/4"
The American Drawing Book (New York, W. J. Widdleton, 1847)

4-8. Table of contents with listing of artists and autographs, Lithograph 13 11/16" x
20 3/4" *Album cosmopolite* New York Public Library

4-9. Page of Autographs, Lithograph 13 11/16" x 20 3/4" *Album Cosmopolite*, New
York Public Library

4-10. Opening announcement of Samuel Putnam Avery's "establishment" 1864
Archives of American Art

- 4-11. William Henry Brown, *John Caldwell Calhoun* Lithograph by Edmund Burke Kellogg and Elijah Chapman Kellogg, 12 5/8" x 9 15/16" for *Portrait Gallery of Distinguished American Citizens* (Hartford: 1845) George Peabody Library
- 4- 12. William Henry Brown, *John Randolph* Lithograph by Edmund Burke Kellogg and Elijah Chapman Kellogg, 12 5/8" x 9 15/16" for *Portrait Gallery of Distinguished American Citizens* (Hartford: 1845) George Peabody Library
- 4-13. Calhoun facsimile letter, opposing page *Portrait Gallery of Distinguished American Citizens* (Hartford: 1845) George Peabody Library
- 4-14. Page of autographs *The Talisman of 1828* Lithograph, sheet 3 1/4 " x 5 3/8" (New York: Elam Bliss, 1827) American Antiquarian Society
- 4-15. Frontispiece, *The Book of the Boudoir or Memento of Friendship. A Book for all Seasons* Lithograph, 9 3/4" x 6 7/8" George Peabody Library
- 4-16. *Reverend Albert Barnes* Engraved by W. L. Ormsby from a daguerreotype, 5 1/2" x 4" *The Coronal and Young Ladies Remembrancer* (New York: James H. Pratt & Co., 1853) George Peabody Library
- 4-17. W. Howland after Gilbert Stuart *George Washington* Wood engraving, 12" x 9 1/2" sheet *The American Drawing Book* (New York, W. J. Widdleton, 1847)
- 4-18. Thomas Seir Cummings, *George Washington* Pencil on paper, 3 1/2" x 2 3/4" Thomas Seir Cummings Album, The New-York Historical Society
- 4-19. Biography of Horatio Greenough, Wood engraving, 3" x 2/12" *Our Countrymen: or Brief Biographical Memoirs of Eminent Americans* by Benson J. Lossing (New York: Ensign, Bridgman & Fanning, 1855) Special Collections, The Johns Hopkins University
- 4-20. Biography of Benjamin West, Wood engraving, 3" x 2 1/2" *Our Countrymen: or Brief Biographical Memoirs of Eminent Americans* by Benson J. Lossing (New York: Ensign, Bridgman & Fanning, 1855) Special Collections, The Johns Hopkins University
- 4-21. Unknown engraver *Henry Inman from a Daguerreotype* 1846 Wood engraving, 8 7/8" x 5 1/4" sheet for *The Artists of America* George Peabody Library
- 4-22. Henry Inman, *Mumble the Peg* Steel engraving by J.I. Peare, 4 3/16" x 3 1/2" for *The Artists of America* George Peabody Library
- 4-23. Charles Loring Elliott *William Sidney Mount* 1848 Lithograph by Charles Crehen, 17" x 13" (Goupil, Vibert & Co. 1850) Museums at Stony Brook

- 4-24. Charles Loring Elliott *My only Sketch in water color: William Sidney Mount* (?), Jan. 2, 1845 Watercolor on paper, 7 3/4" x 6 7/16" William Walters' Album, The Walters Art Museum
- 4-25. Unknown Photographer(s?) *Artist's Souvenir* ca. 1864 Cartes de visite mounted on board, National Portrait Gallery
- 4-26. Thomas Sully *Charles Carroll of Carrollton* 1829 Watercolor on paper, 7 13/16" x 6 3/16" William Walters' Album, The Walters Art Museum
- 4-27 Thomas Sully *Portrait of a Lady* n.d Watercolor on paper, 4 5/8" x 3 13/16" William Walters' Album, The Walters Art Museum
- 4-28. Thomas Sully, *Country Girl* 3 13/16" x 3 3/16" and *Title Page Vignette* Engraved by John Cheney for *The Gift for 1842* (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1842) New York Public Library
- 4-29. Thomas Sully *The Gipsy*, 3 3/4" x 3 1/8" Engraved by John Cheney for *The Gift for 1842* New York Public Library
- 4-30. Charles F. Blauvelt *Boy Observing an Eclipse of the Sun* Pencil on paper, 7 7/16" x 5 1/2" William Walters' Album, The Walters Art Museum
- 4-31. Charles Felix Blauvelt *Man Pouring Himself a Drink at a Bar* Oil on paper, 7 3/8" x 5 3/8" William Walters' Album, The Walters Art Museum
- 4-32. Henry Inman, *Rydal Falls* August 28, 1844 Ink on paper, 9 5/8" x 7" William Walters' Album, The Walters Art Museum
- 4-33. Henry Inman *Rose* 1841 Watercolor and pencil on paper, 5 3/16" x 4 1/16" William Walters' Album, The Walters Art Museum
- 4-34. John William Hill *Rose* Watercolor on paper, 6 7/8" x 5 7/8" William Walters' Album, The Walters Art Museum

Introduction ‘Signature Drawings:’ Social Networks and Collecting Practices in Antebellum Albums

Leafing through an album of American drawings from the early nineteenth century is an experience of the senses - a slightly dusty, moldy scent emanates from the pages, delicate watercolors and fine pencil lines beckon the eye, written inscriptions signal cryptic sentiments, and ruled outlines indicate the collectors’ processes of identification and unification. For the most part, the drawings are small and carefully-crafted in pencil, watercolor, or ink. Many are round or oval vignettes with edges shading off into the surrounding page or oval-topped; these speak a visual language of illustration while presenting images of harmonious domesticity, peaceful nature, or humorous urban genre.

Whether large and imposing like businessman William Walters’ custom-made “Original Designs by American Artists” assembled in 1859-60 (Ill. 1) or mass-produced sketchbooks put to use by artists and amateurs for their drawing collections (Ill. 2), these assemblages present a number of puzzling questions to the twenty-first-century viewer. Some of these we can begin to answer through standard methods of art historical research. Who were the artists whose work was collected in this way? How did these diminutive works relate to the artists’ broader oeuvres? What were the relationships among them and to the collector who put the album together?

Other questions are just as present but more difficult to answer. How were the drawings acquired and how were they valued by collectors? Why were they arranged as they are? What meanings did these drawings, so sentimental, so idealized, so finished, hold for those who produced, owned, or viewed them? In what contexts

were they experienced? What were the various levels of narrative that accompanied their reception – in other words, what stories were told about them as the album pages were turned?

These questions apply not only to individual works or to the assemblages in which they were gathered, but lead also to more general issues in the collecting practices of the period. Albums of American drawings assembled in the decades before the Civil War comprise a small and rare body of evidence from the early years of the American art world at a time when that market was expanding to meet vast new demand for visual imagery. The institutions that brought art and art world information to the public, the exhibitions and emerging art press, were expanding and increasingly firmly entrenched. A retail market for art, with frequent auctions, established dealers, and artists clustered in studio buildings, was developing concurrently. Concentrated in New York, the art enterprise thrived symbiotically with that city's business world.

The special qualities of drawings - their function as studio tool, their intimate connection to the hand of the artist, the seeming ease with which they could be dashed off – encouraged different modes of collecting and different levels of reception. Many who acquired them, whether artists or amateurs, continued in the well-established tradition of exchanging drawings and of giving them as gifts. This practice evolved from the *album amicorum* tradition which had emerged in academic circles in northern Europe in the late 16th century.¹ At the same time, other collectors, mostly non-artists, relied on the market mechanisms of commissioning and purchase.

¹ Theodore Stebbins, Jr. *American Drawings and Watercolors*. (New York: Harper & Row, 1976) p. 113.

As a demand-driven market for drawings by American artists began to develop, graphic works began to appear in art auctions, which put on display a particularly public form of acquisition.

To the twenty-first-century viewer, trained since infancy to process a daily barrage of visual imagery and accustomed to works of contemporary art that deconstruct their own material or making, antebellum American drawings can present a confounding aspect. Their highly-finished, mimetic quality, idealized themes, and sentimental tone can be somewhat off-putting, their subjects cloying, their “meaning” seemingly transparent and easily dismissed. Indeed, the history of American art has held until only recently to a fairly rigid canon that isolated paintings from the graphic arts. When linkages have been made between the two media, drawings have been investigated primarily as studio tools and as preparatory studies for the oil paintings that stood further up the hierarchy of value.

Clearly however, individual drawings and the album assemblages into which they were collected had significance and meaning of their own. They operated, I will argue, not as subsidiary studies, but as a form of “paper currency” within a different register altogether, one in which the distinction between original work and multiple print or illustration was significantly blurred. I will take an integrative approach to this visual and physical evidence, situating it within several spheres of activity and meaning. Compelled by the many questions they raise and intrigued by the visual experience of the albums, my goal is to shed light on their “social lives” and their rich cultural context.

This investigation hinges on the existence of nine albums of American drawings assembled from the late 1820s to the early 1860s and now in public collections. They are either intact or their contents can be recreated.² The earliest of the group are the albums of artists John Ludlow Morton (1792-1871), the original Secretary of the National Academy of Design, and his fellow Sketch Club member and the Academy drawing instructor, Thomas Seir Cummings (1804-1894). Morton's album is unusual in that many of the drawings are made directly onto the page, clear evidence of the practice of friendship exchange in a close social group that was fashionable at the time. Dated from 1826-1836, the twenty-seven drawings are mementi collected from close acquaintances. Some are in the distinctive holograph form often used in friendship albums. A holograph drawing combines image, text, and signature, all in the artist's hand. Other entries here commemorate an important joint project of the Sketch Club circle, the publication of a gift book entitled *The Talisman* in 1828, 1829, and 1830. As assemblages, these albums participate in the tradition of the *album amicorum*, a bound collection of autographs, writings, and drawings collected by the owner from his friends.

The Morton album includes works by members of his Knickerbocker circle, such as a fantasy landscape and an allegorical *Shipwreck* by Thomas Cole (1801-1848), a frieze of classical figures in ink by Moseley Danforth (1800-1862) (Ill. 3), and two pencil drawings by Asher B. Durand (1796-1886). Danforth and Durand were both practicing engravers at the time, the latter still years away from his second

²The John Ludlow Morton, Thomas Seir Cummings, John Mackie Falconer and Frank Blackwell Mayer albums are all intact so that the original progression from page to page can be experienced. Those of John Neagle, William C. McGuire, William T. Walters, J. Stricker Jenkins, and Rev. Elias Magoon have all had the drawings removed. The Walters drawings were assigned accession numbers in their original sequence, while that information has been lost for the others.

career as a portrait and landscape painter. Other works include an original drawing by National Academy President Samuel F. B. Morse (1791-1872) for an illustration in *The Talisman*, two holographs by engraver and portraitist Henry Inman (1801-1846), and a *Forest Scene* by landscape artist William Guy Wall (1792-1864) (Ill. 4).

Painter Robert Walter Weir (1803-1889), just returned to New York from three years in Rome, contributed a work of cavalier genre, *The Dancing Lesson*, Frederick Styles Agate (1803-1844) a holograph of a *Shipwrecked Mother and Child*, and George Whiting Flagg (1816-1897), the nephew of Washington Allston and protégé of New York patron Luman Reed, three wash drawings, a bizarre *Bandit with Ghost*, an unfinished medieval banqueting scene, and a figure study of a peasant with a fur-trimmed coat. Filled with tokens of friendship, the album speaks the language of affiliation and connection among a cultured and affectionate group.

The album of Thomas Seir Cummings has a more personal, “scrapbooking” aesthetic unusual among the others under consideration, which tended to privilege the more finished drawing. Intermingled among his own observations of the physical environment, including a drawing of his residence in lower Manhattan (Ill. 5) and studies for the portrait miniatures for which he was renowned, are numerous drawings and sketches by Cummings’ friends and proofs of the prints that translated their original drawings for the mass audience. Cummings was a key figure in the Sketch Club and National Academy of Design and his album mirrored the contents of that of his friend Morton with works by contemporaries Thomas Cole, Asher B. Durand, Henry Inman, William Guy Wall, and the brothers John Ludlow and Henry Jackson Morton (1807-1890). A drawing by “Dr. Bliss” of *Mr. Francis Herbert*, a

combination of the perfections of poetry painting printing and expedition accompanied by Fame (Ill. 6) is characteristic of the light-hearted, witty tone of Sketch Club drawings. Adding to the sense of his album as “scrapbook” are a number of drawings by artists now lost to obscurity, E. C. Potter, Brett, and A. Earle, including a wash portrait by the latter of the sleeping artist and Cummings’ former drawing instructor John Rubens Smith.³ (Ill. 7)

The album of John Neagle (1796-1865) is the only one among the group under consideration still “in the trade.” Now disassembled, with many of the drawings by the better-known artists Henry Inman, William (1755-1834) and Thomas Birch (1779-1851), Charles Robert Leslie (1794-1859), and Gilbert Stuart (1755-1828) dispersed, it combined Neagle’s own drawings with contributions from painters, engravers, and amateurs in the Philadelphia art world. Notable among them are drawings by Felix O. C. Darley (1822-1888), the engravers David Edwin (1776-1841) and Samuel Seymour (Ill. 8), and a *Ship, “drawn by an automaton boy, Phila October 23rd 1835 in the presence of J. Neagle.”* (Ill. 9)⁴

John Mackie Falconer (1820-1903), an amateur artist and businessman active in New York and Brooklyn beginning in the 1840s, assembled an album of sixty drawings as “a representation of the best of my friends” at the same time as he built an extensive collection of American paintings. Housed in a brown morocco album with watered silk endpapers, the works are in pencil, pen, watercolor, wash, and gouache and artfully arranged on the pages. Works are clustered by single artist, or

³ The Morton and Cummings albums are in the collection of the New-York Historical Society.

⁴ The Sketchbook in which Neagle assembled his collection of drawings and a number of the drawings are in the possession of the Spanierman Gallery in New York. I am grateful to Ralph Sessions for showing me the album and for providing information on the drawings that had been sold from it.

grouped by sketches made on a single day by different artists. They are juxtaposed in relationships that we can only attempt to decode, or situated in splendid isolation on the page.

Falconer was clearly a social being; many written accounts refer to evenings looking at art in his home, and the album served as visual entertainment for his callers. He presented on equal footing the work of professional artists Jasper Cropsey (1823-1900), William Hart (1823-1894), Tomkins Matteson (1813-1884) (Ill. 10), John Henry Hill (1839-1922), Samuel Colman (1832-1920) (Ill. 11), and Edwin White (1817-1877) with that of amateurs Maria Cooley Cropsey, Dr. Edward Ruggles, Vicountess Maria Kirkwall (Ill. 12), a Mrs. Newberry, and Brooklyn realtor Henry B. Gay. Drawings by illustrators John Magee (active 1844-1867), John McLenan (1827-1865), and David Hunter Strother (1816-1888) intermingled with works by engravers Owen G. Hanks (ca. 1815- ca. 1865), Alfred Jones (1819-1900), and James Glasgow (1828-1853). The common thread is a spirit of friendship and connection, all expressed on paper.⁵

Falconer's friend, the American landscape painter Jasper Francis Cropsey appears to have assembled his album as a travel memento as well as a gathering of the works of his friends. Of the thirty drawings, seven are by Cropsey himself, many from his first European trip in 1847-1849. Notable in his album are drawings by two German artists he met while living in Italy, B.F. Toermer, C.F.H. Werner, and the Frenchman C. Mayer. Compelling examples of the practice of friendship exchange,

⁵ The album is in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. For references to Falconer's entertainments see Linda S. Ferber, "Our Mr. John M. Falconer" in *Brooklyn Before the Bridge: American Paintings from the Long Island Historical Society*. (Brooklyn: Brooklyn Museum, 1982) p. 17 and William Sidney Mount to Falconer, December 13, 1856 in Alfred Frankenstein. *William Sidney Mount* (New York: Harry Abrams, 1975) p. 317.

they include an *Italian Lake Scene with Villa* inscribed with the holiday greetings, “Prost Neujahr! C. Werner, f. 1849, Rom.” Cropsey appears to have extended the circles of exchange, giving a *View of the Ponte Molle* in Rome by Baron Toerner to his friend Falconer, who preserved it in his own album. In turn, Cropsey owned two drawings by Falconer, a *Lake Scene with Trees* and a view of the *Barracks at Fort Pitt*.

The Reverend Elias Lyman Magoon (1810-1886), whose art collection *The Crayon* described as “richest in crayon, pastel, and water-color drawings,” was at the forefront of the collectors beginning to acquire these works through purchase and not just by exchange. “A variety too great to admit of particular notice; or even the enumeration of their authors’ names,” and primarily British works, the collection also contained drawings by Americans Alonzo Chappell (1828-1887) (Ill. 14), Jasper Francis Cropsey (Ill. 15), William Hart (1823-1894), William James Hennessy (1839-1917), Worthington Whittredge (1820-1910) (Ill. 16), Homer Dodge Martin (1836-1897), and John Trumbull (1756-1843). Constrained by a “parson’s budget,” Magoon practiced a hybrid form of acquisition situated between gift and purchase, often trading on his personal relationships with artists to extract bargain prices.⁶

In the nation’s Capital, James C. McGuire (1812-1888) took advantage of his central place in art circles to acquire sketches and drawings from artists who lived in or passed through the city. He was both an auctioneer and a participant in the art

⁶ “Sketchings: Our Private Collections. No. VI” *The Crayon* (December 1856) p. 374. Magoon’s collection was purchased by Matthew Vassar in 1864 and formed the core of the Vassar College Art Gallery. For further information on Magoon, see Ella M. Foshay and Sally Mills. *All Seasons and Every Light: Nineteenth Century American Landscapes from the Collection of Elias Lyman Magoon* (Poughkeepsie, N.Y.: Vassar College Art Gallery, 1983) and Kevin Avery and Claire A. Conway, “The Reverend E. L. Magoon and the American drawings collection.” *Antiques* 157, no. 1 (January 2001) pps. 212-17.

auctions in which American drawings were beginning to appear. The eighty-seven drawings in his “Scrapbook,” given to the Metropolitan Museum of Art by a descendant in the 1920s, include landscapes by the “picturesque explorer of our country” Charles Lanman (1819-1895), Thomas Doughty (1793-1856) (Ill. 17), Henry Inman, and Thomas Cole, numerous portraits by George Augustus Baker, Jr. (1821-1880), Thomas Seir Cummings, Washington artist Henry Johnson Brent (1811-1880), Edward Dalton Marchant (1806-1887) and Samuel F. B. Morse. The album is unusual for the number of rapidly-executed, unfinished sketches it contains, including a pencil drawing by Francis Edmonds (Ill. 18) of the same subject as his famous painting *Facing the Enemy* (1845, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, Virginia), sketches by Emanuel Leutze, including a design for a lifesaving medal, and other works on pages apparently ripped out of artists’ sketchbooks. McGuire, known for his hospitality to artists in Washington, appears to have taken whatever he was given, valuing even unfinished works as marks of the artist’s hand.

At a sale in Baltimore before the Civil War, McGuire would likely have made the acquaintance of William T. Walters (1819-1894), a liquor merchant and railroad investor who was just beginning to assemble the vast art collection that would be his lasting legacy. Both McGuire and Walters purchased works by obscure British marine artist J. W. Yarnold at the Granville Sharp Oldfield estate auction in Baltimore in 1855. Walters also won the bidding for a painting of cattle by Thomas Sidney Cooper (1803-1902). Whether the three drawings by Cooper in McGuire’s album were also from the Oldfield collection is impossible to know. But the collectors’ shared tastes expressed within the constructed community of auction

participants certainly paved the way for their work together as founding Trustees of the Corcoran Gallery of Art after the Civil War.

As Walters was making a name for himself with generous commissions of paintings and high prices paid at auction, in 1858 he began to assemble what he termed “the greatest book of the season,” an album of American drawings notable for the scope of its contents. The novice collector appears to have recognized that drawings occupied a less public realm of exchange; not only did the Baltimore businessman let it be known that he would pay handsomely for drawings but he also enlisted the support of two New York art world insiders, the landscape painter John Frederick Kensett (1816-1872) and the engraver Samuel Putnam Avery (1822-1904), who was in the process of becoming an art dealer.

The majority of the forty-four artists whose work Walters assembled had some relation to one of those two men. Avery’s activities as an engraver are reflected in the inclusion of the work of a number of illustrators: Augustus Hoppin (1828-1896) (Ill. 19), William John Hennessy (1839-1917), and John McLenan (1827-1865) had all provided images for books Avery compiled, including *Mrs. Partington’s Carpet Bag of Fun* (1854) and *The Harp of a Thousand Strings* (1858).⁷ Avery’s extensive acquaintance among working artists in Brooklyn and New York, his new career as an intermediary and art dealer, and his own collecting helped Walters to acquire drawings by Albert Bierstadt (1830-1902), Charles F. Blauvelt (1824-1900), Charles Loring Elliott (1812-1868), Francois-Regis Gignoux (1816-1882) (Ill. 20), and Henry Peters Gray (1819-1877).

⁷ Madeleine Fidell Beaufort, Herbert L. Kleinfield and Jeanne K. Welcher. *The Diaries 1871-1882 of Samuel P. Avery, Art Dealer*. (New York: Arno Press, 1979) pps. xi-xii.

Kensett was likely Walters' source for the watercolor *Knitting* (1859) by Richard Morrell Staigg (1817-1881). The portrait miniaturist had painted Kensett soon after arriving in New York from Boston in 1840. Kensett also informed Walters of the availability of a group of drawings by illustrator Felix O. C. Darley, which the collector purchased with enthusiasm.⁸

Both Avery and Kensett were likely to have steered Walters in the direction of George Augustus Baker. "Highly esteemed for his portraiture of women and children," Baker had met Kensett in Rome in 1845 and shared studio and living space with him and the German painter Louis Lang in the Waverly House for many years. Avery's role in the acquisition of the oil sketch *Little Girl in a Red Bonnet* (Ill. 21) is signaled by a letter from Baker stating that "the little head for Mr. Walters is not yet ready." As Avery's relationship with Walters became known, he began to receive petitions. Writing Avery from Rome in October of 1860, a J. W. Notchnap sent a retraction: "If the request I made to you with regard to Mr. Walters was what your judgment disavowed, I hope you did not propose it."⁹

Walters acquired a number of drawings on his own, including four holographs, the particular form of graphic souvenir that participated in wider fashions of autograph collecting and parlor entertainment. Walters' holographs were produced in 1814-1815 by Americans Benjamin West (1738-1820), Washington Allston (1779-1843), Charles Robert Leslie (1794-1859), and Samuel F. B. Morse, when all four

⁸ William T. Walters to John Frederick Kensett. June 14, 1858. (Edwin D. Morgan Collection, New York State Library, Albany, NY).

⁹ Henry T. Tuckerman. *Book of the Artists* (New York: G. P. Putnam & Son, 1867) p. 489. Katherine D. Manthorne and Mark D. Mitchell. *Luminist Horizons: The Art and Collection of James A. Suydam*. (New York: National Academy Museum and School of Fine Arts with George Braziller, Publishers, 2006) p. 116. George Augustus Baker to Samuel Putnam Avery, January 1, 1860. J. W. Notchnap to Samuel Putnam Avery, October 20, 1860. (Avery Autograph Letters, Watson Library, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.)

artists were resident in England, the younger two training with their elders. For Walters, they would have carried historical value as evidence of the early years and transatlantic history of American art, as well as distinguished provenance from the estate of Baltimore collector Robert Gilmore.

Visiting Ellen Harper Walters' Philadelphia family brought Walters into contact with artists in that city; his purchase of "a figure piece, one of his gems of child-life" by George C. Lambdin and "a careful landscape study of Pre-Raphaelite fidelity" by William Trost Richards was duly noted in "Domestic Art Gossip" in *The Crayon* of November, 1859. Walters also purchased what appears to be a preliminary drawing for an illustration in ink and wash by Christian Schussele (1824-1879) (Ill. 22), a lithographer and illustrator who worked in the publishing ventures of the Duvals and Sartains in Philadelphia.

From his own city, Walters acquired two drawings by the short-lived genre painter Richard Caton Woodville (1825-1855), the ink sketch *Bringing in the Boar's Head*, inscribed by Woodville to his fellow Baltimore artist, Frank Blackwell Mayer (1827-1899) and the satirical and possibly self-referential watercolor of 1848 *Man holding a child and carpetbag* (Ill. 23). The *Classical Scene of Cupid and Two Putti* by Mayer in Walters album dates from December, 1848 (Ill. 24). Throughout 'Original Sketches,' works by lesser-known artists, some still unidentified, are interleaved with those whose fame extends to our day, such as Asher B. Durand, Frederic Edwin Church, and Thomas Cole (Ill. 25).

Two more assemblages of drawings put together by Baltimore collectors in the period before the Civil War still exist today. Frank Blackwell Mayer, mentioned

above, collected drawings from his fellow artists from the earliest years of his art study in Baltimore and in Philadelphia. His 'Souvenir Sketchbook' includes a *Sketch of Trees* by Lewis P. Clover (1819-1896), from 1846, when Clover spent time in Baltimore; several drawings from the 1840s by Philadelphia artists Peter Frederick Rothermerl (1817-1895), William Henry Furness, Jr. (1827-1867) and George C. Lambdin; a *Sketch of a Nun* by William P. W. Dana (1833-1927) and two Western scenes by Seth Eastman (1808-1875).

Baltimore collector J. Stricker Jenkins (1831-1878), a young colleague of Walters' with a family fortune from coffee importing, came to the practice later, and worked with Avery as well. His drawing collection included works by Americans Asher B. Durand and William Hart, as well as French drawings from the Ecouen School that Walters and Avery helped to introduce to America in the later 1860s.

Works of art survive over time either because they retain their value in the marketplace or because they occur in a form that, even if it may not be highly prized, is easily preserved. These albums of American drawings reflect a paradox of value; although their contents attracted little attention in the market and in the art historical canon, they were also assembled in a form easily "stuck on a shelf." Whereas the fragility of the paper support of individual drawings compromises their long-term preservation, as part of an assemblage, they have been viewed as worthy at least of holding on to, if not of appreciation or study.

The construction of a narrative is essential to the process of viewing works of art. When they are part of an assemblage in which resonances are created through

sequencing and juxtapositions, that narrative is even more complicated and dynamic. In a sequence, visual imagery invites comparisons and demands explication, what theorist Susan Stewart terms “the imposition of a frame.”¹⁰ The frame for these works of art, I will argue, includes the external world of social and business relationships, the domestic space of the parlor, the burgeoning visual world of illustrated books and periodicals, and the creation of a canon of celebrity artists, promoted in a developing art press.

The “story” of each work of art includes its creation myth, which incorporates details of the artist’s life and his or her relative fame or obscurity within the public canon constructed in the press and in exhibitions. The progress or provenance of the work of art is equally important to the narrative; whether it was acquired directly from the artist or from a famous collector, social value was conferred. How audiences experienced the work is another facet of the story. Images from the period of people looking at books and albums show an absorptive gaze, a concentrated focus by multiple viewers on the work of art, within a domestic context of striking uniformity. These objects clearly had social and didactic power. At a time when reproductions of original drawings were becoming increasingly available, original images “known from the print” appear to have gained value because of the existence of numerous serial duplicates created through reproductive media. In an inversion of Walter Benjamin’s widely-accepted dictum, the aura of the original appears to have been increased by the fact that the image was widely reproduced. As marks of the hand reflecting the character and capacities of known artists, drawings were also

¹⁰ Susan Stewart, “Death and Life, in that Order, in the Works of Charles Willson Peale,” in John Elsner and Roger Cardinal, eds. *The Cultures of Collecting*. (London: Reaktion Books, 1994) p. 205.

valued and collected in ways similar to the autographs of people famous in other ways.

Semiotician A. J. Greimas developed a visual tool to articulate the complexities of literary narrative that has been helpful for the subject at hand. The semiotic square maps the structures of signification – binary opposition, simple negatives of the two opposites, complex terms and synthetic positions – that Greimas found in every story. His interpreter Frederic Jameson saw the potential value of this application to other fields, encouraging non-semioticians to “*bricolate*, simply to steal the pieces that interest or fascinate us, and to carry off our fragmentary booty to our intellectual caves.”¹¹ In this spirit, the Greimas’ square can be applied to antebellum drawings, mapping some of the dynamics of the various arenas in which their “social life” was enacted, as well as complexities of reception that would have resonated for contemporary viewers. (Ill. 26) Within this schema, various methods of collecting and of valuation that informed the marketplace can be kept in view.

The attempt to recreate and understand some of the contexts in which these images were received, leads quickly to more general questions about collecting. Here again, a paradox of value comes into play. As individual works, the antebellum drawings hardly seem up to the task of supporting an analysis of larger cultural issues. Described as “miniature, and easily-attainable works of art,” this particular mode of graphic production was meant to be viewed within a compilation or series. It is precisely their assembled nature that makes it necessary to evaluate these albums within a broader context. My goal is to use this overlooked body of evidence, tucked

¹¹ Algirdas Julien Greimas. *On Meaning: Selected Writings in Semiotic Theory* (translated by Paul J. Perron and Frank H. Collins, foreword by Frederic Jameson, introduction by Paul J. Perron) (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. viii.

within album pages, to think more broadly about the reception and function of drawings in the early years of the American art market.

The fundamental distinction of album context has been largely overlooked in previous scholarship on American drawings. The literature on drawings in the antebellum period has focused primarily on publishing specific collections or establishing the oeuvres of particular artists. The attribution of works and filling in of artists' biographies has taken center stage. Another important focus has been situating drawings as preliminary studies for paintings, leaving the often more fruitful interface with prints and illustrations largely unexplored. The circulation of drawings in the marketplace, as well as their reception in domestic settings, has received only cursory attention. As in the study of paintings in the antebellum period, a canon has evolved that has relegated many artists well-known at the time to secondary status and has minimized the rich interplay between high art and mass culture that weaves through the drawing albums.¹²

¹² For American drawings, see Dita Amory and Marilyn Symmes. *Nature Observed, Nature Interpreted: Nineteenth-Century American Landscape Drawings and Watercolors from the National Academy of Design and Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, Smithsonian Institution*. (New York: National Academy of Design, with Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, Smithsonian Institution, 1995); Kevin Avery, ed. *American Drawings and Watercolors in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, vol. 1. A Catalogue of Works by Artists Born Before 1835*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press with the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2002); Elaine Evans Dee. *Nineteenth-Century American Landscape Drawings in the Collection of the Cooper-Hewitt Museum*. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1982); *Master Drawings*. Volume 42, no. 1 (Spring 2004) Drawings in American Museums; Bartlett Hayes. *Drawing of the Master: American Drawings*. (New York: Shorewood Publishers, 1965); Kenneth W. Maddox. *An Unprejudiced Eye: The Drawings of Jasper F. Cropsey*. (Yonkers: The Hudson River Museum, 1979); Jo Miller. *Drawings of the Hudson River School*. (Brooklyn: Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences Museum, 1969) and her two articles on the same subject for *Connoisseur* in August and September of 1970; Henry P. Rossiter M. & M. *Karolik Collection of American Watercolors and Drawings, 1800-1875*. 2 vols. (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1962); Theodore E. Stebbins, Jr. *American Master Drawings and Watercolors*. (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1976). Roberta Olsen's catalogue of the collection of drawings of the New-York Historical Society is forthcoming in 2008.

Several scholars have recently taken up the subject of drawing within a broader context and set of social practices. It is important to mention that all three address the European tradition of Old Master connoisseurship, which privileges the *schizzo*, the rapid translation of the observations and imaginings of the artist onto paper in emulation of Leonardo, who first used the term. Within this tradition, the finished drawings that early nineteenth-century American collectors valued, were given less consideration, categorized somewhat dismissively either as “contract” documents for painting commissions or as “presentation” drawings to be given as gifts to friends or to curry favor with potential patrons.

David Rosand’s *Drawing Acts: Studies in Graphic Expression and Representation* investigates the “phenomenology of drawing,” expanding the discourse beyond traditional connoisseurship to analysis of the medium as “act, art, and image.” Tracing two lines of inquiry back to the writings of Pliny the Elder, Rosand concerns himself most with the “line of Appelles,” the indexical trace of the creating artist. *Drawing Acts* provides a broad overview of the history of drawing theory from the Renaissance forward by such authors as Giorgio Vasari, Roger de Piles, and Antoine-Joseph Dézallier d’Argenville. Rosand follows the rhetorical linkage of the medium to handwriting, and the relationship of drawing to printed media. In close readings of the graphic work of Leonardo, Michelangelo, Raphael, Dürer, father and son Giovanni Battista and Domenico Tiepolo, and Rembrandt among others, Rosand looks for evidence in drawings of “the handwriting of the spirit,” the individual expression, of each artist. The focus he brings to the “corporeal

dimension of our response to a drawing” is an important contribution to understanding the medium’s particular intimacy and power.¹³

Genevieve Warwick’s *The Arts of Collecting: Padre Sebastiano Resta and the Market for Drawings in Early Modern Europe* applies the study of gift-giving from the field of anthropology to the complex collecting practices of Padre Resta. She provides a subtle reading of the relationship between gift-giving and financial exchange in the Padre’s courtly circles, set against the backdrop of broad shifts in macro-economic relationships in the early seventeenth century. The drawings Resta assembled obsessively and “gave” to noblemen with the expectation of reciprocal cash support of his favored charities, functioned as a specific currency in a complex web of social and economic relationships.¹⁴

In *Learning to Draw: Studies in the Cultural History of a Polite and Useful Art*, Ann Bermingham seeks a cultural understanding of drawing that moves beyond “a history of techniques, media, and practitioners,” to an “examination of drawing’s cultural meanings.”¹⁵ Focused on England in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, this study examines the intersections between drawing and other social practices and institutions as diverse as etiquette and decorum, philosophy, literature, and amateur instruction. Bermingham deconstructs the discourse surrounding drawing to build up a view of the complex web of social exchange between “artist and patron or amateur and drawing master...craftsmen and artists, designers and

¹³ Rosand, David. *Drawing Acts: Studies in Graphic Expression and Representation*. (Cambridge, U.K. and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. xxiii.

¹⁴ Genevieve Warwick, *The Arts of Collecting: Padre Sebastiano Resta and the Market for Drawings in Early Modern Europe*. (Cambridge, U.K. and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000)

¹⁵ Ann Bermingham. *Learning to Draw: Studies in the Cultural History of a Polite and Useful Art*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000) p. x.

manufacturers, draftsmen and military men, publishers of drawing manuals and their reading public, women amateurs and professional male artists.”¹⁶ She analyzes drawing in the early modern period as a means of communication and as a tool that allowed people to “negotiate their subjectivity both in individual terms and in terms of class and gender.”¹⁷

Throughout this investigation, I have been guided by the notion, investigated and quantified in the social sciences, that collected works of art have a “social life.” Their meaning at a particular moment in time derives from numerous aspects - their forms, their circulation, their history, and their uses.¹⁸ The value of a work of art varies according to the agent; the drawing an artist produced as a quick gift was retained by the recipient as a cherished memento, the original image produced for an engraving considered worthless by the artist or engraver once the multiple was put into production was preserved by someone at greater remove for whom the process held greater mystery.

Value is related to how and where the work was acquired, the social messages with which it is encoded, and its relationship to other cultural phenomena. All of these facets need to be considered to begin to construct contemporary context. How a drawing was displayed and appreciated points to webs of interaction that proceed

¹⁶ Ibid, p. xi.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. ix.

¹⁸ Important sources have been: Pierre Bourdieu. *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*. (Cambridge, U.K.: Polity Press, 1993) and *L'amour de l'art: les musées d'art européens et leur public*. (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1969), Arjun Appadurai, ed. *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. *The Meaning of Things: domestic symbols and the self*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), Andrew Hemingway and William Vaughn, eds. *Art in Bourgeois Society, 1790-1850*. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998), Susan M. Pearce. *Collecting in Contemporary Practice*. (London: Sage Publications, 1998) and Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood. *The World of Goods*. (New York: Basic Books, 1979).

from the individual, to the family in its domestic setting, to social and business connections beyond the home, and into the burgeoning arena of mass culture.

Social anthropologist Arjun Appadurai has provided a number of crucial insights into the consumption of luxury goods, a category that includes these works of graphic art. Because they no longer hold “use value,” these goods function as pure social signs. Appadurai is guided by Georg Simmel’s refutation of the idea of absolute value in *The Philosophy of Money* of 1907. Simmel observed that demand, the human judgments of desire, sacrifice, or gain, is the force that imbues an object with value. Taking this argument several steps further, Appadurai insists on the subjectivity of meaning - objects are devoid of significance other than what human “transactions, attributions, and motivations endow them with.” He places consumption behavior in a broad frame of reference; rather than individual desire, it reflects the broader social arena, “eminently social, relational, and active rather than private, atomic, or passive.”¹⁹ In line with this point of view, I have sought to situate drawings within the social framework of antebellum art circles, paying close attention to provenance and to such contemporary phenomena as the fashion for illustrated gift books and illustrated biographies. It is clear that part of their function was as signs of friendship and affiliation assembled for social display. The status of artists singled out by the media in newspapers, periodicals, and illustrated biographies, adhered to these works and reflected onto their collectors.

Anthropologist Mary Douglas, working with economist Baron Isherwood, applies the ethnographic practice of viewing material possessions as conveyors of social meaning, and defines commodities as “a nonverbal medium for the human

¹⁹ Appadurai, pps. 31, 5.

creative faculty.” Their consumption at the level of luxury transmits messages of power, rank, and access to information. Indeed, what is being transacted at the top sphere is really shared knowledge about a network of mutual confidence. The actual goods are the visible tip of the iceberg. The rest is a submerged classified catalogue of names of persons, places, objects, and dates. The main activity is a continuous attempt to standardize their values as precisely as possible.²⁰

Imbued with the capacity to signify complex social behaviors and pressures, objects help to build the structures of society. Works of art, consumed in the “top sphere” as a means of indicating taste, distinction, and wealth, serve as potent evidence of individual power. Collecting original drawings, whose production was so closely linked to the hand of the artist and whose exchange functioned within a long tradition of demarcating and communicating bonds of friendship, was a powerful means of signaling access, participation, and affiliation with elite art circles. As we will see, Douglas’ and Isherwood’s identification of the inclination to standardize in the most competitive arenas of consumption played out in antebellum parlors and auctions as well.

Of course, collecting is also grounded in the one-on-one relationship between the collector and the work of art. That subjective connection, a “passion that is temporal, diffuse and regulative,” is the focus of Jean Baudrillard’s extensive work on collecting. It is a means of exercising individual mastery over a chaotic outer world, “a controlled, self-addressed discourse” in contrast to the anxiety of “human relationships, home of uniqueness and conflict.” In the end, this self-regulated

²⁰ Douglas, Mary and Baron Isherwood. *The World of Goods*. (New York: Basic Books, 1979) pps. 62, 148.

system reflects back on the collector in a “closed circuit;” the “miracle of collecting” is that “it is invariably *oneself* that one collects.”

In a line of reasoning particularly relevant to album collecting, Baudrillard analyzes the motivations at work in assembling series of objects. The idea of fulfillment or completion always hovers over the enterprise: “This is why owning absolutely any object is always so satisfying and so disappointing at the same time: a whole series lies behind any single object, and makes it a source of anxiety.” Several of the antebellum drawing collectors considered here left evidence of their sense of what fulfillment might mean. John Mackie Falconer defined the scope of his collection in terms of his circle of friends, while William Walters appears to have set his own parameters through exposure to exhibitions and to the art press. For example, his insistence on representation of “the Boston artists,” gleaned from the press and dependent on Kensett for access, is characteristic of the frame he imposed, and which remained ultimately unfulfilled.²¹

This investigation will attempt to illuminate the varied collecting impulses expressed in albums of antebellum American drawings and to put individual drawings into context as complex social signs. Because the meaning of these works, both individually and as assemblages, is myriad, and constructed within different spheres of activity, I have taken a “prismatic” approach, examining a different facet of the same body of visual evidence in each of the four subsequent chapters.

²¹ Jean Baudrillard. *The System of Objects* James Benedict, trans. (London and New York: Verso, 2002. First published in 1968.) pps. 92, 96 and “The System of Collecting,” in John Elsner and Roger Cardinal. *The Cultures of Collecting*. (London: Reaktion Books, 1994) pps. 7, 12, 86.

The initial chapter places these diminutive and fragile works of art within their “public life” in the social networks of the Eastern seaboard of the United States. In those systems of social and business relationships, drawings functioned as social currency. They were given as gifts, bought in the ritualized display of the public auction, and acquired through commission and purchase. Assembled into albums, they could open doors, communicating the collectors’ participation in artists’ circles and privileged access to a particularly intimate form of expression.

The melding of commerce and aspiration in this pursuit reveals the social underpinnings of market interaction. Like other such practices, these had codes of decorum of their own. As we will see, the patrician collector Robert Gilmore negotiated the process of drawing exchange with his French counterpart Alexandre Vattemare seemingly without effort; after having given a drawing, it was perfectly acceptable to ask for one in return. In contrast, Charles Lanman breached the etiquette of exchange by selling drawings given him in confidence by fellow artists. William Walters’ foray into this singular collecting arena, promising “the greatest book” and injecting unprecedented financial inducements into an area based heretofore primarily on exchange, has the sense of a neophyte trying out a new language in a new social space. The power relations underlying his correspondence with John Frederick Kensett are complex; even without the benefit of the artist’s side of the story it is clear that money and access alone did not always yield what the collector desired. The inscription on the verso of Walters’ drawing of *The Blue Grotto, Capri* by Albert Bierstadt (Ill. 27) expresses a more familiar role of artist currying favor with a potential patron: “Mr. Walters with the compliments of the

author.” In the close-knit circles in Baltimore, the example of Asher B. Durand shows how competition and mimicry stood at this “hot center” of collecting activity. It is clear that in the social world of art, the purely economic definition of “market” is too limited to encompass the many levels of transaction to be found there. Several distinguished art historians have adopted the word *troc* to emphasize the singularity of this multi-faceted “barter of mental goods.”²²

The second chapter turns to the “private life” of drawing albums. In the carefully-constructed and heavily-encoded social space of the middle class parlor, according to Henry James, an “organized privacy” prevailed. Illustrations available in fashionable gift books served as entertainment and as instruction in the norms of decorum and refinement to which the growing middle class aspired. Unique drawings, collected by those of higher social and economic status, expressed their link to the prevailing sentimental culture through shared themes, overt connections to popular literature, and neo-Gothic forms. The albums in which unique drawings were collected were printed by the same publishers who produced illustrated gift books and often contained many of the same illustrations amid their blank pages.

Parlor “portraits” from the period contain a set of standardized furnishings assembled to communicate the sitters’ embrace of shared values. In antebellum interiors, objects both revealed and shaped character, creating and feeding “people’s vital need for knowledge of others.”²³ Drawing albums communicated culture

²² Michael Baxandall. *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985) p. 48 Also Stephen Bann. *Parallel Lines: Printmakers, Painters, and Photographers in Nineteenth-Century France*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002)

²³ Baudrillard, p. 10.

visually, demanding a quiet, absorptive gaze within an environment of private social display.

