WILLIAM RIMMER

Champion of Imagination in American Art

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Cover image: William Rimmer, *The Dying Centaur* (1869; cast 1905), bronze, Metropolitan Museum of Art, https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/11915, public domain.
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Contents

In honor of William Rimmer

He had art knowledge and genius enough ... to establish an era of art in this country. But he accepted circumstances, and followed the bent of his own nature and feelings.... If the results were disastrous, he made no complaint. In certain matters one's own way is heroism.

T.H. Bartlett, *Art Life of William Rimmer*, 1882

And in memory of my mother, Priscilla White Evans
who was a student of Frank W. Benson
who was a student of William Rimmer

Acknowledgments

This book began with *Flight and Pursuit* which was in the 1985–1986 traveling exhibition of William Rimmer's work. At the time, and in subsequent articles, interpretations of the picture did not jibe with the visual evidence. The challenge (albeit long delayed) to try to figure it out led to research on the artist, a re-identification of a related drawing and a documented, and visually-based, reinterpretation of much of Rimmer's work. As it turned out, this one painting conforms to patterns that can be found generally in the artist's output.

I benefited immeasurably from my precursors, Lincoln Kirstein and Jeffrey Weidman, who compiled information on Rimmer, his pictures, and his sculpture. Kirstein's surviving research, mostly from the 1940s, for a biography of Rimmer was left to Richard Sherman Nutt who intended to expand it. What remains now belongs to the Archives of American Art in Washington, D.C. Weidman built on Kirstein's initial research and completed a Ph.D. dissertation in 1982 that was published the following year as a seven-volume, catalogue raisonné of Rimmer's oeuvre. It is invaluable as an extensively detailed record of what could be discovered about Rimmer and his attributed work at the time. One of Weidman and Kirstein's greatest contributions is their recording of information received from Rimmer's descendants. I would like to acknowledge Jeffrey's kind assistance in allowing me to see some of the questionable-attribution images sent to him since his book's publication (none convincing as by Rimmer) as well as copies of Rimmer's surviving musical compositions (unfortunately mostly illegible) in his possession.

For an addition to primary sources, I owe a special debt to Robert and James Korndorffer who are great-great grandsons of Rimmer, through his first daughter, Mary. Robert owns Caroline Rimmer's annotated copy of Truman Bartlett's 1882 biography of Rimmer and Alice Caroline (Haskell) Lapthorn's unpublished manuscript, "Stories and Memoirs," which includes memories of her grandfather Rimmer.

I am grateful also to the following who assisted this research in important ways. Some are mentioned in the notes: Anne E. Bentley, Mindy N. Besaw, Katie Blumenkrantz, Jud Crawford, C.D. Dickerson III, Deborah Diemente, Stuart Feld, Paul Godin, Richard Hacken, Elizabeth Haff, Ellen Hanspach-Bernal, Martha J. Hoppin, Catherine N. Howe, Kara M. Jackman, Kelly J. Keegan, Kirstin Kennedy, Elizabeth Korndorffer, Joshua W. Lane, James F. Lawrence, Corrine Lemberg, Bronwyn E. Loring, Meredith Marcinkewicz, John F. McGuigan Jr., David Miller, Carolle Morini, Kenneth J. Myers, Scout Noffke, Devi Noor, Lisa Norberg, Richard Salisbury Nutt, Richard Ormond, Michael W. Otto, Karen Papineau, Amelia Peck, Pamela Post-Ferrante, John T. Quinn, Laurel Rhame, Aileen Ribeiro, Miriam Stewart, Nina Sweeney, Thayer Tolles, Patience H. White, Gordon D. Wilkins, Justine Wimsatt, and Tiffany N. Wixon.

Jessica B. Murphy, at the Countway Medical Library, went to unusual lengths to contribute by scanning items for me when the library was closed because of the pandemic. I am indebted to her effort. Sadly, the Boston Medical Library and the Countway Library are parting ways so that, in future, their currently-combined Rimmer collections will be divided. At this writing, the Boston Medical Library is in the process of moving its Rimmer collection into deep storage.

Concerning the text, I am deeply grateful to Linda Merrill for her close reading and thoughtful suggestions. Her comments proved extremely helpful. My debt, in the final phase, also extends to Brian E. Hack, Anne Bolen, and Carol Troyen. Brian and Anne read the manuscript, or parts of it, and made welcome recommendations. Carol contributed by reviewing an early version of the chapter on *Flight and Pursuit* and calling attention to the

use of light as significant. As work progressed, email discussions with Brian about Rimmer's rightful place in a reconsideration of American sculpture served as inspiration, for which he has my gratitude.

Finally, I want to thank Emory University, where I taught, for generously subsidizing the illustrations, as well as the entire staff involved in the book's production at Open Book Publishers. Alessandra Tosi, Alex Priestley, and Luca Baffa deserve special recognition at OBP for the roles they played in guiding the book to its completion. This has been a difficult but thoroughly rewarding journey. William Rimmer deserves renewed attention that I hope he will now receive.

1. A Secret Inheritance

William Rimmer (1816–1879) was a major and highly influential American artist, who, fairly consistently, managed to be misunderstood. Since his death, assessments of him have varied widely. He has been labeled both a neoclassicist and a precursor of the rebellious French sculptor, Auguste Rodin.[1] Yet the content of Rimmer's sculpture is very different from both. Just as concerning, many of his paintings and drawings have been misinterpreted, and his unsigned work confused with that of others. This book is an attempt to reconstruct his artistic identity and to provide a long-overdue reconsideration of his place in history.

To begin with, Rimmer had a much more creative mind than has been assumed. At his death in 1879, he was typically praised as a man of "original genius."[2] In the context of flattering obituaries, this might not seem so unusual. But posthumously he gave new life to this estimation when he won a contest that acknowledged his fertile imagination. In 1880, a national journal of arts and literature, out of Buffalo, asked its readers to name which *two* American artists, alive or dead, were "pre-eminent in imaginative power."[3] Given Rimmer's relative obscurity as a man of "reserved habits," the result must have been a surprise.[4] He shared the honor with Elihu Vedder — a still living, European-trained artist who was primarily a painter and book illustrator. They both were innovative in subject matter, but Rimmer differed in also being unusually original in sculptural form.

With an uncommon breadth of talent, Rimmer split his creative energy as an artist. He worked in both two and three dimensions as well as taught art. During his career, he had to overcome the drawbacks of being not only self-taught — except for some lessons from his father — but also hindered by a late start so that he was not even recognized as a professional until the age of forty-five. It was then that he became a sculptor and necessarily only part-time.[5] He produced few saleable works over a twenty-year career and supported himself by teaching. When he did exhibit — which was rare — his contributions tended to sacrifice public appeal by being inaccessible in meaning. Not only was his iconography esoteric, but he also earned a reputation for a curious reticence by not offering explanations.[6] In short, he rarely created artworks for the purpose of earning public favor or even selling them. According to a now-destroyed diary, he typically practiced as an artist "to gratify" his family or "in gratitude" for a friend.[7]

As for Rimmer's posthumous fame, it was boosted by several means. In addition to having admirers who remembered him, he had published a drawing book that was said to be the only volume on human anatomy that had "any true artistic character."[8] A memorial exhibition was arranged at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (where he had taught), in 1880 and a biography by the sculptor Truman H. Bartlett followed in 1882.[9] For their preservation, between 1905 and 1907, bronze casts were produced from his best known sculptures which Rimmer had modeled in clay and cast in plaster: *Falling Gladiator*, *Dying Centaur*, and *Fighting Lions*. In 1913, four of his drawings appeared in New York's much-publicized *International Exhibition of Modern Art*, also called the "Armory Show," in a section devoted to the finest American art.[10] Also in the twentieth-century, he was repeatedly rediscovered through small, one-man exhibitions in 1916, 1946 and 1985.[11] His stubborn independence, extensive influence through teaching, and avant-garde ideas are why he is worthy of close consideration. Beyond this, there is the undeniable quality of his surviving work.

Rimmer had been born in Liverpool, England, on February 20, 1816, and brought at age nine to Boston, Massachusetts. His father, Thomas Rimmer, possessed the advantages of a well-educated man, purportedly because he had a connection with the French throne, but actually because he grew up in a prosperous English family, about whom nothing else is known. He became a timber merchant and married an Irish woman, Mary

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Burroughs, in Liverpool.[12] In 1818, he arrived in New Brunswick, Canada, at the recorded age of twenty-three (suggesting that Thomas had been born in 1795) and sent for his wife and child to follow.[13] They first lived in Nova Scotia and, in 1819, moved to Aroostook County, Maine. Strangely, Thomas found his chances for advancement repeatedly thwarted, so he worked first as a common laborer and by 1824 as a boot maker.[14] He relocated with his family to Boston in 1826, and together he and his wife had seven children.

Mistakenly — with notable consequences for his eldest son — Thomas claimed that he was the French dauphin and rightfully should have succeeded Louis XVI, who had been executed in 1793.[15] He had this delusion apparently by the time he was ensconced in Canada with what he deemed was a fake identity as "Thomas Rimmer." That is, he believed that he had been falsely declared dead and his inheritance, as the king's son, stolen by the king's brother, Louis XVIII. His survival depended upon moving often to avoid — as he contended — French secret agents. According to his great granddaughter, his mere existence threatened the pretender whose agents pursued him because of a special locket he always wore. It held the only evidence of his heritage: the names, birthdates and titles of his parents as well as his own. In further proof of his claim, he physically resembled the Bourbons, particularly in his profile and lobeless ears.[16]

Taking pride in his education, Thomas spent what he could on books and taught his children himself, including in such subjects as history, botany, and ornithology as well as painting, drawing, and the playing of musical instruments.[17] His son, the wiry and athletic William, supplemented his interest in history by learning Latin as well as French. By all accounts, William needed little encouragement to read widely on his own as he had "an exceedingly studious disposition."[18] Clearly, he had the same autodidactic nature as his father who pursued his remarkably diverse interests by experimenting with electricity, metallurgy, and the raising of silkworms.[19] Almost twenty years after his wife's death from tuberculosis at age forty in 1836, Thomas died a painful death from "chronic diarrhea" in Boston in 1852. By then, he was a disillusioned alcoholic.[20]

At a young age, William Rimmer became known for his creativity in drawing pictures, constructing toy boats, and cutting small horses out of discarded India-rubber used in the soles of old boots.[21] Yet, despite his early inclination toward an artistic career, he had to pursue additional professions for financial support. He assisted and then followed his father in becoming a shoemaker and, with that as his most stable source of income, intermittently tried other paths such as that of a typesetter, sign maker, soap maker, altarpiece painter, and lithographer.[22] Except for a few lithographic prints, his early artworks are lost.[23]

From about 1841 to 1847, Rimmer undertook a more ambitious direction and sporadically studied medicine. The opportunity arose because a friend, Abel Washburn Kingman, was a physician in Brockton, Massachusetts. Rimmer read the medical works from Dr. Kingman's library, observed instruction in dissection at Massachusetts Medical College, and then settled on a mixed career as a country doctor, shoemaker and itinerant portrait painter.[24] Fusing his main interests after 1863, he became an art-school lecturer on the correct drawing of human anatomy, modified for artistic purposes.[25]

Perhaps the switch to medicine was inspired by his marriage to Mary Hazard Corey Peabody, a congenial Quaker about eight years younger, in 1840. Described as "very tall," she still measured shorter than Rimmer and was an "unusually striking looking person." She had "very white skin and black hair and dark eyes."[26] Thereafter, Rimmer devoted himself to supporting and raising a family who occupied the center of his life. His wife and children were a source of both happiness and grief as five of his eight offspring died in infancy. Adding to his misfortune, his wife became an invalid with chronic kidney disease at age forty-four in 1868.[27]

Rimmer's biographer, Truman Bartlett, thought the prioritizing of his family led to "unevenness" in his career as an artist, implying a stunted ambition. This might be so, but, along with William Morris Hunt, Rimmer became one of the two most revered teachers in the Boston art community. Together, between 1861 and 1879, they dominated the Boston art scene.[28] Rimmer taught in other cities as well, such as New York; Worcester, Massachusetts; New Haven, Connecticut; and Providence, Rhode Island. In fact, his success as a teacher came to overshadow public knowledge of him as a professional artist. At the height of his pedagogical fame — from 1866 to 1870 — Rimmer's most important teaching and administrative position was seasonal, as director of the

School of Design for Women at the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, a private college in New York. He would return to Boston for the summer.

Before he died in 1879, the artist produced two books at the instigation of friends, *The Elements of Design* (1864) and the better-known *Art Anatomy* (1877). They present most of his subject matter and are indicative of how he conducted his classes.[29] The first book, with plates of chiefly stick, skeletal and manikin figures, was written mainly for the parents and teachers of young art students.

The second, for more advanced students, is a large atlas of comparative human anatomy, showing different ages and sexes, with photomechanically produced plates. It includes detailed illustrations of the exterior, along with muscles and skeletons, of variously sized human bodies. What is unusual in this kind of book is the comparison of the heads and skulls of a man, lion, and ape and a limited section on interpreting human profiles and facial expressions. The latter are sometimes extreme caricature.[30] The purpose of codifying facial characteristics was presumably to help art students convey the moral status of invented characters. But it was justly criticized for lacking sufficient interpretation.[31] Today this lack would be less concerning than the insensitivity of some of his commentary.

With the book's chief focus on the male nude in various postures, it demonstrated anatomical drawing as not nature dependent, but, rather — as *art* anatomy — the product of an artist's conception. For this, figures generally influenced by the Italian Renaissance master, Michelangelo, proved helpful as a teaching tool. The emphasis on the male appears to have been largely due to ancient Greek and Renaissance precedent.

Many who knew Rimmer spoke of him as at his best when giving "inspired" lectures on the artistic portrayal of human anatomy, which he illustrated with images from his memory and imagination in rapid blackboard sketches.[32] He would show how a human body could be built upwards from the bones and muscles to the outer skin, and how a person might be shown in various actions and from various viewpoints.[33] Frequently he would produce entire figures and elaborate compositions of several of them. Unfortunately, these drawings — reputedly often spirited or strikingly beautiful — were necessarily erased after class, an action that numerous students found painful to witness. Deepening this loss, Rimmer usually worked quickly and discarded what he disliked. In the end, he destroyed most of his other artwork as well.[34]

This destruction included clay models that were reported to be "more wonderful" than the exhibited sculpture.[35] Probably only about 200 works in different media survive. Most of what has been exhibited since 1883 has been the same pieces. Unfortunately, a number of the more recent additions have been painting misattributions.[36]

Long before Rimmer became a teacher, he taught himself. "He was a green young man of eighteen or twenty when I first knew him," a brother artist recalled, "but one could see that he had great mental capacity. His drawing was always full of energy, but not suited," he added presciently, "for commercial purposes."[37] This was the opinion of Benjamin Champney, a fellow apprentice, whom Rimmer had joined in 1837 for about a year at Thomas Moore's lithographic print shop in Boston. Moore's shop trained talented beginners who learned from each other as well as from the chief draughtsman.[38] Champney continued that Rimmer "loved the Old Masters, and could then, as he did more perfectly later, indicate with a few strokes of his pencil the human figure in action. He could even then paint a head in a rough way, counterfeiting the Old Masters' tone and color."[39] Another beginner in this print studio remembered Rimmer as someone who "always took part in the discussions on art matters [and] his perceptions and aspirations were far above the others."[40]

His earliest work includes a design for Moore for a sheet music cover for *The Fireman's Call* (fig. 1), which has autobiographical associations and was drawn on lithographic stone. In addition to having a fine singing voice himself, Rimmer was a volunteer with Boston's Fire Engine Company No. 12, so the depiction of a fireman's rescue of a child would inevitably appeal to him.[41] In fact, the subject relates to Rimmer's character. His capacity for selfless daring and family loyalty were such that he once rushed into a burning and collapsing building in a near-suicidal mission that alarmed onlookers and became the talk of the town. He had feared that his brother, Thomas Jr., who was also fighting the fire, had been trapped there. Fortunately, he then caught sight of him outside.[42]

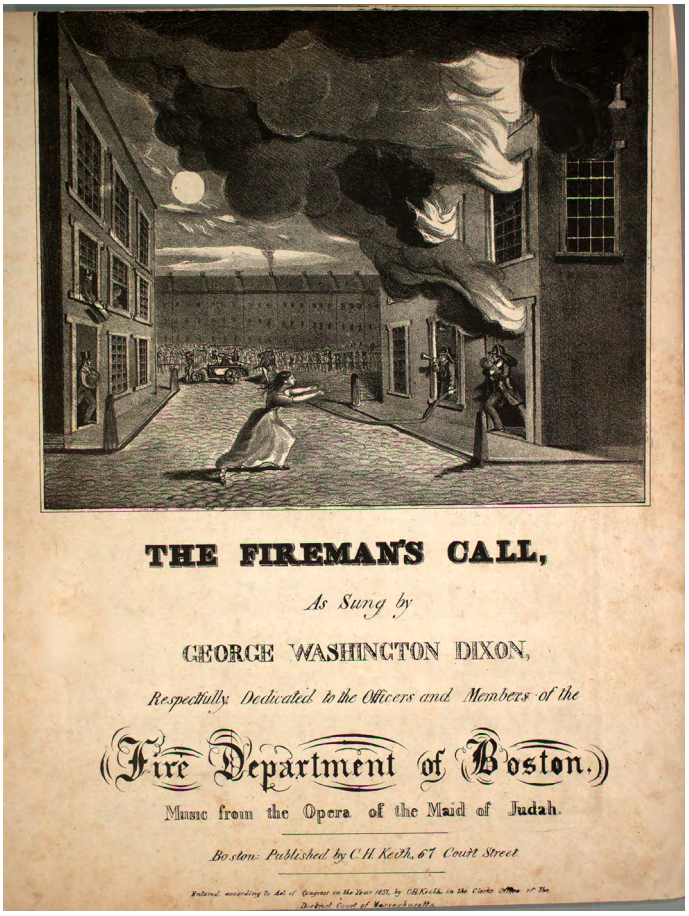

Fig. 1 *The Fireman's Call* (Music Cover), 1837. Lithograph, image: 7 1/8 x 8 ¾ in (18.12 x 22.25 cm). Courtesy the Lester S. Levy Sheet Music Collection, Sheridan Libraries, Johns Hopkins University

Although *The Fireman's Call* is an early work, the awkward drawing of the advancing mother who seems anchored by an oddly enlarged ankle and foot, does not jibe with Champney's description. A co-worker at Moore's might have had this in mind when he noted that occasionally "We thought his drawings exaggerated, but he always defended them."[43]

While working in a lithographic medium in the late 1830s, Rimmer produced copies after well-known artists, probably as part of his self-instruction. One of these is *The Banished Lord* (fig. 2), a small copy, printed in reverse, after an English work: Sir Joshua Reynolds' untitled, bust portrait of a man (Tate Gallery). As sometimes happened, the original painting was copied as a print with an invented title. From its appearance, Rimmer's version was generally based on the 1777 mezzotint after Reynolds (fig. 3) or one of its many copies.[44] That Rimmer should be attracted to a theme of banishment, and a sorrowful man wrapped entirely in a cloak, suggests the impact of his father's claim. The picture's title refers to the Rev. Thomas Warton's meditation on the vanity of life in his 1745 poem, "The Pleasures of Melancholy", but the image and Warton's text were not published together. Their union is the result of the ingenuity of the engraver who combined one of Reynolds' character pictures or "old heads" in 1777 with the subject of the poem for better print sales.[45]

Rimmer surely felt the injustice of losing his father's supposed birthright. His own position as the eldest son of the presumed dauphin was almost never mentioned to friends, but, in at least one lapse or moment of closeness, Rimmer did tell a neighbor that his real identity would surprise him.[46] He did not speak further on the subject or — as far as is known — ever act on his belief. Possibly he considered his father too powerless and the title claim too late to pursue effectively.

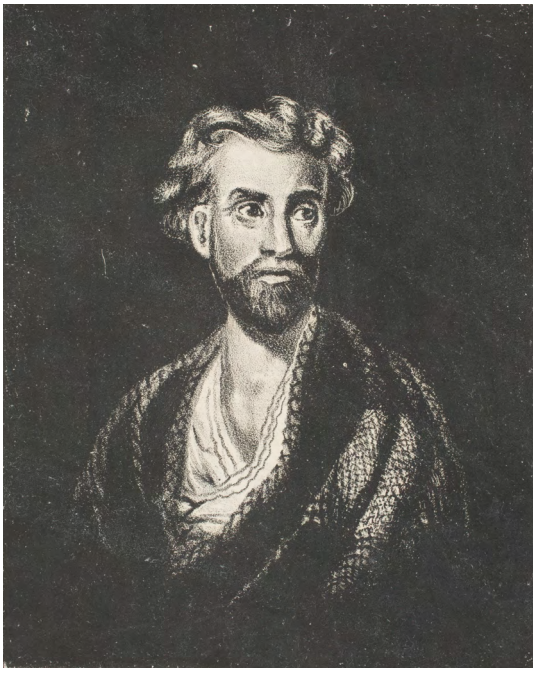

Fig. 2 *The Banished Lord* (Formerly: *Head of a Prophet*), probably the late 1830s. Lithograph, 6 3/16 x 4 ¾ in. (17.75 x 12.09 cm). Worcester Art Museum, Massachusetts. Photo: © Worcester Art Museum / Charles E. Goodspeed Collection / Bridgeman Images

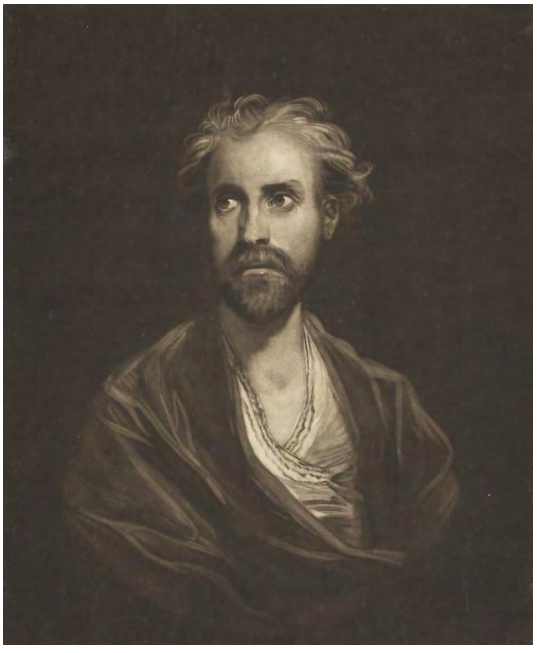

Fig. 3 J.R. Smith, after Sir Joshua Reynolds, *The Banished Lord*, 1777. Mezzotint on paper, 13 ½ x 11 in. (33.70 x 27.90 cm). Scottish National Portrait Gallery. Bequeathed by William Finlay Warren, 1886

As for other claims, Rimmer did assume an academic title during his lifetime. After his apprenticeship with Dr. Kingman — like many physicians at the time — Rimmer practiced without a license, and, contrary to his biographer's claim, he never received a diploma from the Suffolk County Medical Society.[47] As a physician, he had some success with "difficult cases" and in treating such diseases as typhoid fever, but he did not receive enough pay to sustain his family, and his health suffered from the strain of overwork. Therefore, after about sixteen

years — during which time, art was his recreation — he abandoned his medical practice in 1863 but retained the honorific "doctor."[48] Ostensibly, he did this because his livelihood thereafter depended upon teaching at art schools as an anatomist rather than as an artist. But it was thought at the time that he also had a "great regard for the dignity of his character."[49] He was distinguished looking, athletically built and relatively tall, so that a stranger might infer that "he was haughty and aristocratic," but as his biographer, Bartlett, learned, "that was far from the truth."[50]

The truth, which evaded Bartlett, is that Rimmer's opinion of himself — leading to humility or arrogance — varied to a remarkable degree, depending on his mood.[51] As part of this changeableness, on occasion, he adopted another embellishment to his name and added the middle initial "P," standing for "Phillip." It has royal significance because it is the name of a medieval French king. In a cryptic reference, the artist signed two birth certificates and a death certificate for his children as "William P. Rimmer."[52]

More meaningfully, Rimmer connected "Phillip" and royalty through a fictional story of well over 300 handwritten pages, titled "Stephen and Phillip," that he wrote and rewrote from at least 1869 to 1879. It included the characters Stephen and Phillip, who join Rimmer as aspects of himself on a journey in search of self-improvement and divine truth. Phillip is a flawed angel who returns to earth as a lesson in humility to overcome his consistent lack of charity toward others or the sin of pride, which Rimmer thought he shared. Although Phillip assumes human form, he can change at will into a powerful lion.[53]

Fig. 4 *Dante and the Lion*, 1878. Graphite pencil on paper, sheet: 6 1/8 x 9 7/16 in. (15.6 x 24.0 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Partly purchased and partly the gift of E.W. Hooper, William Sturgis Bigelow Collection, and Mrs. John M. Forbes. Photograph © 2022 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

The link that reveals that Phillip, the lion, refers to Rimmer's French heritage is Dante Alighieri, who was one of Rimmer's favorite poets.[54] Dante wrote in *Inferno* (part of his *Divine Comedy* from 1320) about his confrontation with a lion, and Rimmer acknowledged his interest in the scene by illustrating it (fig. 4). Although Dante did not explain, his translators deduced from the context that the lion is a symbol of France representing "Philip le Bel," King of France from 1285 to 1314.[55] Supporting this connection, Rimmer depicts Phillip in his manuscript as imposing, like "the son of a great king." Identifying with him, he speaks of himself once in the same saga as dressed in purple raiment, playing his royal part with a voice that shakes "the soul of things with its deep roar."[56] Perhaps inevitably, because of the ancient and biblical linkage (Proverbs 19:12; 20:2) between a lion and a king, the lion (which was accessible in a Boston menagerie) became one of Rimmer's favorite subjects.[57]

Significantly, Phillip (fig. 5) and his prototype with Dante are different from Rimmer's other lions in that they have vertical, flaming manes, suggestive of the intensity of a spiritual presence. In a further refinement as the

drawing of his head shows, Phillip, despite being a fearsome lion, is vulnerable and sensitive with large, soulful eyes — described by Rimmer as "glowing."[58]

Fig. 5 *Phillip* (*Head of a Lion*), 1869. Graphite pencil on paper, 11 1/16 x 7 ½ in. (28.1 x 19 cm). Harvard Art Museums/ Fogg Museum, Louise E. Bettens Fund, Photo © President and Fellows of Harvard College

Although his royal claim is expressed in Phillip, Rimmer was actually more concerned, in his surviving art and writing, with the spiritual state of his own soul and the universal moral condition of humanity. The second character in his story, the long-suffering spirit called Stephen, helps make this point. Rimmer's interest in the name "Stephen" almost certainly stemmed from his close friendship with Stephen Higginson Perkins — an intellectual merchant from an old Boston family and a sometime-artist whom he met in 1858. In fact, Rimmer's 1860 granite bust of the biblical St. Stephen was undoubtedly created to please him. But, about nine years later when he likely began his manuscript, Rimmer could evidently go further and actually identify with St. Stephen, perhaps partly because of the saint's heavenly vision before his death (Acts: 7:56). Rimmer, too, had visionary experiences and even celestial visions.[59] Moreover, Stephen, the first Christian martyr, was historically important as Paul's predecessor. He was the first Christian to engage publicly in religious disputes.[60] In this inclination to dissent, he resembled Rimmer. All three of Rimmer's characters engage in theological debate, and, in a real life parallel, Rimmer was known to argue over religious matters in a debating society in Randolph, Massachusetts, by the mid-1850s.[61] He was an impressive amateur theologian who, although Christian, had his own non-denominational viewpoint.