Chapter three takes the connection between albums and giftbooks one step further, delving deeper into the fertile intersection of unique and serial images in the antebellum period. It is remarkable that albums of drawings show few connections with paintings, the line of inquiry most frequently pursued in art historical investigation of graphic works to date. However, the relationship with reproductive media is prevalent. In contrast to the canon of American art, antebellum collectors appear to have made few distinctions between artists specializing in different media; in the albums, works by easel painters sit side-by-side with those by artists best known as engravers or as illustrators, many of whom occupied the same social and professional networks.

Original works for illustrations or prints, which communicated the semiotic complexity, difficulty of acquisition, and rarity of the luxury object, were prized by drawing collectors precisely for their generative relationship to serial work. Both John Ludlow Morton and Thomas Seir Cummings included in their albums original drawings for illustrations in *The Talisman*, a joint publication project of their Sketch Club circle. Even such purists as the Reverend Elias Magoon, who clearly expressed his disdain for the “copyism” of such new techniques as chromolithography, could not avoid completely this serial aspect of the contemporary art market. The works he purchased from the British antiquarian and publisher John Britton included many original drawings for the “best engravings executed in England.”

Writing and drawing were perceived as complimentary practices in antebellum culture, both expressing the character of their agent. The final chapter examines this trope at length, within the context of parallel collecting of drawings and autographs. This was fueled, I will argue, by the desire to possess the indexical marks of a celebrity hand. As the first generation of American heroes, the signers of the Declaration of Independence at its apex, passed on, their written expression was collected and valued. Collecting drawings was similarly motivated by the development and promulgation of a specific group of famous artists, often working in a signature style.

Aided by new reproductive technologies and by the reduction of cost in printing and distributing books and periodicals, a cult of celebrity began to develop in America. Symptomatic was the fashion for illustrated biography, produced to the point of “biography mania” in the period. In these books, engraved portraits (often derived from daguerreotypes), life stories, and signatures were combined for each subject. This trend tapped into a broad desire within American culture for a shared sense of American history, enacted by exemplary individuals. By the late 1840s, American artists began to be included in the pantheon of individuals elevated in this way. Characteristic of a nation seeking to define the role art would play in its corporate life, these steps toward inclusion were conservative – drawn primarily from the first generation of American art - and highly standardized – the same names, West, Copley, Allston, Stuart, Greenough and less expectedly, Inman, appearing in numerous different books. Not surprisingly, given the tentative embrace of art in the broader culture, these choices were also grounded in the linked perception of writing

and drawing. In these first steps toward celebrity status, artists who also wrote poetry were given the initial places of prominence.

In the end, this enterprise will have met its goal if these albums are opened and the “miniature and easily-attainable works of art” gain new stature as complex signs of social networks and collecting practices in antebellum America.

Chapter 1: Drawings in the Social Sphere: Albums as Currency in Antebellum Art Circles

With unabashed enthusiasm and characteristic optimism, Baltimore businessman William Walters described the album of drawings he was assembling as “the greatest book of the season.” In a series of letters to the landscape artist John Frederick Kensett (Ill. 1-1) dated from June of 1858 through July of 1860, he laid out his goal and tactics for the collecting campaign on which he embarked in 1859. Aspiring to the highest level of quality, he hoped to acquire works from known and respected artists. Those included the current President of the National Academy of Design Asher B. Durand, from whom he importuned “the promised sketch for the book which by the way promises to be a very beautiful collection indeed.” He would fund his ambitions at a level transcending normal market mechanisms, promising artists “the most liberal compensation for the very best thing they can do.”

This was a fundamental departure from the tradition of drawing exchange among artists that had operated in the earlier years of the nineteenth century. Word about this new, generous collector circulated quickly in artists’ social networks. Though Walters never went so far as to state it as a goal, enhancement of his social standing was a significant factor in his collecting ambition and the approbation he received as he acquired new works confirmed both his aesthetic and his financial successes.

The market for drawings was complex and changing at the time and these works of art carried many layers of social meaning. Until the second quarter of the nineteenth century, drawings had primarily served a studio function for artists as

preparatory exercises. Portraits on paper and landscape “views” in pencil and watercolor were produced, though they rarely appeared on the market. After 1825, in a development that can be linked to the concentration of artists in New York, artists began to produce “album drawings,” highly-finished works, often with arched tops or in “haloed” vignette form that they exchanged as intimate signs of friendship and connection.²⁴ Even as graphic works began to be exhibited in the major annual exhibitions and collectors began to acquire drawings in the 1840s and 1850s, they continued to be connected to rituals of gift-giving and reciprocity. As assemblages of individual social signs, albums of drawings reflected exchange within a community of interest and a particular, more intimate collecting practice.

The social status of artists was on the rise in America before the Civil War. As the number and variety of newspapers and periodicals expanded in this period, the comings and goings of a select group of artists filled column inches, like the society gossip read by the many about the few. At the same time, artists’ drawings began to appear alongside paintings and sculpture in exhibitions and in auction sales. By owning graphic works, the collector signaled his connoisseurship and his intimacy with artists as well as the value he placed on the absorptive activity of “reading” such works in the encoded social space of the parlor. (See Chapter 2) As a commodity market was beginning to develop for graphic works, possessing them signaled membership in the elite cohort that took part in the exhibitions, auctions, and sales in which they were distributed, as well as acquaintance with artists and their agents. Thus drawings that carried private meaning as mementi and sentimental illustration

²⁴ Stebbins, p. 113.

also proclaimed in a unique way the collector's privileged social access and economic power.

Collecting From the “Luxury Register”

Along with the other collectors addressed in this study, Walters participated in a market for drawings that was an example of an elite system of exchange. Relying on a complex interplay of gift and sale, of commissions and social and business contacts, this market was grounded in methods of valuation more complex than pure economic transaction. Works of art played a hybrid role as both commodities and gifts. In the highly-ritualized domain of the art auction, they generated interest and competition among a community of like-minded individuals, whose participation and purchases were a very public form of display. These diminutive and subtle works of art had a capacity for significant social communication.

Social anthropologist Arjun Appadurai provides a helpful analysis of the markets for such luxury goods. Rather than differentiating luxuries from necessities, he focuses on their inherent meaning, suggesting that they be considered “incarnated signs,” whose primary value is rhetorical and social. As a special “register” of consumption, luxury, according to Appadurai, has five defining characteristics:

- 1) restriction, either by price or by law, to elites;
- 2) complexity of acquisition, which may or may not be a function of real “scarcity”;
- 3) semiotic virtuosity, that is, the capacity to signal fairly complex social messages (such as pepper in cuisine, silk in dresses, jewels in adornment, and relics in worship);
- 4) specialized knowledge as a prerequisite for their “appropriate” consumption, that is, regulation by fashion; and

5) a high degree of linkage of their consumption to body, person, and personality.²⁵

Drawing collecting in the antebellum period manifested many of these characteristics and complexities. The works participated in a many-faceted spectrum of value: sentimental, memorial, monetary and status. They were difficult to acquire, carried numerous layers of meaning comprehensible primarily to insiders, and were closely linked to the body, to the “hand,” of the artist. (See Chapter 4.)

While individual drawings have specific histories and trajectories, their provenance serving as a form of biography, assemblages of drawings in albums bespeak an even more complex social history. As part of a collection, they invite comparison between works, analysis of sequence and subject matter, and awareness of lacunae or exclusions. For Jean Baudrillard, collected objects are “accompanied by projects,” and thus need to be understood in their social context:

As for collecting proper, it has a door open onto culture, being concerned with differentiated objects which often have exchange value, which may also be ‘objects’ of preservation, trade, social ritual, exhibition – perhaps even generators of profit. Such objects are accompanied by projects. And though they remain interrelated, their interplay involves the social world outside, and embraces human relationships.²⁶

William Walters appears to have understood that putting together an album of drawings would require more than money; graphic works were still less available commercially than paintings in America, and until the second quarter of the

²⁵ Arjun Appadurai. “Introduction: commodities and the politics of value,” in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in social perspective*. Arjun Appadurai, ed. (Cambridge, U.K.; Cambridge University Press, 1988) p. 38.

²⁶ Jean Baudrillard. *The System of Objects*. James Benedict, trans. First published in 1968. (London and New York: Verso, 2002) p. 103.

nineteenth century, rarely had currency outside the studio context. He inserted himself consciously into a restricted social world, a marketplace of elite exchange among artists and their well-connected friends and patrons, in which he paved the way with business and social contacts as well as with cash. He appears to have relished the complexity and challenge of these acquisitions. In several instances, he tagged requests for drawings onto paintings commissions recognized for their generous terms. In that context, the operable “value register” for the drawing is that of the gift or “exchange by private treaty” in which value is negotiated outside of the traditional forces of supply and demand. Artists, including Asher B. Durand, Frederic Edwin Church, and the brothers William and James MacDougal Hart, recognized the wisdom of providing the extra work of art to their patron, who in turn reassured them that they would be included in a collection that “promised to be very beautiful indeed.” Walters also took part in art auctions where the privileged gathered in a community of exchange, and where participation, proclivities, and prices were known to all.

“Always your sincere friend”: Kensett and Walters

Walters’ collecting ambition was national in scope and thus depended on social networks beyond his Baltimore base. His correspondence with John Frederick Kensett is peppered with news of collectors and artists up and down the Eastern seaboard. He asked for Kensett’s assistance during the artist’s summer travels to New England in obtaining for his album works of “the Boston artists,” from whom “as you suggest three or four will be enough.” He also petitioned Kensett to intervene

with his friend Louis Lang to obtain a drawing, reminding him of “a female figure you and I admired very much in one of his compositions – he could do that more readily – or something of that sort and it would be very nice.” By enlisting Kensett, whose attentions he cultivated with social visits in New York and Baltimore, with flattering language in his communications, and with shipments of Havana ‘segars,’ Walters allied to his collecting enterprise a celebrity artist and positioned himself at the very center of New York art circles.²⁷ (Ill. 1-1)

American artists had come a long way in stature since John Singleton Copley’s complaint that painting was considered “no more than any other useful trade...like that of a Carpenter, tailor or shew maker, not as one of the most Noble arts in the world.”²⁸ Henry James, Sr., father of the American novelist and member of the New York social elite, noted the changing social status of the artist in 1851. “He has been from the beginning always a very suspicious individual in the moral regard...Yet, whether he be naughty or virtuous, we seek him and honor him...for what he represents, and never dream that money can pay for his pictures.”²⁹

Walters’ correspondence with Kensett has a deferential tone that sometimes approaches the obsequious. In the ten extant letters, written between June 1858 and July 1860, the collector appears to be trying out a new language of art appreciation,

²⁷ WTW to JFK, November 28, 1859. Franklin Kelly has suggested in conversation that the relationship between Kensett and Lang may have been intimate. See also Katherine E. Manthorne and Mark D. Mitchell. *Luminist Horizons: The Art and Collection of James A. Suydam*. (New York: National Academy Museum and School of Fine Arts with George Braziler, Publishers, 2006) p. 31. Walters was appropriately oblivious; in fact, he wrote that, according to Lang, “the ladies would not let you alone at Nahant” and closed another letter with warm regards from Mrs. Walters and her wishes to be made “known too she says to Mrs. K. - who is to be -” WTW to JFK, October 9, 1859 and November 28, 1859.

²⁸ Quoted in *America: The New World in Nineteenth Century Painting*. Stephen Kojka, ed. (Munich, London, New York: Prestel, 1999) p. 54.

²⁹ Henry James, Sr. lecture in *The Literary World VIII* (February 1, 1851) quoted in Harris, p. 258.

while positioning himself for the artist's favor through compliments, commissions, and exchange of art world gossip. He reinforces their connection by referring to encounters in New York and visits by Kensett to Baltimore, where the artist's brother was in the rope-making business. The mode of ingratiation is particularly apparent in the recounting of the death of "Mr. Waite – cousin to Colman," from injuries sustained in a fall from "a high rock a few miles out on the Balto and Ohio R Road." Twice within one short paragraph, Kensett is reminded "he met you when you were last at my house" and "you have met [him] at my house."³⁰

At times Walters' relationship with the artist seems to have derived less from actual personal contact and more from reading the art press and other printed sources. One clear example reveals the latter dynamic. *Lotus-Eating: A Summer Book* written by George William Curtis and illustrated by Kensett was published in New York in 1856. In the first chapter entitled "The Hudson and the Rhine," Curtis contrasted the two rivers in exuberant prose, and judged the American the superior of the two, "no European river is so lordly in its bearing, none flows in such state to the sea."³¹ In a letter to Kensett several years later, perhaps as he received *Evening on the Hudson* from the artist, but certainly before he had traveled to Europe and had firsthand experience of the Rhine, Walters wrote his own lavish tribute to the Hudson River:

"I have said a thousand times, it is one of the most prominent of the many very beautiful things on Earth which is not appreciated as it deserves – leaving out the Castellated ruins of the "Rhine" it would no doubt excel in beauty that so cellibrated (sic) resort of all the tourists of the world and from whence, I regret it, for their want of intelligence

³⁰ WTW to JFK, July 20, 1859.

³¹ George William Curtis. *Lotus-Eating: A Summer Book*. (New York: Dix, Edwards & Co., 1856) p. 23.

and taste, I have known many of our countrymen to return not having seen the Hudson except from a New York ferry boat.”³²

Secure in his own “intelligence and taste,” as well as in his role as munificent patron, Walters risked presumption.

In the end, it is striking that, despite repeated, gentle reminders, Kensett provided neither works by Boston artists nor a drawing of his own for the album of ‘Original Sketches.’ This may have less to do with the quality of his relationship with Walters than with Kensett’s lack of time. During the highly-productive period in the artist’s career from 1848 through 1861, the only known drawings are from the year 1856.³³ At the same time, his paintings were achieving popular acclaim and impressive sales. He was also experimenting with such new techniques as the serially reproducible cliché verre, (Ill. 1-2) and participating actively in public cultural life as a member of President Buchanan’s Commission to oversee the decoration of the United States Capital.³⁴ Providing a drawing for Walters, or scouting out others for the album, was evidently not a high priority.

There is also evidence that artists, newly concentrated in New York studios, were tiring of requests for “sketches” and studio souvenirs. Already in 1855, *The Crayon* characterized this mode of collecting as “a system of intellectual extortion, practiced under the protection of that all-devouring dragon of pictorial offspring – the lady’s album.” “Nothing is more common than to hear some of his well-meaning, but

³² WTW to JFK, July 23, 1860.

³³ John Paul Driscoll. *John F. Kensett Drawings*. (University Park, Pennsylvania: Museum of Art, The Pennsylvania State University, 1978)

³⁴ Harris, p. 257 and p. 393, n. 23.

uninitiated friends making a polite demand, or visiting his painting-rooms for a “little sketch.”³⁵

The frontispiece Walters chose for his drawings album appears to pay tribute in visual form to Kensett for his help with the final product, enshrining the artist in a luxury example of the neo-Gothic frontispiece. (Ill. 1-3) The gold-outlined, blue and red lettering of the title ‘Original Sketches’ stands on an all-over ground of vine patterning. Ivy leaves and early summer flowers, day lilies, irises, and campanula, entwine with the date A. D. MDCCCLIX (1859), and a shield with the unidentified artist’s initials: CMB. Standing on the lower curve of the oversized S is the figure of a gentleman artist, seen from behind. Clothed in a loose-fitting summer suit and broad-brimmed hat, holding a palette, he stands at an easel and paints the river scene before him. With a gleaming foreground of water on which two sailboats glide, simple forms of the background hills, and luminous cloud-filled sky, the scene evokes characteristic features of Kensett’s landscapes. Walters’ intention to make this visual connection is supported by its difference from the frontispiece he did not choose. (Ill. 1-4) Produced by CMB in a similar neo-Gothic visual vocabulary, this alternative celebrated the arts in two marginal portraits of a medieval painter and draftsman, framing an illumination of the great seal of Maryland.

S. P. Avery: At the Hub of the “Art Fraternity”

Like the canny businessman he was, Walters did not rely on Kensett as a single source for art. He made the acquaintance of Samuel Putnam Avery in the early 1850s

³⁵ *The Crayon* 2, no. 9 (August 29, 1855) p. 128 quoted in Eleanor Jones Harvey. *The Painted Sketch: American Impressions from Nature, 1830-1880* (Dallas: Dallas Museum of Art, 1998) p. 90.

and began to use his services as art agent and intermediary. A New York engraver and book publisher with extensive contacts and a wide circle of artist friends, Avery was beginning to work as an art dealer, purchasing works of art at auction and serving as a middleman in art transactions. (Ill. 1-5) His Brooklyn home was a gathering place for American artists, forty-eight of whom would signal their support and friendship on the inaugural announcement in 1864 of his “Establishment for Engraving, Publishing, and General Agency for the purchase and sale of fine Oil Paintings and other Works of Art.”³⁶ His correspondence with artists is filled with news, invitations to openings, and requests sent from summer lodgings for art supplies from the city. A communication from C. Griswold is characteristic of those exchanges, acknowledging Avery’s place in the art world:

Delaware Ohio Oct. 1st 1861 “I hope you will write again soon, and keep me posted on whatever transpires in the *art-fraternity*, of interest. Remember me kindly to Mr. Hubbard, and to Hennessy, Dix, Morse and other friends as you see them.”³⁷

In his personal art collecting, Avery appears to have crossed regularly the lines between high art and popular culture. Between 1854 and 1861, he loaned twenty-eight works by American artists to the annual exhibitions of the National Academy of Design. While most were oil paintings, the loans included pen and ink sketches by John McLenan and a pencil drawing by William John Hennessy, both illustrators and comic draftsmen. Avery had engraved and published their works, along with those of Augustus Hoppin and Felix Octavius Carr Darley, in such humor books as *The Harp of a Thousand Strings*, *Mrs. Partington’s Carpet-bag of Fun*, (Ill. 1-6) and *Laughing*

³⁶ Announcement in the Avery Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

³⁷ C. Griswold to SPA, October 1, 1861, Avery Autograph Letters, Watson Library, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Gas: an encyclopedia of wit, wisdom and fun. That eight of the forty-eight artists whose works were in Walters' album were New York illustrators, including McLenan, Hennessy and Augustus Hoppin, (Ill. 1-7) is a sign of Avery's involvement. Walters relied on Avery to assemble the book as well, writing to Kensett; "When you do have the sketch, have the kindness to hand it to Mr. Avery who will have the Book until 15th or 20th Dec for the purpose of placing things in it."³⁸

Avery also collected drawings by established fine artists, such as works in graphite of botanical subjects from the mid-eighteen-fifties by Aaron Draper Shattuck (Ill. 1-8) and William Trost Richards.³⁹ The detailed observation of nature and highly-finished style of these American Pre-Raphaelites appealed to William Walters and attracted some publicity in the measure. The "Domestic Art Gossip" column of *The Crayon* in November of 1859 mentioned his purchase in Philadelphia of "a careful landscape study of Pre-Raphaelite fidelity" by Richards. This reference could be to one of two works. *Moonlit Scene* is an undated, finished ink wash landscape in which the foreground foliage and trees are rendered in exquisite detail under the rich light of the moon. (Ill. 1-9) *Woodland Plants* is a closer observation of a tall berry cane, under which ferns, and other flora grow. Rendered in pencil with some white highlights, it is signed "July 5th /59 W.T. Richards." (Ill. 1-10) A bravura

³⁸ WTW to JFK, November 28, 1859. The dates hint at the possibility that the album was intended as a Christmas gift, while the contents suggest his wife Ellen Harper Walters as the intended recipient.

³⁹ For information on Avery, see Ruth Sieben-Morgen "Samuel Putnam Avery (1822-1904), engraver on wood; a bio-bibliographical study," Ph.d dissertation, Columbia University, 1942 and Madeleine Fidell Beaufort, Herbert L. Kleinfeld, and Jeanne K. Welcher, eds. *The Diaries, 1871-1882, of Samuel P. Avery, Art Dealer.* (New York: Arno Press, 1879) The drawings were given to the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art by Avery's granddaughters. Kevin J. Avery, *American Drawings and Watercolors in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, vol. 1. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002) p. 20.

performance with the pencil, it is a rebuttal in visual form to Asher B. Durand's 1855 recommendation to aspiring artists in his third letter on landscape painting: "do not first attempt foliage or banks of mingled earth and grass; they are more difficult of imitation, which, as far as is practicable, should be your purpose."⁴⁰

Walters, who subscribed to *The Crayon* and embraced many of its Ruskinian precepts in his collecting activity, would certainly have taken pride in the facility and rapidity with which Richards produced such "imitation." When *The Crayon* praised the nature studies of the brothers James MacDougal and William Hart, singling out the former for "some of the most perfect studies of foreground material that I have ever seen, perfectly Pre-Raphaelite in the delicacy of rendering detail," Walters also took notice.⁴¹ He acquired several works by the Hart brothers, including a painting by James McDougal Hart of *A Stream in the Adirondacks* of 1859. The artist appears to have provided Walters with two drawings at the same time, one a pencil *Landscape* (Ill. 1-11) that highlighted his knowledge of the habits and foliage characteristics of trees. The oil on paper *Waterfall in the Mountains*, (Ill. 1-12) exaggerates the signature *repoussoir* view into a cleft between mountains promulgated by Asher B. Durand. Rendered in minute detail and bright fall colors, the composition includes a waterfall that lifts the birch tree from its expected position in the foreground up and to the right. Also heightening the bird's eye view is a line of birds snaking along the cliff edge, drawing the eye to a distant sun setting in the haze of early fall.

In addition to William Trost Richards, with whom he maintained a lively correspondence for many years, Avery kept up with a number of the American Pre-

⁴⁰ Asher B. Durand, "Letters on Landscape Painting," *The Crayon*, vol. 1, no. 6., (1855) p. 66

⁴¹ Linda Ferber and William Gerds, eds. *The New Path: Ruskin and the American Pre-Raphaelites* (Brooklyn: Brooklyn Museum of Art, 1985) p. 56.

Raphaelites. He was likely the one to have found for Walters the lovely *Rose* by John William Hill. (Ill. 1-13) Among the artist's Pre-Raphaelite friends, the collector's interest in "name" artists appears to have been as well known as his reputation for generosity. Hill wrote to an artist colleague hoping that the latter might receive from Walters "a commission worth having, but it is hardly to be expected as we P.R.Gs are not yet at all notorious."⁴² Avery must have kept a number of the elder Hill's drawings on hand, including one that he contributed to the sketch book for the 1864 Brooklyn Sanitary Commission Fair. The cantankerous Hill authorized Avery to make the loan, but refused to participate with other artists, because "the work that these men are doing is diametrically opposed to what I am doing and so I do not wish to be considered in any way connected to them...it only fills my mind with sadness to see men wasting their lives in producing such useless trash."⁴³

By the late 1850's Avery's affiliation with the wealthy Walters was also well known in the wider New York art world. The dealer's correspondence with artists, which is preserved in a large collection of "Autograph Letters," combines financial dealings with other forms of transaction. There are numerous mentions of works commissioned for the Baltimore collector, such as "the little head for Mr. Walters" that George Augustus Baker had not yet completed. The artist referred to one of two works, the *Little Girl in a Red Bonnet*, an oil on paper rendering in the drawing album (Ill. 1-14) or the full-scale oil on canvas *Portrait of Jennie Walters as a Young Girl*. (Ill. 1-15) It is certainly possible that both works were portraits of Walters' young daughter, who would have been six years old at the time. Baker was also a friend of

⁴² Ibid. n. 36

⁴³ John W. Hill to Samuel Putnam Avery, March 20, 1864. "Autograph Letters," no. 65, Watson Library, the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Kensett from the time the two artists met in Rome in 1845. He was known for “a clear and vivid flesh-tint, a grace of expression, and a beautiful refinement in his portraits.”⁴⁴ A member of the Council of the National Academy of Design and an Academician since 1852, Baker also exhibited at the Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore and at the Pennsylvania Academy in Philadelphia, both places where Walters could have seen his work. As a member of the Maryland Historical Society, Walters loaned works of art to its annual exhibitions. His wife, Ellen Harper Walters, was the daughter of a prosperous Philadelphia merchant, ensuring a certain degree of movement between the two cities and participation, already noted in *The Crayon*, in the Philadelphia art world.

These snippets of communication around Walters’ album illustrate the numerous “registers of value” at work in the emerging American art market. Drawings served social functions for artists and for patrons that transcended normal market mechanisms. That Hill would choose to forgo the exposure at the Sanitary Fair and the potential reward it might garner rather than be allied with others’ work he considered “useless trash,” speaks to an intense personal connection to these works as an extension of his person in the social sphere. That the successful Durand would willingly add a finished drawing onto a painting commission attests to his understanding of the complex dynamics of reciprocity involved in patronage and gift exchange. That Darley’s original drawings for illustrations circulated in a secondary

⁴⁴ Henry T. Tuckerman. *Book of the Artists: American Artist Life, Comprising Biographical and Critical Sketches of American Artists, Preceded by an Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of Art in America*. 1867 (New York: James F. Carr, 1966) p. 489. In 1867 a critic wrote that Baker, Kensett, and Lang “have just formed a most delightful art colony at the new building 1193 Broadway, where they have pitched their easels and surrounded themselves with all the elegances of modern beauty and improvement.” *Watson’s American Art Journal* 6, March 16, 1867. p. 325.

market fueled by insider information (see Chapter 3), testifies to the high value placed on them by collectors as luxury goods. All speak to different facets of social significance and “use value” that artists and collectors attached to works of art. Because they were so closely connected to the hand of the artist (see Chapter 4), drawings manifested more intimate motivations and circulated in a more personal register.

The “troc” of Drawing Collecting

Art historians have long grappled with the complexities of the transactions and interactions that surround works of art. The traditional conceptual frameworks of “market,” “patronage,” or “artist’s circles of influence” require greater scrutiny. They take limited account of the human relationships, societal formation, and individual emotional motivations that are also in play. Taste is a complex matter. Michael Baxandall has pointed out the limitations of the purely economic definition of *market* in the art world, substituting for it the concept of *troc*, which translates from the French as trade, barter, or swap. Writing about Picasso’s Cubist *Portrait of Kahnweiler*, he defined the social aspects of *troc*, which carried, in some cases, more weight than a direct monetary transaction. For Baxandall, *troc* is a system of value that transcends the purely financial to address the many social facets of the interaction between artists and patron. For in the relation of artists and cultures,

the currency is much more diverse than just money: it includes such things as approval, intellectual nurture, and, later, reassurance, provocation, and irritation of stimulating kinds, the articulation of ideas, vernacular visual skills, friendship and...a history of one’s activity and heredity...The painter may choose to take more of one sort of compensation than of another – more of a certain sense of

himself within the history of painting, for instance, than of approval or money. The consumer may choose this rather than that sort of satisfaction. Whatever choice painter or consumer makes will reflect on the market as a whole. It is a pattern of barter, barter primarily of mental goods...I refer to the relation as *troc*.⁴⁵

In his study of the elaborate relationships between printmaking, painting, and photography in nineteenth-century France, art historian Stephen Bann also relies on the concept of *troc*. He uses the term to define the mental habits and conceptual frameworks shared by practitioners of those differing artistic disciplines. For Bann, the collaborations among painters and printmakers in the 20-volume *Voyages pittoresques et romantiques en l'ancienne France* produced in the early nineteenth-century and among artists and photographers in the monumental 1858 *Oeuvre de Paul Delaroche* illustrated with the work of British photographer Robert Jefferson Bingham, constitute “exceptional opportunities for *troc*.” He defines this concept as “a form of relation in which two classes of people, both within the same culture, are free to make choices in the course of an exchange, any choice affecting the universe of the exchange and so the participants.”⁴⁶ Bann’s definition expands those “relations” beyond the artist/practitioners to include the dealers, patrons, and collectors who comprised their art circles.

The trade in ideas and goods that surrounded painted portraits and mahogany furniture in eighteenth-century New England was the subject of a recent analysis by Americanist art historian Margaretta Lovell. With culture as her “quarry,” Lovell illuminates “the interdependent social and economic webs linking local and distant populations of workers, theorists, suppliers, and patrons throughout the mercantile

⁴⁵ Baxandall. *Patterns of Intention*. p. 48

⁴⁶ Stephen Bann. *Parallel Lines*. p. 4.

Atlantic” and which come together in the work of art. What she calls webs, and what Baxandall and Bann would call *troc*, are, for Lovell, “indexical cultural systems” in which objects “are imagined, designed, and made to resolve certain needs, problems, desires for certain class- and gender-defined purchaser-owner-users and therefore they point to those shared needs, problems, and desires.”⁴⁷

The discipline of art history has struggled to incorporate the complexity of this “collaborative social organism”⁴⁸ into the more traditional conceptual frameworks of market or patronage. Both Baxandall and Bann utilize an arcane term of shifting definition because they appear to find their native English wanting for so simple a word or so flexible a concept as *troc*. Works of art, the artists who produce them, and the collectors who assemble them, inhabit entwined social networks, in which economic concepts of supply and demand exist in tandem with individual aesthetic choices and the social norms we call “taste” or “fashion.” While simultaneously accommodating and drawing attention to this complexity, *troc* functions as a container for multiple meanings.

As we will see throughout this study, many of the same “mental goods” that contribute to artists’ choices were also the currency of antebellum drawings collectors. Friendship, social standing, intellectual stimulation, the desire to project to the world an image of refinement and knowledge, all of these motivations adhere, in a particular way, to that collecting enterprise. With such a close link to the artists’ hand, drawings manifest intimacy and connection. This associates their possession

⁴⁷ Lovell, Margaretta M. *Art in a Season of Revolution: Painters, Artisans, and Patrons in Early America*. (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005) pps. 4-7.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* p. 7

with the multi-faceted, “calculative” dimension of the gift.⁴⁹ In that register of exchange, economic interests are hidden, presented as “magnanimity and obligation to veil the intention of securing a return in both a material and an immaterial form.”⁵⁰ The gift of a drawing has ramifications in both directions – a work of limited economic value to the artist holds significant social value for the collector.

A passage by author Henry James gives a view into the *troc* of antebellum New York to which William Walters aspired. James, describing the gatherings in his boyhood parlor around 1850, gives a glimpse into the webs of acquaintance, publicity, and celebrity at work in that artistic and literary circle:

There were ‘artists’ in the prospect – didn’t Mr. Toro Hicks and Mr. Paul Duggan and Mr. C. P. Cranch and Mr. Felix Darley, this last worthy of a wider reputation, capable perhaps even of a finer development, than he attained, more or less haunt our friendly fireside, and give us the sense of others, landscapist Cropseys and Coles and Kensetts, and bust-producing Iveses and Powerses and Moziers, hovering in an outer circle? There were authors not less, some of them vague and female and in this case, as a rule, glossily ringletted and monumentally breastpinned, but mostly frequent and familiar, after the manner of George Curtis and Parke Godwin and George Ripley and Charles Dana and N.P. Willis and, for brighter lights or those that in our then comparative obscurity almost deceived the morn, Mr. Bryant, Washington Irving and E.A. Poe.⁵¹

Drawings as Social Currency: Vattemare’s “Admirable System” of Exchange

The first recorded exhibition of drawings in the United States was from the collection of renowned entertainer and ventriloquist Alexandre Vattemare (1796-

⁴⁹ Appadurai, p. 11.

⁵⁰ Genevieve Warwick. “Gift Exchange and Art Collecting: Padre Sebastiano Testa’s Drawing Albums,” *Art Bulletin* vol. LXXIX, no. 4 (December 1997) p. 634. Warwick seeks to redress art history’s neglect of gift exchange as an important component of art patronage, drawing on the vast anthropological literature.

⁵¹ Henry James. *A Small Boy and Others: A Memoir*. (Chappaqua, N.Y. and London: Turtle Point Press & Gibson Square Books, 2001) p. 31.

1864). Of equal interest as this milestone was the way in which Vattemare used his collection as social currency as he traveled through the country. Soon after he arrived in New York from France in 1839 to promote the goal of international library exchange, he arranged for the exhibition at the National Academy of Design of “his collection of sketches from artists of almost every nation in the civilized world; his autographs from thousands of celebrities, and from every crowned head who had ever written; medals of every nation and period.” According to National Academy chronicler Thomas Seir Cummings, himself an artist and collector of drawings, “It was at once historic and instructive, and one of the most remarkable [exhibitions] ever presented in the city. It appealed principally to the contemplative – to the scholar. It was therefore, as might have been expected, *unsuccessful* in a pecuniary point of view.”⁵²

Vattemare used his drawings as a form of social advertising, as graphic letters of introduction that helped him gain access to the people who both governed and supported the city’s civic institutions. The stated, but ultimately unmet goal of the New York exhibition was to raise funds to create a medal for the Academy to award to a deserving artist each year. However, the potent combination of signature art and philanthropic intent also served as tangible evidence to the New York public of Vattemare’s stature in the royal courts and artistic circles of Europe. His collection was a gentleman’s accessory, attesting to refined artistic tastes and elite antiquarian interests. In the new Republic still unsure of its cultural and artistic status, it opened

⁵² Thomas Seir Cummings. *Historic Annals of the National Academy of Design*. (New York: Kennedy Galleries/Da Capo Press, 1969) p. 156. More information on Vattemare, particularly on his involvement in the founding of the Boston Public Library, is provided in “The First Public Library” *The Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 194 (July 1954) pps. 75-77.

doors. Vattemare's drawings were also evidence on the individual level of the principle of exchange he sought to promote among libraries and among nations.

Vattemare brought to America a portable version of his drawing collection in the form of the *Album Cosmopolite ou Choix des collections de M. Alexandre Vattemare*. (Ill. 1-16) Published in 1837-40, this impressive volume contains lithographs of drawings that had been given to Vattemare on his travels interleaved with pages of facsimile autographs and reproductions of portrait medals. He dedicated the album to the "artists of all nations" whose gifts represented an international exchange of talent. The laudatory introduction by M.P. Henrichs, an attaché in the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, explained to the reader how the album served as memento of Vattemare's wide-ranging travels and exchange enterprise. "Outlines, sketches, drawings, paintings, autographs, compositions in all of the genres offered in remembrance of his joyful soirées, enlarged his baggage daily."

Vattemare's portfolio of drawings testified to the positive reception of his theatrical performances among the artistic and the powerful: "The most illustrious personages wanted to see and hear him...after every success of the artist, new tributes enriched the collection of the amateur."⁵³ The aesthetic response engendered by viewing Vattemare's performance or by looking at his album appears also to have produced a desire for social connection; people wanted to add to the collection and to be counted among its luminaries. In the original album and the published facsimile,

⁵³ "Des esquisses, croquis, dessins, peintures, autographes, compositions de tous les genres offertes en souvenir de ses joyeuses soirées, grossissaient journellement son bagage." "Les personnages les plus illustres ont désiré le voir et l'entendre; aux suffrages de tant d'autres ils ont aussie ajouté le leur...A chaque succès de l'artiste de nouveaux tributs venaient enrichir la collection de l'amateur." M. P. Henrichs. *Album Cosmopolite*. (Paris: 1837-40)

as well as in the exhibition at the National Academy of Design, drawings, autographs, and the likenesses reproduced on portrait medals carried equal weight in the service of social presentation.

The inscriptions on drawings reproduced in the *Album Cosmopolite* often referred self-consciously to the objective of inclusion and the forging of bonds. *The Dream (Le Songe)*, a medieval scene set into a frame of neo-Gothic tracery, is signed “Adolphe Fries à son ami Alexandre Vattemar.” (Ill. 1-17 and 1-18) A depiction of the *Virgin of Lurley (La Vierge de Lurley)*, “legend from the banks of the Rhine” by M. Bégas of Berlin was singled out in the text as having been “made especially, in 1831, to ornament the rich album of M. Alexandre.” (Ill. 1-19) The handwritten inscription, lithographed on the print’s border, has the informality of an entry in an autograph album.

Grandville’s *Walter Scott, Sheriff lisant le Riot Act à Alexandre-Rassemblement* (Ill. 1-20) was originally produced as a color lithograph for *Le Charivari* to illustrate a brief entry by the famous writer Sir Walter Scott about the many-faceted identity of his actor friend. “It seems to me that you should at least be called Alexandre & Company. But no, it is a troupe, a meeting, a crowd; and I, as sheriff, I must perform the duties of my position. Yes, instead of singing your praises, I must read the *Riot Act* and command you to disperse.”⁵⁴ The image in the *Album Cosmopolite* sets outline caricatures of Vattemare costumed for multiple

⁵⁴ “Il me semble que vous devez être au moins Alexandre et Compagnie. Mais non: c’est une troupe, une reunion, un rassemblement; et moi, sheriff, je dois remplir les devoirs de ma place. Oui, au lieu de chanter toutes vos merveilles, je devrais lire le *riot-act* et vous ordonner de vous disperser.” Sir Walter Scott became a good friend of Vattemare when the performer lived and worked in England in the 1820’s. Quoted in Suzanne Nash, “Alexandre Vattemare: A Nineteenth-Century Story” www.sdn.ac.uk/dixneuf/september04/nash/vattemare

theatrical roles ranging from old lady, to admiral, to Persian pascha, into a Highlands scene. The inscription in the artist's hand, once again adds to the impression of looking at a memento drawn into an album. It reads "Souvenir of friendship given to M. Alexandre and company by one of his countless admirers, Marly le Roi, July 1831. J. J. Grandville." Such tangible evidence of a personal connection to an author so universally revered and widely read as Sir Walter Scott would certainly have impressed Vattemare's new American acquaintances.

Throughout the album, captions emphasize the spirit of artistic exchange, and inscriptions and signatures serve to identify and place the artist in the charmed Vattemare circle. Landseer's *Dying Stag (Cerf Mourant)* (Ill. 1-21) is a signature work by the British animal artist, executed in vibrant pen and wash that echoes the violent entanglement of the stag and hound. The artist's energetic line and distinctive autograph support the dynamic of the scene. His signature's spikes and flourishes mirror the points of the stag's branching antlers and the forward-falling movement of the two animals.

If the examples of royalty, literary personages, and famous artists was not enough to give social imprimatur to Vattemare's enterprise, the final pages of the *Album Cosmopolite* published an international listing of subscribers, including such Americans as President Martin Van Buren, a General Henderson from Texas, Mr. Alfred Moret of the Library of New Orleans, and Dr. Tucker of New York. (Ill. 1-22.) The example set forth in the album text and in the National Academy exhibition persuaded New York's artists to assemble their own gift for Vattemare. As the Frenchman prepared to leave New York, a number of Academy members presented

him with a *National Album* containing drawings, including “a view of the Hamilton and Burr dueling ground” below the cliffs at Weehawken contributed by Thomas Seir Cummings.⁵⁵

In the course of his American travels of 1840, Vattermare made his way south to Baltimore, where his drawings collection gained him entry to the home of one of the country’s most distinguished art collectors. The contact with Robert Gilmore must have been congenial, for it initiated both a correspondence and an artistic exchange.

On August 2, 1840, Gilmore wrote to his new acquaintance:

Agreeably to my promise yesterday, when you gratified me with a view of your beautiful collection of drawings by the artists of the (illegible) of Europe, of France, of England, I now send you a specimen of W.G. Wall’s drawings, which I hope will prove acceptable. I also send you an autograph of the two Presidents you wanted viz. M. Madison and M. Monroe, and one of John Hancock, President of Congress and first signer of the Declaration of Independence. These I would not have parted with to anyone but yourself, that your collection may be as complete as possible.

Gilmore understood and exploited the code of reciprocity; in the same communication, he requested “a single specimen of the Japanese birds,” asking that Vattermare carefully cut one off from him from a sheet holding several examples. Gilmore’s participation in exchange did not, however, extend to joining in on Vattermare’s grand library project. While supporting it “in principle,” he stated that advanced age and other occupations precluded his active involvement.⁵⁶

Other Baltimore community leaders took up the cause of exchange with greater enthusiasm. Meetings were held of a “Committee on the Library” and

⁵⁵ Cummings, page 157.

⁵⁶ Robert Gilmore to Alexandre Vattermare, August 2, 1840. Vattermare Papers. MS 1452. The Maryland Historical Society.

speeches of support were published in *The Pilot*, *The American*, and *The Patriot*. Nonetheless, the institutional infrastructure was not yet in place in Baltimore to facilitate the “admirable system” Vattemare had in mind. His proposal appears instead to have had a longer-term influence on the thoughts and aspirations of the Baltimore leaders he met and sought to persuade. Many of them were among the founders, four years later, of the institution that finally arose and took hold. The Maryland Historical Society opened in 1847 in an Atheneum building built by subscription. In recognition of his instigatory role, Vattemare was elected an Honorary Member in January 1845, even before the building opened.

Drawings helped to extend the social connections between Vattemare and other Baltimore citizens. In addition to the work by William Guy Wall from Gilmor, the Frenchman received another drawing as a gift and memento soon after his initial visit. Mrs. Robert Cary Long, Jr., wife of the American architect, wrote in September of 1840 asking that he accept “the enclosed production of a Baltimore pencil for your collection, as a humble testimonial of the sympathy and regard of one who has resolved never to find fault with the world or the age which can produce one spirit so truehearted, self-devoted, and philanthropic as Mon. Vattemare.”⁵⁷ The drawing, of the Neo-Gothic stone entrance gateway to the pastoral Greenmount Cemetery designed by Long and built in the same year of his wife’s letter, is inscribed “to Alexandre Vattemare Esq. from Robert Cary Long, Arch.”⁵⁸ (Ill. 1-23) For his

⁵⁷ Mrs. Robert Cary Long to Alexandre Vattemare, September 29, 1840. Vattemare Papers.

⁵⁸ The drawing (37.1944) is in the collection of the Walters Art Museum. It was most likely not acquired during William Walters’ collecting campaign before the Civil War. Vattemare died in France in 1864. The American portions of his collection were purchased by John Bigelow at that time, and presented by him to the Maryland Historical Society in 1890. Walters, who lived in France from 1861-1864, may have purchased the drawing from Bigelow’s estate.

design, Long adopted the Gothic Revival style then coming into vogue in America, and which he had seen reinforced, in graphic form, in the works by Nazarene artist Adophe Fries in the *Album Cosmopolite*. (Ills. 1-17 and 1-24)

Brantz Mayer, the first president of the Maryland Historical Society, wrote Vattemare soon after its founding, with an official request to “not forget the Historical Society in the distribution of such works of value, engravings, medals, etc. as may be placed in your hands to be sent to the United States.” On a personal note, he asked Vattemare to acquire for him an engraving by genre artist Sir David Wilkie. His nephew Frank Blackwell Mayer, who assembled his own album of drawings exchanged with fellow artists, sent Vattemare examples of Revolutionary-era currency from Maryland and Virginia “trusting that they may assist you in completing your collection.”⁵⁹

Vattemare’s progress along the Eastern seaboard included a visit to Washington, D.C., where he appears to have given a drawing by Frederick S. Agate, *Indians Lamenting the Approach of the White Man*, (Ill. 1-25) to James C. Maguire, whom the Frenchman would have recognized as a leader among that city’s arts patrons and as a collector of American drawings.⁶⁰ This drawing by the curator and instructor of drawing of the National Academy of Design, was likely among the works in the *National Album* given to Vattemare by New York artists earlier that year. In this exchange of graphic “currency,” Vattemare used a drawing he received as a gift in New York to serve his social purposes in Washington.

⁵⁹ Brants Mayer to Alexandre Vattemare, June 8, 1845. Frank Blackwell Mayer to Alexandre Vattemare, June 12, 1850. Vattemare Papers.

⁶⁰ Kevin J. Avery. *American Drawings and Watercolors in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002) p. 165-166.

The Collector in the Capital: The Maguire Scrapbook

James C. Maguire (1812-1888) assembled his “scrapbook” of American drawings during the course of a long career in Washington, D.C. Like William Walters, Maguire was a businessman, and his album was not an expression of personal artistic production but a record of his contact with artists. Like all of the albums addressed in this study, Maguire’s manifests a particular social history, much of which, for lack of written evidence, can only be discerned from details of the artists’ biographies and from the works of art themselves. Each album is filled with mysteries: whom do the portraits depict, what sentimental associations or memories did certain landscapes carry, how did genre scenes encode political or social messages lost to our twenty-first century eyes? What is clear is that the drawings manifest relationships of friendship as well as patronage and purchase. They bespeak Maguire’s professional involvement with publishing and art sales and his place at the center of the small but dynamic art world of the capital city.

Born in Westmoreland County, east of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Maguire came to Washington as a young man and found employment as a bookbinder. By mid-century, he owned the city’s largest bookbinding establishment, and was involved in auctions and in other merchant activity.⁶¹ At the center of Washington art circles, like Avery in Brooklyn, “his house and table were for many years open to the many well-known artists visiting this city.”⁶² His drawings album, “one volume

⁶¹ “The Benning-Maguire House: E Street and Neighborhood” in *Records of the Columbia Historical Society*. Vol. 33-34 (Washington, D.C.: Columbia Historical Society, 1932) p. 106

⁶² Obituary of James C. Maguire. *The Star Courier*, August 27, 1888.

containing 82 Oil Sketches, Water-colors, Sepia and Pencil Drawings”⁶³

memorializes those visits and the vibrant art commerce of the capital.

Although Maguire left no written record of his contacts with artists, the catalogue of his estate sale indicates that he was also a collector of paintings and of autographs. Maguire’s taste in drawings was a bit more forgiving than Walters’; his album contains numerous unfinished works while the latter favored a more highly-finished execution. A number of the works in Maguire’s album are sketches and preliminary designs. For example, one work by Emmanuel Leutze (1816-1868) has been linked to the artist’s participation in the New York Sketch Club. Titled *The Last Drop*, this graphite drawing with ink outlines depicts a Native American scooping a drink of water from a pool of water. (Ill. 1-26) Sprawled in a pose reminiscent of Hellenistic sculpture, the figure is depicted as inert, non-threatening, and extinguished. It embodies the idea of the native population as a “dying race” that influenced both artistic depictions and public policy in the antebellum period.⁶⁴

Other works by Leutze owned by Maguire were equally unfinished, including designs created for other purposes, such as a *Sketch for a Lifesaving Medal*. Many of the sheets in the scrapbook are sketchbook pages containing several unrelated drawings by an individual artist. Perhaps it was Maguire’s activity in publishing, in which he very likely commissioned illustrations from artists, through which he developed an interest in the evidence of artistic process. Rather than

⁶³ *Catalogue of the Collection of Paintings, Statuary, Bronzes, &c. belonging to the Estate of the Late James C. Maguire.* (Washington, D.C.: Thomas Dowling, auctioneer, 1888?)

⁶⁴ Avery, p. 212 and Kathryn S. Hight. “Doomed to Perish”: George Catlin’s Depictions of the Mandan” in Marianne Doezema and Elizabeth Milroy, eds. *Reading American Art.* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998)pps. 150-162.

purchasing these works, he also very likely received them as gifts directly from the artist – and took what he was given.

One of the thrills of collecting is certainly the possession of objects among which relationships can be drawn. As Baudrillard has pointed out, “the fulfillment of the project of possession always means a succession or even a complete series of objects.”⁶⁵ In an album of drawings, such relationships added to the potential narrative experienced while leafing through the pages. If Maguire enjoyed that fulfillment, he must have taken pleasure in uniting works by two brothers in his album. The drawing of *The Tahitian Chief Otores* (ca. 1839) is by Alfred Thomas Agate, younger brother of Frederick Styles Agate, whose drawing *Vattemare* passed on to McGuire. Carefully rendered in delicate hatching, it is in the oval vignette form with the sitter’s signature beneath which was conventional in contemporary portrait engravings. (Ill. 1-27) The younger Agate had taken part in the United States South Seas Surveying and Exploring Expedition, a four-year voyage beginning in 1838. He settled in Washington upon his return and produced a number of the illustrations for Captain Charles Wilkes’ *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition*. The portrait of Otores may have been intended for that book (it is inscribed “for text vignette” below the signature) but it was not included in the final published version.

The contents of Maguire’s album serve as a reminder that although New York was most certainly the center of antebellum-period art activity, many artists were drawn to Washington, D.C. by the possibility of congressional commissions and access to wealthy private patrons in the seat of power. Maguire collected drawings from many of the artists who passed through the capital city. The painter Thomas

⁶⁵ Baudrillard, p. 86.

Doughty (1793-1856), a pioneer among American landscape artists, had a brother who was an accomplished draftsman for the United States Navy. William Doughty exhibited a large collection of his younger brother's work at his Washington home. Maguire's Doughty drawing, *River Scene* of 1840, is an example of the way in which the artist incorporated the picturesque tradition after his visit to England in 1837.⁶⁶ (Ill. 1-28)

Doughty's contemporary, the Boston-based artist Alvin Fisher, was in Washington in spring of 1838, where he noted having "disposed of" a number of paintings, some by lottery.⁶⁷ Maguire likely purchased the paintings *Landscape with Cattle* and *Interior of a Barn, with Cattle* at that time. The 1836 drawing by Fisher, *Scene with Dogs* (Ill. 1-29) was probably a gift from the artist to the collector. It is quickly and sketchily-rendered; the foliage is executed in broad cross-hatching and the two dogs are indicated with minimal modeling, the focus on their strange, pinpoint eyes. This would have been considered a signature work for the artist, who had written of his animal studies in Dunlap two years before:

I then began painting a species of pictures which had not been practiced much, if any, in this country, viz: barnyard scenes and scenes belonging to rural life, winter pieces, portraits of animals, etc. This species of painting being novel in this part of the country, I found it a more lucrative, pleasant and distinguished branch of the art than portrait painting...and as advantageous as any other to my reputation as an artist.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Avery, p. 144, n. 1.

⁶⁷ Sona K. Johnston. *American Paintings 1750-1900 from the Collection of the Baltimore Museum of Art*. (Baltimore: The Baltimore Museum of Art, 1983) p. 64.

⁶⁸ William T. Dunlap, *A History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States*. (1834. Reprinted Boston: C.E. Goodspeed & Co., 1918) vol. 3. pps 32-33.

After the sudden death of Henry Inman in 1846, the artist William Henry Powell was awarded the opportunity to complete his teacher's commission for the Rotunda of the United States Capital in 1848. Powell's *Self-Portrait at Fifteen* in the Maguire album is signed and dated 1837.

The Soldier's Farewell, an outline sketch by Emanuel Leutze in ink and graphite in Maguire's album, is inscribed Washington, 4/59. The artist made several trips to the capital in the 1850s and 1860's, having secured the commission for the Rotunda of *Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way*. Leutze was also aware of the art interest of William Walters in Baltimore, dropping the collector a note about coming to visit in October of 1859.⁶⁹

Maguire's album contains a number of works by artists born or based in Washington, including Henry Johnson Brent (1811-1880) and John Cranch (1807-1891). John Mix Stanley (1814-1872), another expedition artist, is represented by a large-scale pencil sketch of a seated man wearing moccasins, with a rifle by his side. It is inscribed "Low. Loose. Jim Conner. Texas March 21 '43." (Ill. 1-30)

Charles Lanman (1819-1895), whom Washington Irving called "the picturesque explorer of our country," settled in Washington in 1848.⁷⁰ The two works by Lanman in Maguire's album, *Indians Returning from the Hunt* (1840) (Ill. 1-31) and *Landscape* (n.d.) (Ill. 1-32), are carefully-composed and highly-finished drawings in graphite that attest to the artist's engraving training with Asher B. Durand and to the publication of his illustrations of the American landscape as engravings. The accomplished Lanman worked as the librarian of the War Department, the

⁶⁹ WTW to JFK, October 9, 1859.

⁷⁰ Rossiter, p. 220.

Department of the Interior, the U.S. House of Representatives, and the Washington city library. He catalogued the art collection of Maguire's friend William Wilson Corcoran in 1857 and continued to paint, often visiting the Long Island home of his friends William Sidney Mount (1807-1868) and Shepard Alonzo Mount (1804-1868).⁷¹

Lanman was also a collector of drawings. In response to William Sidney's inquiry, he wrote in 1841 "My Sketch Book flourishes. I have received a noble drawing from Eastlake of England, and also two from the great Cooper, the cattle painter. They are all magnificent."⁷² Several such references to Lanman's sketchbook, long since disassembled and its contents dispersed, provide an unusual body of evidence about the movement of drawings from one collection to another and from the register of gift exchange into the art market.

It is likely that the works by the Mount brothers in Maguire's collection, as well as his two cow drawings by Cooper, came from Lanman. Both drawings by William Sidney Mount evoke the Long Island artist's life, *Artist Sketching at Stony Brook, New York*, dated 1840, (Ill. 1-33) and *Landscape with Figure*. (Ill. 1-34) In each, it is possible to read the top-hatted figure as Lanman, the artist's frequent visitor from the city. These are the types of drawings the brothers Mount produced, often using those around them as models. For example, when they turned their pencils on each other, they produced such portrait drawings as Shepard's *William Sidney Mount*

⁷¹ Avery, p. 323. There is evidence throughout their extensive correspondence of the detailed interest Lanman took in William Sidney Mount's work. See Alfred Frankenstein. *Painter of Rural America: William Sidney Mount 1807-1868*. (Stony Brook, Long Island: The Suffolk Museum, 1968) pps. 29, 34, 35 and 42.

⁷² Charles Lanman to William Sidney Mount, September 25, 1841 in Alfred Frankenstein. *William Sidney Mount*. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1975) p. 111.

Painting 'Cider Making' and William's intimate sketch of his brother. (Ill. 1-35) The five drawings by Shepard Alonzo Mount in the Maguire album are similarly evocative of the artist's Long Island home, including two sketches of cows titled *Fly Time*, a drawing of *Wild Geese from Nature* and a study of the *Studio of William S. Mount*. (Ill. 1-36)

However, it is another, unusual drawing by Shepard that appears to reveal Lanman as the intermediary. Both Mount brothers were on intimate terms with this friend, and their letters touch on several occasions on the subject of "lovely" women, "one of God's noblest works."⁷³ In the context of antebellum drawing albums, in which a parlor decorum reigned, *Back of a Woman* (Ill. 1-37), with its unlaced bodice, loosened hair, and expanse of bare flesh, has a striking, for the period even shocking, sensuality. The expectation of the giver would certainly have been that such a provocative image would remain hidden within the Sketch Book covers to be shown only in a private moment. But Lanman appears to have sold the entire album to William Colman, whose artists' supply shop and print dealership was a public gathering place for New York's artists and patrons. This helps to explain the admonishing tone of William Sidney Mount's letter of May 1843:

By, the by, there is a great sensation in town among some of the Artists respecting a particular Sketch Book to be seen at Colman's. I fortunately heard of it just before I left and consequently happened in to Mr. Colman's, and, without my asking, he told me he had a pencil sketch of mine, and also some of my Brother Shepard's. I told him it was impossible – he described them all and his manner of getting them etc. Then if I could have put my grapplings upon you, we would have had one grand flourish. How you can reconcile yourself to your Brother Artists, I

⁷³ Mount to Lanman, January 23, 1841. Frankenstein, p. 106.

am not able to tell, unless you redeem the sketches, which I would do, if it took my last shirt.⁷⁴

Although some of the language is opaque to our modern eyes, it is clear that Lanman had breached the etiquette of drawing exchange. Mount was annoyed to find sketches given as gifts in the possession of a tradesman, even one whose artists' supply shop and art dealership was best known as the place of Thomas Cole's "discovery" in 1825.

It appears unlikely that Lanman "redeemed" the sketches from William Colman. The seven-day estate auction of Colman's considerable holdings seven years later included "Pencil Drawings by the first Artists," and "a large and entirely unique Scrap Book, mostly original American and English drawings."⁷⁵ Soon thereafter, in a letter of April 25, 1850, Lanman wrote to William Sidney Mount with

some good news to tell you about my "Scrap Book," which Colman got away from me, and which I could never get back. I tried hard to buy it, at any price, from his brother some weeks ago, but could not as a whole. A portion of the sketches and some of the very best I did secure, and am now hoping to get the whole. My collection, as it now stands, is very rich, and it will be a long time before they slip away from me again.⁷⁶

It is impossible to discern whether Lanman gave or sold these drawings to William Maguire in Washington or if Maguire purchased them from the Colman auction directly.

Like Walters, Maguire also collected drawings from artists from whom he purchased paintings. From George Augustus Baker, he acquired the painting *Spring*,

⁷⁴ Mount to Lanman, May 20, 1843. Frankenstein, p. 114.

⁷⁵ *Catalogue of Books, Drawings, Paintings, Engravings and Statuary at Auction, with order of the Assignee and Administrator of the late William A. Colman, Long known as a Collector and Dealer in Rare Books and Works of Art, by Cooley and Keese (John Keese, auctioneer) at No. 304 Broadway, New-York commencing on Wednesday, 10th of April, and continued for Seven Days.* Collection of the American Antiquarian Society.

⁷⁶ Frankenstein, p. 124.

as well as three “heads” and a sketchbook page. He owned the Asher B. Durand painting *Landscape, Raritan Canal* as well as a handsome landscape drawing. This graphite on paper work features the prominent foreground tree and receding background so characteristic of this artist. Maguire also patronized the banker/genre painter Francis William Edmonds. His collection contained a painting of an *Organ Grinder*, as well as two works on paper, a droll pencil drawing of a *Dog* and a study for his well-known temperance message painting *Facing the Enemy*. (Ill. 1-38)

The complex social evidence of Maguire’s album includes a notable concentration of works by artists associated with the city of Cincinnati. Washington painter John Cranch worked there in 1839, writing his friend Lanman that he was scraping along “tolerably well, considering the bad and wicked times.” William H. Powell also painted in Cincinnati for a short time.⁷⁷ William Apthorp Adams, a Cincinnati attorney, amateur artist, and friend of Thomas Cole, exhibited pen and ink sketches at the National Academy of Design in 1842. Maguire owned his *Hunter*, a fanciful half-length portrait of a man, from whose torso project, in a form of backwoods heraldry, the heads of a lion, an eagle, a wood duck and a dog. (Ill. 1-39) The menagerie is completed by a frog at his shoulder. This artist, now obscure, was represented in the collection of John Mackie Falconer, himself a close friend of Cole, with a Rembrandtesque ink *Head of an Old Man*. (Ill. 1-40)

Maguire appears to have assembled drawings as mementi. Like graphic autographs, these works of art document contact with the ever-changing circles of artists that flowed through the city of Washington. They are visual reminders of

⁷⁷ Lillian B. Miller. *Patrons and Patriotism: The Encouragement of the Fine Arts in the United States, 1790-1860*. (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1966) p. 189.

social contacts, of large-scale Congressional commissions that attracted talent to the capital, and of travel and visiting among artists and patrons. Along with the visual pleasure enjoyed from leafing through his album, Maguire would have derived position and status from this accumulation of social currency.

Auctions and ‘Art Circles:’ The Dynamics of Walters’ Early Collecting

William T. Walters’ album of drawings provides another example of the complex social history and potential layers of meaning of assembled works of art. After arriving in Baltimore in 1841, he began to participate in a cultural life in which art collecting and exchange were established mechanisms of social interaction and personal display.

By the mid-1850s, with his business thriving, Walters had taken his place among the city’s elite, moving his young family into a grand townhouse at 5 West Mount Vernon Place. There he began to participate in the organizations that defined Baltimore’s cultural life. He joined the Maryland Historical Society in 1856, and loaned works of art to its annual exhibitions. He also became a member of the Allston Association which met in the home of artist Frank Blackwell Mayer.⁷⁸ How Baltimore society viewed Walters, whose rapidly-accumulating fortune was built on liquor distributing and commission merchant activity, is difficult to know. It is clear, however, that he observed and absorbed the role that art played in social standing. He understood that in this stratum of antebellum society, acquaintance with artists and possession of their works added élan and burnished reputation.

⁷⁸ William R. Johnston. *William and Henry Walters, The Reticent Collectors* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999) p. 5, 12.

The first evidence of Walters' activity as a collector is his participation in auctions. These most public and social forms of acquisition are as much a means of establishing and projecting social reputation as of exchanging goods. By putting himself forward as a bidder in art auctions, in which the participants in the competition and the prices paid for works of art were made public, he placed himself among the elite group taking part in such "tournaments of value."

Walters had the opportunity to view and to bid on a grand collection of art on May 15, 1855 at the auction of the holdings of Granville Sharp Oldfield at his home in Mount Vernon Place. The event was promoted with hyperbole as the sale of a "choice and valuable Collection of Paintings surpassed by few Galleries in Europe, in numerous Gems of Cabinet-size – the labor of forty years of collecting, at an outlay of a large fortune." The auction catalogue listed the 658 lots as they were hung on the walls of Oldfield's home, offering William Walters then (and us now) unusual access to an installation of art in a grand domestic setting. The Entrance Hall, for example, contained "twelve Original whole length Portraits...obtained in Paris during the French Revolution" of such luminaries as Robespierre, Danton, Thomas Paine and Lafayette.⁷⁹

From among the many copies and many optimistically attributed Old Masters in the sale, Walters acquired *Guinea Pigs* by Baltimore animal painter Hugh Newell which hung in a back bedroom. At the end of the auction, after bidding against the likes of merchant Johns Hopkins, banker Thomas Swann, and Robert Gilmore relative S. Owings Hoffmann, Walters had accumulated a number of copies of Old Master

⁷⁹ *Catalogue of Valuable Paintings, the entire collection of Mr. Granville Sharp Oldfield, at his residence, Mt. Vernon Place, Baltimore, to be sold without reserve at public sale on Tuesday Morning, 15th May, 1855.* (Baltimore: F.W. Bennett & Co., auctioneers)

works, a painting of cattle by British artist Thomas Sidney Cooper, and two scenes by British marine artist J.W. Yarnold. It is very possible that Walters made the acquaintance of his Washington contemporary James C. Maguire at this time. They had in common the purchase of works by Yarnold – Maguire acquired *Rocks at Etretat – Coast of Normandy* in the sale – and by Cooper – Maguire’s Scrapbook held three pencil drawings, *Farm Landscape*, *Village Landscape*, and *Study of a Boy*.⁸⁰ After the Civil War, the two collectors would serve together as founding Trustees of the Corcoran Gallery of Art.

Unlike a commission transacted between a patron and an artist or a purchase made through an intermediary, art auctions are a theatrical, public forum, with defined roles, specific props, and an established vocabulary of gesture. Arjun Appadurai has coined the phrase “tournaments of value” for these “complex periodic events that are removed in some culturally well-defined way from the routines of economic life. Participation in them is likely to be both a privilege of those in power and an instrument of status contests between them.”⁸¹ Participation in auctions is both a measure of privilege and a sign of confidence in one’s strategic skill.

Because they are focused on inessential luxury objects, art auctions are particularly layered with social ritual. They constitute “play” on a field established for a select group. According to Jean Baudrillard, an art auction

institutes a concrete community of exchange among peers. Whoever the vanquisher in the challenge, the essential function of the auction is

⁸⁰ Maguire sale catalogue, p. 14 and Avery, p. 300-301. Maguire may have acquired two of the Cooper drawings from the “sketchbook” of Charles Lanman (see above.) Cooper was prized by American collectors, including John Wolfe, Esq., whose two pictures, “one a flock of sheep; the other, cattle, sheep, and goats” were mentioned in the profile of his collection in the January 1856 issue of *The Crayon*.

⁸¹ Appadurai, p. 21

the institution of a community of the privileged who define themselves as such by agonistic speculation upon a restricted corpus of signs. Competition of the aristocratic sort seals their *parity*...their collective caste privilege with respect to all others.⁸²

A contemporary account in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* in 1856 described such a community, emphasizing the efficiency and camaraderie with which auction business was transacted:

No one can attend these book-sales without being highly impressed with the good understanding that seems to exist among all parties concerned. It is very common for publishers to act as volunteer auctioneers of their own books, and intersperse their labors with speeches that are fine specimens of wit and good feeling; altogether the sales are colloquial and sociable, and it is astonishing that so much business can be done with so little seeming restraint and apparent want of discipline; the close observer, however, will notice that there presides over all, the quick eye and attentive ear of the clerks, and at nightfall, when the labors of the day are closed, everything is correctly down in black and white.⁸³

Another contemporary account took an opposing view, disdaining the public display of the auction:

Oh, we wish we had a pen so powerful as would touch the callous souls of men who profess to be patronizers of arts – and who buy largely at public sales, when their names can be called out so all the curs in literaturodom will say – there is an antiquarian – there is a man who pays big prices for books at auction, but nowhere else.⁸⁴

⁸² Jean Baudrillard. *For a critique of the political economy of the sign*. (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1981) p. 117.

⁸³ *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*. (April 5, 1856) "New York's Trade Sales"

⁸⁴ "A Week Among Autographs" by Rev. S. Gilman in Caroline Gilman. *The Poetry of Traveling in the United States*. (New York: S. Coleman, 141 Nassau Street, 1838) p. 19

“Enlightened Liberality:” Making a Name in New York Art Circles

Walters began to spread his wings beyond Baltimore into the New York art world in the late 1850's. Although it was certainly business matters that took him to the northern city for periodic visits throughout the decade, collecting art and pursuing the acquaintance of artists soon became an important ancillary activity. In December of 1858, he gave “an unlimited order to buy” at the Artists' Fund Society auction sale to benefit the widow and children of genre painter William Ranney. This instruction was very likely given to Samuel Putnam Avery, who was known to attend the frequent New York auctions faithfully.⁸⁵ *The New York Times* of December 22 reported that Walters had acquired several paintings, among them a small work, *Morning in the Tropics*, by Frederic Edwin Church, for which he paid \$555, the highest price at the sale. (Ill. 1-41) Aware of the public nature of his purchase, Walters wrote self-deprecatingly to Kensett of his “foolery” for paying “very dear,” indeed he could “write *myself* down like Dogberry – an ass.” As ridiculous as he may have felt about over-spending, however, he perceived the cause, supporting “the widows and orphans and beneficiaries,” as worthy.⁸⁶ After this foray, Walters began to be noticed by the art press, with notices about his collecting in *The Crayon* and for the commissions he dispensed “with an enlightened liberality rarely met in America” in the *Cosmopolitan Art Journal*.⁸⁷

Perhaps it was to reward Walters for his extravagant support at the Ranney sale that Church contributed a drawing to “the greatest book” the next year. Entitled

⁸⁵ Fidell-Beaufort. p. xiv.

⁸⁶ WTW to Kensett, December 24, 1858.

⁸⁷ Johnston, p. 21.

A Ruined Church in the Tropics, and dated “Dec ’59,” it is a carefully-executed pencil drawing of a South American scene. (Ill. 1-42) A belltower, overgrown with foliage and flanked by an abandoned hut occupies the foreground, while a volcano looms behind. The assurance of Church’s hand is reflected in the strong linear structure of parallel strokes in the sky, the mountain, and the foliage. Washes of Chinese white create patches of sunlight on the adobe, and in the trees and clouds.

The visual word play on the artist’s last name in the subject of the drawing was very likely intentional. As early as 1848, Church signed his name with a pictograph of a simple church. (Ill. 1-43) He played a similar game with his submission to the tribute album presented in November 1864 on the occasion of his seventieth birthday to William Cullen Bryant by artist members of the Century Club. For this album, Church produced an oil sketch of *A Century Plant at Cotopaxi, Ecuador*, wittily memorializing the club context within a “signature” South American scene.⁸⁸ (Ill. 1-44)

When New York art patron Charles M. Leupp (1807-1859) took his own life in 1859, Walters appears to have known the circumstances, writing to Kensett “How horrible that was about poor Leupp.”⁸⁹ Leupp’s stature as an American collector was assured; his holdings had been publicized in the series on prominent collectors in *The Crayon* in 1856. Walters had certainly paid attention to that imprimatur and the listings of artists; of the twenty Americans mentioned in Leupp’s collection, Walters would own works by seven. Never an adventuresome collector intent on discovering

⁸⁸ A. Hyatt Mayor and Mark Davis. *American Art at the Century*, (New York: Century Association, 1977) p. 8

⁸⁹ WTW to Kensett, October 9, 1859.

and encouraging new talent, his interest was in accumulating examples by those who already enjoyed elite patronage and approbation from the media. (See Chapter 4)

Eighty-two paintings were listed in the auction catalogue for Leupp's estate sale on Tuesday, November 20, 1860, among them works by "Stuart, Cole, Durand, Leutze, Church, Kensett, Mount, Page, Huntington, Chapman, Edmonds, Audubon, Baker, Casilear, and many other Artists of Celebrity." The framed engravings for sale included numerous American examples, such as a colored proof of *Niagara* "after Church," *Sparking and Facing the Enemy* "after Edmonds," and *Washington Crossing the Delaware* "after Leutze."⁹⁰ Although it cannot be proved that Walters attended the auction sale, Avery certainly did, along with his friends George Augustus Baker and Louis Lang, both of whom submitted successful bids.⁹¹ The small-scale painting of *Kenilworth Castle* purchased by Leupp directly from the artist Thomas Cole was likely acquired at the estate auction by Walters' fellow Baltimorean B&O railroad investor John Work Garrett.⁹² The painting was described in the auction catalogue as depicting "stately ruins...fitly delineated in the noble style of the great artist."

⁹⁰ E. H. Ludlow, *Auctioneer. Catalogue of Valuable Paintings and Engravings, being the entire gallery of the late Charles M. Leupp, Esq., among which are the works of Jordaens, Greuze, Vandyck, Watteau, Giordano, Panini, Preziosi, Robbe, De Block, Eckhout, Ommeganck, Stuart, Cole, Durand, Leutze, Church, Kensett, Mount, Page, Huntington, Chapman, Edmonds, Audubon, Baker, Casilear, and many other Artists of Celebrity. To be sold at auction, by E. H. Ludlow & Co., On Tuesday, November 13, 1860, at 7 1/2 o'clock, P.M., (or if the 13th is stormy, on the first succeeding fair Evening,) at the National Academy of Design, northwest corner of 10th Street and Fourth Avenue.* New York Public Library, Stuart Collection.

⁹¹ James T. Callow. "American Art in the collection of Charles M. Leupp," *Antiques* 118. (November, 1980) pps. 998-1009.

⁹² For Leupp's purchase, see Elwood C. Parry. *The Art of Thomas Cole: Ambition and Imagination.* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1988) p. 326. For a listing of "T. Cole's small "Kenilworth" in the Garrett Collection, see Edward Strahan. *The Art Treasures of America.* vol. 1. (Philadelphia: G. Barrie, 1879-1882) p. 80.

As was fairly typical in auction listings of the period, no drawings were included in the Leupp catalogue. However, one graphic work in Walters' album may have had a connection to that famed collection. *Rydal Falls*, a pen and ink dated August 28th, 1844, can be attributed to Henry Inman, who visited the poet William Wordsworth at Rydal Mount in Cumbria that summer, and whose engraver's precision is manifest in the execution. (Ill. 1-45) The image was well-known, as Leupp exhibited his Inman painting of the same subject at the National Academy of Design in 1845 and in the memorial exhibition held to benefit the artist's survivors the following year.⁹³

The one documented purchase Walters made from the Leupp sale returned to Baltimore a work of distinguished provenance. A portrait by Gilbert Stuart of "Mr. Barry, H.B.M. Consul at Baltimore," it was described in the catalogue as "one of those remarkable proofs of Stuart's power of painting flesh. Came from Mr. Gilmor's collection."⁹⁴ Walters owned a number of drawings from the Gilmor collection, including holographs by Benjamin West, Washington Allston, Charles Robert Leslie, and Samuel F.B. Morse, and portraits by Thomas Sully and Rembrandt Peale. Walters' *Landscape with Ruins* by Thomas Cole could have been obtained

⁹³ William H. Gerdtz and Carrie Reborz. *The Art of Henry Inman*. (Washington, D.C.: The National Portrait Gallery, 1987) pps. 53-54, 142. That notoriety didn't necessarily translate into market value, as *Rydal Water* sold for only \$45 at the estate auction to John Taylor Johnston later in the century. Callow, "American Art in the collection of Charles M. Leupp" p. 998. Here is another link to Avery, who may have represented Walters and Johnston at the Leupp auction. An annotated copy of the catalogue of the John D. Wolfe sale of December 22, 1863 in the collection of the American Antiquarian Society notes Avery's bids for Johnston for works from the "German School," the Belgian and Dutch Schools," and the "French School." In its write-up of Wolfe in the first installment of "Our Private Collectors" in January of 1856, *The Crayon* praised the collector for "uncommonly judicious selections" from these schools. In the summary of the sale, which made a total of \$109,590, Johnston is listed among the "Principal Purchasers" with a total expenditure of \$12,410.

⁹⁴ For a listing of Walters' collection, including Stuart's *Consul General Barry*, see Strahan, vol. 1, p. 94.

from either the Leupp or Gilmor estates. (Ill. 1-46) Both of those earlier patrons had close contact with the artist, who may have given the drawing as a gift. Walters continued to prize the Gilmor provenance even after his collecting interests shifted in the mid-1860s from American to contemporary European art. He purchased another Gilmor-related work, the last copy by Gilbert Stuart of his Atheneum portrait of George Washington, through Samuel Putnam Avery in 1885.⁹⁵

Competitive Collecting: Jenkins, Avery, Walters

If Walters was following the example of collectors from previous generations and from New York to steer his art acquisitions, there is evidence that others in his home city were observing him. Art collecting was in part a reflection of a world of commerce, competition, and social display. Baltimore was small, its business community tightly knit, and Walters was not alone among businessmen to acquire the work of contemporary American artists. Information from exhibition and auction records show traces of parallel collecting and of a marketplace in which many participated in a dynamic artistic environment.

Several of William Walters' contemporaries in Baltimore followed similar collecting paths. Among them, J. Stricker Jenkins (1831-1878), twelve years younger and connected by marriage to New York society, stands out for the level of his acquisitions. He joined his father's prosperous coffee import house in Baltimore in 1850 and married Clara Vandervoort of New York four years later. They began to acquire American art in 1856, including works by many of the same artists represented in Walters' paintings collection and drawing album: Frederic Edwin

⁹⁵ Edward S. King and Marvin C. Ross. *Catalogue of the American Works of Art, including French Medals Made for America*. (Baltimore, The Walters Art Gallery, 1956) p. 10.

Church, John Frederick Kensett, Sanford Robinson Gifford, George Augustus Baker, and George Henry Boughton.⁹⁶ It is certainly likely, given their parallel art interests and mercantile activity, that Jenkins was invited to see Walters' Kensett entitled *The Tide in Summer* in early 1859. Walters enjoyed the social approbation the painting engendered, reporting the positive reaction of his friends and acquaintances to the artist, "Oh you don't know how much it is praised and admired."⁹⁷ Jenkins acquired a Kensett painting of his own in 1865, *On the Hudson*, a striking example of the artist's Hudson River views. (Ill. 1-47)

Jenkins followed Walters into drawing collecting as well. In the early 1860's, with the assistance of Samuel Putnam Avery, he assembled a small collection of works on paper housed in a handsome monogrammed leather box.⁹⁸ (Ills. 1-48, 1-49) A pencil *Landscape* (Ill. 1-50) with white gouache highlights signed 'Wm. Hart, 1862,' carries Avery's signature on the reverse. The drawing by that artist in Walters' collection, though somewhat smaller in scale, is a similarly finished pastoral landscape with figures. (Ill. 1-51)

The remaining six Jenkins drawings offer intriguing evidence of the continuing collaboration between Walters and Avery, even after the former moved to Europe during the Civil War.⁹⁹ *Tambourine Girl* signed 'E. Saintain, N.Y., 1862,' (Ill. 1-52) was made by the same French-American artist, Jacques-Emile Saintain

⁹⁶ *The Taste of Maryland: Art Collecting in Maryland 1800-1934*. (Baltimore: The Walters Art Gallery, 1984) pps. 21-22.

⁹⁷ WTW to JFK, March 27, 1859. Kellogg Collection.

⁹⁸ These drawings are in the collection of the Baltimore Museum of Art, accession numbers 1998.619-625.

⁹⁹ A letter dated May 7, 1863 to Avery from John William Casilear mentions a painting for Mr. Jenkins "which I have found leisure to take up within the past week – the subject you will remember you selected from one of my sketches." (Avery Autograph Letters, Watson Library, the Metropolitan Museum of Art)

(1829-1894), who had portrayed *Henry Walters at the Age of Twelve* in New York in 1860 (Ill. 1-53).

Jenkins also collected works of the Ecoeu School, to which Walters and his wife Ellen were introduced by Baltimorean expatriate George Lucas upon their arrival in France in 1861. The emphasis these artists placed on sentimental genre, farmyard scenes, domestic interiors, and peasant children, suited the Walters' Victorian sensibilities. Jenkins' drawings by André Dargelas (1828-1906) and Théophile Emmanuel Duverger (1821- ca. 1901) are both undated, making it difficult to know whether they were acquired from an exhibition of Ecoeu School works held at the Allston Association in Baltimore, through Avery from Walters, who began to send French work to his New York agent for resale at auction, or elsewhere.¹⁰⁰ An untitled and undated drawing by Ecoeu artist Théophile Lemmens (1821-1867) of chickens by a well, is similar enough to one documented in the collection of George Lucas, to suggest to the involvement of that Paris-based Baltimorean.¹⁰¹ (Ill. 1-54) While many questions remain unanswered, it is clear is that these drawings, housed in gold-leafed matting in a handsome purpose-built box, were among the Jenkins' prized possessions.

The “Hot Center”: Asher B. Durand in Baltimore

In such competitive collecting, awareness of the activities of peers and of the marketplace appears to play as large a role as individual aesthetic choices.

Anthropologist Mary Douglas noted and analyzed the tendency toward

¹⁰⁰ Johnston, p. 26.

¹⁰¹ Lucas' drawing, *Fowl in Barnyard*, is signed and dated February, 1862, and inscribed “vendre á M. Lucas – toile de 5.” The drawing is now in the collection of the Baltimore Museum of Art.

standardization in this form of consumption, which is as visible in the market for art today as it was in William Walters' Baltimore. "When the tendency to standardize values is strong, some crucial form of social control is being exerted; it is a sign that we are near the hot center of a competitive system where small differences matter a lot."¹⁰² To own a work by Asher B. Durand in Baltimore was to possess a signature work by a name artist and to stand at that "hot center." In the 1850s, Durand was the President of the National Academy of Design and a leading figure. The example of this Hudson River School painter offers a revealing view of the competitive system at work in Walters' circle.

Clara Vandervoort Jenkins, the New York-born wife of J. Stricker Jenkins, likely brought the first work by Durand to Baltimore, an early portrait of her grandfather, William Ledyard Vandervoort, painted in 1836, the last year of the sitter's life. (Ill. 1-55) In their leather box of drawings, the Jenkins placed Durand's handsome *Green River*, an oval-topped landscape drawing in pencil heightened with white gouache on brown-washed paper. Measuring 8" x 10," it is a spectacular example of an album drawing, unfortunately undated. (Ill. 1-56)

Another colleague of Walters owned a landscape by Durand. In the Allston Association, Walters socialized with businessman John W. McCoy, who would become his partner in W. T. Walters & Co. after the Civil War. McCoy was primarily a patron of local artists, including Frank Blackwell Mayer, whose *Negro Page of Venice* was included as McCoy's in the list of "Additional Collections in the City of Baltimore" in the 1870s.¹⁰³ Before they forged a business alliance, he and

¹⁰² Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood. *The World of Goods*. (New York: BasicBooks, 1979) p. 144.

¹⁰³ Edward Strahan. *The Art Treasures of America*. vol. 3. (Philadelphia: G. Barrie, 1879-1882) p. 80.

Walters shared an interest in contemporary American landscape painting. At some point in the 1850's, McCoy purchased a small-scale (24 x 18 ¼ inches) work by Asher B. Durand, *Landscape, A Study from Nature*.¹⁰⁴ So well-known and respected was that artist in Baltimore in the mid-1850s that a mysterious Miss J.E.F. was credited with exhibiting a "Landscape, after Durand" in the Maryland Historical Society exhibition of 1856. Down the road in Washington, William Maguire owned a characteristic landscape drawing by Durand as well. (Ill. 1-57)

An exciting art world event in Baltimore precipitated William Walters' acquisition of a painting and a drawing by the artist. In June of 1858, the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad hosted an "artist's expedition." Its purpose, according to Durand's son John's subsequent article in *The Crayon*, was "making the beautiful scenery of the road known to the public through this observant class." The roster of invited observers who arrived from New York included John Durand, John Frederick Kensett, Louis Lang, James Suydam, John Ehninger, and Louis Mignot. Joseph Ames came from Boston, J.H. Beard and W.W. Fosdick from Cincinnati, David Hunter Strother from Berkeley Springs, West Virginia and Frank Blackwell Mayer represented the artists of Baltimore.

Mayer (1827-1899), already mentioned in the context of Vattemare's visit, was a member of Baltimore's social elite and would have seen to the entertainment of the party by his fellow members of the Maryland Historical Society and the Allston Association. Since his teenaged-years, when he was a student of Alfred Jacob Miller in Baltimore and then at the Pennsylvania Academy, Mayer had kept an album titled

¹⁰⁴ The painting was given to the Peabody Institute of the City of Baltimore and placed on indefinite loan to the Baltimore Museum of Art. *Taste of Maryland*, p. 19.

“Souvenir Sketches,” in which he collected drawings by artists of his acquaintance.¹⁰⁵ He appears to have struck up a friendship with John Durand at the time of the B & O excursion, and received from him a large-scale drawing inscribed “Sketch from nature by A.B. Durand./Given to F.B. Mayer by his son, J. Durand, July 1858.”¹⁰⁶ (Ill. 1-58) Upon his return to New York, John Durand also gave his new friend coverage in *The Crayon*, mentioning that Mayer had completed “two watercolor pictures of marked interest and value” in the “Domestic Art Gossip” column.¹⁰⁷

Although he was not in the traveling party, Walters, both a railroad investor and a patron of the arts, would most likely have been included in the entertainment of its members at the Baltimore terminus. Walters took advantage of meeting the younger Durand to present a commission to Asher B. Durand. He followed up with a letter, writing on June 8, “I take the opportunity in having met your son here, to transmit by him a commission for a picture by you. I propose to leave the subject entirely to you – the price to be also at your discretion from \$500 to \$700.”

Walters clearly enjoyed the positive reaction he received to additions to his collection. After receiving the spectacular *In the Catskills* (Ill. 1-59) from Durand in May of the next year, he wrote enthusiastically of the social effect of the large-scale picture “the possession of which seems to have rendered the subject of such universal congratulations that I assure you I feel very proud indeed.” Paying \$1,500 for the canvas, more than twice the amount of the original commission, didn’t squelch the

¹⁰⁵ Mayer’s album of ‘Souvenir Sketches,’ as well as numerous sketchbooks, are in the collection of the Baltimore Museum of Art. If the album included works by other artists as well-known as Durand, they have been separated.

¹⁰⁶ The Durand drawing given to Mayer is now in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Avery, et.al., p. 150.

¹⁰⁷ “An Excursion on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad;” *The Crayon* (July, 1858) p. 208 and “Domestic Art Gossip,” p. 206.

collector's enthusiasm in the least, in fact it emboldened him, in a postscript, to make this request: "May I ask you not to forget, if you please, the promised sketch for the book which by the way promises to be a very beautiful collection indeed." The repetition of the word promise, both reinforcing the artist's obligation and assuring him of inclusion in appropriate company, the emphatic indeed, the ingratiating if you please, all contribute to a rhetoric of reverence for the artist that was typical of Walters and his fellow collectors.¹⁰⁸

A masterful drawing, complementary to the painting in subject and in composition, arrived soon thereafter. *Valley landscape in moonlight*, (Ill. 1-60) dated 1859, is rendered in pencil in the precise, detailed manner of both the trained engraver and the Ruskinian and grounded in the close observation of nature that Durand had recently espoused in his "Letters on Landscape." The moonlit valley provides a background of soft, almost smudged hatchings and delicate atmospheric perspective. In the middle ground, a shaded copse of trees and a rock formation draws the eye into the scene. The tall, misshapen foreground tree is rendered in careful detail, with light playing over its trunk and leafy branches. This signature work would have been a valuable piece of social currency in Walters' collection, confirming his leadership in the competitive world of Baltimore collectors.

¹⁰⁸ WTW to A. B. Durand, May 3, 1859. Such overpayment was not unique to Walters. Many patrons of the genre painter William Sidney Mount, including Henry Brevoort, Jonathan Sturges, and Charles M. Leupp, are documented as adding to the original commission price upon delivery of a painting that pleased them. See Frankenstein, pps. 24, 32, and 36. It is noteworthy that Durand received similar treatment and similar requests from his New York patrons. In 1857, sugar refiner Robert L. Stuart sent Durand a check for thirteen hundred dollars with the note "Very much pleased with the painting. I have made the check for more than I mentioned to you." As he prepared to go abroad for an extended period, Henry G. Marquand asked Durand for a sketch as a recollection of artist friends and a "source of delight" to show Europeans. Quoted in Neil Harris. *The Artist in American Society: The Formative Years, 1790-1860*. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1982) p. 281.

Chapter 2: “Miniature and Easily-Attainable Works of Art:” American Drawings in the Parlor

Chapter 1 demonstrated the role of drawings as social currency in the antebellum period. Purchased and exchanged in a public sphere in which art commerce, social aspirations, and business relationships intertwined, these works on paper communicated human connections in graphic form. Their acquisition depended on specific social circumstances in which the drawings’ “use value” as a studio tool, was transformed into what might be termed “collectible value” that conferred social status.

It would be limiting, however, to see these works as participating purely in the public realm, as they were primarily experienced and appreciated within the refuge of the private home. Bound into albums and displayed on the center table so important to the conventionalized furnishings of the antebellum parlor, drawings became part of the decoration and accessorization of a space encoded with aspirations to personal refinement and social position. In the parlor, drawings shared space with the sentimental fiction and illustrated gift books that both pictured and shaped American middle-class culture. In this environment, images and texts were “read” as sources of instruction, entertainment, and memory.

Among the extant drawings albums from the second quarter of the nineteenth century, there is a near uniformity of preference for highly-finished works addressing sentimental domestic subjects and romanticizing themes. Adhering to a mimetic aesthetic, setting a moral tone, illustrating didactic messages, these drawings

belonged to realist traditions that invited absorptive viewing. In this “private” life, the work of art was connected to literature and to illustration and served as a source of parlor culture. Period images of people in parlors reinforced the “twinning” of the visual with the textual.

The exchange of drawings was a fashion in the period not just for professional artists but for amateurs. Drawing instruction was widespread and drawing was an expected accomplishment of an educated person. Drawing albums served as mementi of personal association and as entertainment during social visiting, while they assembled and commemorated social contact, and promulgated a particular form of sentimental culture.