The Stephen in Rimmer's narrative arrives as a demon or divided soul from Hell.[62] After undergoing unbearable torture — much of it inflicted by his memories — he is overcome with remorse, his angelic self begins to be revealed and he advocates for compassion. Like Phillip, but initially much darker (even suicidal), he embodies many of Rimmer's flaws as the artist saw them — his anger and accumulated resentments to the point of hatred — as well as his conflicted response which was his moral anguish over having such feelings.[63]

Both Stephen and Phillip are self-criticisms. If Phillip represents Rimmer's mistaken pride, Stephen represents his moral inadequacy, but this difference between them is irrelevant to the story. The entire text of "Stephen and Phillip" is a wildly inventive tale, concerning three eventual friends and incorporating sub-stories and hallucinatory scenes, but it is also partly rewritten passages that drift into incoherence. At its best, it has lines that read as poetry, such as when Rimmer describes how the ocean's "teeth grate on the ringing sand."[64]

The incoherent parts of "Stephen and Phillip" are suggestive of mental illness. Rimmer did suffer from what appears to be bipolar disorder or extreme mood swings that could range from deep depression to the exuberance of mania. Otherwise known as manic depression, this is a spectrum illness with different degrees of severity, and it was not well understood in the nineteenth century. The average age of onset is eighteen which, for Rimmer, would mean his illness probably began in about 1834.[65]

Because of Rimmer's moodiness, as Bartlett stated, the opinions of those who knew him could differ greatly. "Ordinary people," he reported, "were often half in doubt of his sanity."[66] Rimmer himself spoke of madness and of hearing the "voices of demons," saying it came from "my own madness, the disorder of my soul changing the sweet melody of nature into groans."[67] He recounted experiencing both mania and depression: "What is it," he asked, "that makes night what it is, mad or melancholy?"[68] Conscious of his illness, he wrote of his feeling of "ecstacy" as being called a "disease of the mind."[69] Later he expressed regret over an apparent manic episode and felt "the horror of a [contrasting] sanity that was beside itself in what had gone before."[70]

Unfortunately, his mood swings could have adverse financial consequences, such as when he finally earned enough to purchase a small house and then impulsively sold it to lend the money to a needy friend.[71] In these shifts, he could develop grand ideas that he later abandoned, such as his plan in 1874 to open a public aquarium in Boston. He went so far as to rent rooms and set up tanks; then, in a reversal of confidence, he abruptly abandoned the idea, certain that it would fail. In the end, he lost several thousand dollars.[72]

As if he were different people, Rimmer could range widely from someone who disliked speaking to a "brilliant and tireless talker, advancing constantly the most startling and beautiful theories, and making astonishing statements, often with the most reckless disregard alike of the opinions and feelings of his hearers.[73]" Such inconsistent loquaciousness, rapid flow of ideas, abundant confidence, and self-absorption are typical of mania.[74]

On one occasion, when a sitter complained about an unfinished portrait, Rimmer, in likely a manic state, responded by taking up his paintbrush and covering it with monkeys.[75] This vulnerability to mood might explain some of his more whimsical statements, such as "The thigh is the noblest part of the body."[76] Indeed, seemingly brilliant synthesizing of larger truths or a professed, unique understanding of interconnectedness — such as a physical thigh and the concept of nobility — is typical of mania.[77] Such combinatory thinking possibly played a role in the occasional stereotyping of humanity in his lectures and in *Art Anatomy*. An example is his class drawing of two "debased" heads — or heads reflecting immorality — and categorizing them as a characteristic contrast in the debased type between an Englishman and a Frenchman.[78] To condense whole nationalities into physical averages, stated factually and not meant to be caricature, presumed a stunning knowledge of mankind.

Fortunately, his loyal friend and patron, Stephen Perkins, provided a record of Rimmer's depression in surviving correspondence. He tried to promote his friend's career but then, tellingly, felt compelled to liken the depth of Rimmer's despondency in 1863 to Abraham Lincoln's persistent melancholy. Repeating Rimmer's description of his depression as so incapacitating as to be the "twin brother of death," he worried over its inevitable impact on the artist's productivity.[79] From the report of others, Bartlett too acknowledged Rimmer's periodic depressions, "peculiar temper and sensitive nature," and had the insight to conclude "for reasons beyond his control, he [could] not do his best."[80] Rimmer's grand-niece, who had been raised by Rimmer's brother, helped to explain by asserting that Rimmer "always worked in a 'mood' and hurried to produce what he wanted when the spell was on him."[81]

If bipolar — which fits what is known of him — the artist went through periods of apparent normalcy (which could be for months), punctuated by one or more episodes of mania but, more often in his case, by periods of depression. He might also be extremely irritable, as reported of him, in probably a mixed state.[82] Recognizing his illness provides understanding of not only Rimmer but also his artwork and the peculiar changes in his manuscript handwriting that are clearly affected by mood, such as increased speed and sudden illegibility

suggestive of mania.[83] To speak of Rimmer's bouts with illness is to recognize his struggle and the obstacles he had to overcome, but — as with many, famous bipolar artists — it does not undermine the extraordinary quality of his achievement. Much of the misunderstanding of Rimmer during his lifetime and subsequently stemmed from this mental illness.

Manic depression or bipolarity is hereditary. While Thomas Rimmer's mental illness is not known — nor when it began — he undeniably suffered which helps to explain his erratic career, his belief that he was the dauphin, his paranoia concerning secret agents, and his probable self-medication with alcohol. Grandiose delusions, such as his, are typical of manic or hypomanic (less severe) episodes.[84] Reciting Thomas' memories, his great-granddaughter wrote that he was "spirited out of France" for his safety as a small child and placed with a "very wealthy Englishman" who employed tutors for his education. As the story goes, he later joined the British army (no record of this) and, when his term ended, returned to France to make his claim. It was acknowledged, but his inheritance had already been taken by a pretender.[85] One report related his death to mental illness, saying he "died raving, his screams ringing through the town all night."[86]

According to her death certificate, an equal or stronger case for bipolarity concerns the artist's oldest daughter, Mary Matilda (Rimmer) Haskell, who died at age forty-one in 1891 of "Nervous Exhaustion — Acute Mania."[87] This medical diagnosis is straightforward enough, with added evidence, to support the theory of a genetic illness.

Decades after Bartlett's biography, Lincoln Kirstein published the tale, from hearsay, that Thomas Rimmer died in a cottage in Concord, Massachusetts, while being tended by the famous author Ralph Waldo Emerson. Sad to say, this is far from the truth. Thomas died in poverty in the House of Industry in South Boston, having lived there possibly since 1848.[88] This meant he was imprisoned in a city-run workhouse for able-bodied paupers where he had to work to earn his keep. He would have been admitted by a director or committed by a court because of a minor offense, such as disorderly conduct or drunken behavior. This would explain why he did not live with his relatives in his final years.[89]

Some of Rimmer's pictures refer to the family usurper myth and provide insight into his perception of his position in relation to his heritage. The myth is resurrected with the storm pictures, *Scene from The Tempest* (fig. 6) and *Scene from Macbeth* (fig. 7), an original altering and pairing of Shakespeare's plays to create his own message. From a canvas stamp on the reverse that supports their date, we know he produced them in about 1850. The pictures offer a contrast between two sorcerers, Prospero and Hecate, and — more importantly — indirectly allude to the Rimmer family's blocked heritage.[90] Typically, as in this instance, when Rimmer was inspired by a text or visual image, he did not copy the ideas presented but rather incorporated them into his own thinking, saying something often wholly new.

In the scene (Act 1, Scene 2) from *The Tempest*, which was Rimmer's favorite Shakespearean play, Prospero, who is the banished rightful duke of Milan, explains to his daughter, Miranda, that, years ago, he had his heritage stolen by his brother.[91] Knowing that his usurper was on a ship passing their island, he caused the storm that led to their shipwreck, seen at the right. Although he is the wronged party, Prospero exercises restraint and, as the play unfolds, his character softens. Since Caliban, at left, is not in the play's scene, his inclusion clarifies Rimmer's meaning. As once ruler of the island, he also suffered the consequences of usurpation, but by Prospero. In response, he plans to seek revenge and right this wrong by immoral means. Thus, he and Prospero are essentially lower and higher versions of a person who has been similarly victimized.

In the *Macbeth* scene (Act 3, Scene 5), Hecate, a lunar goddess of witchcraft, scolds her assistants for proceeding without her in tempting Macbeth to seize the Scottish throne. He was ripe for the temptation as a military hero fresh from a victorious battle. She leaves them to take the lead herself by fooling Macbeth into believing he is greater than fate. Together the three characters are creating, or encouraging, a ruthless usurper who is under the illusion that his success is assured. Despite Hecate's display of power, she is subservient to an unidentified "little spirit" who calls to her from the clouds above (line 446). Rimmer converts this spirit into the identifiable Cupid — who is not in the play — but, fittingly, Cupid is a symbol of desire, and his bow is trickery. In fact, as Rimmer would have known as a Latin reader, "cupido imperii" means "desire for ruling power."[92] In this guise, Cupid governs not only Hecate, but, through her, Macbeth.

Fig. 6 *Scene from The Tempest*, ca. 1850. Oil on canvas, 36 x 26 in. (91.4 x 66 cm). Detroit Institute of Arts. Gift of Sally A. Feldman in Memory of Joseph D. Feldman

Fig. 7 *Scene from Macbeth*, ca. 1850. Oil on canvas, 36 x 26 in. (91.4 x 66 cm). Detroit Institute of Arts. Gift of Sally A. Feldman in Memory of Joseph D. Feldman

In the first picture, Prospero and his daughter assume roles that resemble those of Rimmer and his family. Instead of his usual staff, Prospero holds the staff of Asclepius (changing Shakespeare's text) — the Greek and Roman god of medicine — with its ancient symbol of a serpent entwined around a rod.[93] Like the physician Rimmer, he will fulfill the role of a healer. With brown hair, deep-set eyes, and a straight-bridge nose, Prospero could be a self-portrait, bearing resemblance to Rimmer even more than twenty-five years later (fig. 8). Behind him, Caliban, a beast-man, is a witch's son. His horned head recalls not only that of a horned satyr, suggesting his lecherous nature, but also, more distantly, the monstrous head of Hecate. This is one way of connecting the two scenes visually.

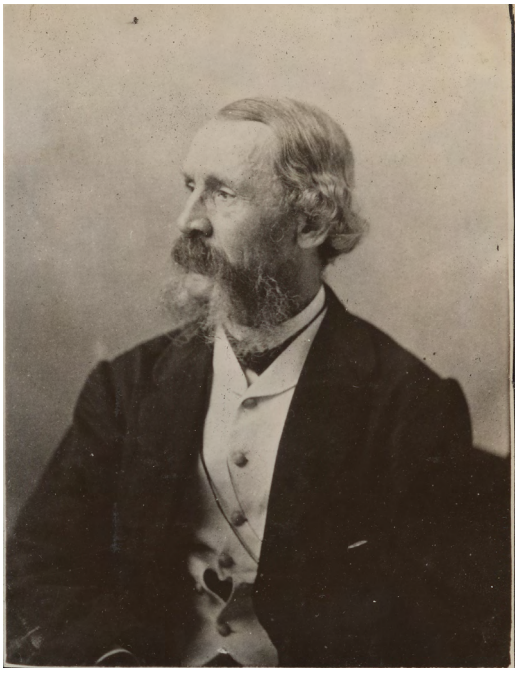

Fig. 8 J.J. Hawes, *William Rimmer*, ca. 1878. Photograph, 4 x 2 ½ in. (10.5 x 6.3 cm). Boston Medical Library, William Rimmer Collection

In the companion picture, Hecate wears an obvious mask with a visible edge, recalling her role as a double dealer who both warns and falsely reassures Macbeth. This scene undoubtedly refers to the Rimmer family's enemies or those who encouraged them. Rimmer, or — much more likely — his father, now occupies the position of the rightful king who is the subject of plotting and will lose his kingdom to Macbeth's overweening ambition. Paired this way, the pictures provide a moral contrast in the treatment of greed between its triumph in Hecate's picture and its defeat in Prospero's. Presented as a healer, Prospero retakes his dukedom but acts magnanimously toward the shipwrecked men, choosing "nobler reason" over full revenge (Act 5, Scene 1, line 26).

Characteristically, almost no detail is unimportant. At above left in *Scene from The Tempest*, the ball of fire, seen in an opening in the cave wall, is the "most auspicious star" that Prospero mentions (Act 1, Scene 2, line 182). Similarly, the conch shell in the foreground is not in the play but has significance as a sign of Prospero's ability to summon the play's action, and, in the Macbeth scene, the flourishing plants and water at lower right evidently refer to renewal after Macbeth's defeat.[94]

Well aware of the pitfalls of a vanity such as Macbeth's, Rimmer ridiculed any dreaming with regard to his father's claim. He wrote in his undated "Stephen and Phillip:" "And Self was a great King, and others bowed down before him, and he sang in royal robes, master by one consent."[95] That is, others bow to a robed king — as a requirement of the office — but only a fool would think this meant consent to his ascension of the throne.

A perhaps related drawing is *The Duel: "Only the Brave"* (fig. 9) which is also undated. Created for an oval lithographed mount, it shows a lion, from the back, reclining beneath a strongly rooted but partially broken tree

which can be interpreted as a symbolic comment on this lion. He looks across an empty expanse at a lioness and second lion. In doing so, he appears to recognize that possession of the female has passed to a younger rival, or that she has betrayed him. The one clue is that the picture is inscribed at bottom right, outside the oval: "The Duel/ 'only the brave &cc.'" This alludes to Laurence Sterne's twelfth sermon in *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick* which is on the theme of generosity and forbearance when revenge is expected. The paraphrase is from the line "The brave only know how to forgive; — it is the most refined and generous pitch of virtue ... but a coward never forgave. — It is not in his nature." Sterne's example is the biblical Joseph, son of Jacob, who was sold into slavery by jealous brothers and yet able to forgive them.[96]

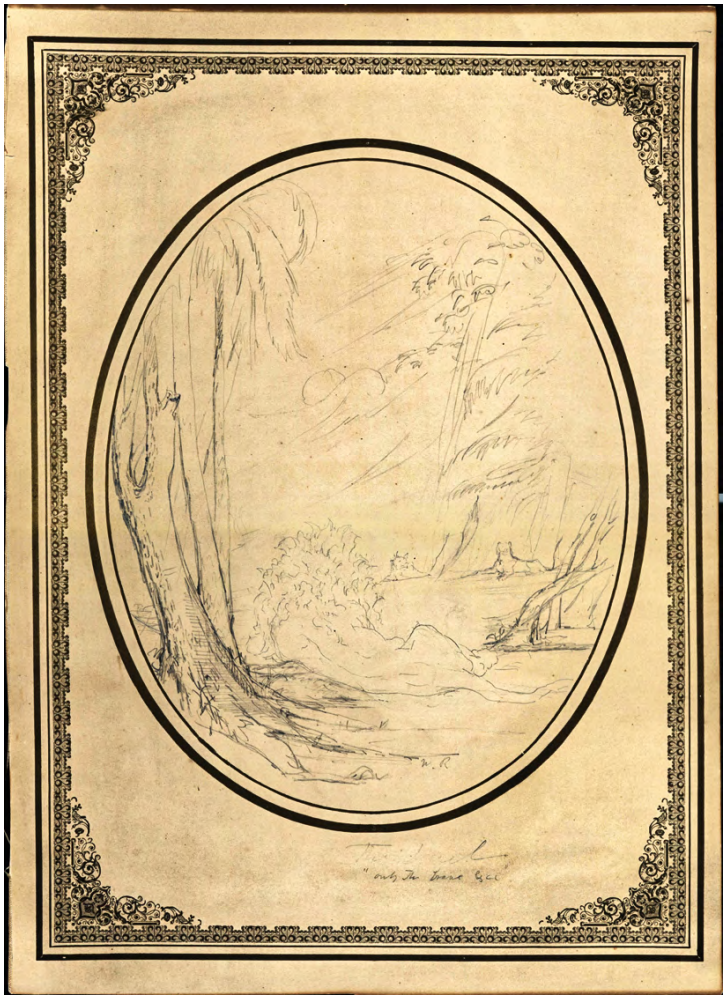

Fig. 9 *The Duel: "Only the Brave,"* probably 1860s or 1870s. Graphite on paper, 18 x 12 ¾ in. (45.73 x 32.40 cm). Boston Medical Library, William Rimmer Collection

Rimmer created a different story with his metaphorical scene of lions. The distant opponent is not well defined, so the viewer needs to imagine the rest of his form and most of the female as well. The trees are again significant in that the lion currently with the female is near a vigorously growing tree, whereas she is separated from the foreground lion by dead branches. This leonine interaction has been interpreted as a comment on the Rimmer family myth that has the near lion turning his back on his enemy and gazing at his family in a refusal to fight.[97] Turning the back is more avoidance than forgiveness, but, with either interpretation, this clearly symbolic drawing of treachery and forgiveness could signal acceptance. Either Rimmer accepts the successful claimant to the French throne, Louis XVIII, or he unrelatedly forgives someone who has wronged him. Regardless, compassion and forgiveness were ideals that he sought to embrace throughout his life, and they appear to

relate to his father's experience.[98] Like Prospero — or like St. Stephen who famously, at his death, forgave his persecutors (Acts: 7:60) — he had no great desire for vengeance.

Yet Rimmer's family kept the story of his father's royal birth alive. In the family scrapbook, which has his wife's name engraved on it, is a relevant newspaper clipping. It conveys the erroneous story that the Empress Josephine had been murdered by poisoning in 1814 to prevent her from communicating to her friend, Czar Alexander I, the proofs she had that the son of Louis XVI had been taken from prison and was still alive.[99]

Before he died, Thomas Rimmer gave his oldest son his specially designed locket (which now had a broken chain) in a box and told him not to let anyone know that he had it. A granddaughter wrote that, at the end of his life, when Rimmer was preparing to visit his daughter, Adeline, he found the box, wrapped in yellowed paper and tied with string. As she related, "He sat they say a long time with it before him undecided whether to open it or not." When he finally did, he found the box empty with "the imprint of the locket and three pieces of the chain, still in the cotton and nothing else."[100]

In coming to terms with his heritage, Rimmer wrote: "The highest pleasure of existence is intellectual joy [replaced with "peace"]." He added: "no tinkling of the senses, no pride of things, no court, no retinue" can compare with it.[101] This might well pertain to his sense of fulfillment through the academic and cultural life of the Cooper Union in New York, where he spent his happiest years.[102]

Rimmer's peaceful acceptance of his lot reflects Warton's poem on melancholy, where Warton speaks of the material trappings of a court and concludes that, without them, "far happier" is the banished lord.[103] The poet's preference is for a solitary, contemplative life — enriched by depth of feeling and an educated imagination. But unlike Warton's exemplary lord, Rimmer never cut himself off from others and departed even further from the lure of royal trappings with his empathy for the poor, the unfortunate, and the unjustly treated.[104] He repeatedly took action on their behalf. Arguably, he was much more affected by his father's despair and humiliation than his father's birthright.

Apparently repelled by the thought of benefiting from his father's tragedy, he told his children never to give details about their ancestral heritage to anyone outside the immediate family. This request passed through a couple of generations. It was his "express wish."[105] For their part, the family thought of him as admirably honorable, altruistic and "free from guile." In a moral sense, he had a nobility that was not conferred by title. As the youngest daughter, Caroline, expressed it, "None will ever know perhaps the degree to which my father led a noble life."[106]

Endnotes

1 For neoclassicist, see Helen W. Henderson, "Has New England an Art Sense?" *The Bookman; a Review of Books and Life* 51 (April 1920):138. For Rodin, see Wayne Craven, *Sculpture in America*, rev. ed. (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1984), 347. Craven likens the style of Rimmer's *Seated Man* (*Despair*) to that of Rodin's work. Jeffrey Weidman in his *William Rimmer: Critical Catalogue Raisonné* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1983), 1: 42–43, notes that both created fragmented pieces and thought of sculpture "in terms of formal values." The linkage with Rodin occurs more frequently than with neoclassicism and goes back at least to 1905. See Charles de Kay, "Honors for William Rimmer, Sculptor and Teacher," *The New York Times*, September 17, 1905, SM6.

2 For genius, see Anon., "The Late Dr. Rimmer," *Boston Daily Advertiser*, August 23, 1879, [2].

3 For contest, see C.W. Moulton, ed., *Queries with Answers in Literature, Art, Science and Education* (Buffalo: C.L. Sherrill and Co., 1886), 9 (quote), 59. The question was asked of the readership in an 1885 issue of *Queries*, *A Monthly Series of Published Questions* and answered in a subsequent issue.

4 Truman H. Bartlett, *The Art Life of William Rimmer: Sculptor, Painter, and Physician* (New York: Kennedy Graphics, 1970), 146 (quote). See also ibid., 21. This is a reprint of the 1890 ed. with a new pref. by Leonard Baskin. The 1890 ed. is a reprint of the 1882 ed.

5 For self-taught, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 31.

6 On reticence, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, vi, 11; and Almira B. Fenno-Gendrot, *Artists I Have Known* (Boston: Warren Press, [1923?]), 36.

7 On public favor, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 144. The diary entry is overstated. For instance, he did create some inexpensive pictures that were sold at an auction (ibid., 20) and drawings to be sold at charities to benefit soldiers and a hospital. See C.H.D., "Chicago Sanitary Fair, 1865," *Boston Daily Advertiser*, May 18, 1865, 6; and Anon., "Hospital for Women and Children," *Boston Post*, October 20, 1865, 4. For the quotes, see the undated diary reference in Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 130. Bartlett saw one or two volumes that no longer exist. See Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 4:1328–29n. These diaries were perhaps within the Rimmer material offered to Harvard University by a descendant in about 1936 and, except for some drawings, refused. On this see Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 4:1353–54n.

8 Edward R. Smith, "Dr. Rimmer," *Architectural Record* 21, no. 3 (March 1907): 201.

9 On the 1880 exhibition, which ran from May to about mid-November, see Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 4:1323n. The checklist catalogue by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, was published as *Exhibition of Sculpture, Oil Paintings, and Drawings by Dr. William Rimmer* (Boston: Alfred Mudge and Son, 1880). In appendix C of volume 4 of his catalogue, Weidman reproduces this checklist plus checklists for an 1883 sale of Rimmer's work at J. Eastman Chase's Gallery, Boston, and the exhibitions of 1916 (reconstructed) and 1946–1947. According to Caroline Rimmer's notation in her copy of Bartlett's 1882 book in the possession of collateral descendant Robert Korndorffer, Bartlett never knew her father.

10 See Gail Stavitsky, Laurette E. McCarthy, and Charles H. Duncan, *The New Spirit: American Art in the Armory Show* (Montclair, N.J.: Montclair Art Museum, 2013), 76. See also Walter Pach's letter, May 23, 1946, to Lincoln Kirstein, box 1, research file: Misc. Copies, Drawings and Lithographs, Undated, 1945–1946, Lincoln Kirstein and Richard Sherman Nutt Research Material on William Rimmer, 1849–1971, Archives of American Art, Washington, D.C. Pach thought one of the drawings was a study for the *Falling Gladiator*.

11 The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, organized the February 17–March 1, 1916, exhibition, with approximately 135 works and no catalogue. Lincoln Kirstein and the Whitney Museum of American Art organized the exhibition, *William Rimmer, 1816–1879*, at the Whitney Museum, November 5–27, 1946, and at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, January 7–February 2, 1947, for which Kirstein wrote the catalogue. Jeffrey Weidman and the Brockton Art Museum / Fuller Memorial organized the exhibition, *William Rimmer: A Yankee Michelangelo*, at the Brockton Art Museum, October 6, 1985–January 12, 1986; the Cleveland Museum of Art, February 25–April 20, 1986; and the Brooklyn Museum, June 6–July 20, 1986. Weidman wrote the catalogue with additional essays by Neil Harris and Philip Cash.

12 Based on family records, Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 2, provided Rimmer's birthdate and birth location, identifying his mother as "Mary" and Irish, but he omitted her maiden surname. There is no known parish record. In the 1940s, William Rimmer's grandniece, Marion M. McLean, supplied a "Burroughs" surname. On this, see Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 1:67n. This must be Mary Burroughs who married Thomas Rimmer on July 31, 1815, at the Anglican church, Holy Trinity, in Liverpool. Thomas is identified as a timber merchant. Because of the timber supply in North America, this might have been a reason to move to Canada and subsequently the United States. On their marriage, see the *Marriage Register, 1813–26*, p. 60, for Holy Trinity, Liverpool Records Office. They were members of the same parish. On Thomas' education, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 2, 3.

13 Verifying much of Bartlett's account, the record shows that Rimmer arrived in Fredericton, New Brunswick, in 1818, but he came via Ireland. Then, according to Bartlett (*Rimmer*, 2), he sent for his wife and son. See Terrence M. Punch, *Erin's Sons: Irish Arrivals in Atlantic Canada, 1761–1853* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 2008), 1:52. There is no known record of the crossing of his wife and son.

14 Weidman, et al., *Rimmer*, xiii. Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 1, describes Thomas as an itinerant shoemaker by 1824. Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 1:69n, shows, through Boston City Directories, that Thomas' address changed almost yearly, and his profession did not switch from laborer to boot maker until 1834. Evidently there was switching back and forth.

15 According to his death certificate, Thomas Rimmer was a decade too young to be the heir of Louis XVI. See his 1852 death certificate, giving his age as 57, under Biographical Material, box 1, Kirstein and Nutt Research Material, Archives of American Art. The U.S. Census in 1830 and 1840 uses age spans that also place him a decade too young. Furthermore, his claim is disproved by Suzanne Daley, "Genetics Offers Denouement to Mystery of Prince's Death," *The New York Times*, April 20, 2000, A1, A8. Without more precise information from the family, Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 1, writes of Thomas as belonging to a "branch" of the French royal family. Lincoln Kirstein, in "William Rimmer: His Life and Art," *The Massachusetts Review* 2, no. 4 (Summer 1961): 686, https://doi.org/10.2307/25086738, adds, from descendants, his claim to be the dauphin. This essay is reprinted from Kirstein's 1946 essay, unpaginated, for the catalogue of the Whitney Museum and Boston Museum exhibition. That Bartlett did not make more of the senior Rimmer's tragic life was a point of contention with the Rimmer family. See Caroline Rimmer's annotations in her copy of Bartlett's biography in the possession of collateral descendant Robert Haskell Korndorffer. Weidman follows Kirstein in accepting the possibility that Thomas was the dauphin. See his listing of the family's evidence given Kirstein in *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 1:65n3.

16 Alice Caroline (Haskell) Lapthorn, "Stories and Memoirs," 5–6, typed manuscript in the possession of descendant Robert Haskell Korndorffer. On Bourbon resemblance, see Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 1:66n3.

17 Ibid., 6. Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 3–4.

18 On wiry, etc., see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 9. A late student even called him a natural athlete. For this, see Smith, "Dr. Rimmer," 196. For Latin and French and even further tutoring, see Kirstein, "Rimmer: His Life," 687. For the quote, see Anon., "Dr. William Rimmer," *Evening Transcript*, August 22, 1879, clipping, box with bar code: 3-1027-00033-7440, Kirstein and Nutt Research Material, Archives of American Art.

19 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 4.

20 The death of Mary Rimmer, wife of Thomas, from "lung fever" at age 40 on October 25, 1836, is recorded in the "Massachusetts Town and Vital Records, 1620–1988," digital images, *Ancestry.com*. She is buried in Boston's South End Burying Ground which — according to Kelly Thomas, Director of Boston's Historic Burying Grounds — was reserved for the poor. For Thomas' alcoholism, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 4.

21 For more on early creative endeavors, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 3. For drawing, boats, and horses, see ibid., 4–5.

22 Ibid., 8–9. Rimmer, for instance, is listed in Boston Directories as a soap manufacturer in 1838 and an artist in 1843, but he was a boot maker in the 1850 United States Census.

23 On the basis of a typed note, two childish drawings of *Zeus* (*?*) *on Eagles* (now lost) have been attributed to him and dated 1835. This much later note says Rimmer was a "frequent visitor" to a house in Hingham in 1835. It is not known that Rimmer ever lived in Hingham. He is assumed to have been with his father in South Boston at the time. See Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 3:734.

24 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 16–17. Weidman calculates Rimmer's intermittent study with Kingman to be from about 1841 to 1847. He studied dissection in 1843. On this, see Jeffrey Weidman, et al., *William Rimmer: A Yankee Michelangelo* (Hanover, NH: Brockton Art Museum / Fuller Memorial, 1985, distributed by University Press of New England), xiii. On continuing shoemaking, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 19.

25 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 39.

26 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 16, on his marriage to a Quaker. Mary Hazard Corey Peabody was born on January 12, 1824, in Dartmouth, MA., the daughter of Isaac Peabody and Abigail Corey. See "North America Family Histories, 1500–2000," digital images, *Ancestry.com*. Although she and her family cannot be connected with a specific meeting house, the location was known for its Quaker adherents. On their marital rapport, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 122. For her description, see Lathorn, "Stories and Memories," 7.

27 Rimmer is buried in a family plot in Milton with his wife, three daughters, a son-in-law, a grandchild, and a plaque listing the five infants who died, four of whom were sons. The early deaths included their first three children. His wife's illness is mentioned in Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 22; William Rimmer's manuscript, "Stephen and Phillip," 252, Boston Medical Library, Boston, MA; and an inscribed, 1868 parlor sketch of her and daughter Adeline, Rimmer Commonplace Book, Boston Medical Library. Their daughter Caroline added a note that it was done "after one of her severe illnesses." She survived her husband and died in 1885 at age 61 of "kidney disease." See "Massachusetts Deaths, 1841–1915," database with images, *Family Search.org*.

28 On unevenness and the centrality of home life, even before marriage, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 4, 16, 18, 130–31. He cites elsewhere Rimmer's refusal of a trip abroad as a gift because it would entail an embarrassing obligation and leaving his family (88). On Hunt and Rimmer, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 80. Given their combined ability, Hunt even proposed, more than once, that they open a school together (79). Hunt's attempt to obtain Rimmer's collaboration on murals for the New York State Capitol at Albany failed when he disagreed with Rimmer's criticisms. On this, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 78.

29 James Elliot Cabot, a philosopher and amateur artist who attended Rimmer's lectures, wrote an introduction to Rimmer's first book and possibly subsidized it. He promoted its adoption in elementary schools. See Cabot in William Rimmer, *The Elements of Design* (Boston: John Wilson and Son, 1864), 8. Also see Cabot in Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 43–44. The Transcendentalist, poet and artist Caroline Sturgis (Mrs. William A. Tappan) paid to have Rimmer's second book published. See Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 85. A revised second edition of the first book, including a new section on form (based on *Art Anatomy*), was published in 1879 as *Elements of Design in Six Parts*.

30 While the original volume was consulted, the edition used in this book is William Rimmer, *Art Anatomy*, with an introduction by Robert Hutchison (New York: Dover Publications, 1962), an unabridged but slightly revised republication of the 1877 edition. For some skulls, Rimmer reports (21) using the Museum of Natural History, Boston. In analyzing character as revealed in physiognomy, he admitted it was not a science (62) but remained a man of his time in acting as though it was.

The original volume — Dr. William Rimmer, *Art Anatomy* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1877) — is large as if it were meant to be a display item or a work of art in itself. The 1962 text is the same but with rare one-line deletions concerning minority groups, such as, on page 22, regarding faces, "the appetites and sensibilities find strongest expression in the dark skinned races." For more on the context for the book, see Elliot Bostwick Davis, "William Rimmer's *Art Anatomy* and Charles Darwin's Theories of Evolution," *Master Drawings* 40 (Winter 2002): 345–59, http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1554563. The inclusion of facial expression, and its analysis, is unlike the contents of contemporary manuals on art anatomy. His competition was chiefly Henry Warren's *Artistic Anatomy of the Human Figure* (London: Winsor and Newton) which is a book of skeletons and bones which was issued in a fourteenth edition in 1873. This book recommends the "antique statues" as the best models (8).

31 Anon., "*Art Anatomy*," *The Nation, A Weekly Journal Devoted to Politics, Literature, Science, and Art* 24 (September 8, 1877): 157. The 1877 edition of 50 copies did not meet the demand, but a fire destroyed the plates in 1879, so a new edition was created in 1894 and republished thereafter. For this, see Anon., "News of the Fine Arts," *The New York Times*, May 28, 1894, 3.

32 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 41.

33 His procedure is described in Smith, "Dr. Rimmer," 200.

34 On his drawings and their erasure, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 141. For painful, see Smith, "Dr. Rimmer," 201.

35 On destruction, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 18, 50, 128, 351 (quote).

36 These include the following pictures in the 1985 Rimmer exhibition catalogue: *Ebenezer K. Alden* (Mead Art Museum); *Mrs. Howland* (Private Collection); *A Riderless War Horse* (Private Collection); and *Sunset / Contemplation* (Manoogian Collection). Learning that Lincoln Kirstein sought works by Rimmer, the owner of *Mrs. Howland* produced it as by him, claiming there was once a signed, companion portrait of a Dr. Howland. No such second portrait existed. The Pilgrim John Howland Society recently found, in its genealogical records, no American "Dr. Howland" of about the date of the supposed wife. There was also a fraudulent label involved. See the correspondence over the two Howland portraits in box 1, Kirstein and Nutt Research Material, Archives of American Art. Once the Howland portrait gained acceptance, the Alden portrait could be added as similar in style. In the most obvious difference, both are too sharply defined with darker shading than can be found in documented work by Rimmer. A third portrait, *The Reverend Calvin Hitchcock* (Fogg Museum), related to these, has also been wrongly assigned to Rimmer. Richard Sherman Nutt attributed the *War Horse* to Rimmer, but Rimmer did not draw horses like this (his were fairly standard as they were from memory), and the use of a dry brush is atypical. For Nutt's role, see Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 2:516. The landscape, *Sunset / Contemplation*, serving as the catalogue's cover illustration, has a forged signature with a fake date and appears to be one of several replicas by the Danish artist Hans J. Hammer of his *A Square in Ariccia, Italy, after Sunset* (1862; National Gallery of Denmark). Other misattributions, most of which are online, are too numerous to be addressed in a note.

37 Benjamin Champney, *Sixty Years' Memories of Art and Artists* (Woburn, MA: [Privately Printed], 1900), 11.

38 David Tatham, "The Lithographic Workshop, 1825–50," in Georgia Brady Barnhill, Diana Korzenik, and Caroline F. Sloat, ed., *The Cultivation of Artists in Nineteenth-Century America* (Worcester, MA: American Antiquarian Society, 1997), 46.

39 Champney, *Sixty Years*, 11. One of Rimmer's paintings that had the general look of a Baroque master dates from about twenty years later: his small *Crucifixion* (lost), ca. 1855, painted for Father John T. Roddan of St. Mary Parish, Randolph, MA. See Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 19 and ill. no. 14.

40 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 8.

41 On singing and the fire engine company, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 9–10. Rimmer's name as artist is inscribed on several known copies of this print. See Weidman, et al., *Rimmer*, no. 79.

42 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 10.

43 Ibid., 8–9.

44 Another copy, in reverse, is Rimmer's *The Entombment* (Worcester Art Museum) which can be identified as after Guercino's *The Dead Christ Mourned by Two Angels* (National Gallery, London) from about 1617–18. This tiny lithograph has a pencil inscription, outside the image, with Rimmer's name (misspelled) and a wrong 1845 date. Embracing mythical subjects, Rimmer also produced a lithograph of Venus, in oddly original boudoir surroundings, as *Reclining Female Nude* (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston). Kirstein concluded that it is an "allegory of luxury," but, with a dog (traditional symbol of loyalty) included at lower left, it is more likely an allegory of faithfulness and lust. Caroline Rimmer dated it in the late 1850s, which is believable. See Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 3:769–771. Bartlett calls Rimmer's lithograph, *The Hunter's Dog* (Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 124 and ill. no. 10), which is a lost work, a "copy from a lithograph" but does not identify a source. It appears instead to be an original composition, showing a loyal dog protecting his dead owner, done in the manner of the English artist, Edwin Landseer, who was famous at mid-century.

45 For the passing reference to a banished lord, see Thomas Warton, *The Pleasures of Melancholy; A Poem* (London: for R. Dodsley, sold by M. Cooper, 1747), 18. On Reynolds and the print versions, see Martin Postle in David Mannings, *Sir Joshua Reynolds: A Complete Catalogue of His Paintings* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 1:509-10. Perhaps relatedly, Rimmer's friend, Stephen H. Perkins, owned an oil copy (lost) of the Reynolds (509).

46 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 21–22.

47 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 24, reported that Rimmer received a diploma from the Suffolk County Medical Society. Kirstein, "Rimmer: His Life," 688, claimed that he had been issued a license by the same, but there is no record of either. On the lack of licenses, see Philip Cash's essay in Weidman, et al., *Rimmer*, 25.

48 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 25 (quote), 35. The 1863 date is given in his obituaries, such as Anon., "Dr. William Rimmer," *Boston Daily Advertiser*, August 22, 1879, [1]. It was probably not an abrupt ending, and he continued as an occasional doctor. In the Massachusetts State Census of 1865 and the United States Federal Census of 1870, his occupation is listed as physician. According to Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 37, he continued to attend Stephen Perkins as his doctor. Perkins died in 1877. Rimmer might also have long been a bootmaker as he is listed in the United States Federal Census of 1850. In 1877, he wrote of teaching at the Boston Museum as only "one of my means of procuring a livelihood." On this, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 91–92.

49 Schools advertised his instruction as scientific, and some of his students studied surgery. For this, see Anon., "The Establishment of the Art School," *Boston Daily Advertiser*, February 17, 1864, 2. For the quote, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 143.

50 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 95. He was slender and 5 feet, 10 inches.

51 For swings between arrogant and humble, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 11, 28. He reported about but was unable to identify Rimmer's mental illness.

52 The middle initial appears on the birth certificates of Adeline (1849) and Caroline (1851) as well as on the death certificate of Thomas (1843). See the digital images under the online database *Family Search.org*.

53 See Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 49, 257, 263, 275, where Stephen and Phillip are projections of Rimmer. For Phillip cast out for lack of charity, see ibid., 105, 115, 117, 119, and 214. He is to assume flesh and experience what it is like to be on the other side of his condemnation (103). In a vision, a group of angels tell Rimmer that he should accompany Phillip and learn with him (137). Like Phillip, Rimmer could be a severe critic of others, but he also realized that he could be unjust. For this, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 140, and Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 137. Through his pain, Stephen teaches them both pity (ibid., 167, 177, 209). For Phillip as a lion, see ibid., 139, 279. Rimmer's manuscript is partially paginated with numerical gaps that can be filled from his pagination. With regard to dating his much-rewritten manuscript, Rimmer was working on it at least in 1869, the date of the drawing of Phillip, and in his final days in 1879, according to his daughter's note on the first page. Kirstein, "Dr. Rimmer?" 133, dates the manuscript as 1855–1879, without explanation for the first date. Most, if not all, of it was probably written during the decade after 1869. On the problem of dating it, see Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 1:83–84n. His daughter, Caroline, hoped to publish parts of the manuscript with a biography of Rimmer. She wrote of this to the playwright and friend of her father, James Steele MacKaye. No response is known. See her letter, February 19, 1914, James Steele MacKaye Papers, box 40, folder 10, Special Collections, Rauner Library, Dartmouth College, Hanover, N.H.

54 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 95.

55 For the quote, see Dante Alighieri, *Dante*, translated by Ichabod Charles Wright (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green, and Longman, 1845) 1:10. The reference, in this translation, is to line 45 of the first canto of the *Inferno*. A second drawing of the same scene, with the same date, is at the Wadsworth Athenaeum, Hartford.

56 For son, see "Stephen and Phillip," 203. For roar, see ibid., 35.

57 Boston had such a menagerie, beginning in 1835. See Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 1:374n.

58 The "uplifted mane" is mentioned in Rimmer's description of Phillip in "Stephen and Phillip," 155. For glowing, see Rimmer, ibid., 153.

59 On visions, for instance, see Rimmer in his "Stephen and Phillip," 45, describing a vision in which he stands before the gate of Heaven.

60 Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Paul: The Apostle of Jesus Christ, His Life and Work, His Epistles and His Doctrine. A Contribution to a Critical History of Primitive Christianity*, translated by Eduard Zeller and revised by A. Menzies, 2nd ed. (London: Williams and Norgate, 1876), 1:60. The first edition is 1845.

61 For an example of their debating, see Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 349. For the debating society, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 21.

62 Rimmer seems to have understood the term "demon" in the same way that the Transcendentalist Amos Bronson Alcott did as a "lapsed or divided soul," not pure evil. See Alcott's *Diary for 1849*, Volume 23, January, p. 12, Amos Bronson Alcott Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

63 For Stephen as both demon and angel, see "Stephen and Phillip," 49, 50. For a demon from Hell, see ibid., 40, 49, 78, 209, 211–19, 239–49. See ibid., 45–49, for Rimmer fighting a demonic, hateful and suicidal Stephen as part of himself. See ibid., 74, for Stephen's "despairing memories." See ibid., 217, for Stephen and Rimmer sharing guilt. See ibid., 261, for Stephen's conversion and worship of God. For Stephen advocating for compassion, see ibid., 79, 218, 261, 265. Rimmer's interest in St. Stephen is also evinced in his undated drawing, *The Stoning of St. Stephen* (unlocated), which descended from his sister's daughter. See Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 3:744–47; and Weidman, et al., *Rimmer*, 39, ill. 5.

See Weidman, et al., *Rimmer*, 5, for a different opinion on "Stephen and Phillip." He views the manuscript as representing Rimmer's "relationship with his father, as embodied in two angels, Stephen and Phillip, who symbolize respectively the light and dark aspects of the soul, initially at odds and separated but eventually reconciled." Certainly Stephen, once described as "filthy rat" (235) and a soul "in hell" (263), is not initially — if at all — the light aspect of the soul. He too could take the form of a beast. Rimmer's father is never mentioned in the legible text, but Rimmer does once indirectly associate Phillip with him or with his heritage through the words: "son of a great king" (203). Both Kirstein and Weidman read "Stephen and Phillip," but Kirstein never advanced far with his intended book on Rimmer, while Weidman's interpretation appeared in published form in his dissertation and exhibition catalogue.

64 Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 123.

65 Kay Redfield Jamison, *Touched with Fire: Manic Depressive Illness and the Artistic Temperament* (New York: The Free Press, 1993), 17.

66 For Rimmer as a manic depressive, or bipolar, artist, see Diane Chalmers Johnson, *American Symbolist Art, Nineteenth-Century "Poets in Paint:" Washington Allston, John La Farge, William Rimmer, George Inness, and Albert Pinkham Ryder* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 2004), 48, who deduces his illness, in passing, as a fact; and Dorinda Evans' discussion of him in a manic depressive context in *Gilbert Stuart and the Impact of Manic Depression* (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2013), 140–45, 147, 150–52, 156–57, 160–61. Others perceived Rimmer as having a "split personality." For this, see Barbara B. Millhouse and Robert Workman, *American Originals: Selections from Reynolda House Museum of American Art* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1990), 80. Contradictory opinions on Rimmer's character and personality are documented in Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 133–47. For the quote, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 16. Bartlett had access to more primary information on him, in the form of a diary or diaries, than is available today, but he decided that "many facts of interest and importance, proper to be stated in another generation, cannot now be appropriately recorded" (vii).

67 See the quote in Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 26–27.

68 Ibid., 15, for his fluctuation between mad and melancholy.

69 Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 29.

70 Ibid., 73.

71 For house, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 20.

72 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 89.

73 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 138, 16 (quote).

74 Jamison, *Touched with Fire*, 105–13.

75 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 71.

76 Ibid., 104.

77 Jamison, *Touched with Fire*, 107, 110–11.

78 An 1871 lecture summarized in Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 68–69.

79 Perkins' letter of September 9, 1863, pp. 4, 2, to Rimmer, Boston Medical Library. The expression is put in quotes as if a quotation from Rimmer himself.

80 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 142, 37 (quote), 131 (quote), 135.

81 Marion MacLean's notes in "Research File: Marion MacLean Undated and 1895," box 1, p. 36, Kirstein and Nutt Research Material, Archives of American Art.

82 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 135. See the description of the illness in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 5th Revision. On the irritable state, see Jamison, *Touched with Fire*, 28, 39, 154.

83 For an unusual shift in handwriting, see Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 15, 38, 101, 236, 238, 312, 363, 383. The last five pages, and pages 353–55, contain indecipherable scribbling.

84 See Jamison, *Touched with Fire*, 29, 109–12, on grandiosity.

85 Lapthorn, "Stories and Memoirs," 5. Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 1–2, generally agrees with this but does not realize his claim was as the dauphin and that he visited France. Kirstein, who heard from relatives, says Thomas was "educated like a prince" in England in a South Lancashire yeoman family called Rimmer. He was "supported by the purses of the British and Russian crowns" with the intention of returning him to France. But these two sponsors, when Thomas was age twenty in 1815, decided instead to back the last king's brother, as King Louis XVIII, rather than his son. See Kirstein, "Rimmer: His Life," 686. The family story that Thomas became a British army officer (Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 2; Lapthorn, 5) is unsupported by records.

86 Kirstein, "Rimmer: His Life," 689. Kirstein reports that an attendant "nurse" described his death this way to Thomas' granddaughter (unidentified). He called him "embittered to the point of derangement" (ibid., 687).

87 See her signed death certificate, June 22, 1891, in "Massachusetts Deaths and Burials, 1795–1910," image 304 of 1536, database *Family Search.org*.

88 Kirstein, "Rimmer: His Life," 687. See "Massachusetts, Town and Vital Records, 1620–1988", for Thomas Rimmer, August 3, 1852, no. 1985. His place of death is "Ho. Industry" in Boston, and the informant: "F. Crane." See the photographic image on *Ancestry.com*. "Friend Crane," probably a Quaker, was superintendent of the House of Industry. For this, see *The Directory of the City of Boston ... from July, 1850, to July, 1851* (Boston: George Adams, 1850) 126. Thomas Rimmer is listed in the Boston directories from 1825 to 1847. For this, see the Kirstein and Nutt Research Material, box 1, folder: "Biographical Material," Archives of American Art, Washington, D.C. The burial site for Thomas is not known.

89 On disorderly conduct and confinement in the House of Industry, see *The Revised Statutes of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Passed November 4, 1835 ...* (Boston: Dutton and Wentworth, 1836), 779, sec. 6. Usually the sentence was for a few months, but repeated offenses resulted in longer terms. No liquor was allowed, and a hospital adjoined the facility. Thomas was hot tempered and capable of fighting a man publicly over a flute that he would not return (Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 5). The annual reports (Boston City Archives) give little sense of inmate conditions, but the size of the House of Industry increased to over 600 inmates of both sexes during the years he could have been there. See *Annual Report of the Directors of the Houses of Industry and Reformation for the Year 1852–53* (Boston: J.H. Eastburn, 1853), 16.

90 The canvas stamp is changed to allow the building number to be written in as 17 which was Morris's address from 1849 to 1850. See Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 2:465–68.

91 For favorite, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 95.

92 For Cupid characterized this way, see, for instance, Vincent Bourne, *The Poetical Works, Latin and English, of Vincent Bourne* (Cambridge [England]: printed for W.P. Grant, 1838), 96, 119.

93 For the usual staff, see William Hamilton's *Prospero and Ariel*, 1797 (Old National Gallery, Berlin). Rimmer also made a drawing that appears to show Prospero and Ariel with the sleeping travelers (not a scene in *The Tempest* but easily imagined). Ariel holds his pipe and seems to have just made himself visible, while Prospero looms phantom-like over the sleepers. See the Rimmer Sketchbook, Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine, Boston, MA.

94 His use of a single, flourishing plant next to a foreground hand in the drawing, *A Dead Soldier* (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston), supports this point. In a cropped, ground-level view of a battlefield with a dead man, a startling additional hand on the ground — as if the viewer's — has the wrist arched and a symbolic, adjacent plant as the only indications of life. This is a highly original image, akin to but unlike the famous photographs of the Civil War dead.

95 Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 33.

96 Laurence Sterne, *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick* (London: J. Dodsley, 1767), 2:134–35.

97 Weidman, et al., *Rimmer*, 95.

98 Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 265, 269, 383.

99 Newspaper Clipping Scrapbook of Mary H. C. Rimmer, Boston Medical Library.

100 Lapthorn, "Stories and Memoirs," 6–7.

101 Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 55–57.

102 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 59. New York was much more of an art center, with receptions and exhibitions, than Boston by 1860. For this, see Neil Harris, *The Artist in American Society: The Formative Years, 1790–1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 266.

103 Warton, *Pleasures*, 9, 18 (quote).

104 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 22, 25.

105 Lapthorn, "Stories and Memoirs," 6–7. See note 15 for the dauphin claim.

106 The first quote is from an obituary clipping, [*Boston*] *Evening Transcript*, August 22, 1879, box with bar code: 3-1027-00033-7440, Kirstein and Nutt Research Material, Archives of American Art. The second quote is from Caroline Rimmer's letter to Truman Bartlett, January 3, 1882, in the same box.

2. The Two-Dimensional Portraits in Context

Although Rimmer acted as an itinerant portrait painter part-time (before he became a physician), from 1841 to 1845 in Boston and the suburban areas of Randolph and Brockton, very few likenesses by him survive.[1] His portrait painting differs from his other work in that it is the part of his oeuvre done expressly for financial compensation, yet he did not support himself by it. All of his oil portraits that are known are included in this discussion. Human character did interest him, but, as a portraitist hired by a stranger, he was expected to restrain his judgment and imagination to copy what was before him and — in doubtless the most nettlesome challenge — try to flatter or please a paying sitter.[2] Of the ten known oil portraits, two are of his wife, one is of his sister (not illustrated because of repaint), and at least two are of friends.[3]

His earliest known likeness in oils, *Portrait of a Young Man* (fig. 10) depicts a bookish individual, with unnatural lighting used to complement an overall effect of mystery and self-absorption. Rimmer created it when he was either twenty-four or twenty-five. On the reverse is the artist's signature and an 1841 date — the latter added perhaps in a different hand, yet there is no reason to doubt the veracity of the date.

Fig. 10 *Portrait of a Young Man*, 1841. Oil on canvas, 36 ½ x 29 ½ in. (92.70 x 74.93 cm). Foxboro Historical Society / Foxborough Historical Commission

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The face is quite pale, with highlights on the eyes and nose, and with such delicate modeling in transparent shadows that it is relatively flat. Rimmer's sensitivity to subtleties in value surely stemmed from his initial training in a print medium. Instead of striving for the decorative appeal of rich coloring or textured paint, the artist focused his attention on accurate drawing of the likeness. But there is also some sculptural quality to the face as he sought to describe what he was seeing. For instance, the philtral ridges on the sitter's upper lip, possibly quite pronounced in the sitter, project convincingly and the lip is somewhat curled upwards.

The most sophisticated part of the picture is the artist's response to subtle effects of light, based on close observation of details. For instance, the light on the sitter's white collar reflects on his neck, and there is secondary or reflected light within the shadowed areas of his left cheek and his nose. Creating the sensation of a rounded object in space, there is light as well on the far side of his collar as if coming from behind. Then too, the skillful illumination of the foreground book helps it to project in a realistic way.

The hands in the portrait are another case of replicating what is seen. Rather than flattering to the sitter, they exhibit evidence of an inflammatory arthritis that resulted in a boutonnière deformity of the fingers.[4] As a careful observer with the detached interest of a physician, Rimmer did not avoid representing an abnormality. Almost all other artists would have excluded the hands, especially in a commissioned portrait as this seems to be.

This sitter might have been a patient, perhaps even of Rimmer or of Dr. Kingman.[5] As to his identity, the background is fairly elaborate with shorthand references to a theatrical connection, possibly a Boston theater. Shown as well-dressed, he sits at a desk with an open text and quill pens before him, seemingly on a stage with a balcony above and a stage curtain behind which is drawn back to reveal a moonlit landscape. Unfortunately, despite the visual hints — including a jeweled shirt stud — they are not sufficient to pinpoint a specific sitter's identity.