“Artists of Your Own Acquaintance:” The John Mackie Falconer Album

The album of hardware merchant and amateur artist John Mackie Falconer (1820-1903) is a significant example of this practice. He assembled its sixty pencil drawings and watercolors in the 1840s, soon after arriving in New York from his native Scotland in 1836. Now in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, it contains “carefully finished miniature landscapes and marines...the sort of tokens artists often exchanged.”¹⁰⁹ Works by both amateur and professional artists indicate Falconer’s participation in the New York Sketch Union and the New York Water Color Society. Individual drawings commemorate his friendships with such artists as Charles Lanman (1819-1895), described by Washington Irving as “the picturesque explorer of our country” whose friendship with William Sidney and Shepard Alonzo

¹⁰⁹ Linda S. Ferber. “Our Mr. John M. Falconer” in *Brooklyn Before the Bridge: American Paintings from the Long Island Historical Society*. (Brooklyn: Brooklyn Museum, 1982) p. 16.

Mount was considered in the last chapter, illustrator John McLenan (1827-1866), and the young Jasper F. Cropsey (1823-1900), with whom he was particularly close.¹¹⁰

Cropsey's letters to his fiancée Maria Cooley include numerous references to evenings with "Johnny." After their marriage in 1847, she described a visit to the Falconer home in Brooklyn, where they "had a peep in Johnny's room, saw his sketches, books and engravings."¹¹¹

There are two early graphite drawings by Jasper Cropsey in the Falconer album. The first is a *Landscape* dated 1846, (Ill. 2-1) a scene of happy children fishing on a summer day, their loyal dog guarding the picnic basket. This sunny image participates in the sentimental themes of contemporary book illustration and album exchange. Cropsey evokes the landscape with standard graphic schema – looping outlines for foliage, closely-stacked hatching modeling rock and water, diminishing into faint touches for atmospheric perspective. These all contribute to the impression of hasty, though assured execution, underscored by the flourish of the signature – the drawing self-reflexively connoting the circumstances of its creation.

The second *Tree Study* (1847) (Ill. 2-2) is a careful, reflective observation from nature, in which Cropsey lingers on the detailed leaf structure of the Joe Pye weed and the rough texture of the tree stump. If this is a memento of a day of shared sketching, as so many of the drawings in Falconer's album appear to be, a crucial

¹¹⁰ Henry P. Rossiter. *The M. & M. Karolik Collection of American Water Colors and Drawings, 1800-1875*. Volume I. (Boston: The Museum of Fine Arts, 1962) p. 220. William Maguire's Scrapbook contains two pencil drawings by Lanman. Both are idealized landscapes – a river scene of 1841, *Indians Returning from the Hunt* and an undated *Landscape* with ruins. Both Maguire and Walters owned drawings by McLenan, an illustrator closely associated with Samuel Putnam Avery.

¹¹¹ Ferber, "Our Mr. Falconer," p. 17.

part of its reception would have been a wash of memory and personal association, unfortunately not available to us today.

Maria Cooley Cropsey sent Falconer an elegant and finished observation of an agave plant, from Sorrento, Italy. (Ill. 2-3) A memento from the couple's honeymoon trip to Europe, it evoked the exotic for the friend who stayed at home. Her husband extended the circle of exchange as well, contributing to Falconer's album a drawing of the *Ponte Molle after battery by the French troops* (Ill. 2-4) by the German artist Benno Friedrich Toermer (1804-1859), whose acquaintance Cropsey had made in Rome.

Cropsey's own album, in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, contains two drawings by Toermer, *Nun Standing, Reading a Book* and *Ruins with Cannon and Soldiers* (1849) as well as the work of three other German artists, C. F. H. Werner, C. Mayer, and Niemon (?) all inscribed from Rome. It also has two works by Falconer, the first an arched-topped *Lake Scene with Trees* (1854) (Ill. 2-5) reminiscent in composition of the work of Asher B. Durand, with a central tree and water receding toward the horizon line. Executed in pen with brown ink, its hatchings and shadings have an etched quality that anticipates Falconer's later participation in 1866 as a pioneer member of the French Etching Club and in the New York Etching Club in the 1870s. The second, *Barracks at Fort Pitt* is inscribed "Remains of the barracks built at Fort Pitt near Pittsburg, Ohio River by the British Army in 1764." (Ill. 2-6) A watercolor with graphite underdrawing, it documents from a neighboring rooftop the unprepossessing side yard between two fort buildings, where laundry hangs to dry and a woman climbs the stair to a second-floor kitchen.

Undated, it is likely from later in Falconer's career, when he produced numerous watercolors and oil sketches documenting Dutch and English buildings from New York's past, many just before or during their demolition.¹¹²

Maria and Jasper Cropsey were not alone in experiencing Falconer's collection as entertainment during a social call. William Sidney Mount (1807-1868) recalled his visit to Falconer in a letter in 1856: "My visit at your house I remember with pleasure. The choice books and Engravings you have collected, and paintings, by artists of your own acquaintance; besides the sketches in oil and watercolors done by your own hand during leisure hours...give evidence of a love of nature and art truly gratifying and worthy of imitation."¹¹³ Falconer's personal association with these artists of his "own acquaintance," appears to have added to Mount's sense of the value of the drawings and of the collection into which they had been assembled.¹¹⁴

Another function of album drawings, for Falconer, appears to have been to commemorate outings with friends. Several drawings by young New York artist James H. Cafferty and known amateur Dr. Edward Ruggles, were made on the same day, July 13, 1845. All three are seascapes, two with figures in boats, one a close observation of a *Buoy*. (Ill. 2-7) While they may be straightforward sketches from a day the three men spent together at the shore, they also may be examples of a Sketch Club-like drawing exercise. Read from top to bottom right to bottom left, they illustrate a shipwreck narrative in keeping with contemporary interests.

¹¹² Avery, p. 311

¹¹³ Mount to Falconer, December 13, 1856, New-York Historical Society. Quoted in Ferber, p. 23.

¹¹⁴ I appreciate Sally Promey's insights into the relationship between Falconer and Mount.

The artist Edwin White (1817-1877), also a friend of Cropsey, was establishing his reputation as a portrait painter in New York in the mid-1840s. His *Seascape* in Falconer's album, dated August 1845, is a dreamy vignettted observation of the entrance to Bridgeport Harbor. (Ill. 2-8)

In both cases, for lack of documentary evidence, we can only infer the associative meaning these works would have had for the artist or the collector as he leafed through his album in later years. That Falconer actively solicited these kinds of exchanges to build the contents of his album is indicated by the inscription on a drawing by painter and engraver Owen G. Hanks (ca. 1815-1865). On the verso of his watercolor of a *Lake and Mountains*, Hanks wrote "Dear Falconer, will this little trifle be acceptable?"

"Sentiment of Home:" The Place of the Parlor

Albums of drawings, like Falconer's, were part of the "parlor culture" that was an increasingly self-conscious phenomenon in the period before the Civil War. Its appearance was reflected in conventions of family portraiture, in the complex etiquette of social visiting, and in elaborate new customs such as the coded folding and exchange of calling cards to mark particular social occasions. An associated material culture of domestic architecture, furniture, and furnishings purpose-built for the parlor environment served as the stage properties of a new social performance.

The burgeoning American publishing industry responded to this movement with the publication of richly-illustrated giftbooks, designed to be appreciated in the parlor. Among the hundreds published in the years of their faddish popularity in the

three decades preceding the Civil War, some, such as *The Drawing-Room Scrap Book*, *The Parlour Scrap Book*, *Our Country or the American Parlor Keepsake*, and *The Centre Table*, were clearly directed to that highly-standardized domestic setting. By affiliating with the individually-assembled “scrapbook,” “keepsake,” and “gift,” their titles blurred the distinction between mass-produced gift books and unique albums.

Numerous periodicals, including *Gleason’s Pictorial Drawing Room Companion*, were also specifically edited and illustrated to be read and displayed in the parlor. Albums of drawings, gift books, scrapbooks, friendship and autograph albums, and photograph albums were all part of the visual culture of that domestic setting. They provided distraction and information about the household to the waiting caller, and, like the equally ubiquitous pianos and indoor games, became the focus of parlor entertainment.

Several scholars have delved deeply into the role of the domestic space of the parlor in American Victorian culture, though little work has been done on the visual imagery available in books, assembled in albums, and displayed on the parlor walls. In the late 1960’s, Karen Halttunen explored antebellum American etiquette books and popular literature to find a culture of sentimentality developed as a “defensive strategy against the perceived dangers of placelessness in the open society and of anonymity in the urban world of strangers.” She argued that a sentimental ideal of social conduct, with an emphasis on sincerity and transparency and an aversion to the implied hypocrisy of the confidence man or painted woman, defined what it meant to be middle-class in the antebellum period. Halttunen was acutely aware of the

contradictions inherent in this Victorian worldview, defining the parlor as “a third social sphere, lying between the public world of strangers where sincerity was dangerous and the private family circle where the sincere ideal was virtually meaningless.” In this environment, people were expected to put on a “genteel performance.” The furniture and accoutrements of the parlor served as “stage properties of polite social intercourse.”¹¹⁵

Twenty years after Halttunen’s influential study, Katherine C. Grier published a material cultural analysis of the “convention-laden contents of parlors.” For Grier, parlor furnishings were “constellations of artifacts” that functioned as “structured, and culturally positioned, ways of communicating some kinds of critically important cultural information.”¹¹⁶ Following the anthropologist Clifford Geertz, she maintained that cultures transmit meaning through the manipulation of symbols in patterns that are universally understood. One of the defining aspects of Victorian (or antebellum) culture was the commercialization and increasing availability to the middle class of material symbols that had previously been limited to people of greater means. As use of these symbols spread from elite circles into the broader culture, their meaning was also commodified and transformed. Visual imagery was only one component, and to Grier of far lesser interest than elaborate textile draperies or an upholstered “parlor set,” within the carefully choreographed presentation of family possessions.

¹¹⁵ Karen Halttunen. *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968) pps. 194, 59, 105.

¹¹⁶ Grier, Katherine C. *Culture and Comfort: Parlor Making and Middle-Class Identity, 1850-1930*. (Washington and London, Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988) p. vii, xi.

The increasing emphasis on “parlor culture” in this period reflected broader social and economic changes in America. One of the defining social transformations underway in these early decades of the nineteenth century was industrial and urban expansion that physically separated employment from the home. Men working in offices and factories were thrown into a world of economic transactions and business relationships that were less predictable and secure than those they would have experienced in an attached workshop or in an agrarian community. One way for the developing American urban middle class to cope with the rigors and anxieties of this new economic structure was to imbue the home with new associations of private refuge and of personal expression. Andrew Jackson Downing expressed the strong sentimental underpinnings of this phenomenon in *The Architecture of Country Houses* in 1850: “The mere sentiment of home is like a strong anchor, saving many a man from shipwreck in the storms of life.”¹¹⁷

In the newly-atomized domestic realm, gender roles and environments were more distinctly articulated. The “woman of the house” controlled and steered the education and spiritual development of children and expressed, through her physical environment, her clothing, and her leisure pastimes, the social position and taste of the family. According to a contemporary book of etiquette, “Domestic life is a woman’s sphere, and it is there that she is most usefully as well as most appropriately employed... She may be here a corrective of what is wrong, a moderator of what is unruly, a restraint on what is indecorous.”¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ Andrew Jackson Downing, *The Architecture of Country Houses* (New York: D. Appleton, 1850) p. iv.

¹¹⁸ *Young Lady’s Own Book*. (Philadelphia: Key, Mielke, and Biddle, 1833) p. 15.

Popular culture disseminated this view of women. Images of the parlor, with women decorously at the center of the composition, reading to children and overseeing their play, were prevalent in printed form. (Ill. 2-9) In his controversial booklet *Views of Christian Nurture and of Subjects Adjacent Thereto*, Horace Bushnell, a contemporary Congregational minister and lecturer, articulated a religious concept of the private home. He ascribed a sacramental role to family life, emphasizing parents' responsibility for their childrens' piety. "The house, having a domestic Spirit of grace dwelling in it, should become the church of childhood, the table and hearth a holy rite, and life an element of saving power."¹¹⁹

The home projected the family's character, cultivation, and status to the outside world through architecture, interior decoration, and collected objects. John Ruskin, whose writings on art were widely read and whose aesthetics exerted a strong influence in the 1840s and 1850s in America, asserted the link between people and objects in no uncertain moral terms: "Taste is not only a part and an index of morality; - it is the ONLY morality....Tell me what you like, and I will tell you what you are."¹²⁰

In this cultural framework, the parlor, the "third social sphere" between the outside world and the privacy of family life, took on specific meaning. Over the course of the first half of the nineteenth-century, this room, from which any sign of labor was banished, became an essential element of domestic architecture. By mid-century, plans in architectural books for modest farmhouses, city tenements, and

¹¹⁹ Horace Bushnell. *Views of Christian Nurture and of Subjects Adjacent Thereto*. (Hartford: Edwin Hunt, 1847. Facsimile Reproduction, Delmar, N.Y: Scholar's Facsimiles & Reprints, 1975) p. 13.

¹²⁰ "Traffic" in "The Crown of Wild Olive" by John Ruskin quoted in John F. Kasson. *Rudeness and Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-Century Urban America*. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990) p. 169.

elegant townhouses like that of William Walters on Mount Vernon Place, all gave space to a parlor. Set apart from the rest of the living area, this was the room in which the family received visitors and enacted social rituals of self-edification, self-presentation, and self-control. Contemporary writer and critic Clarence Cook understood how antebellum society conflated physical environment with family character. Accordingly, the parlor “ought to represent the culture of the family – what is their taste, what feelings they have for art; it should represent themselves, and not other people; and the troublesome fact is that it will and must represent them, whether its owners would let it or not.”¹²¹

In this environment, objects became part of what Jean Baudrillard calls the “signifying fabric,” addressing “people’s vital need for knowledge of others.”¹²² Once acquired, that knowledge could lead as easily to admonition as to admiration. The sisters Catherine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe used the vocabulary of the parlor to chastise newly-rich Americans for materialistic display: “Notice the style in which they accumulate the elegances of civilization without even an attempt to elevate their destitute neighbors to such culture and enjoyment. Their expensive pictures multiply on their frescoed walls, their elegant books increase in their closed bookcases, their fine pictures and prints remain shut in portfolios, to be only occasionally opened for the privileged few.”¹²³

¹²¹ Quoted in Kasson, p. 176.

¹²² Jean Baudrillard. *The System of Objects*. pps. 200, 195.

¹²³ Catherine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe. *The American Woman’s Home*. Nicole Tonkovich, ed. (New Brunswick, N.J. and London: Rutgers University Press with the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, 2002) p. 322.

“Signifying Fabric”: Antebellum Parlor Portraits

Family portraits from the period were often set in the parlor, giving a detailed, if idealized, view of this defining domestic setting. There is a remarkable consistency in pose among the sitters, a formality of address to the viewer of the adults and an engagement in genteel parlor activity of the children, that marks these portraits’ participation in a conservative mode of family self-construction. The uniformity of address extends as well to the furnishings privileged with inclusion in these works, attesting to their persistent contemporary meaning. Anthropologist Mary Douglas’ observation, quoted in the previous chapter, of the tendency toward standardization in areas of social interaction in which competition plays a key role is certainly relevant here.¹²⁴ Depictions of books and albums are given a central place in these parlor portraits, indicating their place at a “hot center” worthy of further attention.

Family Group by Frederick Spencer (1806-1875) (n.d.) (Ill. 2-10) works within the parlor portrait convention to portray norms of family interaction, gender role, and interior decoration. A prosperous family wearing elegantly coordinated black and white poses in the richly-furnished parlor of a country house. The door on the right opens to a pastoral landscape that in most urban middle-class homes would more likely be found in a framed print or painting on the wall. A blooming rosebush grows up to the open window on the left. Thus luxuriant nature frames the artificial interior environment, which is lush with red velvet draperies, fashionable medallion carpeting, and richly-upholstered seating. A marble-topped center table at right holds

¹²⁴ Douglas and Isherwood, p. 144.

the standardized accoutrements of the parlor, a bouquet of flowers, an album, and numerous books, one fluttering open to an engraving.

The poses, gaze, and gestures of the figures reinforce gender and generational roles. The father stands at the peak of the family pyramid, his gaze directed past the viewer and into the world beyond. His wife sits on the neoclassical sofa with three of their children, demurely addressing the viewer. The eldest son also gazes outward, while holding open a large, green leather album for his younger brother. Two hats and a bonnet tossed casually on the floor indicate that the parents and oldest child have come in from outside into this close family environment.

Still connected by touch with his mother and too young to read, the younger boy is absorbed in the visual imagery of the picture book that will prepare him to take on his role in the outside world. The little girl leans across her mother, her gaze also focused on the album. In this acutely formal and self-conscious family portrait, engaging with visual imagery in album form is portrayed as a formative activity for model children.

The parlor portrait of *The Reverend John Atwood Family of Concord, New Hampshire*, (1845) by Henry F. Darby (1829-1897) (Ill. 2-11) also signals a central role for books, in this case five open Bibles, within the standard furnishing of the parlor. In this formal family gathering, mother and father sit at each side of the center table, each with the sacred text open in front of them. Reverend Atwood points to a specific passage, his gesture underlining visually his role as interpreter of scripture in the church and as authority in the family. To his left, the eldest son sits in a chair pushed against the mantel, his connection with the father emphasized by the open

Bible he holds and the foot he rests on his father's chair. On a low footstool to their mother's right, two younger children hold an illustrated Bible open between them, reinforcing the role visual imagery will play in their spiritual formation. On the wall behind them hang a colored print of Samson carrying off the gates of Gaza and a memorial to a dead son, which may explain Mrs. Atwood's black mourning attire.

The furnishings of the Atwood parlor are sumptuous and fashionable, from the flowing red window drapes and patterned wallpaper with contrasting border, to the floral carpeting, burl-wood piano, and the recently-invented smokeless argand lamp with decorated shade and cut-glass prisms. They contrast markedly with the austerity and dour expressions of the figures. Their texts, except for that of the youngest children, are unembellished by illustrations and their self-presentation appropriately serious for the family of a religious man, in whose family parlor reading is a shared intergenerational experience of Baptist piety.¹²⁵

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Augustus Carter by Nicholas Biddle Kittrell (ca. 1848) (Ill. 2-12) are as elegant as the parlor setting that signals their middle-class status. Seated together next to a mahogany center table, which holds flowers and a number of books around an astral lamp, the young couple is prosperous and fashionable. The Neoclassical and Gothic furniture, floral patterned rug, velvet draperies with gilt accessories, and portraits hung high on the wall in contemporary fashion, all indicate sophisticated people well-versed in contemporary "parlor vocabulary."

In this image, the books are unread, displayed instead as decorative objects signifying the couple's mental culture. The "mirror images" in the background

¹²⁵ MFA on-line collection catalogue with text adapted from Davis, et al. *Museum of Fine Arts Highlights: American Painting* (Boston: MFA, 2003)

portraits present the same couple once again, wearing the same clothing, but in different poses. The foreground Charles Augustus Carter mirrors the contemplative pose of his wife's background portrait, while his own portrait is in the formal, three-quarter length form. The foreground image of the young couple combines the standard background portraits, entwining the two sitters in an intimate, private view.

The decorative vocabulary of the parlor was not only dispensed in the high-art form of the oil painting. It also pervaded the illustrations in books and periodicals mass-produced for a broad middle-class audience. The frontispiece to *The American Woman's Home* by Catherine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe brings together in visual form many of the social and physical codes of the parlor. (Ill. 2-13) A family is gathered in lamplight around the ever-present center table. Following the conventions of parlor portraits, the woman is at the center, with family members surrounding her. The wall of books in the background and large book in the lap of the older man highlight the importance of reading in the life of the family. The youngest child has discarded the drum and ball of noisy, outdoor play to sit serenely on his mother's lap. He holds a large album or gift book open for his mother, father, and older brother to examine. As the introductory image in the Beecher sisters' instruction book for the home, this parlor scene models exemplary behavior and décor.

In *The Bridal Prayer*, by T. H. Mateson, engraved by T. Doney as the frontispiece in *The Coronal and Young Ladies Remembrancer* of 1853, (Ill. 2-14) the descriptive delineation in the previous parlor portraits is transformed into a sentimental period drama. In anticipation of the wedding ritual, flowers and cakes

have been placed amid the standard parlor furnishings of center table, astral lamp, ornate medallion carpet, gilt-framed paintings, decorative mantel, and piano. The image exudes a sense of expectancy and agitation, derived in part from the way it disrupts the expectation of perfect personal composure in the parlor. After all, *The Ladies' Book of Etiquette, and Manual of Politeness*, merely one example among many of such advice literature, counseled young women to “Let your carriage be at once dignified and graceful...Never gesticulate when conversing; it looks theatrical, and is ill-bred; so are all contortions of the features.”¹²⁶

The silent supplication of the kneeling bride and the ambiguous expression of her festively- attired female attendant create a moment of family drama. The “genteel performance” expected in the parlor is complicated by the authenticity of the bride’s emotion and the indeterminate expression and role of the other female figure. This illustration is not connected to any of the primarily religious texts of *The Coronal*, though buried deep in the book is the poem *The Marriage Song* by Miss S. H. Browne, extolling the firm foundation of a marriage anchored in Christian faith. Perhaps the editor Reverend Frederic James expected the reader to reflect back from the poem to the opening image, which now expands in meaning to an allegory of religious doubt.

In most of these examples of parlor portraits, families were depicted at leisure, composed in a structure of stability based on clearly defined gender roles and surrounded by a limited but evocative grouping of parlor furnishings. The portraits and the parlor setting provided “a testament of the family’s refinement, proof that

¹²⁶ Florence Hartley. *The Ladies' Book of Etiquette, and Manual of Politeness*. (1860) quoted in Grier, p. 100.

they understood how to be polite, that they had a front to their lives as to their houses, where the rough ways of work and family intimacy were concealed, and that they could appear as polished beings, capable of grace, dignity, and propriety.”¹²⁷ The example that subverts these conventions, the *Bridal Prayer*, reinforces the prevalence of social expectations of “parlor behavior.” According to art historian Wendy Katz, a parlor culture of “self-improvement, albums, novels, social visiting, and social evaluation” helped to form “social bonds that were thought to soften and elevate character.”¹²⁸

“As Orthodox as the Hymn Book:” the Vocabulary of Parlor Furnishings

By the middle of the nineteenth century, middle-income homes that in the previous century would have had bare floors, whitewashed walls, and minimal furniture, were softened with carpeting and draperies, and embellished with patterned wallpaper and upholstered furniture. Mass-produced consumer goods that were becoming readily-available and relatively affordable - mirrors, pianos, paintings, books, what-nots filled with objects – were displayed to invited guests as a form of family expression. Women were exhorted to select and display “curiosities, handsome books, photographs, engravings, stereoscopes, medallions, [and] any works of art you may own” as inducements to conversation and polite social interaction.¹²⁹

Objects, collected or created, spoke to the talents, taste and character of the inhabitants of the home. This impulse to display, for which French critic Edmond de

¹²⁷ Richard L. Bushman. *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992) p. 251.

¹²⁸ Wendy Jean Katz. *Regionalism and Reform: Art and Class Formation in Antebellum Cincinnati*. (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2002) p. xvii.

¹²⁹ Hartley. *The Ladies' Book of Etiquette* quoted in Haltunen, p. 105.

Goncourt coined the phrase *bricabracomania*, indicated a new relationship to things, and, among them to the works of art that were increasingly available. The human transactions and values that enlivened these things, that gave them very specific cultural meaning, were tangibly expressed. Victorian consumers had a two-way relationship with objects – they viewed them as both communicating and shaping character. According to Katherine Grier, they “understood that objects were culture in tangible form.”¹³⁰ The parlor environment contained a specific set of essential objects, a “parlor vocabulary” of furnishings. These included wall-to-wall carpeting, heavy ornamental draperies, a “parlor suite” of seating, a center table with lamp, a piano, a decorated mantel, and framed pictures, all of which conveyed messages about their owners. Textiles softened the environment and muted sound; musical instruments showed the discipline and cultivation of the players; books could indicate piety, awareness of the latest fashions, patriotism, or level of education; visual images on the walls and in illustrated books and albums added another layer of discernment to the presentation.

Both etiquette manuals and books on home decoration used the language and concepts of refinement, speaking of the potential for “harmonizing,” “smoothing,” or “softening” rough places or defects in social presentation.¹³¹ In Henry James’ novel *The Bostonians*, Miss Olive Chancellor’s Mississippi cousin Basil Ransom takes in the visual messages of her Back Bay parlor:

It seemed to him he had never seen an interior that was so much of an interior as this queer-shaped drawing room of his new-found kinswoman; he had never felt himself in the presence of so much organized privacy or of so many objects that spoke of habits and

¹³⁰ Grier, p. 8.

¹³¹ Grier, p. 1.

tastes...He had always heard of Boston as a city of culture, and now there was culture in Miss Chancellor's tables and sofas, in the books that were everywhere, on little shelves like brackets (as if the book were a statuette), in the photographs and watercolours that covered the walls.¹³²

Visual imagery played an increasing role in middle-class refinement in the early decades of the nineteenth century. The *Cosmopolitan Art Journal* heralded its own place in driving "daubs and the clumsy etchings from the wall" by distributing to its members "over 20,000 first-class engravings worthy of being hung on the walls of palaces."¹³³ Andrew Jackson Downing was famously imperious in his advice on the use of images in setting the proper domestic tone:

Nothing gives an air of greater refinement to a cottage than good prints or engravings hung upon its parlor walls. In selecting these, avoid the trashy, colored show-prints of the ordinary kind, and choose engravings or lithographs, after pictures of celebrity by ancient or modern masters... Next to prints of this kind, medallion casts, in plaster, of celebrated antique subjects – one or two feet in diameter – are fine objects to hang upon the walls, and may now be had in the cities for a small sum.¹³⁴

By all accounts, however, it was the center table that occupied pride of place among parlor furnishings. Later in the century, interior decoration writer Ada Cone addressed the enduring convention of this furniture in "Aesthetic Mistakes in Furnishing – the Parlor Centre Table," "It cannot be contended that because a few persons of taste have disregarded [sic] it, it is therefore out of fashion, it is an institution, as orthodox as the hymn book. It is practically universal; in expensive as well as in humble houses still the objective point and the pièce de résistance of the

¹³² Henry James. *The Bostonians*. (New York: Penguin Books, 1979) p. 15

¹³³ *Cosmopolitan Art Journal*, Vol. III, (1858), p. 84.

¹³⁴ Andrew Jackson Downing, *The Architecture of Country Houses* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1850; reprinted New York: Dover Publications, 1969) p. 372.

room.”¹³⁵ As in the pictures of the Atwood household, in Frederick Spencer’s family group, or in *The Bridal Prayer*, arrangements of books, flowers, albums, decorative objects, and handiwork on the center table introduced elements of personal expression into an environment laden with social convention.

Gift books: “Signs and Symbols of affection, luxury, and refinement”

Just as Olive Chancellor’s bracket shelves raised her books to the level of aesthetic objects, or statuettes, books were privileged among the objects displayed in the parlor. Works of literature and works of art came together in the parlor in the gift books of poems and sentimental literature, richly illustrated with engravings, which were a publishing phenomenon in the antebellum period. They were described by publisher Samuel Goodrich as “messengers of love, tokens of friendship, signs and symbols of affection, luxury, and refinement.”¹³⁶

From 1825, when Carey and Lea of Philadelphia put out the first *Atlantic Souvenir*, to 1865 when this fashion had run its course, more than one thousand gift books were published in America.¹³⁷ At the peak of their popularity in the mid-1840s, more than sixty separate gift books, including *The Atlantic Souvenir*, *The Pearl*, *The Token* and *The Hyacinth, or Affection’s Gift*, appeared each Christmas season.¹³⁸ The widespread connection between the iconic center table and books was demonstrated

¹³⁵ Article in *Decorator and Furnisher* quoted in Grier, p. 94.

¹³⁶ Samuel G. Goodrich, *Recollections of a Lifetime; or, Men and Things I Have Seen*. (New York: Miller, Orton and Mulligan, 1856) p. 182

¹³⁷ Ralph Thompson. *American Literary Annuals and Gift Books, 1825-1865* (1936; reprint, New York: Archon Books, 1967) preface.

¹³⁸ Ola Elizabeth Winslow, “Books for the Lady Reader, 1820-1860” in George Boas, ed. *Romanticism in America*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1940) p. 94.

by the publication of a gift book entitled *The Centre-Table* in 1860.¹³⁹ They were cherished as precious objects, as this description from *Affection's Gift* attests:

To describe the delight of Amelia on receiving this elegant present, is impossible. She spread a clean handkerchief over her lap before she drew the book from its case, that it might not be soiled in the slightest degree, and she removed to a distance from the fire lest the cover should be warped by the heat. After she had eagerly looked all through it, she commenced again, and examined the plates with the most minute attention. She then showed them to her little brother and sister.¹⁴⁰

For a middle class audience seeking guidance in correct behavior wherever it might appear, this passage instructs by modeling the appropriate response to such a gift, emphasizing proper hygiene to prevent “soiling” or “warping,” assimilation of the visual images through repeated examination, and shared experience with other family members.

Historian Richard Bushman suggests that the gift book came into fashion because “belles lettres were so highly valued.”¹⁴¹ However, as the example of Amelia attests, it was the illustrations in these volumes that were often their most valued feature. Visual information was still rare and wonderful in the antebellum period; it appears mostly to have bothered critics, not consumers, that American gift book illustrations were so frequently derived from old prints or engravings appropriated from other such volumes. When “original designs” were commissioned, illustrations normally preceded text in priority. Commissions were often given to the visual artists before the text was ordered, the illustration thus shaping the story or poem created to accompany it. American painter William Sidney Mount

¹³⁹ Winslow, p. 100.

¹⁴⁰ Passage from E.L. “The Souvenir,” quoted in Martinez, p. 91.

¹⁴¹ Bushman, p. 284.

acknowledged this practice as he promoted his work, the *Fortune Teller*, in a letter to the publishers Carey & Hart by saying “It would open rich for the Gift – a good story can be written for it.”¹⁴²

The relative value of visual over literary material in these publications is also revealed in the distinct hierarchy of compensation for their production. Transforming original drawings into publishable form as illustrations was apparently the most highly compensated work. Engravers were paid more handsomely than the artists, who in turn received more than the writers tailoring words to the visual material. In the 1828 and 1829 issues of *The Atlantic Souvenir*, for example, Asher B. Durand and his fellow engravers G. B. Ellis, George W. Hatch, William Humphreys, and J.B. Longacre each commanded \$200 for their work, while artist Thomas Doughty received \$30 for his sketches of Trenton Falls and Passaic Falls in the volume of 1827, Samuel F. B. Morse \$50 for “The Wife,” three years later (Ill. 2-15), and Henry Inman \$25 for “The Fisher Boy,” in the same volume.¹⁴³ In contrast, Edgar Allen Poe, who published some of his best-known stories and poems in gift books, was willing to accept 50 cents per page from *The Opal* for the first printing of “A Chapter of Suggestions” in 1845, while Nathaniel Hawthorne’s fee for eight stories in *The Token* for 1837 was \$108, just over \$1 per page.¹⁴⁴

American Artists as Gift Book Illustrators

Though many American gift book illustrations were taken without attribution (or royalty payment) from British gift books, several publishers did patronize noted

¹⁴² Mount to Carey & Hart, January 9, 1842 quoted in Thompson. p. 76

¹⁴³ Ibid. p. 42.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, pps. 101 and 22.

American artists with the stated goal of encouraging indigenous art and advancing its public appreciation. H.C. Carey & I. Lea of Philadelphia commissioned original works for engraving from such artists as Charles Robert Leslie (who was Carey's brother-in-law), Samuel F. B. Morse, William Sidney Mount, Thomas Sully, and Robert W. Weir. Carey provided support to Emanuel Leutze for art study in Düsseldorf, Germany, in the 1840's. Designs the artist created during that period were sent to Philadelphia for engraving and were published in *The Diadem*.¹⁴⁵ *The Token*, published in Boston from 1827-1842, contained commissioned works by George Loring Brown, John Gadsby Chapman, Thomas Cole, Alvan Fisher, and Henry Inman that were engraved by John Cheney, Asher B. Durand, and James Smillie, among others.¹⁴⁶ This both fueled and benefited from the growing celebrity status of these artists.

Because many of these artists were members of the Sketch Club and the National Academy of Design, their participation in *The Talisman*, the text of which was created primarily by three literary members, William Cullen Bryant, Robert C. Sands, and Gulian C. Verplanck, was assured. Writing to Verplanck, Robert Sands stated that "The Gentlemen belonging to the National Academy are all very anxious to lend their aid next year, in furnishing designs...Morton is very anxious to try his hand – and Mr. Morse will cheerfully assist us."¹⁴⁷ The three issues of *The Talisman*, published in 1827, 1829, and 1830, contained twenty-five engravings by eight artists, including Henry Inman, Robert W. Weir, Thomas Seir Cummings, Samuel F. B. Morse, Thomas Cole, John Ludlow Morton, and his brother, Henry Jackson

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 79.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 67.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 63.

Morton.¹⁴⁸ In a letter to Guilian Verplanck, William Cullen Bryant cast light on a practical reason for the texts to follow the illustrations. “The necessity of putting the designs immediately into the hands of the engravers will oblige us rather to illustrate their designs than to have designs illustrate what we write.”¹⁴⁹ Both Cummings and John Morton preserved preliminary drawings for works in *The Talisman* in their drawing albums, not just their own, but those by friends in that circle. (See Chapter 3.)

In addition to commissioning original works from artists, gift book publishers often derived illustrations from works held in private art collections. Edward Carey, brother of William and himself a publisher and art collector whose “beautiful chambers” Ralph Waldo Emerson extolled after a visit to Philadelphia, likely drew from his own holdings a number of the original works engraved for *The Gift* and *The Diadem*. Affiliation with famous private collections gave distinction to other publications; *The Atlantic Souvenir* trumpeted its affiliation with Joseph Bonaparte’s collection in Bordentown, New Jersey, while those of Hugh Swinton Ball, of North Carolina, and Daniel Wadsworth of Hartford, graced *The Magnolia* of 1836 and *The Token* of 1831 respectively.¹⁵⁰ *The Talisman* of 1829 identified two works by Robert W. Weir, *Greek Boy* and *Red Jacket*, engraved by Asher B. Durand and George W. Hatch respectively, as being “from the original painting in the possession of Samuel Ward, Esq.” (Ills. 2-16 and 2-17)

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 63. n. 30.

¹⁴⁹ MS letter, February 9, 1829, Berg-Bryant Papers, NYPL quoted in James T. Callow. *Kindred Spirits: Knickerbocker Writers and American Artists, 1807-1855*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967) p. 25.

¹⁵⁰ Thompson, p. 41.

Renowned Baltimore collector Robert Gilmor allowed several of his works of American art to be reproduced in this way. He loaned William Sidney Mount's *Boy Getting Over a Fence, Throg's Point, New York* to a Mr. Morris, editor of *The Mirror* "for the purpose of embellishing the Mirror with a series of woodcuts." Gilmor also sent the same artist's *A Tough Story*, now in the Corcoran Gallery of Art, to Carey & Hart in 1841 for illustration in *The Gift: A Christmas and New Year's Present*.¹⁵¹ (Ill. 2-18) Well known for his willingness to share access to his collection with artists, friends, and foreign visitors, Gilmor appears to have delighted in having his original works of art made more broadly available in published form. Writing to fellow collector Charles Graff in November, 1841, he asked, "Have you seen Carey + Hart's 'Gift' for 1842 – My picture by Mount is admirably engraved in it. It could not be more perfectly rendered in expression + every thing." He expressed his pleasure in the skill of the engravers in a letter to Carey and Hart, "To say merely that the print is a very beautiful specimen of engraving would be insufficient praise; it is the most faithful copy of the picture in all its details, - especially in the expression of the figures, and far exceeded any expectation I had formed previous to seeing it."¹⁵² Gilmor also purchased a painting that had already been reproduced, acquiring Thomas Sully's portrait of Fanny Kemble as Julia in "The Hunchback" from engravers Inman and Childs in Philadelphia in 1833. The plate engraved by John Cheney took the new title of "Beatrice" in *The Gift* in 1836.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Lance Humphries' 1998 dissertation is a definitive resource on Robert Gilmor. Humphries found no documentation regarding the contents of Gilmor's extensive collection of drawings and characterized its dispersal as a "thorny problem." See Lance Lee Humphries. "Robert Gilmor, Jr. (1774-1848): Baltimore Collector and American Art Patron." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1998. p. 263.

¹⁵² Ibid, vol. II, pps. 28 and 307.

¹⁵³ Thompson, pps. 75-76.

The market for periodicals in America grew at the same time as that for gift books. They both fostered visual culture and enhanced the celebrity of particular artists. George Pope Morris, editor of *The New-York Mirror*, a literary magazine that appeared from 1823-1842, published exhibition reviews, “art tales,” and a total of seventy-six full-page steel and copper-plate engravings. These illustrated works by John Trumbull, Gilbert Stuart, Thomas Sully, Asher B. Durand, Chester Harding, Henry Inman, and William Sidney Mount as well as drawings by Robert W. Weir, John Gadsby Chapman, and Alexander J. Davis. Morris placed many of the original paintings and drawings on exhibition in the annual exhibitions at the National Academy of Design.¹⁵⁴

Gift books gave new publicity and broad dissemination to art collectors and collecting. They identified exemplary American art and helped to create the canon of American artistic production for a mass audience. In this context of mass reproduction, they also added value to the original work of art. The appreciation of gift book illustrations extended beyond enjoyment of the published volumes. In some cases, illustrations were offered for sale as portfolios of plates, unencumbered by accompanying text. G.&C.&H. Carvill advertised “Proof impressions on India Paper, imperial 8vo” of illustrations from *The Token* of 1830 in the *New York Evening Post*. W.B. Gilley promoted “A few setts [sic] of the Engravings to sell separate from the book” in the *New York Morning Courier* in November of 1828. Those illustrations included *The Doomed Bride* by Henry Inman, engraved by Hatch, *The Banks of the Juniata* by Thomas Doughty, engraved by G.B. Ellis, *Grandfather’s Hobby* from a painting by Thomas Sully, after a design by Charles Bird King, engraved by E.

¹⁵⁴ Callow, pps. 94-102, 226.

Gallaudet, *Chocura's Curse* by Thomas Cole, engraved by G.W. Hatch, and *The Greek Lovers* by Robert Walter Weir, engraved by Asher B. Durand. (Ill. 2-19) The preface to this gift book drew attention to the six illustrations executed by American artists, especially those owned by collectors: "The picture entitled 'Sibyl,' is from a painting belonging to Dr. Binney of this city; 'Grandfather's Hobby' is from a picture by Sully, after a design by King, in the possession of J. Fullerton, Esq. To these gentlemen our thanks are due for the loan of these pictures to the artists who copied them."¹⁵⁵

Carey & Lea profited from the sale of 600 proofs from the plates of *The Atlantic Souvenir* in 1829.¹⁵⁶ Thus images widely distributed through gift books were commodified as another form of parlor decoration.

"Softening the Asperities of Life:" Visualizing Parlor Behavior

Just as parlor furnishings and accessories carried meanings that were socially constructed, so was there a "vocabulary" of acceptable and expected parlor behavior. In this rarified and coded environment, people enacted rituals of self-improvement and self-expression in which art – literary, visual, musical – played a central role. Refinement, the cultivation of social virtues associated with aristocratic precedent, was the goal; the means of its achievement certain activities, habits of speech, and details of self-presentation.

Visual images found in books, periodicals, and in drawings, reinforced these social norms and modeled correct behavior. A contemporary editor alluded to the

¹⁵⁵ *The Token: A Christmas and New Year's Present* S.G. Goodrich, ed. (Boston: Carter and Hendee, 1830) p. 6.

¹⁵⁶ Callow, p. 45.

gendered destination of gift books and the refining role they were expected to play: “The dissemination of Annuals softens the asperities of life and assists the cultivation of the humanities...There is something sacred in the destination of these beautiful compounds that endears them to our recollection.”¹⁵⁷

As we have seen, parlor images supported a gendered view of the home by placing women at the center of the domestic environment, anchoring the family group. This gave visual expression to the social ideal of womanhood, and normalized refined comportment for middle-class audiences. In a review in the *Cosmopolitan Art Journal* of a book of poems by Nathaniel Parker Willis, illustrated by “the pencils of our best artists, and the gravers of our best wood engravers,” the unnamed author clearly indicates the gender of the book’s intended recipients, “while we refer to the work as a specimen of American taste and talent, let us not forget to say the book should find its way to every centre table and *boudoir* in the land.”¹⁵⁸ A reviewer in *The Knickerbocker* saw this as the genre’s literary downfall: “The degradation of this species of literature arose from the mistaken idea, that inasmuch as annuals were mainly intended as presents for girls, and young ladies, the matter should be chiefly composed of love-stories, and “pretty pieces of poetry.”¹⁵⁹

Gift books perpetuated visual imagery of woman as “domestic spirit of grace” for a wide market. An anonymous writer in *Harper’s* characterized these images as “great-eyed, smooth-cheeked, straight-nosed, little-mouthed, small-waisted beauties.”¹⁶⁰ *The Teacher* (Ill. 2-20) illustrated an essay on education in the annual

¹⁵⁷ Burton’s *Gentleman’s Magazine*, I, (October 1837) p. 278.

¹⁵⁸ “American Proficiency in Illustration,” *The Cosmopolitan Art Journal* vol. 3, June 1859, p. 157.

¹⁵⁹ *The Knickerbocker*, VIII, (September 1836) pps. 355-356.

¹⁶⁰ *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*, II. (January 1851) p. 276

Leaflets of Memory of 1846. A beautiful young woman, sunk in thought as she holds a small book in her hand, rests in an empty schoolroom. The fashionable details of the subject's dress and hair, her languid, long-fingered hands, the tips of tiny shoes peeking out from under her skirts, the delicate teacup and the evidence of her handiwork, all indicate her refinement. The accompanying text begins "Hail! All hail, Minerva!" reinforcing the visual message as it extols the schoolmistress as the "prime moving power of civilization – the source of popular opinion."¹⁶¹

Gentle Sorrow from *The Coronal and Young Ladies Remembrancer* of 1853 is fairly typical of the contemplative, inwardly-focused female image that often appears in these illustrations. (Ill. 2-21) The neoclassical mourning mode is invoked in furniture, architecture, and dress, while also imparting an aristocratic tone. This is tempered, even subverted, by such incongruous vernacular details as the simple, round finials and corkscrew-turned stiles of the chair back, the woman's hefty arms and hands, and the heavily-framed contemporary portrait hanging on the wall behind her.