As for the sitter's stage affiliation, Rimmer himself had an enduring interest in theater and in amateur theatricals. When he could afford it in the late 1860s, he enjoyed watching Shakespearean plays in Boston.[6] Even years earlier, as an undated portrait (fig. 11) implies, he and his wife shared an appreciation of theater or, more particularly, historical fantasy. Although the varnish on his wife's picture has yellowed with age and grime, she is visible as wearing a sixteenth-century-derived dress with slashed sleeves and a narrow, jeweled bandeau above her forehead.[7] Her clothing and hair style (with its ringlets and bun) date from the early to mid-1840s when there was a fashionable revival of the Tudor period. The pose of the head, between a three-quarter view and a profile, is one that Rimmer used repeatedly when it could be flattering to a woman. The more common angle for portraits was a three-quarter turn of the head that is closer to a frontal view, but — possibly because the profile was considered more revealing in terms of reading character — Rimmer used this compromise.[8] His recorded interpretations of women's profiles are too few and too brief to be of much help, but he preferred a straight nose and little or no ornament as in this instance of his wife.[9]

The needle packet in her hand suggests that she designed and made her own historicized outfit. Despite being unique, her dress reflects the aspirations of the Romantic period in its fanciful recreation of the past. In a similar way, the staircase behind, to the far right — offering ascent to another level — is doubtless a personal reference, but, without more of a hint, its message is unclear.[10] The use of clues or symbols in this portrait and that of *Portrait of a Young Man*, to deepen the meaning of the picture, is characteristic of Rimmer's work, especially outside of portraiture.

Such symbols, for example, convey most of the story in Rimmer's historical genre scene, *Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn* (fig. 12), which includes a portrait of Henry VIII. A stamp on the reverse, identifying a Boston canvas seller, helps to establish the date as about 1845.[11] Among Rimmer's surviving work in oils, this scene is unique in being partly derived from an engraving after an oil painting. The original source is *Francis I and His Sister Marguerite of Navarre* (unlocated), by the English artist Richard Parkes Bonington, which was painted and engraved as an illustration (fig. 13) for Mary Shelley's 1829 short story, "The False Rhyme."[12] Rimmer's Henry VIII assumes much of the body and clothing of his contemporary, Francis I, but with the gold-encrusted poniard turned so that it takes on a slightly erotic posture, befitting Henry's position as an impassioned suitor. To those who know

Fig. 11 *Mary H.C. Peabody, Mrs. William Rimmer*, early to mid 1840s. Oil on canvas, ca. 30 x 25 in. (76.2 x 63.5 cm). Collection of Elizabeth Korndorffer

Fig. 12 *Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn*, ca. 1845. Oil on canvas, 24 x 20 in. (60.95 x 50.80 cm). Brigham Young University Museum of Art, gift of C. Joseph Bowdring in memory of John Castano, 1980

her fate, the picture refers obliquely to the death of Anne as queen (her beheading relates to that of Rimmer's presumed ancestor Louis XVI). But the focus is on the first step in this direction, seduction by the devilishly red-clothed and charmingly flushed, all-attentive Henry. His face is roughly based on the likeness of Henry as a young man by Joos van Cleve (fig. 14), or a version derived from it. But Rimmer — in his first known historical portrait — has made the king's blue eyes larger and more appealing as he fixes his gaze on Anne.

Fig. 13 Charles Heath after Richard Parkes Bonington, *Francis the First and His Sister* (detail), 1830. Engraving, sheet: 7 x 4 ½ in. (17.78 x 11.43 cm). British Museum, London. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1878-0713-2733

Fig. 14 Joos van Cleve, *Henry VIII*, ca. 1530–35. Oil on panel, 28 ½ x 23 1/10 in. (72.1 x 59.2 cm). Royal Collection Trust, UK. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Henry_VIII_by_Joos_van_Cleve

Anne's back is turned to the viewer with her face in shadow, so it is not possible to read her facial expression; yet she stops playing her lute and curtseys slightly as she moves away from Henry in an action recorded by her dress. The stopped music, discarded needlework, and draining hourglass are all signs of impermanence, but the hourglass more overtly symbolizes the approach of death. As it drains, her lifetime is shortened.

The other ominously foreshadowing elements are the deadly poniard and the faintly visible tapestry behind Henry's head. On it is a crowned monarch seated on a canopied throne and accompanied by assistants. A woman (the previous queen?) is seen leaving as another woman — presumably Anne — is presented and kneels before the enthroned man. Outside the tapestry, a vertical post, continued by a twisted chair leg, divides the potential lovers and is possibly symbolic of their eventual separation.

The circumstances of Rimmer's courtship picture are completely invented. Against expectation, there is no historical record or Shakespearean scene that fits it. But a portrayal of Anne as vulnerable and guileless is found in Shakespeare's play, *Henry VIII* (co-written with John Fletcher) where she is a minor character who declares her desire not to be queen (Act 2, Scene 3).

As he did habitually, Rimmer invented figures for this picture just as he later worked from imagination on the classroom chalkboard which did not entail the careful study of a living subject. Like the Shakespearean pictures from *The Tempest* and *Macbeth*, this painting seems to have been sold or given away when the family lived in East Milton, Massachusetts, between 1855 and 1863.[13] As the earlier, less personal Shakespeare-related subject, it conceivably differed from the others in being always intended for sale.

Returning to his wife as a sitter, the artist painted a second image of Mary Rimmer (figs. 15, 16) probably in the mid-1840s, without the fancy dress, background, or props of the first. Within an oval, which concentrates the focus, her head is shown in a standard three-quarter view as she looks at the viewer with a sentient connection. Compared to the frontal head in *Portrait of a Young Man* (fig. 10), her flesh color is warmer with a slight tinge of pink in the cheek and with darker shadows so that she is more three-dimensional but not strongly so. More than in most portraits, her eyes have a realistic glassy or liquid quality with a depth of coloring within the iris. In a similar, careful transcription that reveals his interest in underlying anatomy, Rimmer includes the jugular notch of her throat muscles as well.[14] Overall, she is perhaps fantasized to some extent as a natural woman, with her hair let down and no ornamentation. This might be expected of a Quaker, but the effect is of greater naturalism than in the other portrait of her. She is also effectively timeless because of the dark wrap that covers most of her clothing.

In its stripped-down effect and inclusion within an oval, Mrs. Rimmer's likeness is reminiscent of a lost portrait by Rimmer, known from a photograph (fig. 17). The sitter is a young woman from the mid-1840s with her hair collected in a bun, no jewelry and a profile that flatteringly recalls that of Greek classical sculpture. Establishing that this is the product of a commission, the painting's wood stretcher bears the inscription: "By William Rimmer of Boston," where he lived from 1843 to 1845.[15]

Out of Rimmer's known work, a couple of portraits and several other pieces show the effects of manic depression. He destroyed what he deemed inferior, but, in this beginning stage of his career, he also offered to paint portraits for between five and fifty dollars and to coordinate the price with the labor put into it.[16] The wide disparity in pricing could be an admittance of his occasional inability to perform well. With such a range, he could accommodate a multitude of moods. Bartlett noted his unevenness and mentioned a Kingman family portrait (destroyed) of Dr. Kingman, his wife and four children that "not only lacks every merit desirable in a work of art, but it is as awkward in its arrangement as could well be imagined."[17]

Bartlett described Rimmer as not a good colorist, having a "tendency towards yellows and browns" in his best pictures, while "the combinations are unpleasantly cold and inharmonious" in his worst. They could even be "morbid."[18] Contradicting these critiques, one student, who had Rimmer as a visiting instructor, called his pictures strikingly warm: his "color scheme was novel, flesh tints very red."[19] According to Bartlett, "many" observers thought him "afflicted with defective color-vision."[20] Reflecting Rimmer's inconsistency, newspaper accounts provide contradictory descriptions of his coloring in paintings, now missing, as "exquisite" in one case and "severely criticized" in another.[21]

Fig. 15 *Mary H.C. Peabody, Mrs. William Rimmer*, mid 1840s. Oil on canvas, 29 4/5 x 23 ½ in. (76.2 x 59.69 cm). Northeast Auctions, Portsmouth, NH

Fig. 16 *Mary H.C. Peabody, Mrs. William Rimmer* (detail)

Although much remains to be learned about how this illness affects the output of an artist, bipolar painters in a manic state tend to use brighter, warmer and more contrasting colors; the brushwork is also typically freer. In a depressed state, the artist often paints with darker, colder colors, less contrast, slower motion, and less imagination.[22]

Rimmer's portrait of Seth Turner, Jr. (fig. 18), from about 1840–1842, can possibly be understood within this context. Turner, a sergeant in the Massachusetts militia during the Revolutionary War, died at age eighty-six in

Fig. 17 *Bust of a Woman*, 1843–45. Oil on canvas, 24 x 20 in. (61 x 51 cm). Unlocated. Lincoln Kirstein and Richard Sherman Nutt Research Material on William Rimmer, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution

Fig. 18 *Seth Turner, Jr.*, ca. 1840–42. Oil on canvas, 35 ½ x 28 ½ in. (90.7 x 72.7 cm). Collection of the Massachusetts Historical Society

1842.[23] Every bit of Turner's age seems to weigh on him as he sits, generally colorless, under an oppressive dark void. Like *Portrait of a Young Man* (fig. 10), this likeness breaks portrait conventions. Instead of flattering the sitter, it provides a clinical record of his physical and mental deterioration. Altogether, his haggard demeanor conveys deep depression. But this is not necessarily the sitter's mood. This is the result of the artist's choices and, because of how it is painted, it could reflect his own state of mind. He typically did not flatter through flesh coloring, but this deathly pallor seems to be extreme. Rimmer once said, in revealing the effect of depression on his sense of color, "Some people are like ashes in my eyes."[24]

The artist slowly and carefully copied details of his sitter, including the facial lines, the wart between the eyebrows, and the sheen on his hair and coat. Yet, in minor ways, the picture is left unfinished. The long, white hair is merely blocked in, as are parts of the face and collar, so it is possible to see bare patches of the underlying ground which is a pale grayish tan. By leaving visible gaps, Rimmer has progressed in a halting fashion, attentive to only certain parts of the picture and not to others. This apparent hesitancy is suggestive of depression.

Regrettably, the circumstances of the Turner portrait are not known. It does not appear to be based on a photograph, which usually would involve more confident modeling, nor is there a known photograph of the sitter for comparison. Granted, art is never a credible basis for a psychiatric diagnosis, but it often can be supporting evidence of an artist's mood. Whatever the interaction between the painter and his subject, the overall effect of the picture is one of deep melancholy.

Another unfinished painting that shows signs of Rimmer's illness is *Samson and the Child* (fig. 19). The incident shown is from Judges 16:23–27 where the blind Samson, whose cropped hair is beginning to grow

Fig. 19 *Samson and the Child*, ca. 1854. Oil on canvas, 22 x 27 in. (55.90 x 68.58 cm). Private Collection. Image from Skinner Auctioneers (2004)

back and renew his supernatural strength, is called from his prison to entertain his Philistine captors. As his enemies make sacrifices to their god, Dagon, Samson asks a child to lead him to the temple so he can touch the supporting pillars. The picture (which is signed although unfinished) dates stylistically from probably the mid-1850s, a time when Rimmer had an effortless mastery of human anatomy, as seen in a dated minor sketch (fig. 20). But — in front of a magically inventive balustrade — in an unexpectedly amateurish error, one of the child's legs is noticeably shorter than the other. His flesh color also becomes an unnatural, bluish gray in the upraised arm and shortened leg.

Fig. 20 *Gloucester Shoreline with Mary Rimmer*, 1855. Graphite pencil on paper, 5 1/16 x 7 in. (12.8 x 17.8 cm). Harvard Art Museums / Fogg Museum, Louise E. Bettens Fund. Photo © President and Fellows of Harvard College

It cannot be a coincidence that Rimmer's sudden inability to gauge correctly the proportions of parts of a figure in relation to the whole appears sporadically in the work of other manic-depressive artists.[25] A good example is the bipolar English artist George Romney's *Horseman of Montecavallo* (fig. 21), which is a drawing of

Fig. 21 George Romney, *Horseman of Montecavallo*, (Roman Sketchbook), 1773-74. Graphite pencil on paper, 8 ¾ x 11 ¾ in. (22.5 x 30 cm). Courtesy of Cumbria Archive and Local Studies Library, Barrow-in-Furness

a fourth-century statue in Rome. It shows a rear view of Castor — one of the mythological Dioscuri, the twin sons of Zeus — and his horse. The original is properly proportioned and naturalistic, and Romney was a highly skilled artist who could draw a horse from life with anatomical correctness. But, in the drawing, the copied horse has a radically shortened back, abbreviated rump, and shortened legs. That is, there is a disruption in Romney's usual ability to conceive of the image as a whole.

With Rimmer, this disproportion can be found in the woman's enlarged, right foot in *The Fireman's Call* (fig. 1). It also takes the form of an undersized arm in the foreground of the unidentified sitter in *Seated Man* (fig. 22).This drawing has a skillfully drawn head with sfumato shading in the face and highlights on the man's curls which are created with clever economy by the paper beneath. Yet the crayon is used very differently at another time to sketch in the man's body and a shrunken wicker chair. The style is looser with a new carelessness or inattention. Despite the dip in quality, Rimmer overlooked any lapse in that it is signed and dated 1856 as a finished work. It was meant to be displayed within an oval mount.[26]

Fig. 22 *Seated Man,* 1856. Black crayon on brown wove paper. Sheet: 14 x 11 1/16 in. (35.5 x 28.1 cm), oval. Photography by Randy Dodson © Courtesy Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco

Another example of Rimmer's passing inability to construct an ensemble with accuracy is when a student came upon him painting trees on a hillside, but perpendicular to the slant of the hill. On being asked whether trees grow that way, Rimmer "half-unconsciously replied, 'I don't know. Don't they?' as if his mind was occupied with matter beyond the present work."[27]

Puzzlingly, Rimmer exhibited a *Cupid Relating His Adventures to Venus* (lost), with anatomical defects, at DeVries' Gallery in Boston in 1870 to scathing reviews. This was particularly wounding to Rimmer as the local authority on the correct depiction of human anatomy.[28] Only months earlier, another rendition, *Venus Listening to Cupid's Account of His Exploits* (lost), sold in New York as a masterpiece for the extraordinary sum of $10,000 — more than Rimmer would ever earn again for a work of art.[29] With missing pictures that have never

been photographed, it is impossible to know how much went wrong. Presumably the artist's illness played a role in this inconsistency and in the fact that he would publicly display an inferior version. That is, other bipolar artists did the same. For instance, the English artist Benjamin Robert Haydon exhibited a large drawing of Adam and Eve in which one of Adam's legs was too short. When criticized, Haydon said he thought the leg was nicely done in itself, so he kept it.[30]

In an instructive comparison, Rimmer painted two quite different versions of a portrait of Abel Kingman, a former state senator and father of the physician who became Rimmer's mentor.[31] The earliest one, a bust portrait shown cropped (fig. 23), signed and dated 1846, has a later-repaired far eye and cheek and sufficient retouching so that it is not a wholly representative work. Nonetheless, it has the same relatively colorless flesh as in *Portrait of a Young Man*. Bartlett spoke of the head as "well constructed" and described its pale quality as "tender" flesh coloring.[32]

Fig. 23 *Abel Kingman* (detail), 1846. Oil on muslin cloth backed by panel, 30 x 25 in. (76.2 x 63.5 cm). Brockton Public Library, Brockton, MA

The second version (fig. 24) — a revised copy, with swarthy flesh — might have been painted at any time afterward but perhaps most likely at about the time of the sitter's death in 1850.[33] In contrast with the first version, where the sitter smiles wanly at the viewer — with his glasses atop his head, covering a bald spot — in the second, the sitter is sterner and more upright as he gazes off into space, lost in thought. There is also a greater sense of latent energy in the enhanced coloring and modeling of his face. In what presents a challenge for the artist, the second version is also so much in shadow that it can be difficult to see the head convincingly as in the round. But Rimmer counters this effect by modeling much of the face in indirect or reflected light and separating the back of the head from the dark curtain by again deploying secondary lighting. The darkening of the skin and heavy shadowing all seem to have been calculated to make the burst of direct light on the sitter's forehead more climactic.

This small, impastoed spotlight must have special meaning and, as the sitter was a devout Christian, it is most persuasive as a biblical reference.[34] It could well refer to Isaiah 9:2, which predicts that the Messiah's birth will cause a light to shine on those who dwell in darkness in "the shadow of death."[35] It can probably be best understood as resulting from the presence of the Holy Spirit. The apparent spiritual emphasis and the lack of any change requiring another sitting suggest that Rimmer produced the revised version just before or after Kingman's death.

Fig. 24 *Abel Kingman*, ca. 1850. Oil on canvas, 30 x 25 in. (76.2 x 63.5 cm). Collection of Pamela Post Ferrante

In addition to implying the sitter's spiritual state, the second portrait hints at the artist's illness. Rimmer had difficulty in aligning the sitter's ears or, again, relating a part to a larger whole. The near ear is abbreviated but correctly placed and recognizable at the right, whereas the far ear is barely indicated in Indian red and incorrectly

Fig. 25 *Inkstand with Horse Pulling a Stone-Laden Cart*, 1855–63. Soapstone, 6 ¼ x 17 x 11 in. (15.87 x 43.20 x 27.94 cm). Collection of Middlebury College Museum of Art, Vermont. Purchase with funds provided by the Christian A. Johnson Memorial Fund, 1988.133

Fig. 26 *Inkstand* (detail) 1855-63

Fig. 27 *Inkstand* (detail) 1855-63

positioned at the left, between the sitter's cheekbone and the bottom of his mouth. It is less visible than it might be because it is part of seemingly a whimsical stroke on that side of the face that is close to the background color.[36]

This anatomically inaccurate treatment of parts happens as well in Rimmer's horse and cart inkstand (fig. 25), carved in soapstone, where the nostrils (fig. 26) are not aligned and the mane falls evenly on both sides of the horse's neck but is treated differently on each side (figs. 25, 27). Indeed, the eye socket and nostril on the horse's left side are more emotionally expressed than on the right.

Returning to Kingman's portrait, other American portraits of the period were generally more formulaic at mid-century. Kingman's likeness is highly unusual in being dark, painterly and experimental. The most successful portrait painter at the time in the Boston area was the academy-trained Chester Harding (fig. 28).

Unlike Harding's work, Rimmer's picture is inspired by the shadowed portraits of the seventeenth-century Dutch master, Rembrandt — especially some of his etchings. But it differs in having carefully modeled details in off-white, rather than shade, against a dark, relatively flat area.

Rimmer's *Mrs. Robert Restiaux Kent* (*Eliza F. Watson*) (fig. 29), from about 1865, is also concerned with the creative manipulation of light and shade. Perhaps his finest portrait, it is innovative in its inclusion of the sitter's taste in music. Usually if a musical score is shown with a sitter, which is relatively rare, its title is indecipherable. Instead, this score is clearly for J.S. Bach's Aria Suite No. 3, although Rimmer miscopied — or perhaps deliberately altered — the score slightly so that it is not an accurate depiction of the contrapuntal melodic line.

The sitter holds a conductor's baton and presents a full profile because of shadowing, but she is actually in the quasi-profile view that Rimmer favored. His interest in suggesting character through a side view relates to his categorizing of profiles for artistic purposes in his later book, *Art Anatomy*. Generally this section of the book follows mainstream stereotypes from the period with regard to gender, ethnicity, and race that would be offensive today, but it is far too short and unexplained to be a useable system. By chance, this sitter's high-bridge nose — very slightly hooked — does appear in the text in a flattering way which would be reason to emphasize it. It is said to be of the kind "seldom found in a Face of the Animal Type." This means it would not, by itself, be interpreted from a picture as the indication of moral weakness — quite the opposite.[37]

Eliza Kent married a pharmacist in 1864 in the Boston suburb of Chelsea, where Rimmer lived from 1863 to 1866, and probably had her portrait painted in about 1865. The next year, the artist (who had already taught at

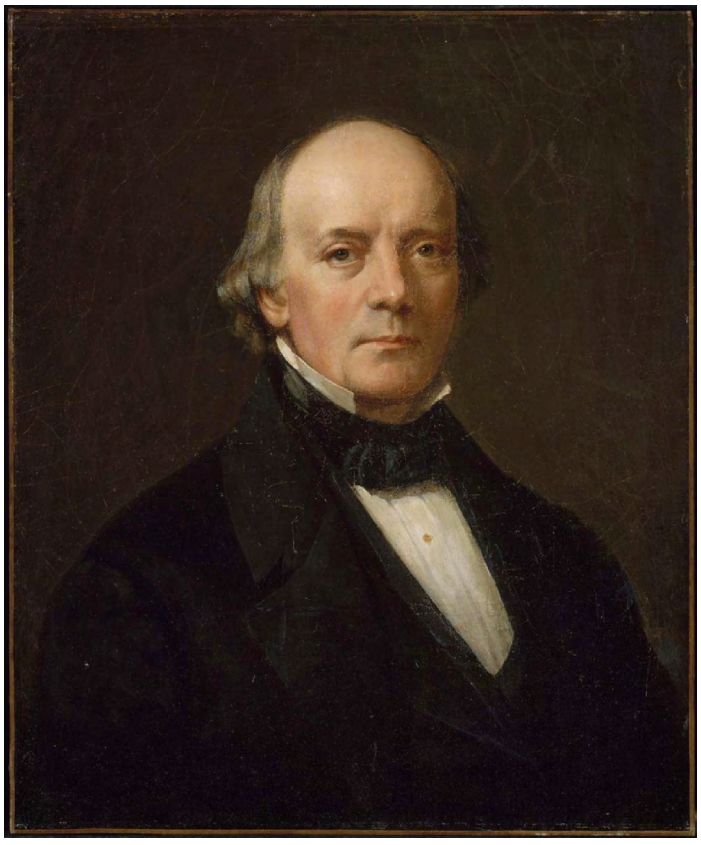

Fig. 28 Chester Harding, *Self-Portrait*, ca. 1843. Oil on canvas, 30 x 24 7/8 in. (76.2 x 63 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

the Lowell Institute in Boston and Harvard University in Cambridge) moved to New York to teach. He did return to Chelsea in the summers and then moved back in 1870, but an earlier date is probable.[38]

According to Eliza Kent's son, Rimmer felt a particular bond with Eliza (fourteen years younger) and her husband because of their mutual love of music. He would visit them expressly "for the music," which must have involved his participation as well.[39] The artist, whose favorite composer was Beethoven, not only sang with a fine bass voice but he also composed and played on the piano, flute, and organ. In fact, during the late 1840s, he performed on the organ, trained a choir, and conducted music at a Catholic church (St. Mary's) in Randolph.[40]

The plan for the portrait almost certainly developed from Rimmer's belief that music belonged to a spiritual life and revealed the inner self.[41] His inclusion of a specific piece by Bach was a way to comment on the sitter's taste, sensitivity, and spiritual awareness. That is, the picture goes beyond the visible — her appearance and action — to verify, through the abstract medium of music, that she is someone with inner beauty.[42]

Another immaterial element, the lighting, is effective in almost the same way as the use of sound. A soft spotlight on Eliza Kent's face with a slight murkiness to the surrounding air introduces a quality of quiet reflection and mystery that Rimmer seems to have preferred. This slightly darkened environment recalls *Portrait of a Young Man* and the now-discolored, early portrait of the artist's wife in its evocation of atmosphere. However, more than in these precedents, Rimmer seems to have delighted in carefully contrived details of light and shadow. Examples include the tendrils of hair on her forehead which cast shadows, the sheen on her hair, the light on the turned-back page, sparkling highlights on the edges of her ruffled collar, and the vertical dash of light in a decorative indentation on the piano that calls attention to her hand. This last use of light serves a compositional function in moving the viewer's eye, in a generally circular direction, and is echoed in the set of parallel lines in the wallpaper.

Fig. 29 *Mrs. Robert Restiaux Kent* (*Eliza F. Watson*), ca. 1865. Oil on canvas, 30 x 25 in. (76.2 x 63.5 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Gift of Mrs. Richard B. Kent in the name of the late Henry Watson Kent. Photograph © 2022 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

The artist was well aware that he could not capture this sense of a soulful presence in sculptured busts, which is one reason he was attracted to the medium of oil paint for portraits.[43] Not just with portraits but also with subject pictures, oil paint suited an artist who prioritized the stimulation of imagination.

Like the other undated portraits, Rimmer's last known likeness in oils, *Young Woman* (fig. 30) has an assigned date — about 1870 — that is approximated from costuming and hairstyle. His youngest daughter, Caroline, owned it, but the picture does not resemble photographs of her and is probably of another family member.[44] It is smaller than the other oil portraits and, unlike them, simplified through the cloaking of large areas in shadow. Indeed, the shadowing is so heavy that this could well be an experimental, portrait study rather than a commissioned likeness. The famous precedent for this dark chiaroscuro with contrasting glitter, as in her tiara and the border of her dress, is the work of Rembrandt, such as in this *Self-Portrait* (fig. 31). Rembrandt had long inspired a renewal of interest among artists.