These themes were given similar expression in the unique imagery of the drawing album. For example, the female figure absorbed in quiet handiwork is treated with a delicate touch in William Walters album in *Woman Knitting*, a handsome watercolor of 1859 by Richard Morrell Staigg. (Ill. 2-22) Half-smiling and serene, she is absorbed in her work. An atmosphere of calm, productivity, and contentment prevails, typical of the domestic subjects of this artist, in whom,

¹⁶¹ *Leaflets of Memory*. Reynell Coates, M.D., ed. (Philadelphia: E.H. Butler & Co., 1846)

according to Tuckerman, “the female beauty peculiar to our country has found no more refined delineator.”¹⁶²

“A Bright, Cheerful Book:” Reading in the Parlor

Antebellum culture imparted and reinforced codes of refinement through words and images, so books and works of art were crucial accessories for proper parlor behavior. Reading from Christian Scripture or suitable literature or poetry, producing handiwork, drawing, looking at albums or stereoscopes, playing games, were all acceptable occupations in the parlor. Books displayed and used in the parlor both formed character and put the family’s tastes and aspirations on display for others to see.

As the parlor portraits have shown, reading, already a prevalent genre theme in European art, was a common theme in the visual arts of the antebellum period. The drawing albums under consideration yield additional evidence of the centrality and potential meanings of this theme. Significantly, the images often leave it unclear whether visual or textual material is being read.

A signature work in the John Ludlow Morton album is a sketch by Thomas Sully of a woman reading to a young child dated 1831. (Ill. 2-23) A quick, loose sketch in pencil and wash, it is characteristic of that artist’s working drawings, and, as such, unusual to find among the finished works more typically collected in albums in

¹⁶² Henry T. Tuckerman. *Book of the Artists*, p. 445. Staigg had made the acquaintance of John Frederick Kensett, whose portrait miniature he painted, soon after he moved to New York from Boston around 1853. It is likely that the watercolor was obtained for Walters’ album by Kensett. This watercolor may relate to the genre paintings by Staigg which Tuckerman characterized as “naïvely expressive, simple and true in feeling, and most gracefully conceived and colored,” and which included such subjects as *Knitting*, *The Love Letter*, *The Novel Reader* (owned by R. M. Olyphant, Esq.), and *Reading the Illustrated News*.

this period. The intellectual communication and close relation between woman and child is signaled by the stacked composition, which brings their heads and the book into close relation. Here is the female “domestic spirit” imparting knowledge and refinement to the attentive child through the written word. The composition of this noteworthy image, sketched directly onto a page in Morton’s album, must have appealed to Sully, for he used it in a painting he completed in 1831 of his children *Alfred and Jane Sully*.¹⁶³ It was given wider distribution as the illustration *Brother and Sister* in *The Gift* of 1839.¹⁶⁴ (Ill. 2-24) Once it was translated into print, Sully indicates that they are reading lines of text, reinforcing a connection to the text of the accompanying poem. We can only infer the additional value the drawing would have gained for Morton, who appears to have prized preliminary drawings for prints, as well as the additional pleasure it would have given those with whom he shared his album, as that image gained wider visibility in published form.

William Walters’ album contains a lush pencil drawing by British-born artist and Tenth Street studio denizen John George Brown (1831-1913), dated 1859. (Ill. 2-25) Oval in format, highly finished and detailed in its execution, the work is characteristic of that artist, who specialized, according to Tuckerman, “in *genre* subjects of a more humble, and especially of a juvenile and sportive kind.”¹⁶⁵ This drawing depicts two children, a girl and a boy, looking at a picture book with absorptive interest while sitting on an ample sofa. Reading images is shown as an

¹⁶³ Edward Biddle and Mantle Fielding. *The Life and Works of Thomas Sully*. (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970) p. 284.

¹⁶⁴ I am grateful to Stephanie Mayer for showing me Sully’s gift book illustration.

¹⁶⁵ Henry T. Tuckerman. *Book of the Artists. American Artist Life, comprising biographical and critical sketches of American Artists: Preceded by an Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of Art in America*. (New York: G.P. Putnam & Son, 661 Broadway, 1867) p. 487.

equally immersive activity as reading text. Striped and patterned wallpaper in the background places this scene in a contemporary parlor at the heart of the middle-class household. Relaxed in their posture, the tip of the little girl's boot extending coyly over the edge of the oval vignette, the children are dressed in substantial clothing, well-brushed, and well-behaved.

Brown had made his National Academy debut in 1858 and must already have made the acquaintance of John Frederick Kensett. Although we do not have that artist's letter to William Walters for reference, Walters, in response to a mention of an introduction to Brown, or maybe the acquisition of the drawing, answered enthusiastically, "I shall be very glad, as I have wanted to know Mr. Brown for a long time – trust I will meet him next winter."¹⁶⁶ The virtuosity and high degree of finish in this drawing suited Walters taste, while the youthful subjects would have modeled proper parlor behavior for Walters' children Harry and Jennie, ages eleven and six in 1859. In *The Children's Sofa*, the frontispiece to *John True; or The Christian Experience of an Honest Boy* published by Harper and Brothers in 1856, a similar pair of reading children is dwarfed by the opulent parlor furnishings. (Ill. 2-26)

One of the more enigmatic works in Walters' album is a watercolor signed by Joseph Partridge (dates unknown) in August of 1817. (Ill. 2-27) A woman in a diaphanous white Empire-style gown turns the page of a book, held up from the viewer's line of vision by her male companion, who wears the high collar, leather boots, vest, and morning coat of the period. They rest on a neo-Classical couch with carved paw feet, curving side arm and round bolster, she kneeling on the end and leaning on her companion, he sitting with legs crossed. Despite the rather awkward

¹⁶⁶ WTW to JFK, July 20, 1859.

pose, their demeanor is serene and focused on the book they both hold, placed at the center of the composition.

The John Mackie Falconer album contains several images of reading, including the New York artist Edwin White's *Girl Reading* of 1845. (Ill. 2-28) In this pencil drawing, the female subject is viewed from behind, the closeness and the intimacy of the moment underscored by the delicacy and detail with which the artist has rendered her eyelashes, earring, and ruffled dress, as well as the faint lines of text on the page. In the same album, illustrator John Magee's *Reading* (Ill. 2-29) in graphite and white chalk depicts a moment of lower-class self-improvement; a father teaching his son to read at the kitchen table. In stark contrast to White's delicate rendering of a beautiful woman, there is an element of the grotesque in Magee's figures, in keeping with his work as a cartoonist as well as a lithographer. Magee illustrated several comic publications, including *Lumps of Laughter: or Smiles for a Shilling* and the *Crockett's Almanac* for 1845 and 1846. He was also capable of producing work in the sentimental mode. His *Mother and Child* in William Walters' album (Ill. 2-30) celebrates the bond between the two subjects in a composition similar to Sully's.

As disparate visually as these drawings may be, they each depict valued aspects of reading both texts and images as a parlor activity: quiet, shared experience between Brown's boy and girl and Sully's woman and child, elegance and formality in White's observation of a quiet moment of solitary absorption, and the possibility of achieving refinement and escaping a grim environment through reading and learning illustrated by Magee.

Reading gave members of the middle class the tools to contribute usefully to conversation and to advance socially and personally. Throughout the antebellum period, the value of “mental culture” was promoted in books, periodicals, newspapers, and lectures. In the introduction to *Fireside Reading*, the popular author Mrs. C. M. Kirkland presented a broad definition of reading as “a circulating medium of ideas,” dependent on “moods,” “different times of life,” “various times of day,” and differing “times of year” for their meaning. Capable of playing a dual role of forming ideas and of expressing cultivation, books could also be misused: “Books are, in general, what we make of them. To some they are hardly more than a certain weight of paper and print, put together in a guise more or less attractive, and forming a genteel article of furniture.”¹⁶⁷

Mirroring and miniaturizing the antebellum rhetoric of home as refuge from a hostile outside world, the activity of reading was served up as an antidote for the mind: “One of the good novels or brilliant essays of the present day, read aloud to the family circle, after tea, is more potent than champagne in dispersing the day’s cares or vexations. The sore or weary track left in the mind by toil and trouble, is more effectually effaced by a bright, cheerful book, than by any more noisy or showy expedient.”¹⁶⁸ Middle-class culture placed sentimental fiction that domesticated refinement and made “gentility an essential element of the respectability for which every middle-class family yearned,” at the center of this “explosion of print.”¹⁶⁹

For Mrs. Kirkland, different books required different types of reading. Some were read for “repose and amusement,” some to “excite curiosity,” some appealed to

¹⁶⁷ Mrs. C.M. Kirkland. *Fireside Reading*. (New York: Charles Scribner, 1854) pps. 11-18

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p. 20

¹⁶⁹ Bushman, p. 281.

“the poetical and imaginative,” while others were “speculative and didactic.” It doesn’t seem too large a logical leap to suggest that the varied visual material under consideration would have demanded different types of viewing as well.

“Seated Play with the Pencil:” Drawing in the Parlor

Drawing itself was an equally acceptable parlor occupation. Henry James’ adolescent memory of his brother William in early 1850’s New York captures, with a younger sibling’s eye, both the activity and the setting. “As I catch W.J.’s image, from far back, at its most characteristic, he sits drawing and drawing, always drawing, especially under the lamplight of the Fourteenth Street back parlour.” Seeking to recover a childhood image of his brother, he finds memory “either quite losing him or but apprehending him again at seated play with his pencil under the lamp.”¹⁷⁰

“Seated play with the pencil” was not just an activity for artists but an appropriate amusement for a refined, educated young man.¹⁷¹ Popular author Catherine Maria Sedgewick captured a similar scene and the associations with drawing in her antebellum novel *Home*. The Barclays, a family whose rise in social status the book chronicles, are gathered in the evening “round a well-lighted table.” While Mr. Barclay read, Mrs. Barclay sewed, and “Charles and Wallace were seated on each side of her, drawing, acquiring at a leisure hour some knowledge of an art for which man in almost every pursuit has some occasion.”¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ James, *A Small Boy and Others*. pps. 108, 135.

¹⁷¹ Several studies document the emphasis on drawing in American education in the antebellum period, including *The Art Crusade: An Analysis of American Drawing Manuals, 1820-1860* by Peter Marzio (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1976) and Eliot Bostwick Davis, “Training the Eye and the Hand: Drawing Books in Nineteenth-Century America,” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 1992).

¹⁷² Quoted in Bushman, p. 256.

Drawing albums were among the objects placed in the parlor to amuse, to instruct, and to encourage conversation. Visual imagery in the parlor was much more than mere decoration; images, just like books, were “read” for edification and entertainment. From our image-soaked perspective at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the power of such visual material is hard to imagine. Henry James gives us some sense of the role and environment for images in a description of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s first visit to the Peabody household in Salem, where he met his future wife. The hostesses brought out a portfolio of Flaxman’s designs for Dante, just received from a friend at Harvard, which became the party’s evening entertainment. Looking back over forty years time, James interprets this little drama, “pregnant with historic meaning,” as characteristic of the “lonely frigidity” of 1840s Salem:

There was at that time a great desire for culture, a great interest in knowledge, in art, in aesthetics, together with a very scant supply of the materials for such pursuits. Small things were made to do large service; and there is something even touching in the solemnity of consideration that was bestowed by the emancipated New England conscience upon little wandering books and prints, little echoes and rumours of observation and experience.¹⁷³

What a contrast not only to James’ art-filled expatriate adulthood, but also to the visual environment of his childhood home in 1850s New York, where, in the front parlor, he recalled a painted view of Florence, an “ample canvas of Mr. Cole, ‘the American Turner,’” a marble Bacchante that had come “straight from an American studio in Rome,” and another large landscape, a view of Tuscany by a French painter Lefèvre.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ Henry James. *Hawthorne*. (Ithica and New York: Cornell University Press, 1997) p. 55.

¹⁷⁴ James. *A Small Boy and Others*. p. 140.

“Do Write in My Album:” Exchanging Friendship in Graphic Form

The practices of drawing collecting and autograph collecting came together in a specific vogue for souvenir or friendship albums, a popularization for the middle class of the elite *album amicorum* tradition. *The Columbian Lady’s and Gentleman’s Magazine* invoked both the collecting zeal and the mixed emotions of the artist or amateur asked to contribute to an album:

Some who lived in this period have commented upon a pernicious habit young people had of soliciting all comers to write an appropriate verse or thought on the tinted page of an album. ‘Let me see your album,’ we are told, ‘was the first favor asked by visiting young ladies, and ‘Do write in my album’ was the word of terror to the ear of every gentleman suspected of dallying with the muses.¹⁷⁵

The nearly universal ability of middle class parlor visitors to write a few lines and add an appropriate drawing, made this fashion possible. *The Talisman* for 1828, the first edition of this collaboration of artists and writers, commenced with a poem entitled “Another Preface to an Album.” After many verses exploring “such similies as suit the common mind” about albums, the poem’s conclusion gives additional insight into the album-writing practice:

O ye! Who herein are required to write,
Be wise, before you undertake the same;
Remember that whatever you indite,
Remaineth to your credit or your shame;
That you had better leave the paper white,
Than wrack your hapless brains with idle aim:
But above all things, if the book you take,
Don’t wait a year, before you bring it back.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁵ *The Columbian Lady’s and Gentleman’s Magazine*, I, (May 1844) p. 226.

¹⁷⁶ “Another Preface to an Album,” *The Talisman*. (New York: Elam Bliss, Broadway, 1827) p. 5. See Patrizia Di Bello. *Women’s Albums and Photography in Victorian England: Ladies, Mothers and Flirts* (Hampshire, U.K.: Ashgate, 2007) pps. 29-51 for nineteenth-century album culture. The chapter begins with a letter from Dr. George Birbeck to antiquarian John Britton asking him to intercede with an artist who has kept Mrs. Birbeck’s album too long.

Albums were exchanged among friends, entrusted in order to be given back enhanced by the writer/artist's personal contribution. This exchange reinforced links of friendship and mutual obligation, for which the album served as a visual record.

Souvenir albums for amateur drawing exchange took a remarkably similar form to gift books, bearing such titles as "Casket of Thoughts" or "Token of Affection." Some were even illustrated with plates from the annuals. Gift book publisher Leavitt & Allen specialized in blank books likely produced as overruns on the same production lines.¹⁷⁷ Other albums published by J. C. Riker, Hutchison & Dwier & Co, and Peabody & Co., consisting of an engraved title page, several engraved leaves of plates, and blank pages in white and colored papers.¹⁷⁸ An album "Presented as a token of Regard and Esteem to Miss Jane R. Warner by a Sincere Friend Jany 1st 1833 Berlin, Conn." had been published by Peabody & Co. in New York in 1832. It contained some of the same illustrations as *The Token* of 1830, Inman's *Lovers* frontispiece (Ill. 2-31), *The Lost Children* by Ary Scheffer, Thomas Doughty's *Banks of the Juniata*, and *The Greek Lovers* by Robert W. Weir, personalized with an inscription "To Jane." (Ill 2-32, also Ill. 2-19) The Presentation Page (Ill. 33), enhanced with intricate calligraphic flourishes in green and red ink, marks the album as a New Year's gift.

The blurring of distinction between the drawing album, souvenir album, and gift book often began with the frontispiece, presentation page or endpiece that surrounded the contents. With remarkable frequency, these were designed in a neo-Gothic style, a European fashion brought to America by such examples as Alexandre

¹⁷⁷ Thompson, p. 20.

¹⁷⁸ Examples of these albums are in the collection of the American Antiquarian Society.

Vattemare's *Album Cosmopolite*. The endpiece of that publication, titled "Une Pensée, par M. Adolph Fries" (1839) (Ill. 2-34) takes the form of an elaborate Gothic altarpiece complete with the figures of Christ and angels. The names of artists included in the album occupy a plaque in the upper left, with the names of "savants" in the upper right. Their countries of origin appear in shields below the sacred scene, with the names of historical artists of the international canon spelled out in scrolls below them.

The presentation pages of annual gift books were often Gothic in style. In the *Leaflets of Memory* of 1846, that page is lithographed in bright hues of gold, green, blue and red. (Ill. 2-35) An elaborate, illuminated P introduces the Gothic lettering of "presented to", and frames an empty oval for the personalized inscription. The presentation page of *The Snowflake* of 1849, rendered in the same color scheme, mirrors the marginalia of an illuminated manuscript, with miniature winter scenes of skating, sledding, and sleigh-riding figures. (Ill. 2-36) In her study of gift book inscriptions, in which additional examples of Gothic presentation pages are illustrated, Cindy Dickinson describes inscriptions as the means of transferring literary annuals and gift books "from the publisher's commercial marketplace to the world of sentiment."¹⁷⁹ However, with its architectural and religious connotations, the Gothic frame provided for sentimental inscriptions also elevated those sentiments into the realm of historical memory.

William Walters situated his album within the annual cycle of gift book publication. He called it his "greatest book of the season," purchased the work of a

¹⁷⁹ Cindy Dickinson. "Creating a World of Books, Friends, and Flowers: Gift Books and Inscriptions, 1825-60," *Winterthur Portfolio*. Vol. 31, No. 1, Spring 1996. p. 57

number of artists best known for their illustrations, and scheduled its shipment to Baltimore from Avery's atelier in New York after "the 15th or 20th of December." He also chose to use the gift book convention of Gothic decoration for the frontispiece, described in Chapter 1. (Ill. 2-37)

"A Poem for your Book:" Drawings in Holograph Form

Among the extant antebellum-period drawing albums, several share examples of a particular form of souvenir drawing. Known as "holographs," they include a finished drawing, a signature, and a piece of verse, all in the artist's hand. The term holograph comes from the law, in which a document wholly written by the person in whose name it appears, carries legal authority. In holograph drawings, the artist's choices of image and of accompanying text, and his autograph inscription combine to form a unique and personal narrative. The combination of these three elements would inflect the process of viewing with questions of motive, personality, and connection.

Several of the drawings in the John Ludlow Morton album take the holograph form. Henry Inman, a contemporary of Morton, was already an established and successful artist in the late 1820's, when most of the dated drawings in the album were assembled. Many of his literary, historical, and genre subjects were engraved to illustrate gift books and periodicals. Inman's vignette of the heroine Eveline and a companion in exotic dress on the ramparts of the castle of Garde Douloureuse, is accompanied by the handwritten text: "I heard a distant sound, said Eveline, - I thought I heard it - hark! It comes again!" and the citation "page 79 of *The Betrothed: Tales of the Crusaders*." (Ill. 2-38) This novel of war and unrequited love by Sir Walter Scott had only been published in Edinburgh in 1825, so Inman's drawing

brought a piece of the most current literature into Morton's album. In ways similar to the literarily-inspired drawings produced in the Sketch Club evenings the two artists had shared, Inman's holograph depended on the grounding of a literary text.

American editions of Scott's novel appeared immediately. While there is no evidence that Inman illustrated *The Betrothed*, the unattributed frontispiece of the one-volume edition published by Samuel H. Parker in Boston in 1825 and republished in 1834 depicts the same rampart scene. (Ill. 2-39)

The second Inman holograph, *The Drowned Boy*, is a pencil and wash vignette of a young man, fully-clothed and unscathed, washed up on a deserted seacoast. (Ill. 2-40) The unattributed verses in the artist's hand are as fraught as the accompanying image is peaceful:

Far from home on Peru's desert strand.
The much lov'd sea-boy sleeps; fancy still hears
His drowning death-shriek in the sea-bird's scream.
His funeral dirge in ocean's sullen roar!

The tragic subject of the drowned boy was a popular theme in early nineteenth century poetry and prose, which such authors as Charles Dickens and William Wordsworth plumbed for its sentimental power.¹⁸⁰

William Walters must particularly have prized the four holograph drawings in his album by Washington Allston, Charles Robert Leslie, Samuel F. B. Morse, and Benjamin West. Dated 1814 or 1815, from the period when all four artists were living in England, this group would have represented for Walters and anyone who viewed the album the work of the revered first and second generations of American

¹⁸⁰ Dickens' "The Song of the Wreck" and Wordsworth's "There Was A Boy" www.poetry.com

artists. Allston, himself as noted at the time for his poetry as for his art, chose six lines from the *Ode to Fear* by the eighteenth-century English poet William Collins:

Danger, whose Limbs of Giant Mold
What mortal Eye can fix'd behold?
Who stalks his Round, an hideous Form,
Howling amidst the Midnight Storm,
Or throws him on the ridgy Steep
Of some loose hanging Rock to sleep.¹⁸¹

The American artist illustrated these lines with a giant Blakean nude figure sprawled precariously on a high rock ledge overlooking a river valley. The drawing is executed in pen and ink in the outline style then in vogue. (Ill 2-41)

Charles Leslie's holograph contribution, *The Poet*, (Ill. 2-42) both points out and subverts the expectation of the intended collector. A hastily-executed pen and ink sketch shows the garret quarters of the subject, its walls scrawled with poems, including one titled "The Vanity of Wealth." The poet wears torn rags and a cap against the cold, and sits on a broken stool propped up on the tenth volume of his Poems. The sordidness of the scene is underscored by the top-hatted gentleman (just beneath the candle on the table), who functions as a stand-in for the collector, and climbs the stairs while holding a handkerchief to his nose. The text, in Leslie's hand, addresses the collector, and reveals the album context of his request, in the process conflating the actions of writing and drawing. "Dear Sir, The above poet is busily engaged in writing a poem for your book + in the meantime I hope you will accept his portrait as a pledge for the performance of his promise. I am Yours very sincerely,

¹⁸¹ Roger Lonsdale, ed. *Thomas Gray and William Collins: Poetical Works*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) p. 139.

C.R. Leslie. March 8th, 1815.” The drawing’s lack of both finish and formality underscores its status as an ephemeral substitute for the poem the patron expected.

Samuel F. B. Morse’s holograph contribution takes a much more sophisticated and formal tone, casting his friend Leslie’s hasty sketch into even greater relief. Morse’s outline drawing depicts a knight in armor, seen from behind. (Ill. 2-43) His right arm extends out as if into the future, as does the artist’s poem, entitled “To the possessor of this book in the year 1965, written March 1815.” A meditation in rhyme on life, death, and “Time’s oblivious mist,” including “that long void...when thee nor I exist,” it is written in high rhetorical style in proof of Morse’s sophistication and erudition.

For Walters and the contemporaries with whom he shared them, these drawings would have exuded rarity, celebrity value, and expatriate cachet. They also carried the value of distinguished provenance, as Walters most likely purchased them from the Robert Gilmor estate sale in 1849. Renowned as a collector of European and American paintings, Gilmor also owned works on paper and a famed collection of autographs. It is in that collection that he classified the four holograph drawings. He inventoried these drawings in the *Catalogue of the Collection of Autographs in the Possession of Robert Gilmor of Baltimore*, self-published in 1832 “for the use of my friends, that they might know what autographs I had, & consequently what I had not & which when in their honor to supply would be acceptable.” Gilmor included the names of the four holograph artists in the alphabetical listings of his holdings, among signers of the Declaration of Independence, military figures, Presidents, other political figures, divines, poets, physicians, scientific class, and actors, as well as

Gilmore correspondents Thomas Cole, and Thomas Doughty and five other American artists.¹⁸²

“Gilt-edged themes:” The Visual Culture of Sentiment

In the antebellum period, graphic images, both unique drawings and mass-produced illustrations, underscored the desire for harmonious, controlled self-presentation in domestic life, modeling correct behavior in the parlor, idealizing women and motherhood, domesticating childhood, positioning romantic love in exotic or historical frames, and presenting the physical environment as idealized landscape. They manifested in visual form the moral, polite, and emotionalizing tone acceptable in social interaction. Highly-finished, small in scale, often oval-topped or round, these vignettes met a social need “... so clearly is the taste of the people in favor of these miniature and easily attainable works of art.”¹⁸³

Gift books commercialized and dispersed widely this particular form of visual imagery and, in turn, shaped expectations of graphic works in other media. Though the differences between mass-produced gift books and individually-assembled albums of original drawings would appear to be great, the images display striking similarities and many interesting linkages. The album drawings of the period also tend to be vignettes that occupy a small proportion of the available space on the sheet, unenclosed in a border or with the edges shading off into the surrounding page.

¹⁸² *Catalogue of a Collection of Autographs in the Possession of Robert Gilmore of Baltimore*. (self-published, 1832) The other artists including in the listing are C.B. King, Gabriel [sic] Stuart Newton, Rembrandt Peale, Thomas Sully, and Col. John Trumbull. Walters also owned two portrait sketches in watercolor by Thomas Sully and a pencil drawing of the famed French actor François Joseph Talma, executed by Rembrandt Peale in Paris in 1810, all of which were likely from Gilmore’s collection.

¹⁸³ “American Proficiency in Illustration,” *Cosmopolitan Art Journal*, Vol. III (1858-59) p. 154.

As “signs and symbols of affection, luxury, and refinement,” collections of graphic works, either unique or mass-produced, illustrated sentimental and moral subjects, while emphasizing the beauty that was equated at the time with virtue. Illustrations of family life showed happy children playing in harmony (Ill. 2-44) and parlor gatherings overseen by serene mothers (Ill. 2-45). Landscapes were similarly sentimentalizing or idealizing, with “bowers” of foliage framing distant vistas, and a predilection for moonlight. The romantic and the exotic were invoked in such commonplaces as a lover’s farewell, mourning over a fallen soldier (Ill 2-46), and medieval settings. Drawings and illustrations provided access to some of the “items of high civilization” that Henry James considered lacking in American life:

No sovereign, no court, no personal loyalty, no aristocracy, no church, no clergy, no army, no diplomatic service, not country gentlemen, no palaces, no castles, nor manors, nor old countryhouses, not parsonages, not thatched cottages, not ivied ruins; no cathedrals, nor abbeys, not little Norman churches; no great Universities nor public school – no Oxford, nor Eton, nor Harrow; no literature, no novels, no museums, no pictures, no political society, no sporting class – no Epsom nor Ascot!¹⁸⁴

A culture of sentimentality was reflected in the titles of the books, such as *The Album of Love*, *The Rose*, or *The Ruby, a Token of Friendship*. The evocatively titled poems they contained, such as “The Moon upon the Spire,” “The Empty Bird’s Nest,” “The Country Graveyard,” “The Mother’s Lament Over Her Sleeping Child,” and “The Dying Soldier” reinforced visual material in textual form. Though they were infused with emotionalism, and a taste for the exotic, the ethos of both the illustrations and the text was one of decorum and refinement, their tone one of

¹⁸⁴ James. *Hawthorne*. p. 34

reassurance in shared values, and conventionalization. Benjamin Rowland characterized it this way: “It becomes apparent in the decorous engravings of the Token Books that American romanticism was a very tame and circumspect version of the agony that shook Byron and Baudelaire. The American union with the muse of romanticism was never anything more than a platonic one.”¹⁸⁵ Conflating the sentimental poetry of antebellum America with the gift books that gave it voice, Walt Whitman wrote disdainfully of “these highly-refined, imported and gilt-edged themes...causing tender spasms in the coteries, and warranted not to chafe the sensitive cuticle of the most exquisitely artificial gossamer delicacy.”¹⁸⁶ Far removed from the rough and tumble of antebellum public life, these images promoted an ideal of personal refinement and social restraint.

¹⁸⁵ Benjamin Rowland, Jr. “Popular Romanticism: Art and the Gift Books,” *The Art Quarterly*, Vol. XX, no. 4, (Winter, 1957) p. 368.

¹⁸⁶ Thompson, p. 29. Walt Whitman. *Democratic Vistas* (London: 1888) p. 65

Chapter 3: The Original and the Multiple: the “Aura” of Value in American Drawing Albums

A tip from John Frederick Kensett appears to have initiated William Walters' collection of drawings. Informed by this art world insider, in the spring of 1858 Walters purchased several drawings by the American illustrator F.O.C. Darley, unique works of art that derived much of their value from their wide circulation in other serial forms. The “social life” of these multiples, which took physical form in prints or as periodical and book illustrations, had helped to establish the popular reputation of the artist. For drawing collectors, association with widely reproduced images brought value to original works, adding anecdotal interest and mass market imprimatur to the reception of the drawing albums in which they were assembled for individual viewing and parlor entertainment.

An examination of this area of drawing collecting before the Civil War quickly surfaces questions about a number of assumptions implicit in the canon of American art history. Although painters and paintings have been consistently privileged in the historical account, in the period preceding the Civil War it appears that a highly fluid relationship between practitioners and media prevailed. The professional and social worlds of American artists were remarkably interconnected, with painters, engravers, and illustrators working together and across media. Collectors of graphic works appear to have held them in equal esteem. The National Academy of Design signaled this artistic egalitarianism by exhibiting drawings and engravings alongside paintings in its annual exhibitions. That so many of the well-known painters had been trained and worked as engravers, including Asher B.

Durand, John Frederick Kensett, and John William Casilear, was a fact of their formation that ensured their sympathy and camaraderie with reproductive artists. John Durand notes, for example, that his father's summer sketching excursions included not only fellow painters, but the engraver Alfred Jones.¹⁸⁷ All of the drawing albums considered here include works of illustrators and engravers, undifferentiated from those of artists known primarily as painters.

“Illustrated by Darley”: Valuing the Original of the Multiple

In the summer of 1858, Walters wrote asking his new friend Kensett “to have the goodness to accept my thanks for the information in regard to the Darley drawings which I purchased and am exceedingly pleased with.”¹⁸⁸ This exchange is not only a rare piece of documentary evidence of a secondary market for drawings before the Civil War, but also an indication of the particular value associated with that artist's work.

Felix Octavius Carr Darley (1822-1888) was at the height of his fame at the time, his works appearing in books by the most popular American authors and in widely-circulating periodicals. The lithographed outline illustrations he had produced for the American Art-Union of scenes from Washington Irving's “Rip Van Winkle” and “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” in 1848 and 1849 ensured his fine art reputation. Indeed, the ubiquity of these multiple images had prompted the *Boston Daily Advertiser* to complain in 1848: “On every other center table will be Darley's illustrations, in every other parlor will hang the picture of Queen Mary...there is,

¹⁸⁷ John Durand. *The Life and Times of Asher B. Durand*. Originally published in 1894. (Hensonville, N.Y.: Black Dome Publishing Corp., 2007) p. 184.

¹⁸⁸ WTW to JFK, June 14, 1858.

therefore, really no inducement for a subscriber to induce his friends to subscribe with him, for they will all together become weary of the pictures which meet them every day as they pass from house to house in friendly intercourse.”¹⁸⁹

But this concern does not appear to have been broadly held and by no means did it diminish Darley’s stature. A profile in the widely-circulated *Home Journal* in 1854 lionized his talents: “For historical and poetical subjects our artist possesses strong powers, discipline of hand, and patient laboriousness of study...He has a keen sense of character, eminent skill in groupings.”¹⁹⁰ According to Henry Tuckerman, “large copies, in crayon” of Darley’s most popular book illustrations were published separately, transcending the binding and their connection to the text to be appreciated as stand-alone works of art.¹⁹¹ As the images were more widely distributed, their original drawings conveyed ever more complex social messages of scarcity, popularity, rising price, and of privileged access to the ‘art circles’ in which originals might be acquired.

Darley’s stylistic range was wide, and his technique adaptable to the tone and content of different publications. To illustrate works from literature and poetry, he used a refined, subtle technique of wash over pencil, in which figures were fully

¹⁸⁹ Quoted in Jay Cantor, “Prints and the American Art-Union,” in *Prints in and of America to 1850*. John D. Morse, ed. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1970) pps. 300-301.

¹⁹⁰ L. Anna Lewis, “Felix O.C. Darley” in *The Home Journal*, August 5, 1854. p. 1. For additional information about this artist, see Frank Weitenkampf, “F.O.C. Darley, American Illustrator,” *The Art Quarterly*, (vol. X, 1947) pps. 100-113.; Theodore Bolton, “The Book Illustrations of Felix Octavius Carr Darley,” *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 61, no. 1 (April 1951) pps. 136-182; “...Illustrated by Darley: An Exhibition of Original Drawings. (Wilmington: Delaware Art Museum, 1978); Sue W. Reed, “F.O.C. Darley’s Outline Illustrations,” in Gerald W.R. Ward, ed. *The American Illustrated Book in the Nineteenth Century*. (Charlottesville: Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum with the University Press of Virginia, 1982) pps. 113-135; and Nancy Finlay. *Inventing the American Past: The Art of F.O.C. Darley*. (New York: New York Public Library, 1999).

¹⁹¹ Henry T. Tuckerman. *Book of the Artist*. p. 473.

composed and modeled, and details carefully rendered. These original drawings were translated into steel engravings. In contrast, the work that Darley produced in the 1850s for books of wit and humor was loose and lampooning. For many of these publications, Walters' friend Samuel Putnam Avery served as both author and woodcut engraver. *The harp of a thousand strings; or Laughter for a lifetime, Konceived, comp., and komically konkocted, by Spavery [pseudo.]...aided, added, and abetted by over 200 kurious kutz, from original designs... the whole engraved by S.P. Avery* was a thick book of humorous stories, poems, and cartoons. Among the "kurious kutz" contributed by Darley, was one with this caption "Fotograph of the frame of mind and Frantic state of the author of the above Famous, Fairy Frivolity – after Finding that the last F had Flown From him Forever! Finis" (Ill. 3-1) *Mrs. Partington's Carpet Bag of Fun*, published by Garret & Co., in 1855, promised the reader 150 engravings, "from designs by Darley, McLenan, Leech, Phiz, Henning, Cruikshank, Hine, Doyle, Tenniel, Goater, Crowquill, etc.," placing the Americans Darley and McLenan among noted British illustrators and satirists. Avery himself became the butt of the book's irreverent tone in the caption to a riotous amalgamation of human and animal forms, in which doodles, portraits and salacious details come together in a proto-Surrealist jumble. "The above drawing was made by 'our Artist,' while under the influence of the spirits, (note confidential – he generally takes gin.)" (Ill. 3-2) Spiritualism was so pervasive a practice in antebellum culture that Avery could make this punning reference assured that a broad audience would follow the joke.¹⁹²

¹⁹² See Charles Colbert, "A Critical Medium: James Jackson Jarves's Vision of Art History." *American Art*, Spring 2002. pps. 19-35.

By the mid-1850's Darley's reputation was such that his participation in a project could spur sales. One popular work that advertised its "Original Designs by Darley" was published by T.B. Peterson in Philadelphia in 1856/57 in the Library of Humorous American Works series. *The Adventures of Captain Simon Suggs, Late of the Tallapoosa Volunteers; Together with "Taking the Census," and other Alabama Sketches. By the Author of "Widow Rugby's Husband." With a Portrait of Simon Suggs from Life and Ten Engravings from Original Designs by Darley* (Ill. 3-3) appealed to American interest in regional types and customs, lampooning people of the backcountry for the amusement of an urban, Eastern seaboard audience.¹⁹³ The illustrations are as roughhewn as the Southern dialect in which much of the dialogue is rendered. (Ill. 3-4) Slumped in the saddle on his nag, with a weather-furrowed face, patchy whiskers, and hooked nose, Suggs is the antithesis of phrenological refinement.

The rougher, more linear style Darley employed for woodblock engravings of humorous subjects stands in marked contrast to the finished style he employed to illustrate literary works. Tuckerman noted the many facets of the artist's talent,

Darley has made a study of American subjects, and finds therein a remarkable range from the beautiful to the grotesque, as is manifest when his drawings are compared; it is rare for the same hand to deal so aptly with the graceful and the pensive, so vigorously with the characteristic, and so broadly with the humorous; and exhibit an equal facility and felicity in true, literal transcript, and in fanciful conception.¹⁹⁴

The roughhewn type of Captain Suggs, who lived by the motto "It is good to be shifty in a new country," attracted the hand of Darley's illustrator colleague John

¹⁹³ See Elizabeth Johns. *American Genre Painting: The Politics of Everyday Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

¹⁹⁴ Tuckerman, p. 475.

McLenan as well. Collector John Mackie Falconer preserved three of McLenan's sketches on the subject on one album page. (Ill. 3-5) These drawings capture Suggs' hooked nose, haggard face, and stooped posture, recalling Darley's illustrations and participating in the creation of a stereotyped backwoods "type." Two of the drawings are portraits of Suggs, in pencil and in charcoal, while the third is a sketchily-rendered genre scene in wash of two men playing cards. Here, loose lines and crude modeling, together with the prominent jug positioned between the players, the sleeping bulldog, and overturned stool on the floor telegraph the characters' lack of refinement. That image was published as "Turning the Jack," illustrating *The Flush Times of Alabama and Mississippi* which appeared in 1853. (Ill. 3-6) As was often the case in the process of translation to print, the figure of Suggs' opponent was transformed into the caricature of a card shark, his features coarsened, his top hat angled, to create a more exaggerated effect. Falconer, a well-positioned amateur artist whose album included many drawings by the working illustrators in his circle of friends, signaled the value he placed on McLenan's drawings by displaying them in a careful arrangement on the page.

The Hierarchy of Technique

Adapting style to subject matter was a long-standing and popular strategy promoted by American publishers and adopted by American artists. East Coast audiences expected observations of pioneers and woodsmen to be rendered in ways that cast their own parlor refinement in relief. Writing to Samuel Putnam Avery from

Saint Louis, the teeming depot of westward migration, artist James Brown described his activities as well as the direction he was receiving from publisher Frank Leslie:

For the past month I have been very diligent in observing matters and things so as to send Leslie some sketches. There are a number that will make up very well for books or papers, some of which will be sent in the course of two or three weeks. You will not be able to judge the quality by those I send as he distinctly desired me to send them as *rude* as possible.¹⁹⁵

The letter continues on, shedding light on the role the intermediary of the engraver played in the generation of style. According to Brown, it was the function of the engravers, “the Artists employed on the paper” to translate the “matters and things” that he observed and sketched. The goal was to make his “rude” sketches “conform to different effects, to make up a general one for the gratification of the public eye.” Avery, who very likely recognized Brown’s travels as an opportunity to bring originals of Western observation to the New York market, may already have commissioned drawings from Brown. The artist appeared to refer to a patron as he reassured the dealer, “That however will not deter me from doing justice to what may be undertaken, for his, will be after the originals.”¹⁹⁶ The drawings intended for a collector, not to be translated by the engraver, Brown implies, would take a more finished form.

As printed illustrations became much more prevalent and the variety of graphic media in which they could be rendered increased, these media adapted toward the goal of mass distribution and integration of illustration and text in print

¹⁹⁵ James Brown to SPA, April 23, 1856, Avery Autograph Letters, Watson Library, The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Brown was also acquainted with Falconer; in the same letter he wrote “You need scarcely be told how busy I have been for you have probably heard from Falconer or Gag” referencing as well their experimentation with the “most beautiful and captivating science” of photography.

¹⁹⁶ Brown to SPA.

production. With variety of technique, a hierarchy of value developed. In its role of artistic pedagogue to the aspiring middle class, *The Crayon* explained the hierarchy, “from line to lithograph, embracing aquatint, lithotint, mezzotint, mixed, stipple, etc., line being the most costly and the best adapted to render delicate variations of character and form.” At the same time, it guided the American viewer to reconsider the relative value of each medium and focus on “how well executed or appropriate to the subject rendered” it might be.¹⁹⁷ Certain subjects demanded certain “appropriate” techniques, with line engraving occupying the pinnacle of the hierarchy of graphic media.¹⁹⁸

The two Darley drawings William Walters acquired in 1858 were of the refined type that the artist used to illustrate more elevated literary subjects. The first, entitled *Parable of the Faggots*, is an oval vignette executed in wash over pencil, the artist’s characteristic method for preparatory drawings for engravings. (Ill. 3-7) It depicts an invalid, with staring, perhaps sightless eyes, seated in a domestic interior and attended by two young men. One holds up a stick to the old man’s hand, while the other ties together a bundle of sticks or faggots. The second drawing addressed a characteristic subject for the artist, who frequently depicted Native Americans, pioneers, and scenes, real and fictional, from American history. An armed group of Indians emerge out of the dark woods at the center of the image. In the foreground light, their leader, carrying a tomahawk, bow, and arrows, holds his ear to the ground.

¹⁹⁷ *The Crayon*, June 1856, p.187.

¹⁹⁸ William M. Ivens. *Prints and Visual Communication*. (New York: Da Capo Press, 1969) p. 113

The oval-topped landscape scene is rendered in wash, with details of foliage, trees, and rocks closely observed.¹⁹⁹ (Ill. 3-8)

These works would have appealed to Walters, who showed a marked preference for “finish,” as well as for narrative subjects, throughout his drawing collection. He also looked for works by established artists who had achieved market imprimatur. Darley’s achievements had so elevated the status of illustrator that he became the first practitioner to be elected a member of the National Academy of Design in 1852, a sign of acceptance that Walters would certainly have noted and approved.²⁰⁰

The Indian drawing appears to have made an impression on Walters’ fellow collector in Baltimore, J. Stricker Jenkins. (See Chapter 1.) His desire for a similar subject was relayed to Darley by Avery, who also served as Jenkins’ New York agent. Darley responded to Avery from the Berkshires:

Stockbridge, May 22, 1862 “My dear sir, Yours of the 14th reached me a few days ago. I will make the sketches you spoke of by the 1st of September and send them to you. The drawing for Mr. Jenkins shall have Indians introduced as requested. Yours very truly, F. Darley.

Another appealing aspect of Darley’s drawings for Walters would have been their rarity. Despite a considerable amount of overlap in collected artists between the albums considered in this study, neither the Falconer nor the Maguire albums assembled during Darley’s most prolific periods contains a work by the popular

¹⁹⁹ The source of these images and of the title, “Parable of the Faggots” if it was ever published, has not been identified.

²⁰⁰ John A. Cuthbert and Jesse Poesch. *David Hunter Strother: “One of the Best Draughtsmen the Country Possesses.”* (Morgantown, West Virginia: West Virginia University Press, 1997) p. 25.

illustrator.²⁰¹ According to Tuckerman, Darley's drawings circulated among his intimates: "the intervals of his professional work were eagerly improved by his friends to enrich their portfolios with sketches and portraits full of meaning and mirth, in the circles where they originated."²⁰² An example of such friendship exchange is in the *Sketch Book* of Philadelphia artist John Neagle (1796-1865), an album of drawings assembled beginning in 1825, in which he inscribed an ink drawing of *Figures Near a Church* as "drawn by Felix Darley." (Ill. 3-9)

Darley also appears to have understood the market value of his original works and retained some of them as assets. On December 17, 1863, the auctioneer Henry Leeds & Co. held a sale of "Original Drawings by F.O.C. Darley...for the famous Illustrated Edition of Cooper's novels...sixty in number, [they] form one of the most notable and interesting collections of original drawings in America."²⁰³ Owning an album with "illustrations by Darley" added another dimension of value to a collector's artistic possessions.

The "aura" of the Multiple: Infusing the Original with Added Value

Walter Benjamin's influential essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" has shaped much subsequent thinking about the original

²⁰¹ The *Village Scene with Dutch Colonial Figures* from the Hosack album in the Metropolitan Museum of Art is attributed to Darley. See Avery, p. 307, C98.

²⁰² Tuckerman, p. 472.

²⁰³ *Catalogue of Original Drawings, by F.O.C. Darley*. (New York: Henry H. Leeds & Co., 1863) The priced copy in the Stuart collection of the New York Public Library from the Darley sale indicates a range of \$36 to \$104 for the drawings at a time when drawings by European artists were making three times that amount. In the John D. Wolfe sale held by Henry Leeds & Co. five days later, no American drawings were offered. However, according to pricing notes, thirteen "English School" watercolors made a total of \$5,310, "an average of \$408." By contrast, "17 American Paintings produced at sale \$1,315, an average of \$371." These included works by Rossiter, Kensett, W.S. Mount, Leutze, Trumbull and Durand, among others. The notes also indicate that Samuel Putnam Avery, representing J. Taylor Johnson, bid a total of \$12,410.

and the multiple in the history of art. Benjamin asserted that replication through mechanical means eroded the “aura” of an original work of art, and its “basis in cult.” As it was reproduced, he argued, the original work lost its traditional ritual function. It acquired “exhibition value,” a new affect in which “the work of art reproduced becomes the work of art designed for reproducibility.” With this shift, the frame of reference for the work of art changed, according to Benjamin, from ritual to politics.²⁰⁴

Several current scholars, disparate in their outlook and interests, have argued not only with the particulars of Benjamin’s reasoning, but with the near-universal acceptance in the humanities his core thesis has achieved over time. In his recent investigation of the “complex polyphony” of interaction among the media of prints, paintings, and photographs in nineteenth-century France, art historian Stephen Bann takes issue with Benjamin for privileging the revolutionary medium of photography over the many other reproductive processes available to and in use by artists in the nineteenth century. He seeks to move beyond Benjamin’s simple binaries of *original* and *copy*, *cult value* and *exhibition value*, to emphasize the “fecundity” of the understanding of reproduction in the period and its acceptance by artists and their audiences.²⁰⁵

The Americanist art historian David Morgan also questions the inevitability of the loss of aura through mechanical reproduction, as that quality, for him, is “a function not merely of an image’s fabrication but largely of its reception.” His investigation of the imagery of antebellum Protestant visual piety, which primarily

²⁰⁴ Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” in Hannah Arendt, ed. *Illuminations*. (New York: Schocken Books, 1969) p. 224.

²⁰⁵ Bann, pps. vii, 30.

took the form of serially-reproduced images in tracts, periodicals and books, is grounded in the notion that aura was “graphically transmissible” if the viewer brought to the image a form of ritual intent.²⁰⁶

Without addressing Benjamin directly, Jean Baudrillard defines the differing realms of the “model” and the “serial object” within the political idiom of class status and class distinction. He frames this binary in terms of choice; while the majority of people have access to a restricted range of obvious selections, a “set code of values” dictated by fashion, mass-production, and mass distribution, a tiny minority at the pinnacle of social status enjoy the “multitude of random possibilities” available in the original and its infinite nuances. Objects express their social life in terms of rhetoric and script; how they address the world and how they are understood is closely related to their uniqueness or their multiplicity. Baudrillard elides the economic disparities that shape his pyramid, while his use of language betrays which segment of society and form of object he values most:

Whereas the model retains an airiness, a discretion, and a ‘naturalness’ that is the epitome of culture, the serial object remains stuck fast in its quest for uniqueness, and betrays a constrained culture, an optimism in the worst of taste, and an emptyheaded humanism. For the serial object has its own class-specific script, its own rhetoric – just as the model has *its* own rhetoric of reticence, veiled functionality, perfection and eclecticism.²⁰⁷

Those who enjoy access to the original, to the artists, designers, and dealers who produce and sell “model” objects, exercise the higher mental functions of taste and

²⁰⁶ David Morgan, *Protestants and Pictures: Religion, Visual Culture, and the Age of American Mass Production*. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) pps. 7-8.

²⁰⁷ Baudrillard, p. 149.

discrimination, while those consigned to the “serial” operate under an illusion of choice that masks the controlling operations of mass consumer society.

The relationship between aura and reproduction, unique and serial object, can be complicated even further. In the antebellum period, photographic reproduction of works of art was still in its earliest stages of development. However, a “complex polyphony” did exist between unique works of graphic art and their images reproduced as lithographs, woodblock or steel engravings. As this visual imagery became increasingly available through newspapers, periodicals, books, and “parlor prints,” the original drawings from which they derived partook of the “luxury register,” in which rarity, difficulty of acquisition, and semiotic complexity contribute to value. Contrary to Benjamin’s influential thesis, many individual works within antebellum drawings collections appear to have gained “aura” and value just because they had been mechanically reproduced and widely distributed. This is a political and social frame of reference, involving the economy of taste and the luxury register of consumption defined by the social structures of antebellum society.

“Known from engravings”: Valuing the Original and the Multiple

The series of articles on “Our Private Collections” in *The Crayon* in 1856 is a source of contemporary thought on the relationship between original and multiple works. Among the listings and descriptions of the “artistic wealth possessed in our principal cities,” the author frequently notes which works were available in multiple form. The collection of John Wolfe, Esq., for example, included Charles Robert Leslie’s *Anne Page, Slender, and Shallow*, “engraved by the Art Union,” as well as

Stag at Bay by Ansdell, “well known by the engraving from it.”²⁰⁸ One picture by American artist Thomas Hewes Hinckley that the author singled out in Wolfe’s collection, *Fox and Hawk over a Partridge*, which had been exhibited in the Art-Union gallery, was not mentioned as a “model” work, though it had appeared engraved as *The False Lesson* for the giftbook *Ornaments of Memory* in 1855. (Ill. 3-10) Among the exemplary works of American art described in the collection of Jonathan Sturges, *Farmer’s Noonning* by William Sidney Mount stood out as “widely known by the engraving of the old Art Union.”²⁰⁹

By building connections between the rarified, luxury context of “our private collections” and the prints and illustrations that were increasingly available to the middle-class audience, *The Crayon* overtly emphasized a democratic relationship to art in America, while implicitly adding to the value of the unique original at the same time. As it created a shared visual vocabulary that spanned classes and connected urban patrons with art appreciators throughout the nation, *The Crayon* also privileged the “many very valuable pictures” that wealthy collectors prized in unique form. As visual imagery became increasingly available to middle-class audiences through books, popular prints, and exhibitions, the originals from which those images derived achieved greater rarity and concomitant increases in both perceived and market value.²¹⁰

²⁰⁸ *The Crayon*, January, 1856. p. 27.

²⁰⁹ *The Crayon*, February 1856, p. 58.

²¹⁰ An example of this phenomenon is the market history of the painting, *Ariadne*, by John Vanderlyn. Asher B. Durand purchased the work from the artist for \$600 in 1831, with the goal of making an engraving. When the print was published in 1835, it was acclaimed by critics. However, its nude female subject precluded commercial success. The print did appear to increase the notoriety and subsequent market value of the original painting. Durand sold it at auction in the early 1860s to Philadelphia collector Joseph Harrison for \$5,000. John Durand. *The Life and Times of Asher B. Durand*. (Hensonville, NY: Black Dome Press, 2007) pps. 76-77.

The auction catalogue for the estate of collector Charles M. Leupp reminded the reader of serial reproductions of certain works as part of its sales pitch. “Modern pictures, both American and Foreign, [which] were painted to order and came direct from the artists,” each receive a short, laudatory description. Among them, two works by genre painter William Sidney Mount were defined by their popular reputation; *Dance of the Haymakers* as “one of Mount’s great national pictures of American rural life; lithographed in Paris, and well known from the print in Europe and America” and *The Banjo*, “another picture purely American, and well known by the print.”²¹¹ *Facing the Enemy*, a painting by Francis W. Edmonds, was portrayed as “A very characteristic picture, and well known from the engraving.” That engraving, executed thirteen years earlier in 1847, had been distributed with a Temperance Society circular focused on artisans, who were considered particularly prone to overindulgence in alcohol.²¹² In that context of serial reproduction, Edmonds’ image lost its humorous edge and approached pure illustration for a morally-laden social cause. Washington collector James C. Maguire owned a drawing of the same subject as the Leupp painting. The small carefully-observed rendering in pencil of a carpenter tempted by the jug, would have carried for the viewer elite associations with the hand of that artist, a fixture in the New York art world, as well as the resonance of its broad “public” distribution to which *The Crayon* alluded. Rarity and

²¹¹ E. H. Ludlow, Auctioneer. *Catalogue of Valuable Paintings and Engravings, being the entire gallery of the late Charles M. Leupp, Esq., among which are the works of Jordaens, Greuze, Vandyck, Watteau, Giordano, Panini, Preziosi, Robbe, De Block, Eckhout, Ommeganck, Stuart, Cole, Durand, Leutze, Church, Kensett, Mount, Page, Huntington, Chapman, Edmonds, Audubon, Baker, Casilear, and many other Artists of Celebrity. To be sold at auction, by E. H. Ludlow & Co., On Tuesday, November 13, 1860, at 7 ½ o’clock, P.M., (or if the 13th is stormy, on the first succeeding fair Evening,) at the National Academy of Design, northwest corner of 10th Street and Fourth Avenue.* Stuart Collection, New York Public Library.

²¹² Avery, p. 174.

ubiquity came together in one drawing, adding to the value the viewer obtained from its reception. (Ill. 3-11)

In the above example and in others, the original object received much of its commodity value from its perceived singularity in contrast to the serial reproduction on which its popular reputation was based. As the amount of available visual imagery exploded in this period, a new expectation appears to have developed that for an original to be rare, its image had to be known. That image now had a life beyond the original, separated from the artist's hand and subject to reinterpretation in a variety of reproductive media. At the same time, the original derived increased value because it retained the "syntactical elements" of the artist's hand, unadulterated by the intervention of the intermediary of engraver, lithographer, or woodblock cutter.²¹³

A story published in *The Pearl* in 1830 and in *Affection's Gift* of 1832 underscores the sense of the mutability of the original and the multiple in antebellum culture and of the flow between them. Entitled "The Souvenir," it is the story of Amelia, the details of whose receipt of the "elegant present" of a gift book in the parlor was discussed in Chapter 2. After perusing the engravings made after famous paintings with "most minute attention," and sharing them with her siblings, Amelia shows her refined and altruistic character by giving the book to her brother's friend Edwin. He is a skilled draughtsman, but lacks models. In a reciprocal act of friendship, the young artist produces copies of the engravings to illustrate Amelia's

²¹³ William Ivens introduced this concept of "syntax" as the organizing structure imposed by the artist on visual form. In prints, this might be the "web of lines" or "lozenge and dot rationalizations" that put an image into a coherent presentation. From this derives his famous definition of photography as "pictorial statement without syntax." *Prints and Visual Communication*. p. 113.

album.²¹⁴ From original to gift book engraving to artist's sketchbook to parlor album, the image moves between forms, each with its own mode of reception.

Though they shared a complex relation to the multiple, certain distinctions prevailed in the collecting of the original painting and the original drawing. Painting was privileged as the height of artistic expression, more social, more connected to a market, more expressive of the collector's aspirations and self-presentation. While collecting drawings was not completely removed from aspirational motivations (see Chapter 1), the medium's greater intimacy and connection to an artist's working process of observation and translation of the physical world added another layer of value. Because drawings were not widely available in the marketplace, and acquiring them, for the most part, involved either gift-giving or exchange, they both required and represented a more intimate level of human interaction between artist and collector. The uniqueness of the artist's hand, the authenticity of each penciled line, or stroke of ink or watercolor, and its connection to a recognizable style, was a part of a drawings' constructed value.

Once again, Arjun Appadurai's anthropological observation is helpful in giving clarity to this phenomenon. He observes that the status of originals is preserved in the face of reproduction through emphasis on uniqueness and on the restricted nature of their acquisition:

The only way to preserve the function of these commodities in the prestige economies of the modern West is to complicate the criteria of authenticity. The very complicated competition and collaboration between "experts" from the art world, dealers, producers, scholars, and

²¹⁴ Quoted in Isabell Lehuu. "Changes in the Word: Reading Practices in Antebellum America." Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University, 1992. pps. 132-133.

consumers is part of the political economy of taste in the contemporary West.²¹⁵

In antebellum America, the “luxury register” of the original work of art was not completely segregated from that of the reproduction; in fact, the necessary elements of restriction and scarcity derived from the very mass market that cast their uniqueness and rarity into relief.

“The Talent of the Country:” Exchanging Drawings in the Sketch Club Circle

The earliest two drawing albums in this study, those of Thomas Seir Cummings and John Ludlow Morton, were assembled in the late 1820s and early 1830s. Both exhibit an interest in preserving and valuing the original after its serial reproduction. The collectors were artists themselves, members of the Sketch Club, and among the founders of the National Academy of Design. Their tightly-knit Knickerbocker circle produced *The Talisman*, a gift book published in 1827, 1829 and 1830. As noted earlier, a spirit of collaboration and camaraderie prevailed in this enterprise. Gulian Verplanck wrote to his fellow literary contributor Robert Sands, “The Gentlemen belonging to the National Academy are all very anxious to lend their aid next year, in furnishing designs...Morton is very anxious to try his hand – and Mr. Morse will cheerfully assist us.”²¹⁶ The closeness and spirit of those circles is also preserved in the pages of the Morton and Cummings albums.

John Ludlow Morton (1792-1871), the long-standing secretary of the National Academy of Design and a painter of portraits, landscapes, and history subjects, was

²¹⁵ Appadurai. “Commodities and the politics of value,” p. 45.

²¹⁶ Thompson, p. 63.

an important, if quiet, presence in the early nineteenth-century New York art world.²¹⁷ (Ill. 3-12) His album, now in the collection of the New-York Historical Society, provides a view into the overlapping circles of his acquaintance. Many of the drawings were executed directly on the album page, as opposed to being glued in. This practice, unique among the extant antebellum albums under consideration, speaks to a close circle involved in artistic exchange. The album would have circulated from one of Morton's friends to another, as each added a graphic contribution.

The frontispiece Morton produced for the volume commemorates those contributors in a landscape table of contents, naming them in distinctive block letters on a drawing of a stone outcropping set in a wooded grove. The image plays with the contrast between the ephemeral nature of the paper support and the permanence of the names seemingly carved in stone. In the type of sophisticated inside joke practiced by his circle, he may also have alluded to the use of stone in the newly-introduced reproductive technique of lithography that would ensure the artists' wider celebrity. (Ill. 3-13, Ill. 3-14)²¹⁸ The rocky cliff in a wooded setting as support for visual information was a trope in this period, reproduced by Morton's friend Asher B. Durand in 1830 for the cover of *The American Landscape, No. 1*. by William Cullen Bryant (Ill. 3-15) and again in the painting *Kindred Spirits* in 1849. (Ill. 3-16)

Morton's album contains works by six of the eight artists who illustrated *The Talisman*. A small pencil drawing by Samuel F. B. Morse is a telling example of the privileged original. (Ill. 3-17) Executed to a high degree of finish in heavily-worked

²¹⁷ For information about Morton, see Avery, p. 330 and Rossiter, p. 246.

²¹⁸ John Ludlow Morton's album is in the collection of the New-York Historical Society.

graphite, on heavy-grade paper, this drawing fills the small sheet. Dated 1827 and pasted onto the album page, it depicts an Italianate landscape. On the right is a large villa overlooking a river bank and mountains in the background. Several musicians rest or stroll below the balcony, on which another figure stands. Such a unique and finished contribution certainly carried with it the stature of its creator, and by association subtly added to the reputation of the album's owner. Morse was the President of the newly-founded National Academy of Design and its vocal defender in the feud with the American Academy. But the drawing derived additional value from the wide circulation it received in serial form. Reworked by engraver G.B. Ellis to place greater emphasis on the musicians, it was included in *The Talisman* of 1828 under the title *The Serenade*. (Ill. 3-18) In the context of this close artistic circle and the shared project of *The Talisman*, Morse's drawing preserved by Morton is imbued with memory, friendship, and joint accomplishment.²¹⁹

Another drawing in Morton's album has a different relation to serial reproduction. At first glance, the holograph drawing by Henry Inman of a scene from *The Betrothed* by Sir Walter Scott appears to be a straight illustration of a defining scene in the story. (Ill. 3-19) Inman's vignette of the heroine Eveline on the ramparts of the castle of Garde Douloureuse, is accompanied by the handwritten text: "I heard a distant sound, said Eveline, - I thought I heard it – hark! It comes again!" and the inscription "page 79 of *The Betrothed: Tales of the Crusaders*." This novel of war and unrequited love had just been published in 1825. The edition brought out by

²¹⁹ Previous investigations of the art in American gift books have assumed that illustrations were always based on paintings. Thus, Benjamin Rowland, Jr. notes that, while "a number of Morse's paintings were reproduced in various annuals, all of which reveal a different facet of his talent...both *The Wife* and *The Serenade* have disappeared." "Popular Romanticism: Art and the Gift Books" p. 377

Samuel H. Parker in Boston that year carried an illustration of the same section of the text, by an unidentified artist, as its frontispiece. (Ill. 3-20) Had Inman produced that image? If so, had he or had the engraver increased the focus on the princess as martial figure, bravely protecting the castle as her knights slept? Or had Inman's design been rejected by the publisher? Or does this drawing take part in the Sketch Club tradition of illustrating a piece of text for amusement? Although these questions cannot be definitively answered, it is clear that even if the composition had had another life - as demonstration drawing for Parker, as guidance for the engraver, as a piece of Sketch Club entertainment - the drawing in Morton's album was made directly on the page, and thus carried the literary image into the realm of friendship exchange characterized by the holograph form. (See Chapter 2.)

The work of portrait painter Thomas Sully was often reproduced in gift books, where his idealized images of beautiful women suited the romantic tone and sentimental reception. His contribution to Morton's album (see Chapter 2, Ill. 2-23 and 2-24) was a signature composition of a woman reading to a child. This image appeared as *Brother and Sister* in *The Gift* of 1839.

Morton's friend and colleague in Sketch Club circles, Thomas Seir Cummings, also collected original drawings made for engraved illustrations.²²⁰ Cummings was the most successful portrait miniaturist in the country in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, during which time he also taught at the National

²²⁰ The Thomas Seir Cummings' album in the collection of the New-York Historical Society has the quality of a "scrapbook." Cummings also owned an album of more finished drawings, along the lines of the Morton album. Assembled in the mid to late 1820's, it contained works by Thomas Cole, Henry Inman, William Guy Wall, Henry Jackson Morton and John Ludlow Morton. This album was disassembled in the late 1960's and sold. See *American Drawings, Pastels and Watercolors: Part Two: The Nineteenth Century; 1825-1890*. (New York: Kennedy Galleries, Inc., 1968) pps. 4-7.

Academy of Design. His album is primarily a repository of his own preliminary sketches for portrait miniatures. (Ill. 3-21) Small pencil sketches on cut-out paper ovals, these works are for the most part maddeningly unlabeled with the names of the sitters. They can, however, be trolled for connections to finished miniatures, such as the portrait of Gustavus Adolphus Rollins. (Ill. 3-22 and Ill. 3-23)

The album also served as a form of *album amicorum*, preserving mementi of friendship from Cummings' Sketch Club circle. He described this group as "formed for the promotion of mutual intercourse and improvement of impromptu sketching... [made up of] Artists, Authors, men of science, and lovers of Art... Its members comprised, in a high degree, the talent of the country."²²¹ Several Sketch Club drawings produced in collaboration with his teacher and subsequent business partner Henry Inman are included in the album. Cummings also owned a holograph drawing by Inman entitled *Forest Hymn*. Dated 1826, it is a carefully-rendered view of a gentleman hunter resting against the trunk of an enormous fallen tree. The poem in the artist's hand is a reverie on "forest solitude."²²² (Ill. 3-24) Cummings preserved drawings by such colleagues as Thomas Cole, William Guy Wall, Asher B. Durand, the brothers John L. and Henry J. Morton, and Samuel F.B. Morse and impressions, most *avant la lettre* or before the caption was added, of the prints made from these artists' drawings.

Many of the original drawings typify the products of friendship exchange. Asher B. Durand's quick landscape in pencil depicts two cows facing a river with a sailboat in the distance. It is inscribed "A. B. Durand to T. S. Cummings, Esq." (Ill.

²²¹ Cummings, *Historic Annals of the National Academy of Design*, p. 15.

²²² This drawing, now in the collection of Mr. and Mrs. Stuart Feld, came from the disassembled album described in note 33 above.

3-25) The landscape drawings by John Ludlow Morton are of such specificity that they could commemorate a shared sketching (and fishing?) expedition. (Ill. 3-26 and Ill. 3-27) At the same time, they took the oval vignette form typical of landscape illustration in books and periodicals. A study of a palm tree by Thomas Cole appears to have been cut from a sketchbook and given as a token to his fellow artist. (Ill. 3-28) The meaning of and value placed on varying levels of “finish” among these drawings, from the care and specificity of the lesser-known Morton, to the hasty memento of a Read Street gathering from the celebrated Cole, is difficult for the modern viewer to recreate. What are we to make of the contrast with the drawing by Cole which Morton owned? (Ill. 3-29) Not only is this a complete, finished album drawing of the sinking of the ship “Fortune” leaving a sole survivor stranded, hoping to be saved, it is also a very rare early example of the moralizing themes that the artist always hoped to pursue.

Cummings also collected works by his colleagues that were made for reproduction. Several of the drawings are originals of images that were reproduced in gift books, some for the joint project of *The Talisman*. A finished pencil drawing by Henry J. Morton in Cummings’ album was engraved as *The Dream of Papantzin* by Peter Maverick for *The Talisman* of 1829. (Ill. 3-30) It is an exotic fantasy image based on a poem following the “factual” account of a Mexican princess, “sister of Monteucozoma,” who was supposed to have died in 1509. She was resurrected, after experiencing a vision of an angel and the sign of the cross. The engraving departs in significant ways from the original drawing. (Ill. 3-31) The image is reversed, indicating it was transferred by contact. The figure of the sleeping princess is

enlarged, the landscape elements of undergrowth and trees that overwhelmed the main figure in the original are simplified, and the background mountain given added emphasis through dramatic effects of cloud and light. Morton's original drawing of Papantizin, like Inman's drawing of Eveline discussed earlier, invoked a scene in which a small-scale figure was surrounded by details of landscape and architecture. In their subsequent translations to print, each figure attained greater prominence as the central character in a dramatic moment.

One portrait drawing by Henry Inman carries the title "The Original Sketch of McGready in the character of Lear for the Page picture, H. Inman, 1827." (Ill. 3-32) Although Cummings did not save an example of the print of McGeady, he did include in the album examples of the prolific Inman's portrait engravings and figurative prints, such as the portrait of Judge Furman (Ill. 3-33) or the dramatically-lit *Man Praying*. (Ill. 3-34)

Cummings preserved copies of prints from his own drawings and others by members of his circle in his album. Many of the prints he retained from his own works are proofs *avant la lettre*. Under the portrait print of *Mrs. Dr. A.C. Castle*, the artist noted both the rarity of the object and details of the subject's biography: "proof, very scarce, Mrs. Castle was accidentally burned to death." (Ill. 3-35) Cummings also retained prints of other *Talisman* illustrations. His own *Mysterious Lady*, engraved by Gimper and published in *The Talisman* of 1830, bears a striking similarity to the subject of a portrait miniature he produced of Mrs. John Ludlow Morton. Only by comparing the print with the miniature inset into the front cover of

Morton's album can the subject be identified and the title of the print begin to reveal itself as an inside joke. (Ill. 3-36 and Ill. 3-37)

Both Morton's and Cumming's albums are early examples of the free flow between original and multiple and the undifferentiated value placed on each by the artist/collector. Connection to publication and to mass distribution added elements of narrative and association to the reception of these assemblages, increasing their value as conversation pieces and mementi.

Pleasing the 'Drawing Fanciers': Value Beyond the Original

Collectors who were not themselves artists also appear to have prized originals of works that were reproduced. As described in the previous chapter, Baltimore collector Robert Gilmore took pleasure and pride in having works he owned made available in serial form. He extolled the engraving of William Sidney Mount's *A Tough Story*, as "the most faithful copy of the picture in all its details, - especially in the expression of the figures, and far exceeded any expectation I had formed previous to seeing it."²²³ (Ill. 3-38)

Artists were also aware of the value American collectors placed on original works either created or chosen for reproduction. In a letter to Samuel Putnam Avery, the Philadelphia painter James Reid Lambdin (1807-1889) took into account the market imprimatur originals derived from publication, in this case that of the Philadelphia gift book publishers Carey & Hart. He was aware of what the growing group of drawing collectors might wish to purchase,

²²³ Humphries, vol. II, pps. 28 and 307.

I have a small water color picture by E.F. Parris, London. The original of the engraving for Carey and Hart's "Gift" as well as two sketches by Leutze made for that firm which I would like to dispose of if there is likelihood of a purchaser in New York. I would be glad to send them on. Mr. Carey gave 30 guineas for the drawing by Parris – it cost me \$30 and I would be glad to dispose of it at the same price...Truly your obliged friend, J.R. Lambdin

I have also two drawings by Leutze – made about 1850 for Carey and Hart – they are a little injured but might please some of your drawing fanciers.²²⁴

The holdings of Washington, D.C.-based collector William C. Maguire also reflected an interest in originals of works created to be reproduced in print. *The Tahitian Chief Otores* in his album was produced by Alfred Thomas Agate, who had served as artist and draftsman on the United States South Seas Surveying and Exploring Expedition between 1838 and 1842. (Ill. 3-39) Although this portrait was not included, many of Agate's other drawings illustrated the *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition* by expedition leader Charles Wilkes. Agate employed the bust-length format characteristic of the illustrated biography for his portrait and included the expected autograph of the sitter, whom Wilkes described as "only a petty chief," written in his stiff and ponderous hand. It is inscribed "for text vignette," another indication of its intended purpose.²²⁵

Maguire collected the graphic works of other artists now known primarily for their work as engravers. These included two landscapes in pencil from the 1840s by James Smillie (1807-1885), the chief engraver for *The New-York Mirror*, who also reproduced Thomas Cole's *Voyage of Life* series and several of the widely-distributed

²²⁴ J. R. Lambdin to SPA, April 1, 1862. Avery Autograph Letters.

²²⁵ Avery, p. 190.

American Art-Union prints.²²⁶ In the drawing entitled *Lime Rock on the Rondout, New York*, Smillie used heavy graphite lines to contrast the foreground evergreens and waterfall with the more subtly rendered woods and bare white cliffs behind. (Ill. 3-40) The entire oval landscape vignette is set in an unusual pre-printed frame of exaggerated neoclassical design. A garland of printed roses surrounds the drawing, set into a fanciful temple structure with stacked columns, figurative frieze, and flanking lions on the decorative base. Unique among Maguire's drawings, as well as among the albums under consideration, this decorative and self-conscious presentation speaks to high value placed on the drawing by the artist or collector.

“The Best of My Friends:” John Mackie Falconer’s Expansive View

For New York collector John Mackie Falconer, the hierarchy of media appears to have had little meaning. He showed as much interest in the work of illustrators and engravers as that of oil painters, placing a premium on the personal associations his collection carried. Falconer described his motivation in a letter to his friend William Sidney Mount: “Half the interest I have in my pictures, are in the knowing of their authors, with whom it has been my advantage to spend many pleasant hours. I have no ambition to form a large collection but I wish a representation of the best of my friends.”²²⁷ The circles he frequented in New York and Brooklyn included working and amateur artists, from members and founders of the National Academy of Design, to engravers known only for their ties to the

²²⁶ Callow, p. 101.

²²⁷ Falconer to Mount, December 20, 1856. Frankenstein, p. 318.

publishing industry, to businessmen who, like Falconer, enjoyed sketching and painting in watercolor as leisure time amusement.

For Falconer, collecting drawings was an active, self-conscious, and social occupation; in a separate communication to Mount he chronicled a new acquisition: “The last of my gettings has been a sketch by Ranney which possibly you have not seen, and a sketch pronounced Horace Vernet’s will be new to you.”²²⁸ The sketch by Western genre painter William T. Ranney was one of two displayed on one album page. (Ill. 3-41) Both are diminutive in size, which did not appear to diminish the pleasure Falconer experienced from viewing them and sharing them with his friends.

Among the thirty-nine artists represented in his album are eleven known primarily for their reproductive works, including illustrator and cartoonist John Magee (active 1844-1867), John McLenan (1827-1866) (whose *Simon Suggs* drawings were addressed above), and the illustrator and wood-engraver DeWitt C. Hitchcock (active 1845-1879) who is attributed with discovering McLenan at work in a pork packing factory in Cincinnati. Hitchcock was employed by the *Illustrated American News* and *Harper’s Monthly*.²²⁹ His drawing in Falconer’s album titled *Plain of Intebuccat, Central America* is a small pencil and red wash drawing that very likely served as the original for an illustration in one of those publications. Little is known of Hitchcock’s biography; whether or not the artist ever traveled in Central America is unclear. (Ill. 3-42) Yet the drawing is similarly rendered to the expansive topographical view he produced of Central Park and appears to be sketched from life. (Ill. 3-43) Two native figures carrying heavy burdens occupy the foreground. A

²²⁸ Falconer to Mount, July 6, 1858. *Frankenstein*, p. 321.

²²⁹ Rossiter, p. 193.

village with a church and red-roofed house sprawls across the valley below.

Hitchcock's technique is economical and assured; while much of the foreground foliage is executed in stylized loops and jagged outlines, the palm trees that help to define the geographic setting are minutely observed. He gives the village specificity through details of architecture in the near distance that fade away to lines and dots further toward the background of rolling hills. Though this drawing is undated, most of the dated works in Falconer's album are from the 1840's and early 1850's, a time when Americans were made particularly aware of Central America through the controversial conflict of the Mexican War. This work would have represented not just "the best of my friends," an original reproduced for broad distribution, but a scene that resonated with political associations from the national stage.

Falconer owned several drawings by the Irish-born brothers James I. (1828-1853) and Daniel T. Glasgow (1835-1858), both of whom were employed by the lithographic firm of William Endicott & Company. James was a member, with Falconer, of the New York Society for the Promotion of Painting in Water Colors, founded in 1850. Among Falconer's drawings are three of his watercolors, which express the artist's admiration for J. M. W. Turner in their atmospheric subtlety.²³⁰ In *Fishing* (Ill. 3-44), Glasgow communicates details of weather, action, and place in a small picture painted in forceful color. A storm approaches, dropping rain over the lake and impelling the boatman to pole toward shore. The structure of ruins along the bank places the scene in Europe and point to the likelihood that, rather than a sketch from nature, it was either copied from a print or drawn from the artist's memory or imagination.

²³⁰ Rossiter, p. 171.

If the subtleties of the relationship of artist to collector are difficult to penetrate, so is the meaning of sequencing and juxtaposition on the page. Two of Falconer's album pages combine a drawing by one of the brothers Glasgow with another by the painter Edwin White. (Ill. 3-45) The older James Glasgow, who died at the age of twenty-four, was praised for his lithographic views of American cities and aspired to be a landscape painter. The drawing in Falconer's album is a finished oval vignette in pencil. Its subject is a rocky stream, observed in the minute detail expected in landscape illustration. Yet it is curiously unrealistic, due to the artist's haphazard assignment of shadows and light. Rocks are rendered either in light, dark, or middle tones with very little texture or variation on the surface. In contrast, White's pencil sketch documents a particular place and time, the entrance to Bridgeport Harbor in August of 1845. Sketched with subtlety and economy of line, it evokes expanses of water and sky, white wash highlights for puffs of cloud, and loose hatching with a blunted pencil and delicate atmospheric perspective conveying summer haze. Composed in the oval format of landscape illustration, this drawing nevertheless speaks to memory and possibly to shared experience among friends. The juxtaposition of the subtlety and graphic economy of the trained artist White with the facile, but sterile hand of the lithographer Glasgow, both working in the landscape mode, would have resonated with those who viewed Falconer's album. Another page contrasts a subtle figure study by White with a tiny landscape by the younger Daniel Glasgow. (Ill. 3-46) Unfortunately, what the juxtaposition of these three artists' work would have communicated to Falconer or to the guests with whom he enjoyed his collections remains obscure to our modern eyes.

Depictions of African-Americans were exceedingly rare in the graphic works collected in albums of this period. Two such drawings in Falconer's album are by artists who were best known for their work in reproductive media. Alfred Jones (1819-1900), who engraved such popular prints for the American Art-Union as *Farmer's Noonning* and *The Painter's Triumph* by William Sidney Mount, created *Hey, hey!*, a watercolor sketch dated February 1856. (Ill. 3-47) A similar depiction of a bundled and racially-ambiguous coachman appeared in *The Harp of a Thousand Strings*, counseling his passenger to "Beware the Widders," the year before. (Ill. 3-48) Jones's smiling driver, apparently enjoying the speed and control he has over his team, stands in marked contrast to the solemnly observant African-American figures on the sidelines of Richard Caton Woodville's *Mexican News*, which he had engraved three years earlier. (Ill. 3-49) As was often the case, the unique work is a more sympathetic depiction than those found in prints and illustrations. A quickly-executed impression that elides completely the volatile issue of slavery and the debased status of free blacks, Jones' drawing has the feel of a graphic greeting "Hey, hey" given to Falconer as an expression of racially-tinged humor.²³¹

The *Negro Servant* by Virginia artist and writer David Hunter Strother is characteristic of that artist's close observation of the "African face" which, he suggested in contrast to prevailing norms, "presents as strong and remarkable varieties of character as that of the Caucasian."²³² (Ill. 3-50) Drawings for the series

²³¹ Samuel Putnam Avery owned a work by Alfred Jones which he exhibited at the National Academy of Design in 1858. If the title, *A Reg'lar Sucker*, is any indication, it likely had a similar, light-hearted tone. Mary Bartlett Cowdrey. *National Academy of Design Exhibition Record, 1822-1860*. (New York: The New-York Historical Society, 1943) vol. 1., p. 272.

²³² David Hunter Strother, aka 'Porte-Crayon.' "A Winter in the South," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, no CIII, vol. XVIII. (December, 1858) p. 6.

of Southern observations Strother wrote and illustrated for *Harper's Monthly Magazine* entered the collections of both Falconer and William Walters. Falconer's *Negro Servant* is a portrait from life that captures the injured eye, receding hairline, and sartorial details of a particular man. Translated into print by Strother himself, and not by *Harper's* wood engravers, the illustration of a *Gentleman's Gentleman* took on the broader aspect of caricature. (Ill. 3-51) Despite Strother's professed interest in depicting African-American individuality and character, the images he produced for a mass American audience in the popular press reinforced widely-held stereotypes.

When Falconer's collection went to auction in April of 1904, the promotional literature overlooked the collector's varied interests. Instead, it emphasized an already narrow canon of American art in which painting and the stature of a circumscribed group of artists were privileged at the expense of the broad circles of working artists in Falconer's acquaintance. The numerous examples by earlier American illustrators and artists working in reproductive media were almost entirely overlooked. Falconer's drawing album was described in Lot 14 as an "Album of carefully selected drawings in watercolors, pen-and-ink and pencil by noted American Painters and forming an interesting volume representative of American art...The drawings are mostly small, but are excellently executed, and number sixty-one."²³³ The serial works Falconer had collected were lumped into large lots; Lot 4 was a selection of etchings, mezzotints and line engravings made for "various Annuals, mostly American," and Lot 5 sixteen proof etchings "mostly views" by

²³³ Anderson Auction Company, 5 West 29th Street, New York. *Catalogue of the Interesting and Valuable Collection of Oil Paintings, Water-Colors and Engravings formed by the late John M. Falconer (Brooklyn, New York)...for sale at auction, Thursday and Friday, April 28 and 29, 1904.* The John Mackie Falconer album is now in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

landscapists F.E. Church, William Hart, J.C. Nicoll, R. Swain Gifford, and others. The broadly-defined and fluid assemblage of drawings that Falconer put together as the “representation of the best of my friends” was reduced and codified by the marketplace. The collector’s expansive view of art and pleasure in the creative process by professional and amateur alike was replaced by the more limited, commodity-driven view of the early twentieth-century art market.

Disdain for ‘Copyism’: Reverend Elias Magoon and the Original Work of Art

Another famous collector of the period is noteworthy for eschewing the multiple in preference for the original work of art. The Reverend Elias Magoon (1810-1886) assembled an extensive and representative collection of small-scale paintings and oil sketches of the Hudson River School through his extensive social network of American artists. The collection was purchased by Matthew Vassar in 1864 to form the core of the art gallery at Vassar College. The pedagogical value of “living, original, American art” was a given for Magoon, who admonished the college’s Trustees to place the “fire!” of art at the center of the academic experience and “collect an ample and diversified gallery of actualities of artistic elegance – forms, tints, tones, true to every kingdom of nature, and which shall at once illustrate the loftiest principles and refine the most delighted hearts.”²³⁴

Magoon’s emphasis on collecting drawings was early and unique in America. The sixth installment of *The Crayon’s* series on “Our Private Collections” observed that “the collection is richest, however in crayon, pastel, and water-color drawings; a variety too great to admit of particular notice; or even the enumeration of their

²³⁴ Report of the Committee on the Art Gallery of Vassar Female College, Magoon Folder 1.10, Special Collections, Vassar College Library. pps. 13, 15.

author's names." Magoon's drawings included works of the European Old Masters, as well as those of French and English artists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In keeping with its adherence to the artistic preferences of John Ruskin, *The Crayon* considered "the most valuable" three landscape drawings by Turner of *Sandy Knowe, Berne, and Bacherach on the Rhine*, singling out the latter as "invested with all the multifarious charms of color, light, and shade, and marvelous detail, and treated with consummate genius."²³⁵ The Vassar purchase included "a great variety of original drawings in sepia, india-ink and other media, comprising the aggregate of original art," housed in several large, leather-bound albums.²³⁶

Magoon appeared to have endowed the original work of art with particular value out of anxiety over the spread of reproductions. His rancor against the cheap color chromolithograph that had flooded the American market since the new technology was introduced in the 1840s, was strong: "but they are after all copies, - not Art, but mechanism, - and 'copyism', you very well know, I despise."²³⁷ Against the backdrop of contemporary society, in which he saw plaster casts, "sterile copies," "dead engravings," and photography "taking the place of all hand work," Magoon extolled "the value of slightest lines and feeblest tints in fine art." He held up the original work of art as "everywhere a luminary, and an inspiration evermore."²³⁸

Magoon maintained friendships with a number of American artists, notably the landscape painters of the Hudson River School (Church, Gifford, Cropsey,

²³⁵ *The Crayon*. (December 1856) p. 374.

²³⁶ Magoon to Matthew Vassar, May 30, 1861. Folder 1.5, Magoon Papers, Special Collections, Vassar College Library.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

²³⁸ Rev. Elias Magoon. *Report to the Committee on the Art Gallery of Vassar Female College*. Folder 1.10, Magoon Papers, Special Collections, Vassar College Library. p. 12.

Shattuck, Whitredge) from whom he famously commissioned the small-scale paintings now at Vassar College. His letter of commission to genre painter William Sidney Mount alluded to the marriage vow and took a tone of jocular flattery in which Mount's work of creating was minimized and the sacrifices and lowly station of the collector were emphasized in order to justify the low prices Magoon was known to pay:

This popping the question has been in my bones for a long, long time, and now it is out because *I do* want a specimen from a man whom I esteem, and an artist whose genius I have for years admired. My dear fellow will you jot me down a bit and name your price? I will garner marriage fees and work extra anywhere just to possess what you can do, and if I were not a parson, and you were not so smart, I'd lick you if you refuse.²³⁹

The American drawings in Magoon's collection, which were interspersed among the European works in his albums, are evidence of friendships and patronage relationships that were often similarly interwoven. The inscription on a tiny, exquisite landscape drawing in pencil and white wash entitled *Beaver Brook*, by Homer Dodge Martin (1836-1897), "for E.L. Magoon," distinguished it as a token of friendship. (Ill. 3-52) Another unique drawing in the collection elucidates a series of exchanges among friends. *Nature: Cooper Reading*, by Henry Inman, is a sketch from life of the famed American novelist lying, legs extended, on a neoclassical sofa while reading a book. (Ill. 3-53) Undated, it has to have been made before 1846, the year in which the much-loved Inman passed away. According to the inscription, it was given by Inman's son John O'Brien Inman to the landscape painter Régis Francois Gignoux. It came into Magoon's possession, along with two works by

²³⁹ Rev. Elias L. Magoon to William Sidney Mount, *Frankenstein*, p. 334.

Gignoux, in the 1850s. Such a famous subject and such distinguished provenance would particularly have appealed to Magoon's dual interests in autographs and in original works of art.

William Hart (1823-1894) created a series of six landscape drawings for Magoon in 1859. Larger in scale than most album drawings, they were likely intended, as were many of Magoon's drawings, to be "mounted under glass and framed," or "stored in cabinets for want of wall-room."²⁴⁰ Each represents a clearly-identified New York or New England landscape, rendered in pencil on paper lightly-coated in brown wash. White gouache highlights provide dramatic accents and portray clouds, moonlight, flowing water, and details of trees and architecture. (Ills. 3-54, 3-55, 3-56)

Even as he privileged original works, Magoon's enormous collection of drawings could not completely escape relations to serial reproduction. For example, Album #3, titled "London and Illuminations," contains pages of pasted-in original drawings of architectural details which he had purchased from the British antiquarian and publisher John Britton (1771-1857). (Ill. 3-57) In a profile of the Magoon collection written in 1860, James Wynne remarked on the connection between his drawings and contemporary periodicals. Noting that it was "especially rich in the original drawings of a large number of the best engravings executed in England," Wynne then listed the many important antiquarian publications they had been made to illustrate, "*The Gentleman's Magazine, Clarke's Antiquities, Coney's Continental Antiquities, Winkler's Cathedrals, the Archeological Journal, Weake's Architecture,*

²⁴⁰ Magoon to Vassar, June 4, 1864.

Cities and Castles of England, and Billig's Illustrated Scotland."²⁴¹ These drawings were in keeping with the collector's interest in religious art and architecture and in the Gothic revival, and served to advance the original goal he articulated for his collection– to "illustrate human progress under and along the divine purpose, - Christianity Illustrated by its Monuments."²⁴²

Ironically, given Magoon's feelings about reproductions, he opened doors for the young artist Alonzo Chappell (1828-1887) to a career as an illustrator for history books, biographies, and works of literature. Magoon met Chappell in 1856 when the New York-born artist's paintings were on exhibition at the Goupil Gallery and soon introduced him to Henry J. Johnson of the publishing firm of Martin, Johnson and Company. Magoon's albums contain numerous pencil drawings by Chappell, many of which have the finished character and implied narrative of vignette illustrations. (Ill. 3-58 and Ill. 3-59)

Given the webs of art world friendships and contacts of both men, it is natural that Reverend Magoon and Samuel Putnam Avery were acquainted in New York before the former was called to a parish in Albany in 1857. An undated letter, sent to Magoon from Avery's Beekman Street address, gives an indication of their intertwined commercial and social interests:

My dear Sir, I send by express the original sketch-study by friend Cropsey – for the "Genevieve" picture – he sent it out for sale at my solicitation - on behalf of a friend that must decline to buy any pictures – As I knew you thought much of it and (mentioned) it before he went away I have sent it – if you want it the price is \$30 – which you can send me (or Mr. Falconer 36 Maiden Lane (Cropsey's money agent) – if you do not want it may I trouble you to return it.

²⁴¹ James Wynne. *Private Libraries of New York*. (New York: E. French, 1860) p. 304.

²⁴² Magoon to Vassar, May 30, 1861.

Please give my regards to Mrs. E.L.M. and (?) me to be your friend
Sam. P. Avery

Why do you never favor me with a call?