Fig. 30 *Young Woman*, ca. 1870. Oil on canvas, 21 x 17 in. (55.33 x 43.20 cm). Unlocated. Image: Jeffrey Weidman, et al, *William Rimmer: A Yankee Michelangelo*. Hanover, NH: Brockton Art Museum/Fuller Memorial, 1985, no. 32

Fig. 31 Rembrandt van Rijn, *Self-Portrait with Shaded Eyes*, 1634. Oil on panel, 28 x 22 in. (71.1 x 56 cm). The Leiden Collection, New York, NY. https://www.theleidencollection.com/viewer/self-portrait-with-shaded-eyes

But Rimmer had already moved in this direction earlier, in a less derivative way, in his first known work in oil, *Portrait of a Young Man* (fig. 10). That is, like many painters historically, he adopted the effect of a turgid, mysterious atmosphere so that it became characteristic of him. He recommended to students, much later, "that impalpable something which we feel but do not see, which softens every defect, and throws over everything a thin, transparent veil."[45] This elusive quality is in the background alone in the earlier work. Closer to Rembrandt, the later portrait envelops the head in darkness. This kind of painting in *Young Woman* is completely unlike many of Rimmer's classroom drawings that are dependent on lines, but he also taught his students how to soften edges or make "outlines obscure."[46]

In the blanket shading or masses of shadow, the portrait also relates to some subject pictures by Rimmer's friend, William Morris Hunt. But the connection is less true with Hunt's portraits, such as *Study of a Female Head* (fig. 32) which incorporates minor shadowing over the visible eye and lighter shading below. Furthermore, the touches of highlight in Rimmer's portrait bring it closer to Rembrandt's work. Hunt, a painter then known best for portraits, and Rimmer sometimes shared pupils who compared them. One of them reported that Hunt, in about 1874, was markedly different because of his generalized drawing "by masses."[47]

Fig. 32 William Morris Hunt, *Study of a Female Head*, ca. 1872, oil on canvas, 23 15/16 x 18 in. (60.8 x 45.7 cm), Brooklyn Museum, John B. Woodward Memorial Fund

So much descriptive detail in *Young Woman* has been eliminated that the fact that the sitter turns her head, with shoulders at an angle, so that there is some action is nearly the sole indication of any characterization. Her posture assumes importance when dealing with a specialist in the expressive possibilities of human anatomy. Rimmer wrote that "when the features are latent," as when little is revealed, "the expression may in some degree receive direction from the action of the body."[48] Her mere turning suggests vitality, especially in this unusual pose. In Rimmer's terms, her subtle smile and eyes enlarged by shadows are also indicative of sensitivity and intelligence.[49] Instead of acknowledging the viewer as Eliza Kent did, she looks beyond and, with the obscuring of her features, is evasive and perhaps soulful. Despite the gaze disconnected from the viewer, this portrait conveys the presence of someone with unmistakable sentience. Rimmer's heads that look at the viewer have this same quality, but it is more easily obtained. That Rimmer's surviving portraits are so diverse makes clear his tendency — carried throughout his work — to challenge himself and experiment.

When the Civil War began with the attack on Fort Sumter in South Carolina, April 12, 1861, Rimmer, at age forty-five, was occupied with completing his heroic, life-size sculpture, *Falling Gladiator*. Although he did not publicly engage in politics, he was a Republican who supported Lincoln and, after the four-year war, he continued to support the policies of the Abolitionists, particularly those of Massachusetts' Senator Charles Sumner.[50]

One potential Civil War portrait stems from the unusual presence of black volunteer troops in Boston under the white Colonel Robert Gould Shaw, a Boston Abolitionist. Seizing the occasion, Rimmer sketched a likeness in pencil of a black soldier with large eyes, a kindly expression, a hopeful upward look, and a forward shoulder in *Heads of Soldiers* (fig. 33). Whether his subject was a real person or not is unknown, but the inspiration for the drawing is apparently in his circumstances, in his grouping with other recruits. They hold rifles and — with their heads lined up — present different overlapping profiles, suggestive of diversity in race and personality. The point, in reference to a real event, appears to be that the foreground soldier is enthusiastically joining other volunteers — black and white — in marching to war as part of a united effort. From the visual evidence, the alternative, that he is shown in an all-black regiment that is so abbreviated as to eliminate skin color, is unlikely.[51] Thus, fairly clearly, this is fiction because the actual regiment was black. But the drawing is symbolic of the Abolitionists' hoped-for racial unity in this fight for one cause. Solidarity is the message.

Fig. 33 *Heads of Soldiers*, probably 1863. Graphite pencil on paper, 7 x 10 in. (17.85 x 25.40 cm). Unlocated. Image from glass plate negative. Courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Related to this effort, Rimmer created clay sketches or preliminary mock-ups (lost) for sculptures that were more "personal" than his drawings and, according to Bartlett, "pathetic in their rendering of the painful condition of the negro in the War for the Union."[52] Evidently the loss of these sketches removes a record of Rimmer's empathy for the American slave.

While other artists painted, drew and sculpted images of the soldiers or of recent battles, Rimmer took a different and more inventive tack. For him, this war, concerning the timeless question of slavery, was epic, and its visual representation had to be allegorical. Mere illustration of war would not be to treat the situation in an art form. In one of his art anatomy lectures, he warned: "In giving great prominence to action and emotion, in whatever particular, we approach the sensational, the sphere of actual events, where art is unknown."[53] The work of art had to be filtered or altered through the artist's contribution — a use of the imagination. Just as he recontextualized parts of scenes by Bonington and Shakespeare, he reconceived an actual event in metaphorical terms. In this, he followed his advice to students "to know nature, but to rely upon knowledge and imagination in the execution of a work."[54]

One of Rimmer's earliest Civil War images, from 1862, uses this metaphorical approach and is a drawing of two symbolic combatants, Secessia and Columbia (fig. 34), representing Secession and the Union. While "Columbia had been a substitute name for the United States, the term, "Secessia," by 1862, referred to the South.[55] With minimal drapery, Secessia has the bearded and mustached head that Rimmer used elsewhere for a Northern European or Goth type; Columbia, in Roman gladiatorial attire, being less barbarous, adopts a classical profile.[56] This is an example of his typing for the purpose of enhanced clarity.

Fig. 34 *Secessia and Columbia*, 1862. Graphite pencil on paper, sheet: 17 3/8 x 24 in. (44.1 x 61 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Gift of Mrs. Henry Simonds. Photograph © 2022 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Rimmer's conception, used as the basis for a photograph to be sold to raise money for the Fifty-Fourth and Fifty-Fifth Regiments of Massachusetts Volunteers (both African American regiments), was so original with its invented characters that it was initially misunderstood. The American public was not used to allegory, other than in a political cartoon where figures might wear explanatory signs. One reviewer, who saw the picture at Williams & Everett's art gallery in Boston in 1863, recognized that this was a mythic battle between good and evil but assumed it showed Great Heart fighting Giant Grim from John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. The scene is so epic that even after being corrected, this journalist found it highly effective with either explanation.[57]

To commemorate the Fifty-Fourth Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteers, which was unique in being the first federally-recognized, African American regiment, Rimmer created not only *Heads of Soldiers* but also another war-themed, allegorical drawing (fig. 35).[58] It too was exhibited at Williams & Everett in 1863, but a couple of months before *Secessia and Columbia*, and with the same intention that it be photographed for the war effort, with a portion of the sale receipts destined for the regiment. The Abolitionist newspaper, *The Liberator* described it as "The Dawn of Liberty" and hailed it as being "prescient" in recognizing in its design "not only a numerical addition to our forces, but the advent of a new reign of Justice, which will give moral vigor to our consciences, and new courage to our hearts."[59]

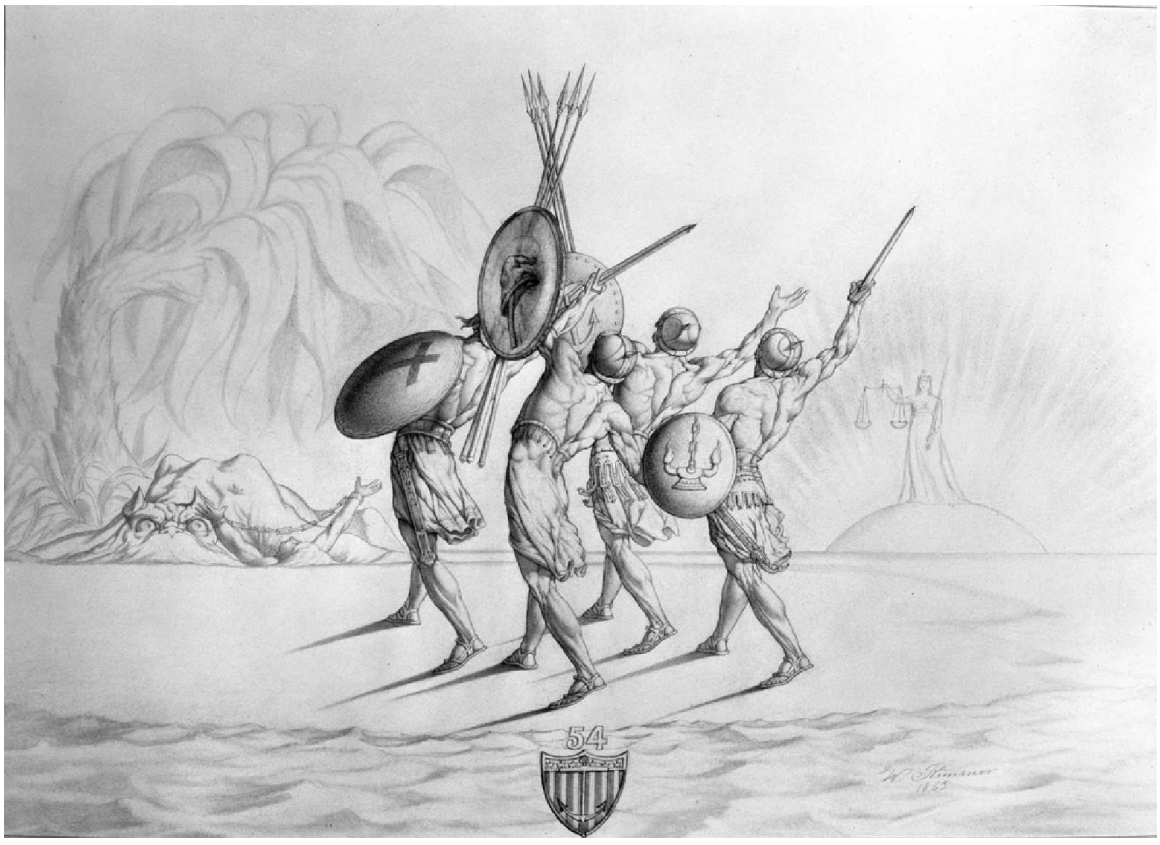

Fig. 35 *Dedicated to the 54th Regiment, Massachusetts Volunteers*, 1863. Graphite on paper, 17 ½ x 24 ½ in. (44.45 x 62.20 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

In the foreground, four members of the Fifty-Fourth Regiment are presented symbolically as Roman gladiators, without the irrelevance of faces, in a timeless fight against pure evil. They have the muscular backs that Rimmer so often drew in his anatomy class, and they perform as a striding, powerful, fearless unit. As one published account interprets it, with uplifted spears, they take "the solemn pledge of eternal warfare" against the huge monster of slavery before them, who sprawls in dominating fashion on a chained victim, surely a woman. While the hideous creature, upon seeing the warriors, starts "to rise again" from beneath a wilting palmetto (symbol of South Carolina), the rising sun illuminates Justice with her balanced scale.[60]

With regard to its exhibition, this drawing superseded *Secessia and Columbia* because it referred to a recent occurrence, the mustering of these troops. As Bartlett noted, the work is rare within Rimmer's oeuvre in being one of the few that deals with current events.[61]

About two weeks after the last published notice of this drawing, the regiment departed for Charleston, South Carolina on May 28, 1863. This particular regiment of black volunteers and their leader, Robert Shaw, are famous for having been exceptionally heroic in battle in Charleston. In a seemingly suicidal mission that resulted in the death of hundreds of soldiers, including Shaw, they stormed the walls of Fort Wagner, one of the Confederate forts protecting the city's harbor.

More than a decade later in 1884, on commission to commemorate Shaw and the Fifty-Fourth Regiment, Augustus Saint-Gaudens produced a naturalistic, high-relief sculpture, just below life-size, that was cast in bronze as the *Robert Gould Shaw Memorial* (fig. 36). Unlike Rimmer's allegorical representation, it is completely based on live models (and photographs of Shaw) to recreate the effect of the soldiers marching from Boston. The final result shows Shaw mounted at foreground center. All the soldiers' heads are individualized in a convincing re-enactment except for the symbolic figure above with a laurel branch for victory and poppies for death.[62]

Fig. 36 Augustus Saint-Gaudens, *Robert Gould Shaw Memorial*, 1897. Bronze, 11 x 14 ft. (3.4 x 4.3 m). Boston Common, Boston, MA. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Gould_Shaw_Memorial#/media/File:Robert_Gould_Shaw_Memorial_(36053)

In contrast, Rimmer's small drawing of an idealistic march to war does not feature a white leader on horseback. Evidently representing an Abolitionist viewpoint, his nearly identical figures seen from the back reject any military or racial hierarchy. Instead, through association, their action is shown to be of the quality of the greatest heroes of antiquity.

In a letter of 1862, Rimmer wrote of the act of drawing the exterior of a human being as playing with an "infinite surface over the finite depth below."[63] By infinite, he meant a surface in movement: the face or body of a living, breathing person. In his *Art Anatomy*, he pondered how to represent that depth below when it had a spiritual quality and concluded that no head is "so finely formed" that it represents "only the Spiritual." Rather, "many forms are possible — as many as there are intellectual graces or physical beauties."[64]

The letter continued that "Any mechanic may make a manakin [sic]. Any surgeon may learn the parts of the human person — but he who would become an artist enters upon a wider field — the discovery through the [subject of a human being] of the strength of his own intelligence and the sensitiveness of his own perceptions."[65] For Rimmer, the creation of art was, above all, a challenging act of perception and self-expression.

With this emphasis on the artist's self, inevitably Rimmer had his own idiosyncratic manner as a portraitist. The deformed fingers, the depressed sitter, the spiritual spotlight, the portrait that incorporates music but eclipses half the face, and the shadowed head with sentience suggested by a tilted neck are indicative of an artist who — despite the expectations of his profession — managed to avoid providing a formulaic result. From what remains, it is clear that — against the more decorative aspects of much of the competition — the merits of Rimmer's portraits in oils were not those of a kind to win broad public appeal.

Characteristically, he persevered on his own path and, unlike most competitors, often sought mysterious effects in light and shadow. The hinting and obscuring in Mrs. Kent's picture and others suggested that a sitter has an elusive identity that involves more than what can be seen. The possibility of suggesting an immaterial reality certainly attracted Rimmer. To the extent that portrait painting could go beyond copying and involve the imagination, Rimmer thought the practice "susceptible of the highest artistic excellence."[66]

Endnotes

1 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 17.

2 Ibid., 17, for character.

3 The portrait, thought to be of his only known sister, Jane — perhaps from memory — belongs to the Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis, IN. Signed on the reverse of the original canvas, possibly in the artist's hand, it is a bust portrait of her, three-quarters to the left, nearly frontal and looking directly at the viewer. Her body is turned left. The sitter was identified by her granddaughter, Mrs. Marion MacLean, to Lincoln Kirstein in 1953. From the costume, hairstyle, and her probable age, it could date from the early 1850s. In 1979, the museum's chief conservator, Martin J. Radecki, noted an "extreme amount of overpaint" from two restorations (museum file).

4 I'm indebted to Dr. Patience H. White, Professor of Medicine and Pediatrics at the George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences, for this diagnosis. Her specialty is rheumatology.

5 After his marriage in Boston on December 17, 1840, Rimmer studied medicine intermittently with Dr. Abel Washburn Kingman of Brockton until about 1847 or 1848 when Rimmer practiced as a doctor. For the timing, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 16, and 21.

6 On amateur, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 26. In 1864, Rimmer was one of a group of seven citizens who presented an "elegant set" of Shakespeare's plays to a well-known Shakespearean actor at his farewell performance at the Boston Theater. For this, see Anon., "Presentation," *Boston Post*, March 4, 1864, 4. Rimmer's sister, Jane, "played, sang, and danced professionally" at Austin and Stone's Boston Museum Company and the Howard Theatre in Boston. On this, see Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 2:481n5.

7 The picture has minor repaint, particularly on the lips and shaded right part of her face. Her neckline is impastoed to suggest an edge of probably pearls.

8 The famous authority on the moral interpretation (sometimes contradictory) of the human profile was Johann Caspar Lavater. See his *Essays on Physiognomy; for the Promotion of the Knowledge and the Love of Mankind*, trans. Thomas Holcroft, 2nd ed. (London: Printed by C. Whittingham for H.D. Symonds, 1804), 4 Volumes. Although the head might be analyzed, it was the profile that was considered most revealing. On a certain educated level, it was common at the time to be a physiognomist who presumed to be able to interpret profiles. For this see Anon., "The Penalties of Literature," *The Southern and Western Literary Messenger and Review 12* (Richmond, VA: B.B. Minor, 1846–1847): 752.

9 See Rimmer's criticism of female faces against an "average" in his *Art Anatomy*, 41, 59. See Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 121, where he also did not like jewelry on men, such as the man's earring in *Flight and Pursuit*.

10 The portrait needs cleaning. More might be revealed in the darkened background, including the staircase, if this is done.

11 The inscription "Prepared by / Morris / No. 28 / Exchange St. / Boston" refers to Apollos Morris and then Charles A. Morris who, according to Boston Directories, occupied this address from 1844 to 1848. See Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 2:439–41.

12 Based on a presumed sixteenth-century inscription on a French palace window that women are too fickle to be trusted, Shelley's tale imagines a bet, to test the truth of the rhymed message. As the engraving shows, the wager is placed between the inscriber — thought to be Francis I — and his sister who are shown together near the window.

13 The provenance for these pictures is in Weidman, et al., *Rimmer*, 52, 54–55.

14 See his special discussion of this area in Rimmer, *Art Anatomy*, 90. Rimmer deepened his understanding of anatomy beyond Kingman's instruction by attending post-mortem examinations in 1843 at the Harvard Medical School dissecting rooms. See Philip Cash's essay in Weidman, et al., *Rimmer*, 24.

15 Box 1, folder: "Photographs of Works of Art, undated," Kirstein and Nutt Research Material, Archives of American Art.

The unadorned or natural look of these sitters is akin to the appearance of an invented character in a small painting (Private Collection) by Rimmer, from probably the late 1830s, that he signed and titled at the bottom, "The Flower of the Forest." See Weidman, et al., *Rimmer*, no. 11, for an image. The young woman shown at full length wears a circlet

of flowers and long hair with an imaginary dress that, like the shallow-crowned straw hat on the ground, is inspired by peasant costuming. Rimmer's source is three love poems by William Cullen Bryant: "Oh Fairest of the Rural Maids" which places her in woodland; "An Indian Story" which describes her as "the flower of the forest" but Native American; and "The Hunter's Serenade" which mentions the panther seen on the left. Rather than an illustration of any one poem, it is a combination of borrowed and changed ideas that concern an innocent, young woman of the forest and a nearby stream. For example, Bryant's wild panther is introduced only in passing as an animal to be killed as a suitable present in "The Hunter's Serenade," but in Rimmer's rendition, the panther is her companion — a docile, black cub, seemingly charmed by the maid's inner beauty and absence of fear. Like Daniel in the lions' den (Daniel 6:22), she is protected by her innocence. All three poems appear in William Cullen Bryant, *Poems by William Cullen Bryant*, 5th ed. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1839), beginning on pages 115 ("An Indian Story"); 119 ("The Hunter's Serenade"); and 171 ("Oh Fairest of the Rural Maids").

16 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 17.

17 Ibid., 17. No photograph of the destroyed portrait is known to exist.

18 Ibid., 126. For morbid, concerning a Cupid and Venus scene, see S.R. Koehler on American painters in H.J. Wilmot-Buxton and S.R. Koehler, *English Painters* (London: S. Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1883), 209.

19 Fenno-Gendrot, *Artists*, 37.

20 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 126.

21 Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 2:551n81; 2:556n5. The severe criticism concerns the "Cupid Relating His Adventures to Venus" (lost) by Rimmer that was ridiculed for unnaturally red, flesh color. On this, see Martha L.B. Goddard, *Letters of Martha LeBaron Goddard Selected by Sarah Theo Brown* (Worcester, MA: Davis and Banister, 1901), 82.

22 Jamison, *Touched with Fire*, 127. See also Emanuel Bubl, et al., "Seeing Gray When Feeling Blue? Depression Can Be Measured in the Eye of the Diseased," *Biological Psychiatry*, 68:2 (July 2010), 205–08, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biopsych.2010.02.009.

23 Sarah Hall Johnston, ed., *Lineage Book: National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution* (Washington, D.C., n.p., 1912), 33:247.

24 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 26. See the related description of seeing grays, as part of depression, in Jamison, *Touched with Fire*, 18.

25 Evans, *Stuart*, 152–56. Chapter five (135–69) is on similarities between bipolar artists. The best understanding of this cognitive dysfunction as a feature of bipolar disorder, using the Street Gestalt Completion Test, is provided by Linda R. Sapin, et al., "Mediational Factors Underlying Cognitive Changes and Laterality in Affective Illness," *Biological Psychiatry*, 22, no. 8 (August 1987): 979, 983, https://doi.org/10.1016/0006-3223(87)90007-2. Her bipolar subjects were unmedicated and euthymic. See also David C. Glahn, et al., "Dissociable Mechanisms for Memory Impairment in Bipolar Disorder and Schizophrenia" *Psychological Medicine 36*, no. 8 (August 2006): 1086, 1092, https://doi.org/10.1017/s0033291706007902, reporting a bipolar deficit in holistic processing of mildly depressive, mildly manic, and remitted subjects on various medications. Unfortunately, there is not sufficient incentive (particularly for an investment from pharmaceutical companies) for exploration into holistic processing.

26 Rimmer's signatures vary, suggesting a difference in speed, with some strongly slanted toward the right and others more upright. This one has the "W" and "R" somewhat embellished and followed by the abbreviation "del [and a raised "t"] for the Latin "delineavit," meaning "drew it." Below this is the date. His use of Latin is like that of "Pinxit," meaning "painted it" on the reverse of *Portrait of a Young Man*. The sitter could be a relative as he has the lobeless Bourbon ear that Rimmer's father had.

27 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 118.

28 Anon., "Music, Art and Sciences," *Watchman and Reflector*, June 23, 1870, [1]. See note 22, concerning inferior coloring and evidently the same picture of Cupid and Venus.

29 Anon., "Art Notes," *New York Herald*, May 8, 1870, 3.

30 Evans, *Stuart*, 156.

31 Bradford Kingman, *History of North Bridgewater: Plymouth County, Massachusetts, from Its First Settlement to the Present Time, with Family Registers* (Boston, MA: n.p., 1866), 562.

32 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 17, who also describes it as a bust portrait. A signature and date were found on the back of the portrait before it was relined. The conservator, John Castano, discovered that it had been cut down. See the object file on it, Brockton Public Library.

33 Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 2:427, on the basis of a photograph, dated the second portrait (not signed or dated) as earlier because the sitter looked younger. The hair is darker, but this version is overall more fictitious. The signed and dated, simpler version is more likely first. There is minor repaint on the second, and its surface was flattened during relining.

34 Kingman, *History*, 562.

35 A variation on this is in John 12:46. All biblical quotations are from the King James Version.

36 This whimsical quality is characteristic of other manic-depressive artists. See Evans, *Stuart*, 156. Lapses in Rimmer's work might be part of an attention deficit. See Luke Clark, et al., "Sustained Attention Deficit in Bipolar Disorder," *British Journal of Psychiatry 180* (April 2002): 313–19, https://doi.org/10.1016/s0028-3932(02)00019-2.

37 Rimmer, *Art Anatomy*, 18.

38 Robert R. Kent's occupation is in the 1870 United States Federal Census. Kirstein suggested the date of 1867, presumably on the authority of the sitter's son, Henry W. Kent, who was a friend. The museum gives a more approximate date, for which the clothing and hair would be just as appropriate.

39 For music, see Henry W. Kent's letter, October 16, 1945, to Lincoln Kirstein, in the research file for Kent, box 1, Kirstein and Nutt Research Material, Archives of American Art.

40 For Beethoven, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 95. For the musical instruments, voice and church, see ibid., 4, 9–10, 120, 19. Weidman, who owns Rimmer's musical compositions, added piano to the list in *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 1:75.

41 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 109.

42 At upper left in a bright spot in the wallpaper, there is a mysterious gold and brown figure that resembles a griffin. Like the musical score, this symbol somehow comments on the sitter.

43 See the quotations from Rimmer in Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 107.

44 See Weidman, et al., *Rimmer*, 72, for Caroline as possibly the sitter. According to the profile photograph of her in the possession of collateral descendant Robert Korndorffer, her nose and chin were different. See also the difference in the group photograph of her in the scrapbook album, Kirstein and Nutt Research Material, Archives of American Art.

45 See Rimmer on Rembrandt in Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 102. Rimmer added bitumen to enrich the effect of a dark color in some works such as the cloak in *Hagar and Ishmael* (Matthew Marks Gallery, NYC) and the background in the second portrait of *Kingman*. This addition plus extra oil were evidently part of an attempt to recreate the richness of the dark browns in the work of such old masters as Leonardo da Vinci and Rembrandt. When *Young Woman* was conserved in 1976, the conservators, Marion Mecklenburg and Justine Wimsatt, from the Washington Conservation Studio, Washington, D.C., found "an excessive amount of oil" in the paint medium. Similarly, the 1985 conservation report on Rimmer's *Sleeping* recorded an excessive amount of oil in the painting of the red blanket. See the curatorial file, Currier Museum of Art. Rimmer's concept of Rembrandt would have been based on prints, photographs, book illustrations and book descriptions. For the quote, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 147.

46 Rimmer's student, Daniel C. French, claimed that Rimmer, in contrast to Hunt, saw "chiefly, line." If this was his instinct, he worked against it. See French's letter to Elbert F. Baldwin, February 4, 1918, Daniel Chester French Papers, Library of Congress. The quote is from William Rimmer, *Art Anatomy* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1962), 91.

47 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 139. Within the undated report is mention of Senator Sumner's funeral which was in 1874.

48 Rimmer, *Art Anatomy*, 49.

49 The size of the eye adds sensibility as interpreted in Rimmer, *Art Anatomy*, 63, no. 193. He supposed that the eye related to the intellect but did not say how (ibid., 12).

50 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 95. On Sumner, see ibid., 139.

51 Kirstein realized this and wrote it in his copy of the 1946–1947 Rimmer exhibition catalogue, against the listing, no. 28, of this work (Kirstein Papers, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts).

52 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 124.

53 Ibid., 114.

54 Ibid., 81 (quote), 143.

55 See the map of Richmond, Virginia, "Drawn by a Refugee Just Escaped from Secessia" in *Harper's Weekley* (August 9, 1862), 6:502. The map belongs to the Library of Congress.

56 See Rimmer's drawing, *Faces: Goth, Greek, Moor*, Boston Medical Library. The allusion to Rome also refers to a republican form of government, which Secessia, as a minority stakeholder, rejects.

The opposing helmets signal competing allegiances to colonial emblems of the United States. The bald eagle which became the symbol of the country in 1782 is here the symbol of the Union; the coiled rattlesnake — originally with its motto "Don't Tread on Me" from a patriotic flag designed by a South Carolinian in 1775 — is here the symbol of the defiant first seceding state: South Carolina. On the side of Secessia is a statue of Slavery as a weeping woman chained to rocks, placed on a plinth emblazoned with a crowned pair of whips; on Columbia's side is a statue of Liberty as an enthroned woman welcoming all people, placed on a plinth emblazoned with a winged cross. This last is an invention probably meant to signify Christian sanctioning of freedom, while the crowned whips (also original) appear to refer to the contrasting, official status of slavery. In the picture's center, the clashing shields of the two giant warriors form a symbolic divide that, together with an erupting volcano below, testifies to their irreconcilability. In the bottom foreground is a miniature landscape which stretches across the scene and shows a river dividing the fortified lands of the two symbols.

57 Anon., "Dr. Rimmer," *Boston Evening Transcript*, May 13, 1863, 4. Kirstein and Weidman thought Rimmer must have been influenced by David Scott's illustrations for Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, but the connection is not that close. He does not need to have seen them. On this, see Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 3:785, with regard to an earlier version of *Secessia and Columbia*.

58 The earlier First Kansas Colored Infantry was created in 1862 but not formally recognized by the federal service.

59 Anon., "A New and Striking Design," *The Liberator*, March 27, 1863, 2.

60 Ibid., 2. In the foreground, the shields of the four pledged warriors contain emblematic references to the Union's sources of strength: faith (cross), liberty (liberty cap on a pole), hope (anchor), and spirit and intellect (joined candles). The last one is an original symbol that has been open to differing interpretation. Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 123, interprets the last as light, and, in his earlier article, as intelligence. See Truman H. Bartlett, "Dr. William Rimmer: Second and Concluding Article," *The American Art Review 1* (October 1880): 510, https://doi.org/10.2307/20559727. Kirstein follows Bartlett's book in [Kirstein], *Rimmer*, no. 41. Weidman records his predecessors (*Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 3:810) without a preference.

61 Bartlett, "Rimmer: Second and Concluding Article," 510.

62 See the discussion of individualized heads in Molly K. Eckel, "Model Citizens: Four Studies for Augustus Saint-Gaudens's Robert Gould Shaw Memorial," *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin, Recent Acquisitions* (2017), 49–55. JSTOR.

63 William Rimmer's letter, October 19, 1862, to the poet and artist, Anne Charlotte Botta, Worcester Art Museum Library, Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, MA. She played a role in obtaining a position for Rimmer at the School of Design for Women, Cooper Union. On this, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 51. For more on her, see Albert Ten Eyck Gardner, "The Arts and Mrs. Botta," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin 6* (November 1947): 105–08.

64 Rimmer, *Art Anatomy*, 23.

65 Rimmer's letter, October 19, 1862, to Botta. His emphasis in teaching was on self-expression. See Rimmer, *Elements of Design*, 5. On the second book and his general reputation for expression, see Moses True Brown, *The Synthetic Philosophy of Expression as Applied to the Arts* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1892) 117. See also Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 119.

66 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 107.

3. Self-Expression in *Flight and Pursuit*

William Rimmer's *Flight and Pursuit* (fig. 37), signed and dated 1872, has been the cause of considerable scholarly debate since the 1980s. After entering a public collection, it appeared in American art surveys as well as a major exhibition, but there has rarely been agreement on the subject, which is not immediately evident.[1] This attention is not misplaced: the picture has been treated in different ways as a rich encapsulation of Rimmer's concerns as an artist.

Within an exotic interior, a terrified man wearing a dagger is chased by a nearly identical figure wielding a saber. The hint of violence — imminent or recently-committed — makes the scene sensational. Wholly different historical contexts have been constructed to provide content for the picture. These include allusions to the 1866 capture of John Surratt, a conspirator in President Lincoln's assassination; the 1811 massacre of the Mameluke warriors by the Turkish Pasha Mohammed Ali; the biblical conspirators against King Solomon, fleeing to the holy altar for safety; and the pre-Civil War pursuit of American fugitive slaves.[2]

In these responses, the vaporous quality of the second figure — readable as a spirit — is usually overlooked. But it is so extraordinary that it must be at the heart of a quite specific interpretation. Even the latest reading diminishes the salience of this peculiarity and, in a surprising compromise, sees the picture's historical content as open-ended, or "left to the viewer's imagination."[3]

A compelling argument can be made that the subject's earliest identification is, for the most part, what the artist intended. After discussing the painting with the daughter of its first owner (one of Rimmer's closest friends), the art connoisseur Lincoln Kirstein, in 1946, called it an allegory of "man and his conscience."[4] But, in an elaboration, presumably influenced by his Harvard education, he claimed that the depiction referred to the enigmatic poem "Brahma" by Ralph Waldo Emerson, one of Harvard's most distinguished graduates.[5] This short piece, which Kirstein quotes, concerns a Hindu god's abstruse reflection on his own nature. Since there is no visual tie, the Emerson connection led to skepticism and it is now generally deemed "tenuous at best."[6] This might not be grounds, however, for entirely discarding an explanation that can be linked through the first owner to Rimmer. Arguably the scene's intended meaning is most convincing as an allegory of guilt or of man's conscience in a state of sin.

With his students, Rimmer expressed a preference for the portrayal of what is timeless and universal — "the intellectual or moral condition of things."[7] This jibes well with a reinterpretation of the picture as epitomizing the conflict between a sinner and his moral sense, or conscience. The theme of conscience fits all the visual details of the scene as well as what is known of the artist and his preoccupations.[8] Furthermore, it echoes the tenor of Rimmer's private, surviving writings about imagined situations and himself. They reveal a troubled man, accustomed to self-flagellation over both perceived and imagined moral failings.[9]

More than has been realized, Rimmer was an artist with a mystical sensibility who not only wrote but also tended to paint from his innermost thoughts and feelings. His private life and his work were closely entwined, and inevitably so. He created mostly for himself and obtained commissions for less than a quarter of his work.[10] Although traditional interpretations of *Flight and Pursuit* have generally favored an historical or literary explanation, the essence of the picture is convincing as much more personal. Yet it is abstracted or expressed in universal terms.

Fortunately, a preliminary drawing for the foreground figure (fig. 38) in *Flight and Pursuit* survives and is partially identified by the artist's label: "oh for the horns of the Altar."[11] This inscription, referring to the Bible, corroborates other evidence that Rimmer favored biblical subjects. Reportedly, he had a "great love for the Bible"

https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0304.03

Fig. 37 *Flight and Pursuit*, 1872. Oil on canvas, 18 1/8 x 26 ¼ in (46.00 x 66.70 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Bequest of Miss Edith Nichols, 1956. Photograph © 2022 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

as apparently a source of moral inspiration rather than of literal truth.[12] Along with the prominent, waistband knife, the inscription helps to establish the first man in the painting as a sinner whose offences include homicide. In fact, for greater emphasis, the one knife becomes two in the drawing. As recounted in 1 Kings 1:50–53 and 2:28–34, egregious offenders (in the first case, a usurper king; in the second, a double murderer) of the kings of Israel could obtain sanctuary by grasping the horns on the four corners of a special altar.[13] In a telling distinction, however, Rimmer's drawing inscription provides the sinner's thinking, and it is not actually a biblical quotation.

Fig. 38 *Oh, for the Horns of the Altar*, 1872 or before. Pencil on paper, 11 4/5 x 14 ½ in (30.20 x 36.85 cm). Cushing / Whitney Medical Library, Yale University

Likewise, the strange figure (fig. 39) following the foreground man in the painting is not biblically based, indicating that the entire image deviates from the Bible. This second man is so thinly painted that he has a barely discernable face but what can be seen are his large eyes trained on the first runner. In contrast to the more strongly colored and highly modeled foreground man, the peculiar transparency of this figure transports him out of the real world. Breaking this contrast, the lower-body posture of each man mysteriously duplicates that of the other.

Fig. 39 *Flight and Pursuit* (detail), 1872

Through the coupling of these figures, the scene encompasses two aspects of a single person — the foreground self, in his state of sin, and, behind him, his higher nature — higher in the sense of the personification (as Kirstein saw it) of a conscience. As the picture makes clear, this Conscience, as a phantom pursuer, is first and foremost an inescapable avenger, from whom the wrongdoer will never be free. Accordingly, the temple altar, indicated by the smoke of a burnt offering at the left edge, and its horns will be of no avail. There is *no* safe refuge, and this is really the point. The inclusion of this sanctuary of last resort even in the drawing's inscription means that, from the beginning, the emphasis was on the utter hopelessness of the sinner's plight. Rather than providing rescue, the altar gives credence, if need be, to Rimmer's known lack of respect for "priestcraft for its own sake."[14]

Adding to the effect of absolute terror before a spiritual manifestation, an ominous shadow appears on the floor at the right, forked to suggest possibly two people. They do not enter the chase (contrary to some readings) but, instead, remain upright and stationary.[15] That is, they appear to threaten by being ever present as if they were a haunting memory, such as unforgettable victims. Like Conscience, they can be understood as part of the mind of the apparent assassin.

Rimmer's soul-baring, self-referential narrative, "Stephen and Phillip," written mostly during the 1870s, is not only an extraordinary resource for understanding Rimmer and his work, but also it has special relevancy with regard to *Flight and Pursuit*. One of the recurrent themes is the culpability of the artist and of his imaginary companions — Stephen and Phillip (aspects of himself) — for various sins. These range from hard-heartedness to outright murder in an impulsive response to villainy.[16] A crucial passage, suggestive of Rimmer's thinking with regard to *Flight and Pursuit*, is where Rimmer cries out: "Alas! For adulterers and thieves and murderers. Oh, who can fancy the shadows that follow them?" Then he describes the shadows' occupants, as if from this image where the recently deceased might inhabit the pool of darkness at the right: "Things of another world (Foul like themselves) on whom corruption hangs from their graves."[17] In a further connection, he speaks of imagined scenes that, like the painting, have historical, Middle Eastern settings, such as Babylon's towers or Nineveh's gates.[18]

At another point in the manuscript, "Conscience" appears in human form, embodied as a female beggar who tests the generosity of the disparate people she meets by asking for a piece of bread.[19] In his vivid imagination, Rimmer conceived of Conscience as capable of assuming different forms in relation to a person, as an interior or exterior being. His own conscience within him, for example, trembles as it is attacked by demon claws, and Stephen, acting as an external conscience, whispers — albeit unsuccessfully — in the ear of an evildoer.[20] The existence of a conscience was so consequential to Rimmer that he even included it in a rambling, art lecture that incorporated a reference to religious viewpoint.[21]

More personally, Rimmer writes in his text of feelings of his own guilt. He cites related, internal "whirling" and being "haunted by evil thoughts," which include the patently erotic. He describes himself as essentially "a sinner in sad remorse," and his recurring concern is the separation of what is morally right and wrong.[22] Ashamed of a tendency to be uncharitable that became exaggerated in his mind, he could identify with sinners (despite his abhorrence of all things evil) and agonize over their moral predicament and prospect of eternal suffering.[23] For him, it is the unseen world, and its meaning, that is all important.[24]

Rimmer's personal torment and excessive feelings of guilt surely stemmed, in whole or part, from his mental illness. As his belabored, over-written text shows, he could become obsessed with a sense of worthlessness and overwhelming, inappropriate guilt. This preoccupation is a characteristic symptom of manic depression.[25] Not only did his unpredictable mood shifts make him inconsiderate and unable to fulfill commitments — such as his scheduled lectures — but also, more painfully, he suffered from frightening, illness-related imaginings of wrongdoing by himself and others that he could not control.[26]

Having seen the "Stephen and Phillip" narrative, Kirstein called Rimmer a "Transcendentalist Christian."[27] His predecessor, Truman Bartlett, knew of the manuscript's existence but had not read it. Writing in 1881 from the reminiscences of others and at least one of Rimmer's now-missing diaries, he came to a different conclusion. He characterized the artist as an independent thinker, not affiliated with any particular philosophy or religious

denomination.[28] This is somewhat misleading. Despite his independence, Rimmer did adopt parts of the religious teachings of others.

For instance, he was partially influenced by the philosophy of Transcendentalism promoted by Emerson, whom he knew.[29] In the manuscript, man's conscience (akin to Emerson's "over-soul") transcends experience and is therefore the best guide to divine truth. Most crucially, in the manner of a Christian and a Transcendentalist, Rimmer writes revealingly of his absolute certainty of the existence of an inner God that is in everyone "innocent or guilty."[30] A conscience (not differentiated from soul) is not only an inner divine presence, but, according to Rimmer, it also has many abstract manifestations or "modes." These include instinct, faith, hope, and "the moral sense in everything."[31]

Adding another dimension, showing the independence that Bartlett perceived, Rimmer, as a questioning Christian, complains repeatedly in the text about "Darwinite Christians" whose stated beliefs adhere too closely to the theories of Charles Darwin.[32] Significantly, it was Darwin who, in his 1871 *Descent of Man*, claimed the conscience evolved from social instincts, such as sympathy. Such thinking erases the possibility of God's participation, which was important to Rimmer, and undermines the concept of the immortality of the soul or conscience.[33] Rimmer's few, passing mentions of Darwin are expressive of frustration. He accepted progressive evolution from a prehistoric reptilian world but believed in the involvement of God and in the soul's immortality.[34]

Flight and Pursuit does not have an obvious precedent or progeny, but it shares a visual and ideological kinship with a few disparate images, all rare and all from the nineteenth century.[35] Not coincidentally, this is considered a time of increased interest internationally in a person's conscience and in the moral obligations of civilized society.[36] Within the United States, the authority of the church and Bible between 1830 and 1870 even began to be supplanted by the supremacy of a private conscience.[37] Closer to the artist and reflecting his social milieu, Rimmer's influential contemporary, Emerson, played a role in this development by going so far as to champion the conscience as the highest law, the "magnetic needle" for an individual's proper moral path.[38]

In a related French depiction from 1877, Nicolas-François Chifflart's *The Conscience* (fig. 40), Conscience appears as an external apparition, but not a personification.[39] Illustrating an eponymous poem by Victor Hugo, this Conscience is a mammoth, floating eye that, after the death of the biblical Abel, relentlessly follows his brother-slayer, Cain, and Cain's family. Alarming and large as the eye is, only Cain can see it. While Rimmer's unearthly Conscience carries a sword as an identifying emblem, the monstrousness of Chifflart's incarnation needs no embellishment. It is sufficient, without weapon, to symbolize the horrific aspects of a guilt-ridden, accusatory conscience.

Rimmer's threatening sword draws on literary references to a conscience as pricking or stabbing with guilt. A precedent can be found, among other sources, in two famous plays by William Shakespeare and a Catholic edition of the Bible. In *Henry VIII* (Act 2, Scene 4, line 1542), the king's conscience endures a "prick" followed by a "splitting power" (line 1554). In *Richard III* (Act 5, Scene 2, line 17), "every man's conscience is a thousand swords." In a stronger connection, Proverbs 12:18 refers to being "pricked" by the very "sword of conscience" (Douay-Rheims Bible). With sources such as these, the expression "the sword of conscience," meaning acute self-reproach, was not only recognized but also employed by the American public of the mid-nineteenth century.[40] Use of the phrase apparently even increased somewhat during Rimmer's lifetime.[41] In a violent situation involving a knife, the countering threat of a long sword, taken from a contemporary expression, might be particularly apt as an accompaniment of a newly conceived Conscience.

In the closest approximation, the Scottish artist, David Scott, used a phantom-like personification of a conscience — but not transparent — in an undated watercolor (unlocated) that was based on a quick sketch from 1841 (Scottish National Gallery). After his death, the watercolor appeared as a lithographic book plate in 1884 (fig. 41). Kirstein kept a photograph of the lithograph in his files, pasted in a research scrapbook next to his photograph of *Flight and Pursuit*.[42] The book plate, inscribed *Self-Accusation*, shows two naked men running along a stormy shoreline. The one in front, ruddy-colored as a living person, is annoyed by the pale, near-double of himself who races with him, setting his feet in his footprints and his elbows on either side of him so that, as they

Fig. 40 Nicolas-François Chifflart, *The Conscience*, 1877. Charcoal on paper, 22 3/10 x 16 3/10 in (56.7 x 41.4 cm). Maison de Victor Hugo, Paris. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chifflart_-_Das_Gewissen_-_1877.

move, they are uncomfortably engaged. The continuous harassment helps to identify the second figure, while his contrasting whiteness is shorthand for a ghostly presence. Although the drawings and lithograph could not have been seen by Rimmer, they provide chronological bookends to his work and are remarkably close in spirit.[43] Kirstein certainly meant to record the similarity between the images, as in the replication of legs.

Fig. 41 David Scott, *Self-Accusation, or Man and His Conscience*, n.d. Color lithograph, 9 7/8 x 12 ¼ in (25.1 x 31 cm). From John M. Gray, *David Scott, R.S.A., and His Works*, Edinburgh, 1884, pl. 19

There was no fixed iconography for Conscience, and, given its history of rankling within, its visual depiction as a separate, exterior being is understandably unusual. Without the images by Chifflart and Scott, there might

be grounds for the speculation of one scholar that the second figure in *Flight and Pursuit* could not be Conscience because it does not correspond to an "elevated moral condition."[44] But Rimmer spoke of a conscience as having many incarnations.[45] Moreover, this second character wears pure white, a color traditionally indicative of virtue. As virtuous, the apparition would be an unforgiving companion rather than an angelic one, with an emotional demeanor geared to the crime and a holy identity conveyed by coloring and transparency. Its essential qualities are its purity, goading attachment, and inescapability, and, as in the case of Scott's image, this Conscience is meaningfully a look-alike.

Irrespective of Conscience, Rimmer's portrayal of an anguished state of mind has precursors in such well-known Romantic allegories as the Anglo-Swiss artist Henry Fuseli's *The Nightmare* (1781, Detroit Institute of Arts), the Spaniard Francisco Goya's *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters* (ca. 1799, Yale University Art Gallery), and the American Elihu Vedder's *The Lost Mind* (fig. 42).[46] Finished in 1865, the last instance shows an over-protectively cloaked, yet inconsistently barefoot, young woman. With a worried, sidelong glance, she clutches what must be a defensive charm and wanders in a canyon that offers no reassuring path. Like Rimmer's setting, hers seems to reflect her state of mind but as an awareness of isolation, abandonment, and entrapment. Because of his interest in psychic and spiritual states, the prolific Vedder is the contemporary whose imagery occasionally approximates Rimmer's. Although the two artists seem to have known each other, they operated quite independently.[47]

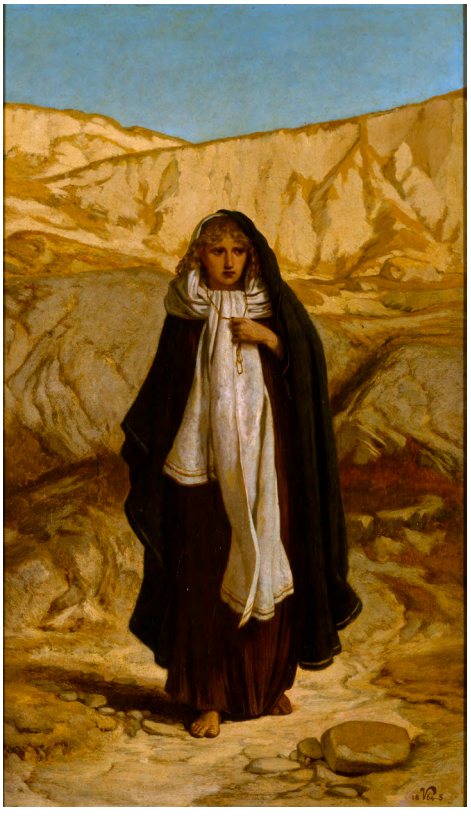

Fig. 42 Elihu Vedder, *The Lost Mind*, 1864–1865. Oil on canvas, 39 1/8 x 23 ¼ (99.4 x 59.1 cm). Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Bequest of Helen L. Bullard, in memory of Laura Curtis Bullard, 1921. Image copyright © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image source: Art Resource, NY.

Probably completed in the summer or fall of 1872, Rimmer's painting first drew public notice when it appeared at a Boston art gallery, Williams & Everett, in early December as *The Flight and The Pursuit*.[48] Later, evidently in 1874, the artist gave it to his supportive friend, Charles Augustus Nichols of Providence, Rhode Island, a prominent lawyer and local politician.[49]

Nichols' love of art made him an obvious recipient. He had been helpful in obtaining lecturing positions for the artist in Providence in 1871–1872 and had even become an informal Rimmer student. Making the connection closer, Rimmer's concentration on teaching in this period seems to have influenced the appearance of *Flight and Pursuit*. In one of the Providence art lectures that Nichols attended, Rimmer drew individual heads that captured an attitude or emotion, such as fear as represented in both the preliminary drawing and subsequent painting. He then showed how the position of a body could strongly affect the viewer's perception of the whole figure, including the face.[50] As in his book, *Art Anatomy*, he also discussed the moral character that might be read from a person's physiognomy, with different ethnic groups having both higher and more degenerate forms. According to his thinking, for example, the face of the first man in *Flight and Pursuit*, with his receding forehead and other attributes, would not be generic man in the manner of Scott's protagonist, but, instead, a "debased" type.[51]

Although a masterpiece in its own right, *Flight and Pursuit* could be a kind of course summation which, aside from the anatomically accurate figures and character study, includes other aspects of Rimmer's teaching: the dominance of one tone, the suggestion of atmosphere, the ethnic costuming, the foreshortening of limbs, and the creation of perspective through orthogonals as well as the diminished size of distant forms.[52] Not all of his visual choices need to have been instructional but, because so many can be linked to his recent teaching, this experience appears to have been a source of inspiration for the picture. The desire to illustrate the effect of distance, for instance, would explain why the second figure does not follow the first in the foreground plane, as might be expected in a chase. Even the fancy cape serves to demonstrate perspective through overlap, made more obvious by the addition of a shortened white stripe which, otherwise, seems to have no purpose.

There is a disruptive element, however, that cannot be so readily explained. The background relief decoration (as well as the architecture) is strangely disjointed and heterogeneous for a real building. The decorated left and right walls of the archways, for instance, do not match, and, within a panel, the patterns are not repeated as would be expected.[53] While the general ambiance is Middle Eastern, as if the scene were meant to be timeless and of biblical importance, the uncoordinated details create an otherworldly or hallucinatory effect. This could be purposeful and appropriate for Conscience. That there should be aberrations underscores the fact that the whole scene is based on the culprit's imagination. As reported and possibly demonstrated here, Rimmer was interested in the imperfections of visual perception. He knew that it could change with circumstance.[54]

Before Nichols obtained the painting, it was given a public airing that went beyond Boston in that it was offered for sale, at "Mr. Brown's" gallery in Providence in January of 1874. A local newspaper contributor described it as showing "the interior of an Oriental [Middle Eastern] sanctuary, into which a murderer is fleeing for refuge, while in the distance an avenger is seen hurrying to intercept him. A shadow projected into the right-hand corner indicates that other pursuers are behind."[55] This first impression from the period is one that Rimmer might have expected. While it misses the implications of the avenger's transparency, it also defies subsequent explanations by not recognizing the scene as either a contemporary or historical reference. Instead, the text reads: "Although it ... was evidently meant rather to furnish hints to artists than to afford pleasure to the public, this admirable piece of work may be examined with the greatest advantage." Rimmer's reputation is behind this reaction. He was known primarily as an art teacher who taught by example, and he seldom exhibited his own work.[56] One journalist had the insight to comment that it was so rare for "a man of original genius" to be willing to instruct that Rimmer's fame as a superior teacher seemed "to stand in the way of many people's appreciating him as an artist."[57]

As Bartlett reported, Rimmer once claimed that he always intended to create pictures from scriptural topics.[58] But, after he became a lecturer, which would have been in 1861, Rimmer lost interest in themes concerning human events. Instead, as Bartlett noted, he turned more to the challenging depiction of "abstract ideas," or his own moral allegories, which might involve single figures, multiple figures, or even landscape.[59]

In this vein, he attempted unusual but universal subjects, such as *Grief* (destroyed), which is an emotional state closely related to guilt. Its realization might have been a dramatic, single personification like that in *Evening, or the Fall of Day* (fig. 43), where day takes the form of the beautiful, prideful fallen angel, Lucifer, "son of the morning"

(Isaiah, 14:12). Or, *Grief* might resemble the personification in *The Sentinel* (fig. 44) or, with added figures, the personifications in *Flight and Pursuit* and *The Master Builder* (fig. 45). Rimmer created such imagery in preference to current, political subjects, such as (as Bartlett mentioned) scenes from the life of the Abolitionist John Brown. Indeed, he tended to think creatively in terms of weighty abstractions which occur in his manuscript as well. For example, the characters argue over which is the greater virtue, Justice or Charity, and Rimmer witnesses a vicious battle between a human female Chastity and vampire-bat Lust.[60]

Fig. 43 *Evening, or the Fall of Day*, 1869–1870. Crayon, oil and graphite on canvas, 40 x 50 in (101.6 x 127 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Leaning on a pole, the helmeted figure in *The Sentinel* maintains his position, as the title suggests, with sustained endurance, much like the solid wall behind him. He can be identified as Fortitude, one of the four cardinal virtues. In addition to the man's physical strength, all-weather attire, and forbearance, the real clue to recognition is the cryptic inscription at lower left. The two upper lines may have been an attempt to write something that now appears as gibberish, but the lower line can be translated in old Hebrew as "man from Kitti" or Citi, referring to a city-kingdom (present-day Larnaca) on Cyprus, whose most famous citizen was Zeno (born ca. 334 BCE), the founder of the Stoic school of philosophy. In an original but identifiable conception, the man depicted is the very epitome of stoicism and its value as a means of protection.[61] It is understandable that Rimmer, who suffered repeated misfortune, would not only be attracted to the concept of stoicism but also want

to represent its steadfastness as a heroic virtue. He was all too aware of the Stoic tenet of uprightness as its own reward.[62]

Fig. 44 *The Sentinel*, ca. 1868. Oil on paperboard, 18 ½ x 12 1/8 in. (47 x 30.8 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Like *The Sentinel*, *The Master Builder* has not only a specific title traceable to the artist, but also it embodies one of Rimmer's "abstract ideas." In this case, he has produced an allegory of hubris or the deadly sin of pride.[63] It is an instance, once again, of Rimmer delighting in constructing a figure "based upon some leading human trait."[64] Large-chested, brawny, and dressed in a fanciful outfit suggestive of vanity, the builder, at a great height, stands precariously on the edge of an unsupported building block — an embedded visual clue to Rimmer's meaning — and gestures authoritatively with an arm cloaked in purple. Emphasizing his instability, his toe protrudes beyond the top block. At lower right, a man wearing a crown recoils with fear in his eyes and in his posture. Although elevated as a king, he would not attempt to add further height. As in Proverbs 16:18, the egotist on the highest block, or Pride itself, "goeth ... before a fall." Even the slightly slanted position of the builder's extended hand is suggestive of downward motion. Bartlett calls the image "one of the artist's strange subjects," and, among possible interpretations, says it could illustrate human vanity.[65] Vanity is pride, but, after Rimmer's death in 1879, the picture lost its original meaning. Fortunately, in 1935, a Rimmer student referred to it as *The Master Builder of the Tower of Babel*, which he recalled seeing in 1877.[66] Not coincidentally, Dante, whose *Divine Comedy* Rimmer read, identified the Tower of Babel and its Babylonian builder, Nimrod — seen together in Purgatory — as an example of pride. It is no wonder then that the figure of Pride resembles Babylonian reliefs of bearded kings (British Museum), and, as Nimrod (Genesis 10:9) was an acclaimed hunter, this figure is accompanied by loyal, but frightened, hunting dogs. Combining two sources — Dante and the Bible — Pride is shown as an irrationally over-confident builder, one who intends his own status to challenge that of God.[67]

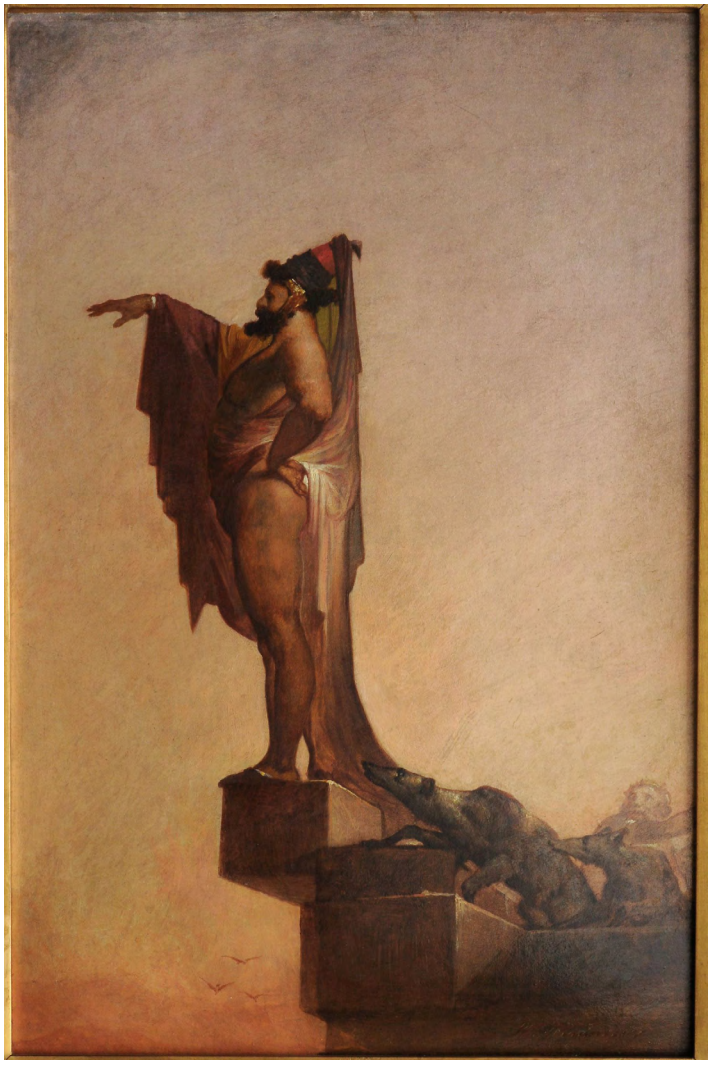

Fig. 45 *The Master Builder*, ca. 1871. Oil and sepia on academy board, 21 7/8 x 15 9/16 in. (55.50 x 39.50 cm). Private Collection.