Although it does not appear that Magoon took the “Genevieve” sketch (the \$30 price was likely a bit rich for his “parson’s” budget and no drawing or oil sketch meets that description in the albums), Magoon did own two drawings by Cropsey from the time of the artist’s European tour in 1847-48. (Ill. 3-60 and Ill. 3-61) A rare figure drawing by Cropsey, the watercolor of a *Seated Woman in Abruzzi*, is a close observation of regional costume and the effects of light and color. The artist, who had trained as an architect, appears more confident in the drawing of a church tower at *Ravello*, in which he deftly evokes the mass of the supporting structure, while focusing on the details of red brick arches and marble columns. It is very likely that Magoon acquired these in the mid-1850s, at the same time as two oil paintings by Cropsey, *Evening at Paestum* (1856) and *Morning on the Coast of Sicily* (1855).

Magoon’s ambitious purchase of sixty small-scale works from the leading American landscape painters began in 1856, the year he was profiled in *The Crayon*. Like Avery, he held soirées at his Brooklyn home to show new acquisitions. He wrote about American landscape in such publications as *The Home Book of the Picturesque* (1852). Given all of this high-profile activity, he was the type of central figure in the world of art, like Charles Leupp, whose activities and choices William Walters sought to emulate.

The Multiple in “Original Sketches:” William Walters’ Album

The numerous works by illustrators side-by-side with drawings by oil painters in William Walters’ album are a reflection of the broad-based social sphere and

numerous friendships among contemporary artists that his agent Samuel Putnam Avery brought to the project. The quality and finish of the work is uniformly high; supporting a fluid and expansive sense of the art world practitioners of the time. Drawings by illustrators brought another register of value into play within the album, resonating with the popular culture of the periodical, newspaper, or “parlor publication.” The organization of the album is similarly without hierarchy. It appears to be sequenced to spur associations, juxtaposing the surprise of recognized celebrity with works that invited explication and discovery.

In contrast to the New York-based artists Hennessy, Hoppin, and Magee, whose works most likely came into his album through Avery, Walters probably made the acquaintance of Virginia artist, *Harper's* writer, and illustrator, David Hunter Strother, in Baltimore. That artist's drawings carried strong associations with popular books and periodicals. Strother was related to the prominent Maryland attorney and author John Pendleton Kennedy, whose Southern chronicle *Swallow Barn* gave the artist his start and brought him national attention as an illustrator. Beginning in 1853, under the pseudonym “Porte Crayon,” Strother had written and illustrated a series of articles on Southern life in *Harper's Monthly Magazine*. He had showed his works in the annual exhibitions of the Maryland Historical Society since 1856 and took part in the famous “Artist's Expedition” on the B&O Railroad, that passed through his hometown of Berkeley Springs, West Virginia, in 1858. (See Chapter 1.) Strother was considered by John Durand to be “one of the best draughtsmen the country possesses, but [one] whose subtle perception of character, broad, genial humor, and

sturdy devotion to the nature, human and external, with which he is surrounded, constitute him, like Darley, one of the best representative artists of his day.”²⁴³

Walters acquired his eight drawings by Strother sometime in the 1850s. Not only was the artist the most popular and highest paid contributor to *Harper's* at the time, but his illustrations were also drawing accolades from *The Crayon* as “justifiably received with ‘unbounded applause.’”²⁴⁴ Strother’s close observations of Southern rural life, in prose and in image, were filtered through the sensibility of a trained and traveled practitioner. Walters’ drawings were a selection from the artist’s recent work. Several, including *Moorfield: Four pigs in a barn* (Ill. 3-62) and *Berkeley Springs: Mrs. Strother at the Piano* (Ill. 3-63) were original studies for illustrations, the former for the series “A Winter in the South” which appeared in *Harper's* in seven installments from September 1857 through December 1858 (Ill. 3-64) and the latter for *Ellie: or, The Human Comedy*, a book by another of the artist’s literary relatives, John Esten Cooke. (Ill. 3-65) Like Walters’ Darley drawings, his Strother illustrations would have added to the narrative constructed and shared by the collector as he showed the album of ‘Original Sketches.’ These connections to popular culture, to shared experience outside of the art world, added to the interest and value of the collector’s original works.

Walters’ close connection to Avery, which he would continue after the Civil War as a silent partner in Avery’s art dealership, led to his participation in several projects translating original works of art into serial form. After all, Avery had

²⁴³ “An Excursion on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad,” *The Crayon* (July, 1858), p. 209.

²⁴⁴ For information on David Hunter Strother, see John A. Cuthbert and Jessie Poesch. *David Hunter Strother: “One of the Best Draughtsmen the Country Possesses”* (Morgantown, West Virginia: West Virginia University Press, 1997) and Jessie Poesch, “Eight Drawings by David Hunter Strother in the Walters Collection” *The Journal of the Walters Art Gallery*, vol 52/53 (1994/95).

apprenticed in a bank-note company and, by the late 1850s, had had a long and productive career as an engraver for newspapers, books, and periodicals. After Walters' well-publicized acquisition at the Ranney sale of *Morning in the Tropics* by Frederic Edwin Church, (Ill. 3-66) Avery produced an engraving of the work that proved to be a popular success. This collaborative production involved the artist, the engraver Samuel V. Hunt, and the Scottish print publisher John McClure, who had overseen the production of the folio-sized engraving of the artist's exhibition picture, *The Heart of the Andes*.²⁴⁵ A writer for the *Boston Daily Evening Transcript* in January 1861 called the *Morning in the Tropics* print "One of the most beautiful specimens of scenic engraving we have seen," noting "the soft, voluptuous grace of atmosphere and vegetation – the dreamy mist and ethereal calmness – which made the exquisite original so charming... it will form a perfect parlor study or boudoir ornament, and grace the portfolio of every tasteful collector."²⁴⁶

Walters acquired Church's "fireworksy" *Twilight in the Wilderness* in the spring of 1860. (Ill. 3-67) Its translation into a Union-backing print entitled *Our Banner in the Sky* happened after the collector's departure for war-period exile in Europe and may, as art historian Franklin Kelly suggests, have influenced Walters' post-war decision to sell the painting from his collection.²⁴⁷ (Ill. 3-68)

Walters continued to take a lively interest in art commerce and in the broad dissemination of visual imagery as his focus shifted to French Academic artists after the Civil War. He collected works that existed in multiple versions by such painters

²⁴⁵ Gerald L. Carr. *Frederic Edwin Church: Catalogue Raisonné of Works of Art at Olana State Historic Site*. Vol. I. Text. (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1994) p. 494, 221.

²⁴⁶ Carr, p. 498.

²⁴⁷ Franklin Kelly. *Frederic Edwin Church and the National Landscape*. (Washington, D.C. and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988) pps. 102-122.

as Ingres and Delaroche, “without contest, the most extensively reproduced artist of his age.”²⁴⁸ One could argue that one of his most famous commissions, for the drawing *The Omnibus* from French artist Honoré Daumier (1808-1879) in 1864, was motivated in part by print sources, one on each side of the Atlantic. In 1854, in the book of humor *Mrs. Partington’s Carpet-Bag of Fun*, Walters’ friend Avery had included a “Chapter on Omnibus Riding,” with his own illustrations. (Ill. 3-69 and Ill. 3-70) Poking fun at the modern day “Inferno” of the omnibus, which forced the rider to share constricted space with “twelve insides, two babies, a bird cage, a dog and a washerwoman smelling strongly of rum and yellow soap,” the image of Avery’s top-hatted and bonneted riders could be seen as a rough prototype for Daumier’s scene, in which enforced proximity of the classes and the sexes overturned middle-class decorum. A print of the same subject that Daumier published in *Le Monde Illustré* in January of 1864 may have reminded Walters of Avery’s illustrations. Soon thereafter, he commissioned his drawing from Daumier. (Ill. 3-71) From illustration, to print, to original drawing, this image resonated with associations from popular culture and everyday life.

²⁴⁸ Bann, p. 2.

Chapter 4: “Celebrity and the Artist’s Hand:” Collecting Artists’ Autographs

In 1859, as William Walters assembled his album of ‘Original Sketches,’ artist John W. Ehninger (1827-1889) supervised the production of a handsome leather-bound book for the refined parlor entitled *Autograph Etchings by American Artists, produced by a new application of photographic art, illustrated by selections from American poets*. Published by William A. Townsend & Co., it introduced to the American audience the new hybrid medium of cliché verre - part drawing, part photographic print - in which the artist drew directly onto a collodion-treated glass plate. The twelve “autograph etchings” were produced by leading artists of the day: Asher B. Durand, Emanuel Leutze, John Frederick Kensett, Felix O. C. Darley, John William Casilear, Eastman Johnson, Sanford Robinson Gifford, James Reid Lambdin, George Boughton, W.P.W. Dana, Louis Mignot, and Ehninger himself. The list of poets, whose selections “illustrated” the visual images, was equally impressive, including such luminaries as John Greenleaf Whittier, James Russell Lowell, William Cullen Bryant, Nathaniel Parker Willis, J. Bayard Taylor, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

Because they eliminated the intermediary of the engraver, cliché verres had the character of direct, graphic expression; Ehninger called them “the perfection of faithful reproduction.” This new form avoided any distortion of the artist’s indexical line as it was “translated” into a print; it bore “the same relation to a reproduction engraved by another hand that an autograph letter does to a circular.” Thus

purchasers of the book of *Autograph Etchings* came as close as was possible in printed form to owning original drawings.

The implied connection to the essence of the artist extended to characteristic subject matter. Viewers of the folio with some knowledge of the art world would have found familiar images and characteristic compositions from each contributor. Durand provided a serene landscape, executed with assurance in the visual syntax of etching. (Ill. 4-1) A large repoussoir tree and carefully-observed foliage and undergrowth characteristic of his compositions in other media are rendered in minute detail, with contrasts of shadow and light constructing receding space. In contrast, his fellow landscape painter John Frederick Kensett's contribution has the quality of a hasty sketch. Abstracted foliage, hints of clouds and distant mountains, employ a markedly animated line while underscoring the assurance of the artist's hand. The patch of clear, reflective water at the center of the composition, indicates a characteristic subject for the artist. (Ill. 4-3). Other works in the collection, in line with each artist's signature subjects and exhibited work, included a winter scene by Boughton, *Childhood* by Lambdin, *Pilgrim* by Leutze, and *The Tropics* by Church's fellow South American traveler Mignot. While hardly mass-produced, *Autograph Etchings* gave a broader audience access to the intimacy of the artists' graphic expression, replicating in printed form the rarified contact with the artist's sensibility normally available only to drawing collectors.²⁴⁹

When John Ehninger made the rhetorical connection between cliché-verre and autograph, he articulated a widely-held trope of antebellum culture. True to the

²⁴⁹ Although information on the size of the only edition is not available, the handwork involved in printing each cliché verre and pasting each into the book and the fact that only one edition was printed argues for a limited number.

etymology of the word “autograph,” contemporaries perceived the activities of drawing and writing as aligned, complimentary expressions of an individual hand. Written signatures carried graphic authority as expressions of individual character, while characteristic graphic expression was valued as signature style. Both spoke to the personality and character of their agent, to “his temperament, and quality of mind.”²⁵⁰ As a mass media infrastructure developed in support of a culture of celebrity in the United States, autographs and drawings operated within another, broader frame. In this context, their “character” reflected and refracted the fame and popular appeal of an elite group of masters recognized in the American canon.

As did many of the gift books published in the same period, Ehninger’s *Autograph Etchings* privileged the work of the visual artists over the contributions of the American authors whose poems “illustrated” the printed images. (Ill. 4-2 and Ill. 4-4) It is likely that the twelve clichés verres were commissioned first. Ehninger perceived each of these as autographic, exhibiting “the strongly-minded characteristics of each artist.”²⁵¹ Each illustration demonstrated the artist’s “signature” style. Like an autograph, the drawing gave the collector and viewer access to the artists’ essence, his “temperament and quality of mind.”

“The enjoyment of sharing names:’ Collecting Drawings/Collecting Autographs

Assembling drawings as autographs was a mode of collecting more open and accessible to those participants who were not artists themselves. Unlike the realm of

²⁵⁰ “Autographs as Types of Character,” in “Sketchings,” *The Crayon*, vol. III, April 1856, p. 124

²⁵¹ John W. Ehninger. *Autograph Etchings by American Artists, produced by a new application of photographic art, illustrated by selections from American poets*. (New York: William A. Townsend & Co., 1859)

the personal friendship exchange, in this more public arena, the work of art was closely connected to the mass market of popular culture. In this “register,” it was the artists’ degree of media exposure and notoriety that gave drawings their value. Collectors assembled “signature” works as they did autographs, valuing graphic expression for its intimate connection to the artists’ hand.

The popular media, as well as the specialized art press that arose in the second quarter of the nineteenth-century, helped to establish a select group of artists at the forefront of the field. This locus of “standardization,” pointing once again to competition and social posturing, formed another “hot center” where the accumulation of works of art serve as a means of competition and self-promotion. In this arena, possession was a two-way street; “name” artists conferred value on a collection, while “name” collectors enhanced the reputation of the artist.

The human inclination to codify is served by institutions of market imprimatur, which in the antebellum period, as today, included the art press and exhibitions at established institutions. In order to function as social expression, collecting depends on a shared set of values. In the luxury sector, this derives from the object’s capacity to convey social meaning. Anthropologists Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood define this aspect of shared culture: “Enjoyment of physical consumption is only a part of the service yielded by goods; the other part is the enjoyment of sharing names...This is culture.”²⁵² As a group of antebellum artists was singled out for star status, for media coverage, and for market dominance, their “shared names” took on significant cultural value.

²⁵² Douglas and Isherwood. p. 75

Sociologist Jean Baudrillard describes this process of codification as essential to the act of collecting. The tasks of “seeking out, categorizing, gathering and disposing” are part of a process of ordering or “seriation” in which the collector creates a personal taxonomy of privileged objects.²⁵³ Contact with celebrity, owning a piece of a reputation that reaches into the mass market, is a powerful method of valuation. An ordering process directed outward, it gives the collected object its worth through association. In this “register of value,” drawings and autographs, both indexical signs of an agent’s hand, were understood in similar ways.

The mark of pen or pencil on an empty expanse of paper has a naked gestural quality that stands in marked contrast to the complex surfaces of oil paints, the mirror of varnishes, and the formality of the frame. The circumstances of their reception are similarly distinct. Confrontation with a painting on the wall, framed as a window, is a more public, social act, while leafing through an album to view drawings bears a closer relation to the absorptive act of reading, closely linked to the artist’s physical form. Art historian David Rosand acknowledges this immersive form of reception as the “corporeal dimension of our response to a drawing.” Deriving as they do from the “direct motions of the body, a drawing inevitably leads us back to the drawing hand, to the body of the draftsman, in a kinesthetic circuit.”²⁵⁴

Rosand has traced the theorization of drawing since the writings of Pliny the Elder in the first century C.E. In Pliny’s chapter on Greek painting in the *Natural History*, he finds a useful distinction between the “Line of Parrhasios,” which

²⁵³ Baudrillard, “The System of Collecting” This idea is intrinsic to his famous description of the “strong whiff of the harem” around collecting as “the series bounded by intimacy..and an intimacy bounded by seriality.” p. 10.

²⁵⁴ Rosand, p. xxiii.

functions primarily to create illusion and the “Line of Appelles,” a sign of the presence and expressive power of the artist. The discourses of the Enlightenment period, particularly the *Lives of the Painters* of de Piles and Dézallier d’Argenville, thematized drawing as an expression of the artists’ character. According to de Piles, “The character of the master is indicated more in drawings...in making a drawing, he abandons himself to his genius and lets himself be revealed.”²⁵⁵ Each of these theorists perceived the acts of drawing and of writing, both means of expression linked to the hand, as requiring similar instruction and lending themselves to similar interpretation.

It is the “line of Appelles,” in which “the drawn mark stands as permanent record of the act of drawing and, ultimately, of the actor, the draftsman” that has particular relevance to the current investigation. Rosand defines this graphic gesture in terms of “self-reflexivity,” alluding to its potential meaning for the drawing collector: “The line of Apelles is retrospective; it refers back to the hand of its maker, and that self-reflexion makes it an emblem of connoisseurship: the line as trace, an index of authorial presence – inviting the imaginative recognition of the viewer.”²⁵⁶

In this final chapter, the related and overlapping collecting practices devoted to drawings and autographs will come into view. They speak to motivations, sometimes stated and sometimes unconscious, that linked these forms of expression with the person of the artist. In this “register of value,” one aim of collecting is the desire to own a piece of history and of a known artist’s characteristic expression, and

²⁵⁵ “Les Dessesins marquent davantage le caractère du Maître... en faisant un Dessen, il s’abandonne a son Génie, & se fait voir tel qu’il est.” Roger de Piles *Abrégé de la vie des peintres avec des réflexions sur leurs ouvrages, et un traité du peintre parfait; de la connoissance des desseins; de l’utilité des estampes*. (1699) quoted in Rosand. p. 348, n. 49.

²⁵⁶ Ibid. pps. 22, xxii., 17.

thus participating in the aura of celebrity. In the antebellum period, written and drawn signatures were subject to a shared discourse, both valued for their connection to the artist's hand.

“Everyone who can learn to write, can learn to draw:” Graphic Expression as Sign

The similarities between writing and drawing found expression in the drawing manuals produced in great numbers at the time. Rembrandt Peale defined the pedagogical core of his *Graphics*, published for the amateur market in 1839, with the statement that “Everyone who can learn to write is capable of learning to draw.” Like the written word, drawing was a universal language, “the guide and foundation of much useful knowledge.” As a means of communication, it expressed the character of the artist, whether amateur or professional.²⁵⁷

In his immensely successful drawing manual, *The American Drawing Book*, first published in 1847, artist John Gadsby Chapman pursued Peale's corollary notion that “everyone should know how to draw that can find advantage in writing.”²⁵⁸ For Chapman, drawing was “another mode of expressing ourselves, not less useful or necessary than that by letters or words.” Drawing was a tool of aspiration, not just an accomplishment of artists or an amusement of the leisure class. It was a means of

²⁵⁷ Rembrandt Peale. *Graphics: The Art of Accurate Delineation; a system of School Exercise, for the Education of the Eye and the training of the Hand, as auxiliary to Writing, Geography and Drawing.* (Philadelphia, E., C. and J. Biddle, 1850 edition) p. 3.

²⁵⁸ John Gadsby Chapman. *The American Drawing Book: Manual for the Amateur and Basis of Study for the Professional Artist: especially adapted To the Use of Public and Private Schools as Well as Home Instruction.* (New York: J.S. Redfield, 1847) *The American Drawing Book* went through seven editions, and was published in England and Scotland in 1858 as *The Linear Drawing Book*.

access to the “great universal language, the language of Design” from which all American enterprise and “manufactures” would benefit.²⁵⁹

Chapman laid out an intensive and thorough course of study that could not be rushed or skipped through. Following his system, the student progressed from tracing simple forms to shading exercises, to recreating outlines, to copying portraits and landscape scenes. Comparing his method to the handwriting exercises taught by his childhood writing master, Chapman promoted a method of instruction based on the careful reduction of form and on endless repetition.

As the Chapman student worked through the instructional sequence of the *American Drawing Book*, the illustrations available for copying became increasingly complex. Once the pupil had mastered the elements of drawing, he was encouraged to copy engravings after the works of European and American masters that served as the book’s illustrations. Landscapes, animal studies, portraits, and genre vignettes rendered in line from originals by Salvator Rosa, Raphael, and Rembrandt were interleaved with illustrations of works by Asher B. Durand, (Ill. 4-5), Thomas Crawford, (Ill.4-6) and Thomas Cole. (Ill. 4-7)

Chapman held strong opinions about the difference in value between the finished and the unfinished work. On a page illustrated with a signature composition by Asher B. Durand (Ill. 4-5) that he would certainly have valued for its finish and refinement, he put forward these distinctions: “A Study and a Sketch are too often considered identical in meaning. A Sketch is but a graphic memorandum – an expedient; a Study, the more faithful record of well-digested investigation.” Students were discouraged from sketching until they had mastered drawing for “Although one

²⁵⁹ Chapman. pps. 3-4.

must learn to draw, before he can sketch, the capacity for one is dependent upon the other.”²⁶⁰

Chapman described a direct relationship between style and character in both written and graphic forms: “Style in painting is the same as in writing – a power over materials, whether words or colors... marked with the individuality and character of the artist’s mind and impulses. A bold mind impels a daring hand, which finds its means of expression in a bold and dashing touch; while the more gentle and timid is as clearly indicated by its manner.”²⁶¹

This aligned understanding of drawing and writing can be found in other, less-expected places in antebellum culture. Art historian Sally Promey has shown that during the same period, New Era Shakers held a similar understanding of the relationship between picture and text. Their gift drawings, the “correspondence” of Shaker “instruments” with the celestial realm, were “a visionary and visual mode of sacred communication which fell within *the line of writing*.”²⁶² Like others in the antebellum period, Shakers understood these two modes of expression as interchangeable and interconnected.

“Traces of Genius:” Autographs and Drawings as Index

When Alexandre Vattemare arrived in the United States in 1840, he found that many fellow collectors valued both forms of graphic expression, collecting drawings and autographs at the same time. As we have seen in the first chapter, his collection

²⁶⁰ Ibid. pps. 96-97

²⁶¹ Ibid, p. 300.

²⁶² Sally M. Promey. *Spiritual Spectacles: Vision and Image in Mid-Nineteenth Century Shakerism*. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993) p. 22.

of drawings helped to pave the way to social acceptance by urban elites. In his *Album Cosmopolite* of lithographic reproductions, each set of four drawings was interleaved with a sheet of printed autographs. The effect of viewing this assemblage, according to the introduction, was to experience “one of those strange pauses in which the spirit, lost in thought, provides visions that appear brightly, light up and pass away, following each other in rapid succession. History, poetry, the sciences, philosophy, all of literature and the arts are represented..”²⁶³ The autographs, just as much as the visual images and their highly-personal inscriptions, were intended not only to stir memory, association, and reverie but also to impress.

Vattemare’s drawings were presented as autographic, revealing the character of the artist through graphic expression. To make this point, the introductory essay exaggerated the looseness and sketchiness and hence the indexicality of drawings, which, to twenty-first-century eyes, look highly finished. Echoing de Piles, the author M.P. Henrichs observed, “It is true that, for the most part, these compositions are nothing more than improvisations, initial thoughts thrown down with abandon and, so to speak, caught on the fly; but one discovers among them traces of genius, the artist is shown uncovered, without accessories, unconstrained, and revealing the sentiments of inspiration.”²⁶⁴

²⁶³ M. P. Henrichs, introduction. *Album Cosmopolite*. “Cet ainsi qu’en parcourant les pages de ce recueil on croirait faire un de ces congés bizarres où l’esprit, s’égarant dans ses pensées, fourmille de visions qui brillent, passent et se succèdent avec une inconcevable rapidité. L’histoire, la poésie, les sciences, la philosophie, toute la littérature et les beaux-arts, sont représentés...” (My translation)

²⁶⁴ Ibid. “La plupart de ces compositions ne sont, il est vrai, que des sujets improvisés, de premières pensées jetées d’abandon et pour ainsi dire saisies au vol, mais on y découvre des élans de génie, l’artiste s’y fait voir à nu, sans accessoires, avec son laisser-aller et le sentiment de ses inspirations. (My translation)

While Vattemare's drawings spoke to intimate exchange, their inscriptions referencing moments of contact and expressions of friendship that confirmed his status as a gentleman welcome in the courts of Europe and known to artists from St. Petersburg to London, his collection of autographs raised the entire album into the realm of history. (Ill. 4-8 and Ill. 4-9) Signatures and holograph texts by such luminaries as Frederick William of Prussia, Alexander Pushkin, Alexander von Humboldt, Sir Thomas Moore, Erasmus, Schiller, Goethe, Anna Schumann, Madame Vigée-Le Brun, Poussin, Rembrandt, and Madame la Duchesse de Berry (personalized to Vattemare) placed the French artist/collector within a grand sweep of European history and culture and in a position of celebrity that his American hosts would recognize and appreciate.

As he made his way around the United States, Vattemare found many kindred spirits for whom the alignment of drawings and autographs was normative and for whom celebrity signatures and artists' graphic works carried significant meaning. In the first half of the nineteenth century, interest in the autograph, in the personal characteristics reflected in the hand of the artist or writer, was high. In Baltimore, after Vattemare shared his album with Robert Gilmore, the American collector made him the gift of a drawing by William Guy Wall and three autographs, "of the two Presidents you wanted M. Madison and M. Monroe, and one of John Hancock, President of Congress and the first signer of the Declaration of Independence. These I would not have parted with to anyone but yourself, that your collection may be as complete as possible."²⁶⁵

²⁶⁵ Robert Gilmore to Alexandre Vattemare, August 2, 1840. Vattemare Papers

By the time of Vattemare's visit, Gilmor had assembled an impressive holding of autographs. He had begun collecting in the early 1820s with the goal of obtaining the signature of every signer of the Declaration of Independence. Apparently motivated by the semicentennial of the United States in 1826 and the passing of the Revolutionary generation of American heroes, Gilmor collected the tangible traces of the men who shaped the early years of the United States.²⁶⁶

Gilmor made a subtle distinction among his American drawings that hinged on their connection to written expression. He classified as autographs those drawings that took the holograph form, in which the artist's written hand, signature, and graphic expression were combined into a unique document. Gilmor included the holograph drawings he owned by Benjamin West, Washington Allston, Charles Robert Leslie, and Samuel F. B. Morse, (later acquired by William T. Walters and considered at length in Chapter 2) as well as signature works by Thomas Cole, Thomas Doughty, Rembrandt Peale, and Thomas Sully in his self-published *Catalogue of a Collection of Autographs in the Possession of Robert Gilmor, of Baltimore* in 1832. These drawings were listed among letters and signatures of American political figures, military heroes, religious leaders, members of the "scientific and dramatic classes" and other celebrities of the day. The principle of exchange was at the core of Gilmor's motivation in producing the catalogue: "This catalogue was printed for the use of my friends, that they might know what autographs I had, & consequently what I had not & which when in their honor to supply would be acceptable." In contrast, Gilmor grouped his other American drawings, more traditional views without written content, by such artists as John

²⁶⁶ For information on Gilmor's autograph collecting, see Humphries, pps. 112-126.

Gadsby Chapman, Henry Inman, and Robert Weir, along with his own travel sketches, in a standard portfolio.²⁶⁷

Other antebellum drawings collectors showed a similar inclination to acquire autographs. The estate sale of collector William Maguire included an “album of autographs,” about which, unfortunately, little else is known. It is likely that the scrapbooking impulse apparent in his drawing collecting, documenting his contact with artists either resident or traveling through Washington, D.C., also fueled his interactions with and requests for signatures from other luminaries of the day.

Brooklyn-based John Mackie Falconer, an avid collector, considered the personal associations and “signature” aspects of his drawings of paramount importance. He too owned albums of autographs, one of which held the signatures of Alexandre Vattemare, biographer Jared Sparks, and impresario P.T. Barnum, as well as those of American artists Daniel Huntington, Seymour Guy, J. Alden Weir and John Gadsby Chapman. Among the thousands of objects in his estate sale was an album of 30 carte-de-visite photographs “mostly with autographs” of famous American painters. This “valuable and scarce collection” contained five additional lots, each comprising twenty original photographs of American painters, many with the artist’s autograph.²⁶⁸ Falconer’s collection of celebrity contacts ranged from original works of art, to the marks of the artist’s hand, to the artist’s image captured in a photograph and validated with a reproduction signature.

Throughout his long career, New York art world figure Samuel Putnam Avery accumulated numerous graphic mementi from artists in the form of letters and

²⁶⁷ See Humphries, vol II., pps. 236-251.

²⁶⁸ Falconer catalogue.

drawings. Not only did he save his own correspondence with artists, but he also sought out and acquired autograph letters by the leaders of the previous generation of American art. They give glimpses into the business transactions, personal relationships, aesthetic discussions, and commercial enterprises that defined the early history of art in this country. Interspersed in alphabetical order among Avery's correspondence, they include a letter from Washington Allston to the Reverend William Ellery Channing; another from John Gadsby Chapman, then Secretary of the National Academy of Design, asking Lewis P. Clover in Baltimore what paintings might be found in that city for the annual exhibition in 1845; one from Chester Harding to John Ludlow Morton also on National Academy business; a letter from Samuel F.B. Morse to French scientist and promoter of photography Francois Arago about the telegraph; a note from Gilbert Stuart Newton to "My dear Colonel;" a 1789 receipt signed by Charles Willson Peale; a letter from his son Rembrandt; a note from John Trumbull asking Benjamin Silliman to collect payment from Yale students for a commissioned portrait of Dr. Dwight; a letter written in Paris by John Vanderlyn to "Mssrs Champney and Kensett;" and a card signed by Benjamin West admitting a W. Gore to "the dinner at the Royal Academy".²⁶⁹

Avery, who was an avid circulator of clippings and of "art fraternity" gossip to his wide network of friends, must have appreciated the access such historical communications gave to the internal workings of American art circles of the early years. Attuned as well to the authority and market imprimatur that the signatures of recognized celebrities conferred, in 1864 he asked forty-eight American artists to

²⁶⁹ Avery's autograph letters are bound into volumes of American and European works, which are in the collection of the Watson Library of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

endorse the inaugural announcement of his art dealership. (Ill. 4-10) Commencing with the leaders of the National Academy of Design, Asher B. Durand, Daniel Huntington, and Henry Peters Gray, the list “reads like a comprehensive index of American artists of the period, from Baker, Beard, Bierstadt, Brevoort, through the Harts, Haseltine, Hays, to Suydam, Tait, Thompson, Vedder, Ward, White and Whittredge.”²⁷⁰

Being part of that list must have brought with it a degree of celebrity imprimatur of its own. This may explain the clipped tone and veiled insult of a letter to Avery from an artist named John Phillips, conspicuously absent from the list, written early in the next year. He asked for cards to give to his city and country friends for whom he, unlike the dealer Avery, had looked for art “without recompense,” though “You need not send the circular as my name not being on the list my old friends might not put the same construction on it that I do.”²⁷¹

The Reverend Elias Magoon, distinguished among American collectors in *The Crayon* for his interest in drawings, brought a similar energy and focus to collecting autographs. Magoon’s “Artistic Autographs,” now in Special Collections in the Vassar College Library, was built on two foundational purchases, the correspondence of British antiquarian John Britton (1771-1857) and of his compatriot, the engraver Cornelius E. Wagstaff. Britton’s publications focused on the English Gothic, and influenced the development of a Gothic Revival in the United States. His letters from British politicians, artists, antiquarians and publishers addressing historic sites complimented Magoon’s collections of drawings of “ancient castles, cathedrals,

²⁷⁰ Beaufort, p. xix. Walters owned drawings by one third of the forty-eight artists on the announcement.

²⁷¹ John Phillips to Samuel Putnam Avery, January 7, 1865. Avery Autograph Letters.

churches, colleges, and ruined abbeys”²⁷² The name and *métier* of the writer appears to have held great meaning for Magoon; attached to many of the letters is a scrap of paper with his handwritten identification of the author.

After he stopped assembling British drawings and turned his attention to commissioning small-scale landscapes from “the best artists in New York,”²⁷³ Magoon’s autograph collecting took a similar national turn. The later volumes of ‘Artistic Autographs’ include personal correspondence from Sanford R. Gifford, Robert W. Weir, William Sidney Mount, Edwin White, Alonzo Chappell, and Aaron Draper Shattuck. His correspondents appear to have been aware that Magoon equated signature with authenticity: Rembrandt Lockwood, helping with the collection, wrote to Magoon from Newburgh, N.Y. in December of 1856, “Enclosed you will find two original drawings by James Watson one the portrait of Addison you will find signed “J. Watson 1722” Watson you know was the first artist that (illegible) in Albany, and there he died.”²⁷⁴ The artist John Louis Petit, responding to Magoon’s request for a drawing, indicated awareness of his own signature style:

I have selected two of these, w. I hope you will honor with your acceptance, though I fear you will hardly find them worthy of a place in your collection. But I have always been accustomed to sketch in a rough manner, and I don’t suppose I should succeed if I attempted any other, and I do not touch my drawings, except to correct palpable errors, after I have finished working at them on the spot – Such as they are I hope you will accept them.²⁷⁵

²⁷² Magoon to William Phelps, November 20, 1860, Archives of the University of Rochester Library, Rochester New York, photocopy in Special Collections, Vassar College Library.

²⁷³ E. L. Magoon. “Report of the Committee on the Art Gallery to the Trustees of Vassar Female College,” pps. 3-4.

²⁷⁴ Rembrandt Lockwood to E.L. Magoon, December 7, 1856. Magoon Papers, “Artistic Autographs,” box 5, volume 3.

²⁷⁵ John Louis Petit to E.L. Magoon, February 27, 1856. Magoon Papers, “Artistic Autographs,” box 5, volume 3.

Magoon appears to have been equally willing to use personal contacts to augment his autograph collection. Edward Everett wrote to him from Boston in May of 1860: “My dear sir, I enclose you a letter, which I have just received from Mr. Fletcher Webster, in answer to a request of mine, that he would furnish you the desired autograph.” Regardless of the letter’s content, it carried a signature that attested to the originality and authenticity in which Magoon found significant value.

“Illustrative of History:” Autographs and Drawings in the Marketplace

Auction records and sales catalogues from the antebellum period confirm the existence of a concurrent collecting practice for drawings and autographs. In fact, in a distinction similar to that of Robert Gilmor, drawings are more readily found listed among the contents of antebellum libraries and along with collections of books and autographs, than with assemblages of oil paintings. The collection of James A. Suydam (1819-1865) is a case in point. He bequeathed ninety-two paintings to the National Academy of Design upon his death and the rest of his collection went to auction in November, 1865. Among the many books, prints, and photographs, were original drawings by Cropsey, Casilear, and unnamed artists. The auction announcement singled out an edition of *New York During the Last Half Century* by John W. Francis, a book prepared for the fiftieth anniversary of the New-York Historical Society in 1857, for its “105 rare and curious portraits and views...[and] a number of Autographs.”²⁷⁶ Suydam had supplemented the printed book with autographs as tangible marks of authenticity.

²⁷⁶ *Catalogue of a Choice Private Library. Being the Collection of the Late Mr. James A. Suydam. Embracing a great variety of the Best Editions of English and American Standard Miscellaneous Literature, and Superbly Illustrated Books, in Rich and Expensive Bindings. Also a Collection of*

When the estate of the collector and art and book dealer William A. Colman came to auction in April of 1850, the introduction to the 216-page catalogue of his private library drew attention to a number of works of art interspersed among more than four thousand books. These included “A Subscriber’s Copy of Audubon on the Birds of America, the plates of which are destroyed and the works out of print...a fine collection of Water Color and Pencil Drawings, by the celebrated artists Holland, Leigh, Gunton, and others... and a large and entirely unique Scrap Book, mostly original American and English drawings.” It is very likely that this Scrap Book contained the drawings Charles Lanman either sold to or exchanged with Colman, putting his friendship with the brothers Mount in jeopardy. (See Chapter 1). Although there is no mention of original autographs, Colman owned a number of illustrated biographies that used facsimile reproductions to signal authenticity, including William H. Brown’s *Portrait Gallery of Distinguished American Citizens with biographical sketches and fac-similes of original letters*.²⁷⁷

The estate sale of John Allan, a modest New York businessman who was both a bibliophile and an art collector, was notable for over one hundred lots of watercolor and pencil drawings as well as many important autographs. The highlight of that group was a letter in the hand of George Washington that brought the extraordinary

Choice Engravings, Etchings, Original Drawings, &c. Some of which are Framed. To be Sold at Auction, on Wednesday and Thursday evenings, Nov. 22nd and 23rd, 1865. By Bangs, Merwin & Co., at their Salesrooms, 694 & 696 Broadway, Cor. Of 4th St., New-York. Sale to Commence each evening at 7 o’clock precisely. (Sale cat. New York: Bangs, Merwin and Company, 1865) p. 179.

²⁷⁷ *Catalogue of Books, Drawings, Paintings, Engravings and Statuary at Auction, with order of the Assignee and Administrator of the late William A. Colman, Long known as a Collector and Dealer in Rare Books and Works of Art, by Cooley and Keese (John Keese, auctioneer) at No. 304 Broadway, New-York commencing on Wednesday, 10th of April, and continued for Seven Days.* (New York: Cooley and Keese, 1850) Collection of the American Antiquarian Society.

sum of \$2,250. A “noticeable event in the annals of bibliomania,” the auction was itself a phenomenon in which

So extraordinary was the demand for many of the rarer books, that all the old ideas of value seemed completely subverted, and a perfect recklessness appeared to reign among the buyers as to the sums they might have to expend in securing some cherished memento of this famous sale...it is certain that the sum total of the sale will be more than forty thousand dollars; a result quite unparalleled as the produce of any private library collection in America.²⁷⁸

The 1866 auction of the “entire private library” of T. H. Morrell included engravings and autographs. The highlight of the collection, “upon which Mr. Morrell had lavished all the riches of years of diligent collecting,” was a ten-volume series of Washington Irving’s *Life of Washington*. His diligence had taken the form of inserting “50 autographs, 10 drawings, and 1,100 plates, beside ancient newspapers, Continental money, etc., etc.” The context and character of this “scrapbooking” added significant value for auction participants and the ten volumes made a total of \$2,000.²⁷⁹ Morrell’s copy of *The Columbiad* by American poet Joel Barlow contained the “often wanting” fac-similes to the signatures on the Declaration of Independence, as well as a portrait and 1811 autograph of the author. These valuable ephemera brought the book’s value to \$25.00. In addition to autographs auctioned in fifty-two separate lots, Morrell’s oil sketch by Asher B. Durand of “the Murder of Miss McRae,” a “Pencil Drawing from life with his characteristic autograph” by artist

²⁷⁸ Unidentified and undated newspaper clipping inserted in *A Catalogue of the Books, Autographs, Engravings, and Miscellaneous Articles Belonging to the Estate of the Late John Allan*. (Joseph Sabin. New York: 1864) New York Public Library.

²⁷⁹ Unidentified and undated newspaper clipping inserted into the New York Public Library’s edition of *Catalogue of the entire private library of T. H. Morrell comprising a choice collection of works on America, its history and antiquities, also autographs and engravings together with a number of Superbly Illustrated and Unique Works, having inserted Plates, Privately Printed and Large Paper Editions, &c. To Be Sold At Auction on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday Afternoons, November 8th, 9th and 10th, by Bangs, Merwin and Co., at Their Salesrooms, 694 and 696 Broadway, commencing each day at 4 o’Clock Precisely..* (New York: Bradstreet Press, 18 Beekman Street, 1866)

Peter Force, and a watercolor portrait of George Washington painted on marble, were included in the works sold.

It seems obvious that this material was particularly valued as evidence of the nation's early history. The auction sale in 1856 of the books and works of art of E.B. Corwin included lot 2469, a "Scrapbook; containing an immense assemblage of Landscapes, Portraits, Etchings, Drawings, Sepia and Aquatint Engravings, illustrative of History, Biography &C." By assembling such evidence into an album, the collector participated in the creation of historical knowledge.

"Biography Mania:" Creating History by Example

For the American consumers who could not afford original autographs, an alternative was available in the facsimile publications produced in great number in the antebellum period. A European fashion adopted in this country, books of facsimiles frequently appeared in auctions of private libraries and collections. Such works as the *Histoire-Musée de la République Française, depuis l'Assemblée des notables jusqu'à l'Empire*,²⁸⁰ and the eight-volume *Portraits of Illustrious Personages of Great Britain, American Historical and Literary Curiosities*, both found in auction records of antebellum collections, helped to fuel a trend in the United States in the years before the Civil War. Facilitated by the introduction of lithography, which allowed for rapid and economical reproduction of precious ephemera, these books met an eager market. While celebrating and encouraging collectors to preserve the past, they

²⁸⁰ Published in Paris in 1842, by Augustin Challamel, its two volumes contained "several hundred engravings of Costumes, Medals, Caricatures, Historical Portraits, and Fac-Simile Autographs of the most remarkable personages of the time."

were also marketed as “Christmas offerings,” annual editions presented “for the amusement and instruction of the present and of future generations.”²⁸¹

The novelty of the American political experiment and the proximity in time to the events of the Revolution gave American history a tangibility that fueled the autograph phenomenon in the antebellum period. The fact that the founding document of the nation had been signed by men only recently deceased, gave any creation of their hands a special value. The handwritten and signed reproduction of the Declaration of Independence that hung in classrooms and parlors across the United States helped to instill a connection to the indexical marks of those early actors in the nation’s formation. Writing with patriotic fervor in the facsimile edition *American historical and literary curiosities* in 1852, the unnamed author drew attention to the motivation for this type of collecting, “our early and romantic past has the merit of being known and truly related; everything which adds to these truths is sought out with avidity by the curious and intelligent inquirer.”²⁸²

The popularity of the illustrated historical biography in the early decades of the nineteenth century attests to an urgent need to create a shared sense of American history and nationhood. Only the novel was more prolifically published than the illustrated biography in this period. The *New York Mirror* in 1830 characterized the eagerness of American audiences for such reading as “biography mania.”²⁸³ Signers

²⁸¹ J. Jay Smith and John F. Watson. *American historical and literary curiosities; consisting of Facsimilies of original documents relating to the events of the Revolution, &c. &c. with a variety of Reliques, Antiquities and Modern Autographs. Collected and edited by J. Jay Smith, Librarian of the Philadelphia and Loganian Libraries, and John F. Watson, Annalist of Philadelphia and New York. Fifth Edition, with additions.* (New York: G. P. Putnam. 1852) Preface.

²⁸² Smith and Watson, Preface.

²⁸³ Gordon M. Marshall, “The Golden Age of Illustrated Biographies: Three Case Studies,” in *American Portrait Prints: Proceedings of the Tenth Annual American Print Conference*. Wendy Wick Reeves, ed. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1979) p. 29.

of the Declaration of Independence and heroes of the Revolutionary War formed the top rung of the pantheon of American luminaries, with contemporary political and religious figures and leaders in commerce and in culture arranged below. Author and historian Benson Lossing defined the underpinnings of this shared history in *Our Countrymen: or Brief Memoirs of Eminent Americans* in 1855: “Biography is History teaching by example. It is the basis of all historical structures. The Chronicles of the nations are composed of the sayings and doings of their men and women. These make up the sum of history.” Biography was valued most for its ability to educate and form the next generation of Americans:

The Roman youth was excited to great and virtuous deeds by the sight of material objects and the voices of Orators; our youth have their aspirations for noble achievements awakened and cherished more by the silent yet potential ministrations of Books which tell of men worthy to be imitated as examples, or studied as warnings, than by mere sensuous impressions.²⁸⁴

Antebellum illustrated biography took a characteristic form, typically including a portrait vignette, a biographical narrative, and a reproduction of the subject’s autograph. Thus it contained all of the elements of character made visible; the subject’s physical form, the biographical account often expressed in highly moralizing, even mythic, terms, and an example of the individual’s graphic expression. The *National Portrait Gallery of Eminent Americans* with biographies by E.A. Duyckinck and illustrations from original paintings by Magoon protégé Alonzo Chappel, encouraged readers to emulate “individuals who have lived and died for the grand result.” Biography, the “key to history,” was the means of understanding the

²⁸⁴*Our Countrymen: or Brief Memoirs of Eminent Americans* by Benson J. Lossing, author of “The Pictorial Field-Book of the Revolution,” etc. Illustrated by One Hundred and Three Portraits by Lossing and Barritt. (New York: Ensign, Bridgman & Fanning, 156 William Street, 1855)

character, talents, and motivations of American heroes. “It admits us into the privacies and behind the scenes..”²⁸⁵

The *Portrait Gallery of Distinguished American Citizens* by William H. Brown deviated from the more typical engraved portraits by taking advantage of the author’s “peculiar talent, of taking full length likenesses, from the observation of a few moments.” Brown’s portraits of American political figures were silhouettes, placed in interior or exterior settings that helped to distinguish each subject. For example, John C. Calhoun’s shaded window looks out on palm trees in his native Charleston (Ill. 4-11) while John Randolph’s Virginia background is signaled by split-rail fencing and fine horses. (Ill. 4-12) Accompanying each image was “a biographical sketch, with a fac-similie of the chirography of the original of the portrait.”²⁸⁶ (Ill. 4-13) The factual information that the writing sample conveyed appeared to be of secondary importance to the author; many of the “chirographic” samples are merely responses to the author’s request for use of the subject’s likeness or to his appeal for a written specimen. It was not written content but written form that provided a window into the subject’s character.