Rimmer ridiculed pride on more than one occasion, as in his poem, "The Love Chant: A Satire," written from the point of view of a Boston suitor who is overly concerned with social appearance.[68] Pride is mocked again in his preposterously elaborate helmets on the bellicose horsemen in *Sketch for "To the Charge!"* (Fogg Museum) and in the raised arm of Mercutio in an invented *Scene from "Romeo and Juliet"* (University of Michigan Museum of Art).[69] More than this, the sin of pride particularly bothered Rimmer in his own life. He must have seen it in his father's self-destructive claim to the French throne, and he certainly saw it in his own lack of charity in his estimation of others. This is especially clear in his manuscript where, as has been noted, he projected this weakness onto his alter ego, Phillip.

A concern with pride is undoubtedly why Rimmer, after creating paired- personification drawings, in 1869, of *Evening* (no. 59.263; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston) and *Morning* (fig. 46), developed and repeated the figure of Evening (Lucifer) in a larger format (fig. 43). Dante, in his visit to Purgatory, mentions seeing Lucifer (more "noble" than all other creatures) as another example of pride whom he witnessed falling "like a thunderbolt" from the sky.[70] Paired with Pride, often called "the root of evil," *Morning* shows a winged youth, with a classical temple beneath his feet, rising in a graceful sweep and holding aloft a happy child with a sunflower.[71] The three stars on his wings refer apparently to the three theological virtues — Faith, Hope and Charity or Love — with the ancient temple symbolizing faith (tau cross and tree in front), the exuberant youth evincing hope, and the

flower-holding child offering love.[72] The three are divine fortifications or bulwarks against temptation, mentioned by St. Paul (1 Thessalonians 5:8). Consistent with Rimmer's propensity for symbolic abstractions, *The Master Builder*, *Evening*, and *Flight and Pursuit* can all be similarly interpreted as spiritual allegories but concerned with sin. Importantly in the last two examples, the sin is not just indicated but also divinely punished.

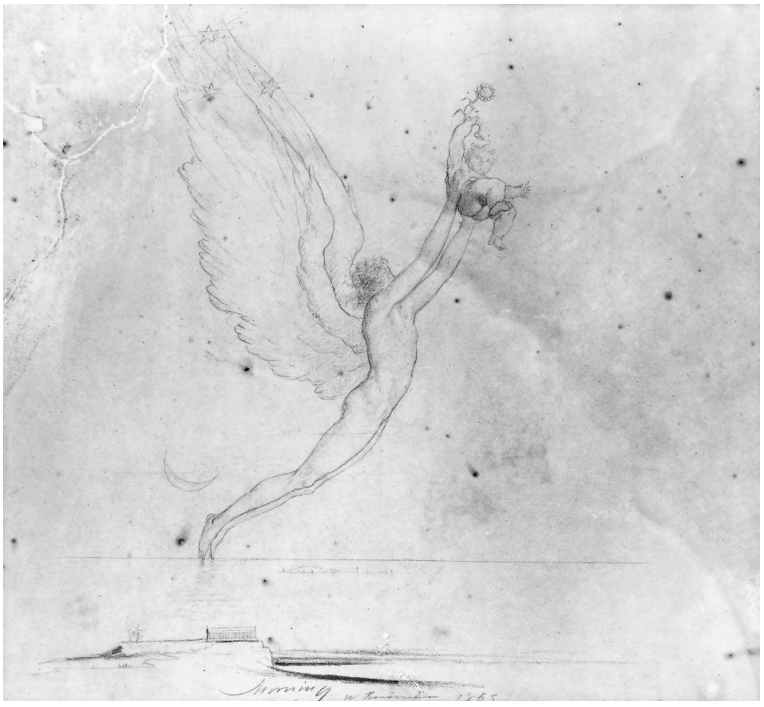

Fig. 46 *Morning*, 1869. Graphite pencil and red crayon on buff paper, 12 9/16 x 14 ½ in. (31.9 x 36.8 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Gift of Miss Mildred Kennedy. Photograph © 2022 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

To the extent that Conscience is a divine response, *Flight and Pursuit* relates to Rimmer's two earlier biblical compositions: *Massacre of the Innocents* (fig. 47) and *Hagar and Ishmael* (private collection), from about 1858.[73] As in the case of the altar in *Flight and Pursuit*, Rimmer's dislike of "priestcraft" becomes a factor in *Massacre*. The painted depiction adds to the mayhem of the biblical story (Matthew 2:16) a foreground vignette of a child being killed in his mother's arms, beneath a useless incense-burning altar. On a high prominence, the victims raise their hands toward Heaven in supplication. Having come to this site for its sacredness and its supernatural potential to protect her, this mother is especially pitiful in her abandonment. Ironically her son will be murdered on the ritual block for animal sacrifice.[74] The second picture has an opposing theme. God did respond to Hagar who also looks to Heaven and prays fervently, but in a desert wilderness, for the survival of herself and her son. Her prayers, and those of her son, were answered by the miraculous appearance of well water (Genesis 21:19). The contrast in the pictures spotlights an injustice that is difficult to comprehend. According to Bartlett, nothing could undermine Rimmer's faith in "a divine Being," but his belief grew only over time and after years of intense struggle.[75]

In other religious work, Rimmer tended to focus on good and evil influences on mankind's moral condition. For instance, he drew a figure of Satan (unlocated), a head of Mephistopheles (unlocated), a crucified Christ (lost), images of saints, and a large *Assumption of the Magdalen* (fig. 48). The last has been mistakenly titled *Madonna / Magdalen* because of uncertainty over the subject. She is the blonde Magdalen, as opposed to the Virgin Mary, whom Rimmer portrayed elsewhere as a brunette. That the picture depicts the glorious redemption of the Magdalen, one of the Bible's most famous sinners, lends support to the emerging pattern of Rimmer's concern with the subject of sin.[76]

Fig. 47 *Massacre of the Innocents*, ca. 1858. Oil on canvas, 27 x 22 in. (68.58 x 55.90 cm). Mead Art Gallery, Amherst College, Amherst. Gift of Herbert W. Plimpton: The Hollis W. Plimpton (Class of 1915) Memorial Collection

Fig. 48 *Assumption of the Magdalen*, 1860s or 1870s. Oil on canvas, 60 x 29 in. (152.50 x 73.50 cm). Richard L. Feigen Collection

In this context, Rimmer's late painting, *Sleeping* (fig. 49), is likely another work on his moral scale. It is convincing as a symbol of innocence rather than an erotic work as it has been interpreted.[77] This is not just an imaginary child lying naked on a bed with her mouth open, arm extended, and light centered on her pelvis. Rather, in her unconscious sensuousness and the welcoming position of her arm, she is credible as a symbolic image of absolute trust and the absence of sin. In the same way, the opened flowers in an urn at her feet signal her association with a culmination of beauty. Physical beauty, as in this instance, means for Rimmer the "soul's perfection."[78] More particularly, and far from being erotic, her bodily position and appearance recall the symbol of a human soul used in his drawing, *On the Wings of the Creator* (fig. 50), which refers to a child's birth.[79] In support of this connection, Rimmer described a helpless infant as "holier than the parent."[80] Through Stephen, he revealed his probable message, and continuing preoccupation, by proclaiming "the greatest of all blessings is innocence." Her nakedness is no less than a badge of innocence.[81]

Fig. 49 *Sleeping*, ca. 1878. Oil on academy board, 8 x 10 ½ in (20.35 x 26.68 cm). Currier Museum of Art, Manchester, N.H. Museum Purchase: Gift of the Friends 1985.41

In *Flight and Pursuit*, the division between the man's corporeal self and his immaterial conscience reflects a moral hierarchy that can be found in both Rimmer's writing and his art. For example, he wrote: "All those who follow the flesh and live in its gratification whether from weakness of conscience or the tyranny of passion are beasts ... All those who *master the body* and *believe in the soul and the conscience* [emphasis added] are men, be they who or what they may."[82] Such men correctly follow the leadership of their better selves.

The same body / soul dichotomy reappears in Rimmer's 1869 sculpture, *Dying Centaur* (fig. 51). As it has sometimes been understood, in an interpretation that is supported by its appearance, the bestial part of this centaur sinks in death as the soulful, human part aspires to ascend from the earth-bound body. In essence, this centaur seeks the salvation of his human soul. Suggesting this explanation, Bartlett observed that the artist "exulted in compositions in which the soul looks down upon the world, in which all power of beast [is] subservient to the exalted superiority of man."[83] It is, as Stephen realized, the divinity of man's nature in his possession of a soul that sets him apart.[84]

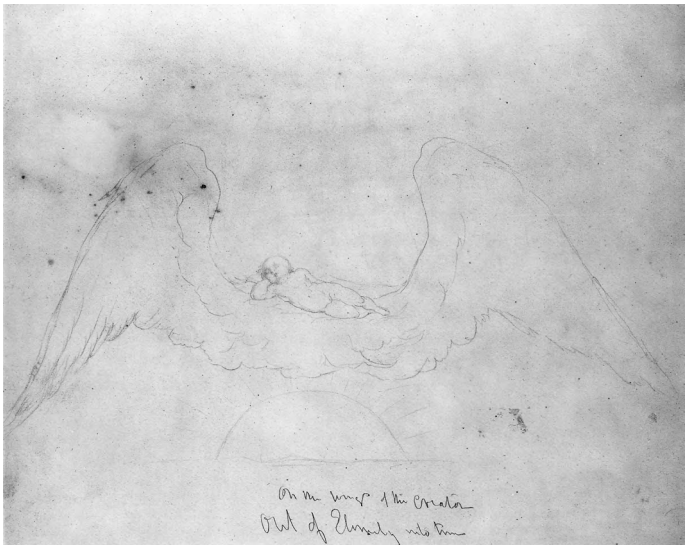

Fig. 50 *On the Wings of the Creator*, undated. Red chalk and pencil on brown paper, sheet: 11 15/16 x 14 3/8 in (30.3 x 36.5 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Bequest from Estate of Frank C. Doble. Photograph © 2022 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Rimmer's youthful centaur does not adhere to its iconographic type. The face of a male centaur is traditionally bearded and configured to reveal a brutish nature in contrast to the refinement of a more civilized opponent, such as Theseus, a Lapith, or even a bearded Hercules. If the typical centaur's beard and mustache are minimized, as in this engraving of an antique bust (fig. 52), his face still does not conform to an ideal type (the classical Greek head). But the reverse is what we see in Rimmer's sculpture (fig. 53). With unconventional eyes, a furrowed brow, and mouth slightly agape (as if in an otherworldly trance), Rimmer's centaur's face is especially strange in being a combination of a Greek ideal for masculine beauty and an incarnation of pleading innocence. Indeed, the eyes, unnaturally lidless and bulging, convey the effect of "glowing orbs," an expression Rimmer used in his manuscript to describe eyes in a spiritual state.[85] Eyes in this state, he called "soul's eyes."[86]

In a related way, Rimmer's lectures and illustrative drawings included an analysis of gradations of physiognomic difference between man and beast, connecting their outward appearance to their inner nature. While not new, this kind of encoding provided moral clarity in the reading of faces in art, especially in narrative pictures such as *Flight and Pursuit*. According to Rimmer's period-based typology, the human head as it approaches the form of an ape's skull (fig. 54) is indicative of an animal nature, and as it approaches the Greek classical ideal, as in this centaur's head, it is indicative of an intellectual or spiritual nature.[87] Such differences are consistent with Rimmer's belief concerning the presence within man of a higher being and the need to subjugate what are animal instincts.

Although the subject of the *Dying Centaur* seems self-explanatory, this is no ordinary centaur. He almost certainly derives from the main character in the moral tale: *The Centaur, Not Fabulous* by the poet and theologian, Edward Young. In his reading choices, Rimmer favored English poets such as Young. The 1755 text went through several editions in the early nineteenth century including as part of a compendium of the author's work in 1854.[88]

Significantly, Young's "Centaur" is not an imaginary creature but rather his designation for the culmination of a human type, the "Man of Pleasure."[89] His Centaurs are biblical prodigal sons in a Christian era, who enjoy life and indulge their appetites without regard for others. As Young describes the moral decline in his part-animal subject, "The man [in his folly] debauches the brute: the brute, debauched, dethrones the man: the dethroned man, and debauched brute, join in rebellion against the immortal" soul. If unrepentant, his spirit will be poisoned forever.[90] In a warning to the reader, Young returns repeatedly to the central question of what happens when the Centaur (named Altamont in the story) confronts a death that might be his entrance to Hell. This dilemma is convincing as Rimmer's subject. As Rimmer suggests, through his centaur's eyes and beseeching gesture toward a higher power, his soul still has — in Young's words — "all the sublime beauty originally stamped upon it by

Fig. 51 *Dying Centaur*, 1869. Plaster, 22 x 24 ¼ x 25 ½ in. (55.9 x 61.1 x 64.8 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Bequest of Miss Caroline Hunt Rimmer. Photograph © 2022 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

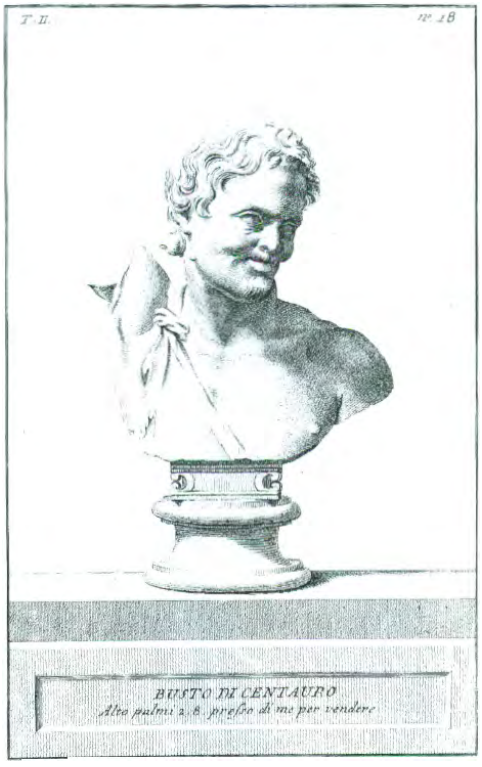

Fig. 52 Anon., *Bust of a Centaur,* 1769. Engraving, 12 x 7 8/10 in (30.4 x 19.8 cm). From Bartolomeo Cavaceppi, *Raccolta d'antiche statue, busti, bassirilievi, ed altre sculture*, Rome, 1769, vol. 2, pl. 18

Fig. 53 *Dying Centaur* (detail), model 1869, cast 1967. Bronze, 25 ¾ x 25 5/8 x 21 1/2 in. (65.4 x 65.1 x 54.6 cm). National Gallery of Art, Washington. Gift of the Avalon Foundation

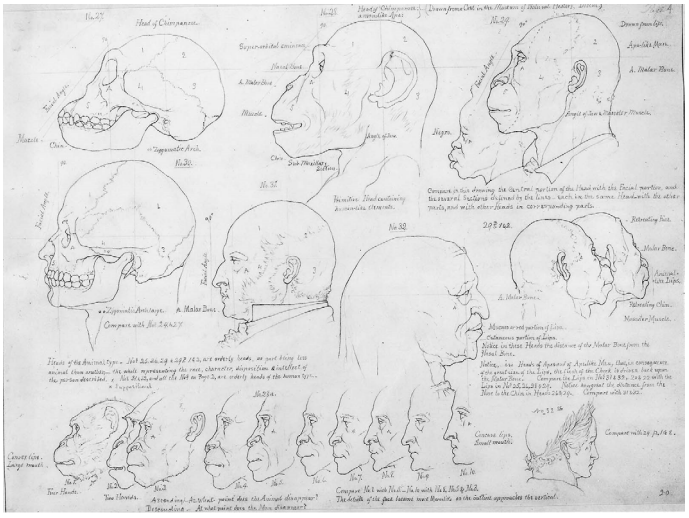

Fig. 54 *Comparison of Men: Ape Heads, from "Art Anatomy,"* ca. 1877. Graphite pencil on paper, 10 ½ x 14 13/16 in. (26.6 x 37.7 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Deity."[91] This divinely-created man who has become a Centaur desperately seeks salvation but is not yet saved. In this context, the *Dying Centaur* symbolizes what an indulgent man has done to make himself less perfect before his Creator.

Through this interpretation, one of Rimmer's best-known works reinforces a new view of the artist as often a portrayer of moral concerns through invented circumstances. The *Dying Centaur* joins *Flight and Pursuit* as part of this pattern. The theme of the Centaur is also consistent with Rimmer's apparent belief in the rewards of a life involving self-denial or stoicism.

The presence of a human, spiritual essence or higher self — as seen in the Centaur — appears to be the main theme in Rimmer's *Civil War Scene* (fig. 55) as well. In this case, concerning the aftermath of an artillery raid, a wounded Northern cavalry officer seeks solace in drinking from a fresh stream. More to the point, as he contemplates a painted miniature that contains the likeness of someone he loves, his low head bandage (in an attention-attracting red) takes on the appearance of possibly a lifted blindfold. The preliminary drawing for the entire scene (Fogg Museum) suggests its basic content in that it is inscribed: "To Any Man Ful of Love."[92] While the officer is soulful in his reverie, his horse, shifting hooves uncomfortably, looks out at an abbreviated portrayal of the Confederate war dead, with quizzically alert ears but without human comprehension. Illogically, there are two bedrolls — one a Union blue and the other a Confederate gray — on the horse's back which signals the presence of coded allusions and makes this man appear to represent soldiers from both sides. The treasured miniature, spiritually understood backlight, and distant church all contribute to the contrast of the man's higher self (love) and lower self (hatred) as exhibited on the battlefield. The picture has been interpreted as conveying the futility of war, but the drawing's inscription eschews war and is wholly focused on the humanity of the survivor. Wounded and grasping his miniature, he recognizes what gives his life meaning.[93]

Rimmer's strong inclination toward pacifism recurs in two pictures that are likewise concerned with abstract values but show moral failures. His oil paintings, *Sketch for "To the Charge!"* (Fogg Museum), dated 1874, and *Battle of the Amazons* (fig. 56) from probably about the same time, depict the foolishness of common causes of war: arrogance and vengeance. Approximately the same size (13 × 18 inches) with one on cardboard (*Charge*) and the other on canvas, they deliberately relate by repeating, with some variation, the foreground two wounded men within a scene of slaughter. The pose of one of these men in *To the Charge* partly copies the famous sculpture of the *Dying Gaul* (Capitoline Museums, Rome). In the first picture, a rebellious horse provides a note of sense by refusing to join the overly-decorated, or freakishly-helmeted, horsemen in battle. In the second, concerning the Trojan War, Achilles, on horseback, pursues the queen of the Amazons, Penthesilea, who has heads of victims

Fig. 55 *Civil War Scene*, probably 1860s. Oil on canvas, 20 ¼ x 27 ¼ in (51.4 x 69.2 cm). Detroit Institute of Arts. Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Sheldon Stern, 73.103

Fig. 56 *Battle of the Amazons*, ca. 1875. Oil on canvas, 13 3/8 x 18 in. (34.00 x 45.73 cm). Manoogian Collection.

dangling from her saddle. What makes this vengeance particularly senseless is that these two protagonists are potential lovers. Achilles fell in love with her at the moment he killed her. Underscoring the theme of extreme folly, an unnoticed white flag of surrender, waving in the background over defeated troops, comes literally between the two riders. Its role is comparable to the horse in the first picture.[94]

Given the emphasis on mystery and originality in *Flight and Pursuit* and Rimmer's position as a teacher, he had to have been aware of — and would have agreed with — the strong, supporting stance that the British art critic and author, John Ruskin (significantly influential at mid-century) took on both. For Ruskin, it was axiomatic that all great art had to be inventive, but, beyond this, he singled mystery out as a pictorial characteristic that is a source of special aesthetic pleasure.[95] Particularly in the case of artworks such as these by Rimmer that teach, in Ruskin's words, "Divine truth," there must be a mysterious element: "Excellence of the highest kind without obscurity cannot exist."[96]

This effect of incomprehensibility was not a passing interest but, rather, a guiding principle in much of Rimmer's work. Because of it, he even praised the indefiniteness of the English landscapist William Turner's backgrounds.[97] In *Flight and Pursuit*, the lighting — like the unmatched wall patterns — plays a decisive role in promoting an ambience of mystery. Rather than wholly logical, it is partly symbolic. Light enters from hidden, implied windows at upper right, and from hidden overhead sources in the background, behind Conscience. Within framing archways, this distant light helps to dramatize and further etherealize the already-transparent, central figure of Conscience, giving the impression of a hallowed being.

Light to Rimmer carried symbolic meaning such as in *Sleeping* and in the following reference, in his manuscript, to celestial beauty: "The pure light of heaven hung in the sky and the sweet beams of immortal life brightened the day."[98] More relevantly, he speaks of an aura surrounding Phillip in his angelic state, signifying his status as holy or "divinely favored."[99] Rimmer's light in his *Flight and Pursuit* also fosters a degree of incomprehensibility. For instance, light coming from the foreground right could explain the enigmatically illuminated, inner left side of the first arch, but, if that were the case, almost all the shadows would be different. In short, this painting is not limited by the laws of nature or confined to this world.

Consistent with this confusion, Conscience casts a shadow, albeit fainter than the nearest shade. Rimmer spoke of a fearful envisioning of shadows, creating — through imagination — a false reality. This is what the background and surroundings are, as part of a self-haunting.

When addressing the issue of subject matter, Rimmer promoted the inclusion of mystery in such a way as to lead to misunderstanding over *Flight and Pursuit*. Part of a lecture (reproduced in Bartlett) can be misread to mean that his paintings were intended to have an open-ended quality.[100] Central to this is Rimmer's comment that "the more closely [a subject] is defined … the more circumscribed must be its theme, the narrower the sympathies that surround it, and the less enduring the pleasure that flows from it."[101] Put differently, "individual modes of thought or conceptions of character, when given in a form that leaves nothing to the imagination, are seldom found to correspond to [the memories] of the beholder."[102] While these vague statements advise avoiding specifics — as in time, location, and costuming — his recommendation is not the same as advocating an open-ended content. Nor, in this instance, would Rimmer's contemporaries expect it.[103]

Essentially, he said the same thing on another occasion: "Leave something for the imagination."[104] This exhortation relies on the association of ideas, a doctrine that echoes Ruskin but also hails from the eighteenth-century thinking of such theorists as Sir Joshua Reynolds. That is, that a work of art can be enriched by its openness to the viewer's association.[105] Washington Allston, a Boston artist from over a generation earlier, was a proponent of such a theory.[106] But there is no expectation that the spectator imagine wholesale changes in subject or layers of different meaning.[107] Rimmer merely pushed his students to introduce ambiguity, so that the viewer might be encouraged to indulge in the pleasure of *his or her related* thoughts. This would appeal to the viewer's appreciation of a meaning that is not immediately obvious, providing potential for deeper contemplation. Significantly Rimmer not only spoke of an artist's theme as a single subject, but he also limited the meaning of *Flight and Pursuit* by supplying a title for the preliminary drawing.