Interest in the visible marks of famous people was manifest in the fashionable gift books as well. Interleaved among the illustrations by Sketch Club circle artists in *The Talisman of 1828* was a spread of autographs: signatures of American presidents and political figures, as well as artist Washington Allston, author Washington Irving, and poet Felicia Hemans. (Ill. 4-14) *The Book of the Boudoir, or Memento of*

²⁸⁵ E. A. Dyckinck. *National Portrait Gallery of Eminent Americans. From Original Paintings by Alonzo Chappel with Biographies by E.A. Duyckinck.* (New York: Johnson, Fry & Company, 1862)

²⁸⁶ William H. Brown. *Portrait Gallery of Distinguished American Citizens with Biographical Sketches and Fac-Similes of Original Letters* (Hartford: E.B. and B.C. Kellogg, 1845, reissued by G.A. Baker and Co., New York, 1931)

Friendship. A Gift for All Seasons, published in Boston in 1853, intertwined the authenticating signature with sentimental intent. The book's frontispiece was an engraved portrait of its editor, signed as if by a friend, "Thine Truly, Ellen Louise."²⁸⁷ (Ill. 4-15) The publishers of *The Coronal and Young Ladies Remembrancer* placed a portrait of the author Reverend Albert Barnes next to his essay on "The Heroic Period of Christian History." Underneath the engraving, made like so many others from a daguerreotype, is the lithographed handwritten inscription "I am very truly yours, Albert Barnes." (Ill. 4-16) In both cases, the signature added an aura of authenticity and individual sentiment to a mass-produced publication.

Chapman's *Drawing Book* adhered in its own way to the notion of visibility of character and participated in the cult of American heroes as well. A line engraving by W. Howland from Gilbert Stuart's *Atheneum Portrait* of George Washington (Ill. 4-17) provided a fitting conclusion to Chapman's chapter on the drawing of "The Human Head." So ubiquitous was the acceptance of this national hero and so well known was this image that the portrait of "the immortal Washington" was printed without introduction, identification, or artist's attribution. Chapman assumed his reader would seize the opportunity to absorb, through graphic engagement, the heroic qualities of America's greatest hero. Thomas Seir Cummings executed a sketch of Washington for a portrait miniature and saved it in his album. (Ill. 4-18)

Chapman was not alone in finding virtue in copying portrait images of American heroes. The belief that character manifested itself physically, evident in the prevalent interest in phrenology and physiognomy in the period, found expression in

²⁸⁷ *The Book of the Boudoir, or Memento of Friendship. A Gift for All Seasons*. Ellen Louise, ed. (Boston: Phillips, Sampson and Company, 1853) George Peabody Library

the illustrated biographies as well. For example, in the *Portrait Gallery of Distinguished American Citizens*, John Marshall merited this description: “his outward appearance bore testimony to the inward man, and exhibited him as he really was, without arrogance, pomposity, or self conceit.”²⁸⁸

A similar point of view was revealed in educational discourse.²⁸⁹ The *Connecticut Common School Journal* recommended that students

take off likenesses of persons who have made the most distinguished figure in history. Drawing these likenesses will tend to produce an increase in attending to their characters. With their looks and names thus associated, the learner associates their actions. This imparts to their whole history a clearness, distinctness, animation, and familiarity, that otherwise it can scarcely receive. The likeness may indeed be imperfect; but this will not materially alter the happy result.²⁹⁰

Artists in the Pantheon: The Growth of Celebrity

While John W. Ehninger’s *Autograph Etchings* emphasized the connection between the artists’ hands and character, it also reinforced a specific group of distinguished artists whose fame was widely promulgated in the popular press. The word “celebrity” denoting not an attribute of public life but a particular type of person was just entering the American lexicon in the 1850s. In 1854, Matthew Brady advertised his Daguerrean Gallery at 359 Broadway, touting not only its “facilities for the reproduction of First-Class Pictures,” but also its “matchless collection of

²⁸⁸ Brown, p. 6.

²⁸⁹ On visualizing character in antebellum culture, see Morgan. *Protestants and Pictures: Religion, Visual Culture, and the Age of American Mass Production*. pps. 275-280. For the application of this concept to the daguerreotype, see Wendy Wick Reeves and Sally Pierce, “Translations from the Plate: The Marketplace of Public Portraiture” in Grant B. Romer and Brian Wallis, eds. *Young America: The Daguerreotypes of Southworth and Hawes*. (Rochester, N.Y.: George Eastman House International Center of Photography, 2005)

²⁹⁰ *Connecticut Common School Journal* (1842) quoted in Eliot Bostwick Davis. *Training the Eye and the Hand*. p. 83.

European and American celebrities available for viewing.”²⁹¹ Ralph Waldo Emerson used the word “celebrity” as a noun in his collection of essays *English Traits* in 1856.²⁹² Supported by the press and a developing art infrastructure, a cadre of artists began to warrant that designation, joining politicians, literary figures, and performers in media-driven prestige.

The artists who earned celebrity distinction were drawn primarily from those members of the National Academy of Design who were based in several studio buildings in New York. Antebellum readers could follow their sketching tours, exhibitions, and studio production by reading specialized art periodicals, as well as the “Art Gossip” sections found in more widely-distributed publications. These artists showed their work at the annual exhibitions held by the National Academy of Design, the Boston Atheneum, the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, the Maryland Historical Society, and Washington Art Association. As the number of exhibition venues grew, so did a more serious and trained group of art critics writing in newspapers, periodicals, and in the new publications dedicated to art that began to appear in the late 1830s. Inevitably, the developing culture of celebrity affected art collectors, coloring their choices with the tint of autograph-hunting and the search for mass-market prestige.

It was not until the 1850s, in the later years of American “biography mania,” that artists began to be included in illustrated biographies. By the time this fashion was at its height, publishers sought to keep it novel by expanding the scope of eminent Americans under consideration. As might be expected, the “first artists” of

²⁹¹ Quoted in Susan S. Williams. *Confounding Images: Photography and Portraiture in Antebellum American Fiction*. (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997) p. 8.

²⁹² *Oxford English Dictionary* (compact edition). 1971.

the previous generations, Benjamin West, John Singleton Copley, John Trumbull, Charles Willson Peale, Washington Allston, and Gilbert Stuart, dominated the lists. In *Our Countrymen: or Brief Memoirs of Eminent Americans* published in 1855, author Benson Lossing privileged those visual artists who produced “with both the pencil and the pen.” Among them, Allston was “a gifted painter and poet” for whom “In painting, West, Reynolds, and Fuseli were his instructors; and Wordsworth, Southey, and Coleridge, were his chief literary companions.” Contemporary sculptor Horatio Greenough merited a listing, it appears, because of his versatility: “Sometimes Greenough would express his thoughts in Painting; sometimes in Poetry; but most frequently in Sculpture.” William Dunlap was “equally distinguished as artist and author,” while Henry Inman made the cut because “although he seldom indulged in rhyme, his conversation and letters were often instinct with the spirit of poetry.”²⁹³ *Our Countrymen* took the standard biography form; each eminent American artist was portrayed in a line engraving, inserted into the biographical text. A facsimile of the subject’s autograph, below each portrait, suggested personal imprimatur, lending authenticity to the image. (Ill. 4-19 and Ill. 4-20)

Abner Dumont Jones, the author of *The Illustrated American Biography*, profiled Washington Allston, Henry Inman, Gilbert Stuart and Benjamin West among the book’s one hundred biographies and three hundred and thirty-four advertisements. His flattering explanation “to our patrons” of the motivation behind the as yet unusual step of including advertisements in the text, is relevant today:

It is a desideratum in advertising to combine economy with attractiveness – to present the advertisements with something which will attract the attention, not only of the commercial community, but

²⁹³ Lossing, pps. 262, 337, 386, 393.

also of such persons of taste as are looking for the beautiful and the intellectual as well as the useful.”

Like Benson Lossing, Jones placed a premium on written expression.

Washington Allston was “not only a painter...he has since increased his reputation as a poet by occasional contributions to the press, some of which exhibit a high order of poetic genius, and rank him with the first class of American poets.”

Many of Jones’ biographies were crafted as morality tales of parenting: Gilbert Stuart had a “headstrong nature” and “wild impulses” but was saved from “the downward fate in which such strong waywardness and imbecile parental authority so often terminate” by his passion for painting; the early incidents of Benjamin West’s childhood are held up as “the prophecy of the painter’s future triumph” as well as “a lesson to parents carefully and assiduously to nourish the first germs of genius in their offspring.”²⁹⁴

In 1846, writer and biographer Charles Edwards Lester published *The Artists of America: a series of biographical sketches with portraits and designs on steel*. Lester chose seven subjects, Washington Allston, Henry Inman, Benjamin West, John Trumbull, James DeVeaux, Thomas Crawford, and Rembrandt Peale, with the goal of making “Our Artists and their Works better known *at home*. Abroad, this is not necessary, for they have always been better known, and better appreciated there than in their own country.” His narratives drew liberally on William Dunlap’s 1834 *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States* as well as

²⁹⁴ Abner Dumont Jones. *The Illustrated American Biography, Containing Correct Portraits and Brief Notices of the Principal Actors in American History; Embracing Distinguished Women, Naval and Military Heroes, Statesmen, Jurists, Divines, Authors and Artists; Together with Celebrated Indian Chiefs*. Vol. 1. (New York: J.M. Emerson and Company, 1853) Preface, pps. 375, 191, 163.

on materials provided by the artists themselves. Henry Inman, who died that year, was selected once again to represent the current generation of artists, a privilege reinforced by the reproduction of his popular genre painting *Mumble the Peg* as the volume's frontispiece. (Ills. 4-21 and 4-22)

Not every artist wanted to be swept up in biography mania. Painter William Sidney Mount, who never fully immersed himself in the New York art world, always maintaining the retreat of his family's Long Island home and the country persona to go with it, did not seek such broad-scale celebrity. In a letter to his brother, in which he noted Lester's publication "beautifully gotten up for a hollyday present," he made it clear that "I declined being introduced in the work."²⁹⁵ Later in life, he wrote to Mary C. Vaughn, "Seven or eight authors have written to me to furnish material respecting myself, but I respectfully declined."²⁹⁶ Mount did, however, allow the publication by Goupil, Vibert & Co. in 1850 of a large scale lithograph after the portrait by his friend Charles Loring Elliott. (Ill. 4-23) Published in a series called variously the "Gallery of Illustrious Americans" and "Portraits of Distinguished Americans," Mount joined such luminaries as Jenny Lind, William Cullen Bryant, Daniel Webster, and N.P. Willis in celebrity stature. One can only imagine how collector William Walters would have valued the acquisition of Elliot's "only sketch in watercolor" for his drawing album. It is very likely Elliott's study for the portrait of his friend Mount and would have participated in that artist's well-established

²⁹⁵ William Sidney Mount to Shepard Alonzo Mount, November 22, 1847. *Frankenstein*, p. 50.

²⁹⁶ Cowdrey and Williams, p. 3.

celebrity. (Ill. 4-24) Mount's portrait was disseminated further on a carte-de-visite, assembled with those of several of his peers in an "Artist's Souvenir. (Ill. 4-25)²⁹⁷

"A Reflex of the Mind:" Autographmania

Attendant and related to the phenomenon of the illustrated biography was a growth in interest in collecting the visible marks of eminent Americans, the signatures and holograph texts that showed the imprint of their hands and from which traits of character might be inferred. Not only were autographs included in numerous publications, autograph collecting was so extensive a social practice in this period that it became the focus of social commentary in the popular press.

The *Home Journal* casts light on the process of autograph collecting and album exchange, emphasizing the burden this fashion placed on the "already over-employed public man" for "People nowadays have some hesitation in requesting a poem, an impromptu, an epigram, for their albums. Albums, indeed, are somewhat out of date; but an autograph – what more easy, more reasonable, and less likely to be refused?"²⁹⁸ The *Crayon* focused on the connection between "chirography and character:" "a man's autograph shows his temperament and quality of mind...when a pen is taken to write, these indications will be apparent in the particular forms of the letters, and in the general style of the chirography, and thus the written page may become in more ways than one, a reflex of the mind." The practice of requesting signature works from artists also drew comment from *The Crayon*. Studio visitors

²⁹⁷ For more information on the genre of artistic biography, see Michèle Hannoosh, "Théophile Silvestre's *Histoire des artistes vivants*: Art Criticism and Photography," *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. LXXXVIII, no. 4 (December 2006) pps. 728-755.

²⁹⁸ "Autographs," *The Home Journal*. (September 9, 1854)

who requested sketches from artists during studio visits were admonished for perpetrating “intellectual extortion.”²⁹⁹

The popular author Mrs. Kirkland, herself a likely target of the autograph hunter’s attentions, defined the autograph in terms of its reception, as “a lock of one’s mental and moral hair, given to be speculated upon by diviners who are by no means likely to be soothsayers.” It operated in a particular sphere of exchange, in which the celebrity was burdened by expectation and obligation: “It is, in short, something that every body, without exception, would avoid giving if they could, and yet something which, being reputed a trifle, every body is ashamed to refuse.”³⁰⁰

“A Week Among Autographs” by Reverend S. Gilman describes one of the largest autograph collections in the United States. His essay served as a fifty-page coda to the “northern and southern excursions” contained in *The Poetry of Traveling in the United States* by Caroline Gilman of Charleston, South Carolina. Reverend Gilman spent the week in question among the five thousand specimens of I. K. Tefft, Esq. of Savannah, Georgia. When the collection was sold at auction in 1866, it was considered “probably the largest and most valuable collection ever offered for sale, numbering nearly 30,000, many of which are extremely rare.”³⁰¹

²⁹⁹ “Autographs as Types of Character,” *The Crayon*, Vo. III, April 1856, p. 124 and *The Crayon*, vol. II, August 1855, p. 128 quoted in Harvey, p. 52.

³⁰⁰ “Autographs,” in Mrs. Kirkland. *A Book for the Home Circle or, Familiar Thoughts on Various Topics, Literary, Moral and Social*. (New York: Charles Scribner, 145 Nassau Street, 1853) pps. 70-74.

³⁰¹ *Catalogue of the entire private library of T. H. Morrell comprising a choice collection of works on America, its history and antiquities, also autographs and engravings together with a number of Superbly Illustrated and Unique Works, having inserted Plates, Privately Printed and Large Paper Editions, &c. To Be Sold At Auction on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday Afternoons, November 8th, 9th and 10th, by Bangs, Merwin and Co., at Their Salesrooms, 694 and 696 Broadway, commencing each day at 4 O’Clock Precisely..* (New York: Bradstreet Press, 18 Beekman Street, 1866), endplate.

Reverend Gilman characterized autograph collecting as a form of gift exchange, noting that “Mr. Tefft has succeeded in forming his large collection without incurring any direct expense.” He observed how the collector maintained an inventory of duplicates for barter and corresponded with fellow collectors Robert Gilmor of Baltimore and Rev. Dr. Sprague of Albany, while also monitoring the market for autographs in England. Gilman was particularly drawn to an autograph by Dr. Hugh Blair, “author of ‘The Sermons’ and ‘Lectures on Rhetoric:’”

Behold then the highly decorated flourish of the initial H in the signature of Hugh Blair! See the long and graceful dash which the hand of the octogenarian struck forth upon the subscription of the note! Who can fail to perceive even in these minute characteristics, the external traces of that elegant mind..?”

Despite several such rhapsodic passages, Reverend Gilman did not hold a completely positive view of autograph collecting. He considered it both “among the last intellectual luxuries grafted on a high growth of refinement and civilization,” and “the object of a special anxiety, of a sort of idolatry, which among many individuals has degenerated into a mania, a folly.”³⁰² The passion of a dedicated collector could go beyond social bounds and needed to be moderated.

In 1857, William Brotherhead of Philadelphia published privately twenty-five copies of his treatise *Autographi-Holographiani*, in which he proclaimed the virtues of autograph collecting. Like biography, autographs had the capacity to bring the viewer into “direct communion” with the great men of European and American celebrity who had enacted a history that he described breathlessly – “What an

³⁰² Caroline Gilman. *The Poetry of Travelling in the United States. With Additional Sketches by a few friends. And “A Week Among Autographs” by Rev. S. Gilman.* (New York: S. Coleman, 141 Nassau Street, 1838) pp. 374 and 426.

important period of time! How prolific of events!”³⁰³ The book’s title, allying the written autograph with the holograph, an inclusive form that included written and visual connections to the maker’s hand, is further evidence of the lack of differentiation between the two forms.

Autographs carried such graphic authority that they were not just a means of access to people and events of the historical past, they could also persuade and influence the future. *Autographs for Freedom*, published by the Rochester Ladies Anti-Slavery Society in 1853, with a second volume in 1854, took advantage of the “influence which must ever be exerted by persons of exalted character, and high mental endowments” to disseminate “light and truth” on the subject of slavery.³⁰⁴ Poems, essays, stories, biblical exegesis, letters and written “sketches” by such luminaries of abolition as Harriet Beecher Stowe, Horace Mann, John Greenleaf Whittier, Horace Greeley, Frederick Douglass, and the Earl of Carlisle were given extra validity and persuasive power by the inclusion of a signature printed at the conclusion of each authors’ piece. This personal mark gave the reader/viewer special access to the character and convictions of eminent abolitionists.

Collecting Chirography and Character

The notion that a person’s character manifested itself visually was prevalent in antebellum culture. Much has been written about the widespread belief, expressed in the “sciences” of phrenology and physiognomy, that a person’s habits of behavior and

³⁰³ William Brotherhead. *Autographi-Holographiani*. (Philadelphia: private printing, 1857) p. 6.

³⁰⁴ Julia Griffiths, Secretary, the Rochester Ladies’ Anti-Slavery Society. *Autographs for Freedom*. (Boston: John P. Jewett and Company. Cleveland, Ohio: Jewett, Proctor, and Worthington. London: Low and Company, 1853) Preface.

character could be “read” from physical evidence. A similar interpretation was applied to the marks of a person’s hand. Drawing and writing both expressed character. To John Ehninger, each cliché verre etching expressed “the strongly-minded characteristics of each artist.” For Reverend Gilman, the discernment of character from the autograph, finding “correspondences between the writing and the mental disposition of individuals,” constituted the “science” of the autograph collector and the special capacity of “the experienced inspector of autographs, who deduces from the signature of an *individual* the qualities of his mind.”³⁰⁵

Autograph collector William Brotherhead attributed to the handwriting of “the noble Washington” traits that were prevalent in the contemporary hagiography of the Father of our Country. Washington’s attributes could be discerned by a special class of connoisseurs. “The handwriting is plain and distinct, it has an individuality of character about it that collectors say never fails to tell at once its genuineness.”³⁰⁶ Brotherhead described the hand of Scottish poet Robert Burns, for example, as “like himself, honest, clear and distinct.”³⁰⁷

American author Edgar Allan Poe was characteristically vehement in his opinion on the subject of handwriting and character. Writing in 1841 in *Graham’s Magazine*, he professed “that a strong analogy *does* generally and naturally exist between every man’s chirography and character, will be denied by none but the most unreflecting.”³⁰⁸ In two chapters ‘on Autography,’ under facsimile signatures, Poe wrote brief paragraphs that had a three-fold objective: “to illustrate how mental

³⁰⁵ Gilman. P. 378.

³⁰⁶ Brotherhead, p. 6.

³⁰⁷ Ibid, p. 18.

³⁰⁸ Edgar Allan Poe. “A Chapter on Autography.” *Graham’s Monthly Magazine of Literature and Art* (November/December 1841 and January, 1842.)

features are indicated by writing; to indulge in some literary gossip; and to furnish an accurate collection of autographs to readers.”

Striking among the one hundred and eight short descriptions is the way in which Poe uses the language of art to describe an author’s hand. Such attributes as “force,” “polish,” “picturesqueness,” “grace,” and “the beautiful” are put forward as positive qualities of character, of writing, and of art. Thus the poet Grenville Mellen’s signature reflected “the poet’s flighty, hyper-fanciful character, with his unsettled and often erroneous views of the beautiful,” while William Cullen Bryant’s manifested “the most common clerk’s hand” in which “we look in vain for the force, polish, and decision of the poet. The picturesqueness, to be sure, is equally deficient in this chirography and in his poetical productions.” Poe’s intermingling of literary criticism and handwriting analysis is particularly striking in the paragraph on poet Nathaniel Parker Willis: “His usual chirography is dashing, free, and not ungraceful, but is sadly deficient in force and picturesqueness.” Of Washington Allston, so celebrated as both a poet and painter, Poe had little positive to say, “His poems are not all of a high order of merit; and in truth, the faults of his pencil and pen are identical.”

“In the Manner of Sully:” Drawing in Signature Style

After instilling the fundamentals of drawing in the student/reader of *The American Drawing Book*, John Gadsby Chapman turned his attention to the question of “manner.” Although he discouraged students from releasing themselves too soon from the rigors of the progressively more rigorous exercises, he promised a reward at

the end, for “with careful observation and practice, he will soon acquire a facility of expressing himself, which, growing into a habit, will establish a *manner* for himself, far more serviceable, and better, than the imitation of another, however excellent or effective it may be.” With the proper tools in place, the student was prepared for a high degree of individual expression: “Style in painting is the same as in writing – a power over materials, whether words or colors, by which conceptions or sentiments are conveyed – and is marked with the individuality and character of the artist’s mind and impulses.”³⁰⁹

The antebellum art market valued signature style and characteristic content from its artists. For novice collectors, the fact that a work fit into a taxonomy of standard forms gave it recognizable merit, just as would a distinguished provenance or a connection to serial reproduction and the mass market. William Walters took part in this register of value with enthusiasm, reading the art press, cultivating relationships with known artists, visiting exhibitions and studios, and collecting drawings with zeal. His two watercolors by Thomas Sully, likely acquired from the estate sale of Robert Gilmore in Baltimore, were examples by an artist whose signature style was widely known and highly valued. The Sully portrait in watercolor of Charles Carroll of Carrollton, Maryland’s Catholic and longest-lived signer of “that record of glory,” the Declaration of Independence, was a famous image of a first-tier American celebrity, “the sole survivor of that immortal band whose talents and inflexible virtues, in the midst of peril, pledged for their country all that men esteem

³⁰⁹ Chapman, p. 13 and p. 300.

of value.”³¹⁰ (Ill. 4-26.) Carroll is seated in a wooden chair, next to a desk with a roll of papers, wearing the “loose roquelaure, something between a dressing gown and a frock coat” which marked him as a member of the previous generation.³¹¹ Sully had painted several portraits of Carroll, including two for family members in 1826 and 1827. One portrait was reproduced as a lithograph by Albert Newsome, and published by the firm of Inman & Childs of Philadelphia. Robert Gilmore owned a portrait in oil of Carroll which he purchased from Sully in 1841. While there is no record of how he came by the watercolor, it is listed in his self-published *Catalogue of a Collection of Autographs in the Possession of Robert Gilmore* of 1832.³¹²

The Carroll portrait depicted a known American hero, with specific local association, which Walters would have prized for its celebrity aura. The identity of the sitter in his second work by Sully, the watercolor *Portrait of a Lady*, is unknown. (Ill. 4-27) However, it is so characteristic a pose and costume that it barely required the artist’s autograph to be recognized as his work. Sully was so renowned for his depictions of beautiful women that the mere mention of his name evoked a signature style. The popular periodical *Godey’s Ladies Book* reinforced his stature: “Sully, as all the world knows, paints exquisitely beautiful portraits of ladies. His praise is in all the parlours.”³¹³ Gift books published works by Sully in great number; for example,

³¹⁰ James B. Longacre and James Herring. *The National Portrait Gallery of Distinguished Americans*. (Philadelphia: Henry Perkins. New York: Monson Bancroft. London: O. Rich, 1834) p. 6.

³¹¹ John H. B. Latrobe quoted in John E. Semmes. *John H. B. Latrobe and His Times, 1803-1891*. (Baltimore: The Norman, Remington Co., 1917) p. 215

³¹² For information about Charles Carroll of Carrollton and the many portraits produced of him in his later years, see Ann C. Van DeVanter. “*Any Where So Long As There Be Freedom:*” *Charles Carroll of Carrollton, His Family & His Maryland*. (Baltimore: The Baltimore Museum of Art, 1975).

³¹³ Quoted in Susan S. Williams. *Confounding Images: Photography and Portraiture in Antebellum American Fiction*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997) p. 77

four of the eight illustrations in *The Gift for 1842*, including the frontispiece and title page were works by the artist. (Ills. 4-28 and 4-29)

Edgar Allan Poe could assume his audience's knowledge of Sully's style with "all the world." He described "The Oval Portrait" at the center of his grim tale of that name as a "mere head and shoulders," "done in what is technically termed a *vignette* manner; much in the style of the favorite heads of Sully."³¹⁴ So often were Sully's works reproduced and so taken for granted was the shared visual knowledge of his oeuvre, that *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine* 5 (1839) could publish a poem by Park Benjamin "To a Portrait of a Lady, Painted by Sully" without an accompanying illustration:

Joy, tranquil joy and mild content
In those angelic features bent,
Tell like a fountain's sparkling flow
That all is pure and bright below.³¹⁵

"Many other artists of celebrity:" Creating a canon

The imprimatur of the art press appears to have played a role in William Walters' collecting choices. That validation involved the continual repetition of a standardized list of "shared names." The descriptions of "Our Private Collections," published in five segments in *The Crayon* from January to December of 1856, particularly those of Jonathan Sturges, Charles M. Leupp, and Marshall O. Roberts,

³¹⁴ Edgar Allan Poe, "The Oval Portrait," first published in *Graham's Magazine*, April 1842. *The Works of Edgar Allan Poe*. Hervey Allen, ed. (New York: Black's Readers Service Company, 1927) pps. 311-313.

³¹⁵ Williams. p. 77.

provided the Baltimore collector with lists of artists validated by the New York market. The auction catalogue for the Leupp collection, which we know Walters would have followed, mentions works by “Stuart, Cole, Durand, Leutze, Church, Kensett, Mount, Page, Huntington, Chapman, Edmonds, Audubon, Baker, Casilear and many other artists of celebrity.”

The gushing review of the 1857 annual exhibition of the National Academy of Design in *Putnam’s Magazine* is fairly typical of the canon reinforcement of that genre, singling out Casilear, “the sumptuous Church” and “the fruity Gray” for notice. Strolling the galleries of the thirty-second annual exhibition, “thirty-two times better than any recent one,” “We look for summer – and the Arcadian serenity of Kensett, the soft repose of Durand are before our eyes: for the gushing fountains in the fields, and lo! The impetuous vigor of Hicks, or the suppressed power of Page.” The review also gave instruction on proper comportment in the galleries: “In the morning the rooms have been a quiet retreat for the student who wished to study, and learn to tell a Rossiter from a Huntington. In the evening, they have been thronged with a murmuring crowd, who lingered listlessly in the heat, and pronounced Church’s Andes “beautiful, perfect!””³¹⁶

The example of genre painter Charles F. Blauvelt, now relegated to obscurity, is typical of the publicity of the time. A resident of the Tenth Street studio, Blauvelt was described by the *Cosmopolitan Art Journal* in 1856 as “an artist whose name is now an honored one in art-circles, and whose works are regarded as rare expositions of the homely and humorous side of our American life.” Testament to his appeal to

³¹⁶ *Putnam’s Monthly* no. LVII, July 1857 (New York: Miller and Curtis, 321 Broadway, 1857) p. 130.

collectors was the fact that his paintings were rarely available for purchase – “picture after picture which it would be a treat to see...are only to be seen through the dim light of the gentleman’s parlor walls where they are hung before fairly dry.”³¹⁷ In all, William Walters bought five of Blauvelt’s graphic works, including the pencil drawing, *Boy Observing an Eclipse of the Sun*, (Ill. 4-30) and oil sketch of a *Man Pouring Himself a Drink* (Ill. 4-31), which would have been prized possessions. The works were likely acquired through Samuel Putnam Avery, who owned a painting by Blauvelt titled *Winter* exhibited at the National Academy’s Annual Exhibition in 1860.

In contrast with the European tradition of drawing connoisseurship, which privileged the raw gesture of the *schizzo*, antebellum American collectors, less educated in art and less confident in their taste, showed a marked preference for finished work in which the relationship to illustration and to realistic depiction of recognizable subjects was clear. John Gadsby Chapman reinforced this popular taste, distinguishing between the “graphic memorandum” of the sketch and the “faithful record of well-digested investigation” of the study. His preference for the latter, which required “accuracy of line and truthfulness of expression, be the means or method employed what they may,” was clear, for “it is far better to accomplish one careful, well-studied, and accurately-finished drawing a month, than a hundred loose sketches a day.”³¹⁸

William Walters, a neophyte collector absorbing the language and interests of art circles, did not make Chapman’s rhetorical distinction, and referred always to his

³¹⁷ *Cosmopolitan Art Journal*, December 1856, p. 167.

³¹⁸ Chapman, pps. 169-171.

album of “sketches.” However, he did profess a clear inclination toward finish and realism. Describing a “Newport picture” by Kensett, he indicated “there was a ‘realism’ – real, well defined actual water – and equally real Rock – no vagueness – no uncertainty”³¹⁹ It is significant that Walters’ words easily evoke in visual memory a shore scene with rocks and cliffs so characteristic of Kensett’s art. For these collectors, signature subject matter, even more than style, was a mark of value. Walters would particularly have prized his two drawings by Henry Inman. Singled out as one of the few “second generation” American artists to be profiled in illustrated biographies, Inman was a famed portraitist and a founder and member of the leadership of the National Academy of Design. He had spent time in Baltimore in the early 1830s, painting a portrait of Robert Gilmor. Gilmor also owned the drawing *Youth and Age*, a portrait of himself with his niece Isabel Baron Brien.³²⁰ The artist’s death at age 45 in early 1846 “left a vacancy that cannot easily be supplied, nor is that vacancy apparent only in our ranks, it is perceived and felt throughout the community.”³²¹

In his *The Illustrated American Biography*, Abner Dumont Jones described Inman as “a bright, fair-haired boy, who, as he was the joy of his parents, was destined to become the artist-pet of his country.”³²² Benson Lossing included him among the nine artists profiled in *Our Countrymen: or Brief Memories of Eminent American* with this eulogy: “Art, literature, and social life were all widowed by the

³¹⁹ WTW to JFK, July 20, 1859. Kellogg collection.

³²⁰ Humphries. pps. 247, 254-255.

³²¹ Asher B. Durand, “Minutes of the National Academy of Design” May 13, 1846.

³²² Jones, p. 387.

death of Henry Inman, one of the most gifted men of our century. Wordsworth pronounced him the most decided man of genius he had ever seen from America.”³²³ Inman had made the pilgrimage to visit Wordsworth at Rydal Mount in Cumbria in August of 1845, provided with the commission for a portrait of the British poet from Professor Henry Reed of Philadelphia. The artist returned to the United States with a likeness approved by Wordsworth and his family as well as sketches of the landscape surrounding their home. *Rydal Water* was acquired by Charles M. Leupp and exhibited at the National Academy of Design in 1845. Inman painted *Rydal Falls* for collector Ogden Haggerty after his return from sketches made during his visit.³²⁴ Walters’ drawing of “Rydal Falls,” previously unattributed in the collection of the Walters Art Museum, is clearly dated August 28, 1844. (Ill. 4-32) Ink on paper, it uses the careful hatching structure of the trained engraver to render light and shadow and to model rocks and the play of rushing water in the center of the picture. The strokes of the pen loosen into abstract dashes and scribbles toward the edges of the page, creating the haloed edge of the landscape vignette.

Inman described the subject as “a pleasing waterfall or ‘Force,’ called Rydal Falls, whose waters precipitate themselves in two sheets a few hundred yards from the house.”³²⁵ The rushing water, cascading into a small pool, is this fine drawing’s bravura detail. The fact that the artist’s letter to Professor Reed about his visit to Wordsworth was published in the *Bulletin of the American Art Union* and that he described the subject so clearly, imbued Walters’ drawing with the celebrity of its

³²³ Lossing, p. 386.

³²⁴ William Gerdtz and Carrie Reborz. *The Art of Henry Inman*. (Washington, D.C.: The National Portrait Gallery, 1987) p. 53.

³²⁵ Henry Inman quoted in “Inman’s Visit to Wordsworth,” *Bulletin of the American Art Union*, November, 1850. p. 135.

creator, and of his poet host. The mention of the *Rydal Water* painting as part of the Leupp collection in *The Crayon* in 1856 could only have added to Walters' satisfaction with the related drawing.

The associative resonances of Walters' *Rose* by Henry Inman are less available to us now.³²⁶ (Ill. 4-33) A watercolor from 1841, it has the scale and the finish of an offering for a lady's album. In Walters' album, it would have invited careful observation and comparison with another watercolor *Rose*, this by John William Hill, the friend and correspondent of Samuel Putnam Avery. (Ill. 4-34) Viewed together, Inman's picture seems stiff and imagined next to the "Pre-Raphaelite fidelity" with which Hill has observed the moss rose's habit of growth, cankered leaves, and opening buds – the "not yet notorious" confronting the established methods of the past.

Piecing together the histories of these drawings, as individual works of art as well as in relationship to one another, gives us some degree of access to their contemporary meaning. In the context of the parlor, viewing an album of drawings was a social interaction between viewers, the unfolding of a multi-layered story of acquisition, appreciation, association and meaning. While we may discover bits of evidence, it is humbling to acknowledge that most of that story has been lost forever.

³²⁶ As with so many of the drawings among Walters' "Original Sketches," it has not been possible to trace when he acquired his two works by Henry Inman.

Conclusion

The exhibition of a watercolor in the “dark room” for drawings at the National Academy of Design provoked a controversy aired in the pages of the art periodical, *The Crayon*, in May of 1855. The publication’s editors, William J. Stillman and John Durand, rushed to the defense of the artist, their mentor the British critic and art theorist John Ruskin, to try to correct “the misrepresentation of the man’s genius.” Worried that the poor quality of the work, “not a water-color drawing in any right sense of the word, but a tinted sketch,” would undercut the great man’s stature, they cast aspersions on its owner for acquiring it “in some roundabout way from the dust bin or the waste-paper basket of Mr. Ruskin.” The fact that it was displayed “with the lavish garniture of autograph,” signaling the artist or author’s implicit participation, appears to have magnified the affront.³²⁷

The drawing’s owner, Reverend Elias L. Magoon, leapt into the fray in the next week’s edition. Eager to support the legitimacy of his acquisition, he described a warm welcome into Ruskin’s home “Denmark Hill,” albeit while the “distinguished proprietor” was away. He recounted the circumstances of purchasing the drawing from a clerk who had worked with Ruskin in Italy for the publishers of *The Stones of Venice*. In conclusion, he suggested that others shared the responsibility for its presentation at the National Academy, as “eminent friends in this city had desired to have it shown.”

Most importantly, Magoon wanted his readers to understand how and why he valued a work that, on the surface, appeared so unimpressive. It was precisely “as an

³²⁷ “Sketchings,” *The Crayon*, May 2, 1855. p. 282.

autograph mainly” that this “slight sketch” had meaning. As “the fragile memento of a great, good, and enduring man,” even this underwhelming work had the power to communicate and connect.

A letter in the same issue from Asher B. Durand, the President of the National Academy of Design and father of the editor, reinforced Magoon’s statement. He, too, characterized the exhibited sketch as “simply a memorandum of a bit of architecture in sunlight.” Its value was as a palpable visual connection to Ruskin’s physical presence. Durand believed it afforded “an opportunity for some of his many admirers here, myself included, to enjoy the privilege, as it were, of a silent shake of the hand amongst the crowd of listeners to his thrilling eloquence.”³²⁸

This incident speaks to the complex “social life” of drawings in the years preceding the American Civil War. The concentration of the art market in New York, publicized and supported by a growing art press, had developed a shared knowledge base among those with the time and means to contemplate or collect works of art. As the Ruskin controversy and other accounts have revealed, antebellum viewers brought sophisticated expectations to works on paper. Educated themselves in the rudiments of drawing, they perceived the medium as a particular and personal means of communication and self-presentation. They were tuned to a decorum of “finish” that was expected in the public exhibition and in its private equivalent, the drawing album. Within the prevailing paradigm of public reception, Ruskin’s drawing had to be defended as celebrity “signature,” its graphic marks as autographic of a “great man.” The rapid observations of a working artist, committed to paper for use in the studio, differed not only in execution, but in episteme.

³²⁸ “Sketchings,” *The Crayon*, May 9, 1855. p. 298.

My object throughout this study has been to broaden the discussion of antebellum American drawings, a group of quietly communicative works of art at risk of being overlooked. My goal has been to open up different facets of their complex “social lives.” While previous American art history has focused on the function of these drawings in relation to paintings and as a studio tool for working artists, I have identified a set of artistic contexts and collecting practices driven by different motivations altogether.

The special qualities of this medium, its intimacy and direct connection to the artist’s hand, enriched its function as social currency. Though physically fragile and potentially ephemeral, within certain social networks, these diminutive works carried powerful associations as private communication with a public function. They had the capacity, for example, to give social imprimatur to a traveling foreigner, and to advance the fame of a Baltimore collector in the art circles to which he aspired. They functioned as didactic tools, as entertainment, and as sentimental communication within the coded physical environment of the antebellum parlor.

Here, too, their private and public functions were potentially blurred. Consciously connected with literature and with illustration, these works drew in associative references that added to their social value. The mass-market distribution of the reproduced image adhered to the original work; the drawing’s uniqueness was thrown into relief as the image gained broad exposure. A crucial aspect of contemporary context is the explosion of visual imagery, in prints, books, and periodicals, experienced by the American populace in the years before the Civil War. Lithography, often called polyautography when it was first introduced, rendered the

drawings by both established artists and their workman compatriots visible beyond elite circles of patronage for the first time. Finally, the drawings' connections to the celebrity hand of artists recognized within the prevailing canon was yet another facet of value. As the American public searched for a sense of American nationhood in the early nineteenth century, artists gained new, heroic stature.

The language of drawing appreciation in use in the Ruskin incident and elsewhere seems particularly charged in light of the radical new means of creating images that had swept the country in the previous years. The introduction of photography in 1839, with its capacity to capture the reality of the natural world seemingly without human effort, hovers over the enterprise of drawing and drawing collecting in this period. Hailed as “a positively perfect mirror,” by Edgar Allan Poe, the daguerreotype was viewed, in those early years, as a means of revealing “a more absolute truth, a more perfect identity of aspect with the thing represented.” In this early, mechanically-focused period of the new medium, photography emerged as “the process by which natural objects may be made to delineate themselves,” without the messy intervention of the human hand and sensibility. Its magical aspect derived from that self-sufficiency, “infinitely,” according to Poe, “more accurate in its representation than any painting by human hands.”³²⁹

The intersection of photography and drawing as they were understood and collected in albums in the period before the Civil War is certainly worthy of further study. The continual emphasis on the hand and character of the individual artist in

³²⁹ Edgar Allan Poe, “The Daguerreotype,” in *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine*. (April, 1856) quoted in Alan Trachtenberg, ed. *Classic Essays on Photography*. (New Haven: Leete's Island Books, 1980) p. 38. William Henry Fox Talbot, *Some Account of the Art of Photogenic Drawing*. (London: R. and J. E. Taylor, 1839), and Poe, p. 38.

contemporary commentary about drawing provides rhetorical support for their differentiation and uniqueness. While photography was defined as the ultimate, unmediated authenticity of image, album drawings occupied a position of opposition, as visible traces of the artist. They reflected the character, social networks, and diverse endeavors of the artist, as well as of the collector, in the public and private realms.

I make no claim to having turned over every potential stone in this rich area of cultural history. Other avenues and evidence remain to be explored. For example, in the course of my research, Stuart Feld, eminent collector of nineteenth-century American drawings, kindly shared information about four additional “collections” of drawings from the period that have appeared in the art market over the last twenty years. These include an album presented by Julia Colt Pierson to “E.H.M.” on December 18, 1856; the album of M.A. Townsend; a group of drawings, far more finished than the sketches in his “scrapbook” album at the New-York Historical Society, which belonged to Thomas Seir Cummings; and the album of Henry G. Marquand, a founding Trustee of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

While I was unable to track down any of these assemblages, the lists of contents reinforce the canon of celebrity artists whose graphic works were valued consistently in such collections. The possibility that M.A. Townsend was related to the William A. Townsend who published Ehninger’s *Autograph Etchings* present a further avenue of investigation into the collecting of original works that were serially reproduced. A comparison between the Cummings album available at the New-York

Historical Society with the one dispersed in the trade would certainly yield new insights into that artist's collecting enterprise.

William Trost Richards' "honeymoon album," recently acquired by the Brooklyn Museum of Art, would add additional evidence. To illustrate this album, Richards used the landscape vignettes he had unsuccessfully peddled to New York publishers for a book he titled *Landscape Feeling*. A sophisticated reverse example of the public sphere melding into the private, the reception narrative of this album, if only for the artist himself, would have been complicated by that aspect of the drawings' former "social life."

The many-faceted aspect of these works of art imbues my own experience of them over one hundred and fifty years later. After the archival enterprise of tracking down details of their historical context, I leaf through the albums with fresh eyes. John Ludlow Morton's penciled frontispiece, just one example, indicates the album's contributors on a table of contents seemingly etched in stone. The pleasure I derive from "naming names," from tracking down biography, and filling in story, exists simultaneously with the aesthetic pleasure produced by this small but bold work of art. The archival exercise gives me access to layers of meaning that may have been part of what was originally communicated by the drawing in its album, at the same time that the unique object offers other satisfactions.

The composition, drawing the eye back into a wooded landscape, is pleasingly picturesque. Morton's use of the pencil is assured, a strong syntactical line delineates foreground tree and water, subtle reductions of pressure on the pencil communicate

the atmospheric perspective of space receding into the forest landscape. On this level, my enjoyment is visceral, connected to the physical marks on the page.

Taken one step further, that pleasure is tinged with a curious nostalgia. I discern in my own reaction a somewhat melancholy yearning for a time I never experienced, when people drew graphic gifts for each other's pleasure, and when the enjoyment of such images was an absorptive social act accompanied by conversation. As with their antebellum viewers, these works of art present many different facets. The collectors of the albums, from John Ludlow Morton in the 1820s to William Walters in 1859, assembled drawings into coherent collections that reflected themselves as much as the artists, their social networks, and collecting practices. These elements of the narrative of reception, never fully within our reach, are our challenge to recreate.

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