Not all viewers of *Flight and Pursuit* could relate to the picture's deeply felt message of unrelieved guilt. But this interpretation is supported by a heretofore misidentified drawing (fig. 57) by Rimmer that proves his interest in the subject by showing its moral opposite: the triumph of a virtuous man and his conscience at the end of his life.[108] Such a person offers a marked contrast to the dying Centaur. In his pose with one bent knee, the reclining man is a partial quotation of Adam from Michelangelo's *The Creation of Adam* (Sistine Chapel, Vatican City), and his character draws on this association — the reference to having been created by God. In addition, he carries a long laurel branch as a symbol of his triumph. On the left, in an exhausted state and leaning on the Adamesque figure in an adoring way, lies Conscience, smiling and holding a multi-thong whip. This Conscience, perhaps because of his victorious role, has wings, which are not an unheard-of appendage for Conscience.[109] Above both figures is another winged being or angel offering a crown of life (James 1:12) as a reward for having resisted temptation. To the right is a setting sun and at the far left is a symbol of Satan — an eared owl — trapped in a container.[110]

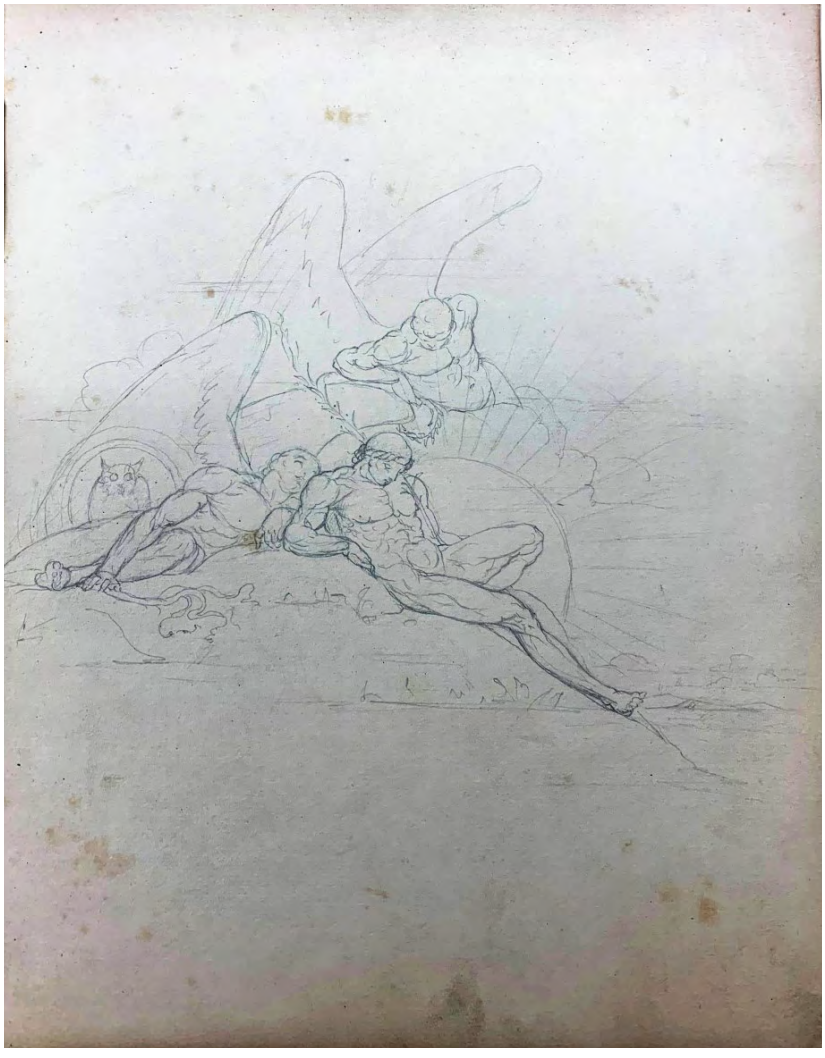

Fig. 57 *Three Angels* (re-identified as *Triumph of a Virtuous Man and His Conscience*), probably 1860s. Graphite on paper, 10 ¼ x 8 ¼ in. (26.05 x 20.95 cm). Rimmer Sketchbook, Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine, Harvard University

Ultimately, the aberrant appearance of *Flight and Pursuit* is the decisive factor in determining its meaning. It follows a modus operandi that can be found in much of Rimmer's narrative painting and even his sculpture, *The Dying Centaur*. Despite the contrivance of mystery, understanding depends upon recognition of visual clues,

such as the flagellant's whip or the otherworldliness of the centaur's face. In the case of *Flight and Pursuit*, there is a tantalizingly unexplained shaft of light. More specifically suggestive is the transparent, duplicative figure in white: Conscience, carrying an identifying emblem. The powerful subtext is that you cannot evade Conscience even through religious belief or its simulation.

Endnotes

1 See, for instance, E.P. Richardson, *Painting in America from 1502 to the Present* (1956 reprint: New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1965), 261–62. The exhibition's 1985 catalogue, with an entry on the painting, is Weidman, et al., *Rimmer*, 68–69.

2 For Surratt, see Marcia Goldberg, "William Rimmer's 'Flight and Pursuit:' An Allegory of Assassination," *Art Bulletin* 58 (June 1976): 234–37, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00043079.1976.10787276. For warriors, see Ellwood C. Parry III, "Looking for a French and Egyptian Connection behind William Rimmer's 'Flight and Pursuit,'" *American Art Journal* 13 (Summer 1981): 56–60. For Solomon, see Carol Troyen in Theodore E. Stebbins Jr., et al., *A New World: Masterpieces of American Painting, 1760–1910* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1983), 291–92. For slaves, but the interpretation is multi-layered and open-ended, see Sarah Burns, *Painting the Dark Side: Art and the Gothic Imagination in Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 129, 135, 138, 149, 157. Readings by others include the argument that the picture refers to Rimmer's father as the lost heir to the French throne. For this, see Charles A. Sarnoff, "The Meaning of William Rimmer's 'Flight and Pursuit,'" *American Art Journal* 5 (May 1973): 19, https://doi.org/10.2307/1594284. Sarnoff's opinion and that of others are repeated in Weidman's entry on the work in his *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 2:592–626. Weidman also adds further suggestions, including that that the painting is "a vehicle for a wide range of symbolic meanings" (613). The same opinion appears in Weidman, et al., *Rimmer*, 69. Closer to the present interpretation in 1980, Troyen wrote of seeing "aspects of a single personality" in the painting. Identifying the background figure, an "unnamed force," as the foreground man's imagination, she concluded the scene represents "paranoia." See Troyen, *The Boston Tradition: American Paintings from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* (New York: The Federation, 1980) 146–47. No one has located a close visual precedent.

3 Elliott Bostwick Davis, et al., *A New World Imagined: Art of the Americas* (Boston: MFA Publications, 2010), 279. This concurs with Weidman and Burns (see above).

4 See Edith Nichols's letter, April 23 [1946], to Lincoln Kirstein, regarding their meeting to discuss *Flight and Pursuit*, folder entitled "Correspondence Feb–Oct, 1945," Kirstein and Nutt Research Material, Archives of American Art, Washington, D.C. She lent the picture to a 1946 exhibition that Kirstein organized. For interpretation, see [Kirstein], *Rimmer*, [38]. On friendship, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 21.

5 [Kirstein], *Rimmer*, [38].

6 Charles Colbert, *A Measure of Perfection: Phrenology and the Fine Arts in America* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina, 1997), 105.

7 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 113. Rimmer strongly implies this is his aim. His Civil War drawings, such as *Dedicated to the 54th Regiment, Massachusetts Volunteers* (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston) are examples in that the fighting soldiers wear Roman armor. They thereby attain the status of timelessness or kinship with revered predecessors.

8 He had a sustained interest in allegory. See, for instance, his representation of the Civil War as a battle between Columbia and Secessia in *The Struggle Between North and South*, and *Secessia and Columbia* (both 1862, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston).

9 See Rimmer's manuscript, "Stephen and Phillip," Boston Medical Library, where he describes himself as unjust (137), guilty (217), and sinful (235, 383) with sins including evil thoughts (19). His sins become those of Stephen and Phillip.

10 Rimmer even said that we perceive the world through the lens of ourselves and much of what we think we see actually comes from our own soul. For this, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 109. The percentage, probably too high, is Weidman's calculation in Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 1:136n188.

11 On the verso of a sketch of Hercules, which is initialed and dated 1867, the preliminary drawing probably dates from 1872, the year of the painting. As Bartlett notes, the artist was known for reusing paper scraps (*Rimmer*, 128). In the final painting, he corrected the extended leg somewhat in that it is more bent and the bottom of the sandal turned to conform better to a profile view.

12 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 95.

13 The historical symbolism of the horns is not clear but the horned altar is first mentioned in Exodus 27:2, where it is described, and Exodus 29:12, where the projecting horns on this holiest of altars are anointed, as they habitually were, with sacrificial blood. The expression "the horns of the altar" in Rimmer's day could mean any refuge of last resort. For an example of this, see Anon., "The Horns of the Altar," *Galveston Tri-Weekly News*, November 20, 1871, [2].

14 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 95.

15 That the shadow to the right indicates pursuers first appears in an 1872 *Providence Daily Journal* (?) clipping in the Newspaper Clipping Scrapbook of Mary H.C. Rimmer, Boston Medical Library.

16 Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," for hard-hearted, 119; for murder, 219, 279, 331.

17 For alas and things, see Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 17.

18 Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," for Babylon and Nineveh, 31.

19 Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," for Conscience personified, 37.

20 Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," for conscience, 49; for Stephen whispering, 331.

21 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 107. It appears in a short aside about Protestants and Catholics, concluding that the conscience is better entrusted to worship than to reason.

22 Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," for whirling, 23; for evil thoughts, 19; for sinner, 235; for right and wrong, 27–29,101, 275–83, 333, 347.

23 For lack of charity, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 21, 27, 140. But he was a conflicted person who was also known for his kindness. On this, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 141. For his charity, see Anon., "Dr. William Rimmer," *Boston Evening Transcript*, August 22, 1879, 6.

24 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 21.

25 Jamison, *Touched with Fire*, 13, 262. Also Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 27–28.

26 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 10, 62, 81, 89. Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 21.

27 [Kirstein], *Rimmer*, [13]. The Transcendentalist movement (semi-religious and sometimes comprising conflicting viewpoints) was founded by a coterie of New England intellectuals, including Emerson, in the 1830s and largely spent by the end of the Civil War. One of their commonly held beliefs was that mankind could receive direct revelation from God, bypassing the experience of the senses or powers of reasoning.

28 See reminiscences throughout Bartlett, *Rimmer*, with a supplement on student reminiscences, 132–47. He had the recollections of Rimmer's surviving family and intimate friends (v) and of 150 responses to about 500 circulars asking for information on Rimmer (vi). Rimmer's lost diaries (seen by no other Rimmer scholar) are mentioned on 27, 31, 32, 47, 121, and 122. He briefly cites a "East Milton Diary" and its entries from 1861 (121) to possibly 1863 (47). But he evidently did not see all the diaries or was not allowed to use all of what he saw. For this, see Bartlett's 1876 article on Rimmer in Walter Montgomery, ed., *American Art and American Art Collections; Essays on Artistic Subjects by the Best Art Writers* (Boston: E.W. Walker and Co., 1889), 1:337. From his brief description of the manuscript, Bartlett evidently did not read it (*Rimmer*, 84). For Rimmer's religious outlook, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 95. Rimmer urged his children to attend any Christian church until they made up their minds as adults (ibid., 95).

29 On knowing Emerson, see Edward Waldo Emerson and Waldo Emerson Forbes, ed., *Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson, with Annotations* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1914), 15 (vol. for 1860–1866): 10, 22, 30.

30 For the quote, see Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 181. See also ibid., 101, where "the soul is a moral universe, and in it are all things of consciousness, temporal and spiritual." For Christian, see 1 Corinthians 3:16. On related Transcendentalism, see Philip F. Gura, *American Transcendentalism: A History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 10–14.

31 Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," for conscience and soul, 49; for modes, 374.

32 Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 185 and 363–65, for Darwinites. For against Darwinite Christians, see Rimmer's poem, "The Love Chant: A Satire," Rimmer Commonplace Book, Boston Medical Library. On Darwinite Christians, see also Randall Fuller, *Books That Changed America: How Darwin's Theory of Evolution Ignited a Nation* (New York; Viking, 2017), 189, 246–47.

33 Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, with an Introduction by John Tyler Bonner and Robert M. May (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1871, reprinted, 1981), 391–92. This followed the publication in 1859 of *On the Origin of Species* and posed a more direct challenge to Christians.

34 Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 95. For God's involvement, see ibid., 363. For the soul, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 28, 96. Bartlett, ibid., 84, says that Rimmer made "lengthy comments on Darwin's writings," separate from his manuscript; in which case, they are lost.

35 A kinship can be found later with George Grey Barnard's life-size sculpture, *The Struggle of the Two Natures in Man*, 1888, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Barnard admired Rimmer's work and praised him as one of "the greatest artists of the world." For this, see Caroline Rimmer's undated letter to Truman Bartlett, p. 5, in container 43, Paul Wayland Bartlett Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

36 Edward Engelberg, *The Unknown Distance from Consciousness to Conscience, Goethe to Camus* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 2:161. According to Paul Strohm, the separation of conscience from institutional religion is "normally viewed as a consequence of Enlightenment secularization." Evangelical Protestantism, strong in the nineteenth century, also undermined the relationship. See Strohm, *Conscience: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 17, https://doi.org/10.1093/actrade/9780199569694.001.0001.

37 D.H. Meyer, *The Instructed Conscience: The Shaping of the American National Ethic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972), 137.

38 Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson in Five Volumes* (Boston: Houghton, Osgood and Company, 1880), 4:250. Charles Mayo Ellis's early pamphlet on Transcendentalism also emphasized a moral obligation to consult one's conscience. See Ellis, *An Essay on Transcendentalism* (1842, reprinted. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1970), 63, 74, 78. The emphasis on an individual conscience preceded them and has been so prevalent in New England that it has been discussed even as a Pilgrim-based, regional phenomenon. For this, see, for instance, Austin Warren, *The New England Conscience* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1966). The modern idea of personal conscience is certainly Protestant-inspired, going back to Martin Luther.

39 "La conscience" (lines 213–80) in volume one of Victor Hugo's collection of poems, "La Légende des siècles," first published in Brussels in 1859.

40 See its use in New Hampshire in Anon., "Serious Reflections," *The Farmer's Cabinet* (August 11, 1858), [1]. Bibles influenced by the Douay, repeat the expression.

41 Online graph of the frequency of its use: Google Books Ngram Viewer.

42 See plate 19 in John M. Gray's *David Scott, R.S.A., and His Works With a Catalogue of His Paintings, Engravings, and Designs* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1884). Gray, *Scott*, 42, dates the original watercolor drawing (Scottish National Gallery) as 1841, but gives no reason for the date. Kirstein's photograph is in "Scrapbook Undated," folder 7, box with bar code ending in 7440, Kirstein and Nutt Research Material, Archives of American Art.

43 Kirstein wrote that Rimmer admired Scott's work "at least in reproduction." See Kirstein's letter, July 11, 1946, to Lloyd Goodrich quoted in Weidman, *Critical Catalogue*, 2:595, 605. Rimmer did praise Scott's illustrations to John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. For this, see Ednah Dow Littlehale Cheney, *Reminiscences of Ednah Dow Cheney* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1902), 144.

44 For the quote, see Colbert, *Measure*, 105–06.

45 For incarnations, see Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 374. When Rimmer created an evil figure, its moral degradation was always obvious as in his drawing *The Midnight Ride*, Rimmer Commonplace Book, Boston Medical Library.

46 As in the case of Fuseli, Vedder's first version is cited. A second, smaller version (Helen Foresman Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas) adds to the background a symbolic light which the protagonist leaves as she enters the foreground's darkness.

47 See Vedder's mentions of Rimmer in Elihu Vedder, *The Digressions of V* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1910), 278, 289. Unlike Rimmer, Vedder — as he admitted — was not a mystic (ibid., 408).

48 The title is in a newspaper clipping, "Fine Arts," inscribed by hand "Dec. 8, 1872" and "Boston Herald," in the Clipping Scrapbook, Boston Medical Library. Unlike the ambiguous title it has now, the original title is perhaps more suggestive of a single, iconic and repetitive, event.

49 Nichols is misidentified as "Col. Charles A. Nichols" in the first (1882) and subsequent editions of Bartlett. The error is compounded as "Col. Charles B. Nichols" in *American Paintings in the Museum of Fine Arts*, *Boston* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1969), 1: 216, and thereafter. See his obituary in *Proceedings of the Rhode Island Historical Society, 1877–78* (Providence: Printed for the Society, 1878), 115–16.

50 For heads, the body and Nichols, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 76, 77.

51 For debased, see Rimmer, *Art Anatomy*, 10, 61. Bartlett, *Rimmer*, for head, 103; for earthy earing, 121.

52 See course instruction in Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 137, 147, 73–75; costuming in Anon., "Dr. Rimmer's Art School," *Boston Daily Advertiser* (May 7, 1870), [1].

53 For Rimmer's interest in teaching ornamental design, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 52, 83. For his instruction in ornamental and perspective drawing, see also Anon., "The Cooper Union / Its Origin and Progress," *The Evening Post* [New York] (May 28, 1866), 1, in the Merle Moore Newspaper Files, library of the National Portrait Gallery and the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington. Rimmer's architectural ornament is not copied from period books on ornamentation or architecture. Rather, it is consistent with his fertile imagination. The whole architectural setting is generally, but without quotation, inspired by Saracenic architecture in a book given to Rimmer, as Weidman has pointed out: Johann Heck's *The Iconographic Encyclopedia of the Arts and Sciences*, volume 4, plates 19 and 20. See Weidman, *Critical Catalogue*, 7:1831. Near Eastern subjects were popular in the U.S. and Europe at the time. On this connection, see Troyen in Stebbins, et al., *A New World*, 292–93.

54 See Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 18, for Dr. Kingman reporting on in-depth conversations with Rimmer about "the powers of observation, perception, the internal recognition of things." A similar case of hallucination is the ghost furniture in *Interior: Before a Picture* (fig. 73). Alternatively, it is possible that this wall-pattern lapse is related to Rimmer's illness, in which case he decided not to correct it. Other instances of inconsistent details — less justifiable in context — are the inventive barrier along the staircase in *Samson and the Child* (fig. 19); the mismatched column capitals on the fountain in *Horses at the Fountain*(fig. 59); the mismatched eyes in *Inkstand with Horse Pulling a Stone-Laden Cart* (fig. 26); the mismatched sides of the wall the man is leaning on in *The Sentry* (fig. 143); and the disruption in the border design, from fold to fold, at the bottom of the tablecloth in *At the Window* (fig. 71).

55 Undated, unidentified clipping in the Clipping Scrapbook, Boston Medical Library. Its source can be traced as the *Providence Daily Journal*, January 9, 1874, [2]. "Oriental" was a term used at the time for Middle Eastern (O.E.D.).

56 For his reputation, see T.H. Bartlett, "Dr. William Rimmer: Second and Concluding Article," *The American Art Review* 1 (October 1880): 509, https://doi.org/10.2307/20559727.

57 Anon., "Dr. Rimmer's Art School" [1].

58 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 95.

59 For abstract ideas, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 80, 125 (quote).

60 For *Grief*, a blackboard depiction, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 139. For Brown, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 125. The argument and the prolonged battle are in "Stephen and Phillip," 283, 158–63.

61 The title is given in an inscription on the reverse signed by Rimmer's daughter, Caroline. See Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 2:543–49, for further information and speculation but without a determination of the picture's meaning. See

Diogenes Laërtius, *The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, trans. C.D. Yonge (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1853), 269, for an ancient description of the perseverance of Zeno of Citium (a word that could also mean Cyprus itself). Not only might Rimmer have read it, but also it could have inspired this figure:

> The cold of winter, the ceaseless rain,
> Come powerless against him; weak is the dart
> Of the fierce summer sun, or fell disease
> To bend that iron frame. He stands apart,
> In nought resembling the vast common crowd;
> But, patient and unwearied, night and day ...

See chapter four for the insignia on the pole.

62 Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 171. Compare to William Enfield, *The History of Philosophy, from the Earliest Periods: Drawn Up from Brucker's Historia Critica Philosophiae* (London: Thomas Tegg and Son, 1837), 199, on stoicism.

63 The picture was lent, with this title, to the 1880 and 1916 Rimmer exhibitions at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. A related small sketch, labeled "Master Builder" by Rimmer, on a sheet of drawings (lost) exhibited in the 1916 exhibition, shows — so roughly as to be almost incoherent — a person mounting a block with at least one other figure standing behind. For this, see the glass plate photographic negative, 16B23_9, Visual Archives, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Both Fortitude and Pride are completely original personifications. While sometimes helmeted, Fortitude is apparently most often shown as a woman holding or leaning on a column, and Pride is usually a woman holding a mirror and accompanied by a peacock.

64 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 128. A precursor for this use of personifications is John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, but Rimmer's characterizations are very much his own.

65 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 127. Confirming a negative reading, Weidman, *Critical Catalogue*, 1:577, sees the main figure as even demonic.

66 H. Winthrop Peirce, *The History of the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1877–1927* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1930), 54. Peirce was an MFA student under Rimmer in 1877.

67 Dante Alighieri, *Dante*, 2:108, canto 12, lines 34–36. Nimrod, a biblical figure who is part of extra-biblical tradition, has not yet been identified with a specific historical person. He is associated with the foundation of Freemasonry and, relatedly, Rimmer was a Freemason in Chelsea, MA, from December 20, 1865, to December 21, 1870. See page 24, line 258, in "By Laws," Star of Bethlehem Lodge, Wakefield, MA. On Nimrod, see Laurence Dermott, *Ahiman Rezon, or a Help to All That Are or Would Be Free and Accepted Masons* ..., 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Leon Hyneman, 1855), 5.

68 A clipping of the poem, published in the *Sunday Herald*, and dated by hand, January 8, 1874, is included in the Rimmer Commonplace Book, Boston Medical Library. The published reference to the author is given as "R."

69 Rather than adhere to a single moment from Act 3, Scene 1, Rimmer created his own narrative which has not been understood. At left, Prince Escalus, with his party, rushes in to find the bodies of Mercutio and Tybalt while Montague and Capulet advance from the right. The dying Mercutio raises a barely visible, phantom arm with clenched fist to damn both houses, as he did earlier, for their feuding. The foolishly perceived threat to one's pride is at the heart of the picture, and the multi-forked dead tree refers to the result. Romeo, barely visible, is fleeing in the distance.

70 Dante Allighieri, *The Divine Comedy; or The Inferno, Purgatory and Paradise*, trans. Frederick Pollock (London: Chapman and Hall, 1854), 260. This is purgatory, canto 12, lines 25–27. Rimmer created an earlier, 1866, drypoint of *Evening* — basically the same figure — as well (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston).

71 For root, see, for instance, H.J. Thomas, *One Hundred Short Sermons: Being a Plain and Familiar Exposition of the Apostles' Creed; the Lord's Prayer; the Angelical Salutation; the Commandments of God; the Precepts of the Church; the Seven Sacraments; and the Seven Deadly Sins*, translated by G.A. Hamilton, with introduction by M.J. Spalding (Louisville, KY: Webb and Levering, 1859), 454.

72 See [James G. Bertram, ed.], *The Language of Flowers; An Alphabet of Floral Emblems* (London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1857), 15, 16, for the sunflower as signifying "adoration" and "devotion." In this popular text that went through several editions, no flower more closely conveys spiritual love. In the drawing at bottom left is a waning moon and, in front of the temple,

a branchless tree and a branching tree (both barely visible). Above the branchless tree is a garden anemone, meaning "forsaken" (ibid., 9, 18). Above the branching tree is a gable with a spire, suggesting the development of churches. Evincing his knowledge of flowers, Rimmer lectured on botanical representation at the Cooper Union (Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 52).

73 This follows the generally accepted date in Weidman, et al., *Rimmer*, 59, but the basis for Weidman's date is an unconvincing thematic pairing of *Massacre* with Rimmer's *Juliet and Her Nurse* (fig. 61), dated 1857. *Massacre* could be later than ca. 1858.

74 This is the interpretation first given in Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 35–36. For a different view, *Massacre* as an allegory of American slavery, see Randall R. Griffey, "'Herod Lives in This Republic:' Slave Power and Rimmer's *Massacre of the Innocents*," *American Art* 26 (Spring 2012): 112–25, https://doi.org/10.1086/665632. He is influenced in his reading by an acceptance of *Flight and Pursuit* as "enigmatic" (114) and interprets the foreground woman as a symbol of the United States (crucial to his argument) because she wears red, white, and blue. But rather than imitative of the national flag, these colors are variants, and the woman further undermines this reading by wearing a prominently displayed band of yellow. In contrast, the uselessness of an altar is a repeated theme with Rimmer and can be found as well in the background of *Samson and the Child* (fig. 19), a work exhibited in 1883 as "about 1854." The scene is taken from Judges 16:26.

75 *Hagar and Ishmael* is undated, but Weidman gives it a ca. 1858 date, partly because he thought Rimmer's last remaining son died in 1859 and the picture might refer to a severe illness before his death (Weidman, et al., *Rimmer*, 60). Horace died at one year on November 11, 1858, of "diarrhea" ("Deaths Registered in the Town of Milton for the Year 1858," p. 200, digital images on *Family Search.org*). Supporting this connection, the date might be retained on the basis of style. See Bartlett's repeated mention of faith in *Rimmer*, 28, 95–96 (quote), 109.

76 Satan is no. 74 in the 1883 catalogue of Rimmer drawings, J. Eastman Chase Gallery, Boston (Boston Public Library file on Rimmer). For a painted Mephistopheles, see the "Dec. 22, 1872" *Boston Herald* clipping in the Clipping Scrapbook of Mary H.C. Rimmer, Boston Medical Library. See also Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 124–25, 76, and, for the Christian subjects, ibid., 19–20, 29–31. See the contrasting hair color in Rimmer's *Madonna and Child* (private collection), reproduced in Weidman, et al., *Rimmer*, 53, fig. 15. The *Magdalen* is stylistically close to this unfinished *Madonna and Child*, with a somewhat square head akin to the imaginary heads of women by Washington Allston. The hands are not the undersized women's hands from the 1850s. Instead, the head and hands are closer to their counterparts in the 1877 *Art Anatomy*. The misidentification of *Magdalen* is probably because the figure resembles that in a drawing, fig. 44, labeled *Madonna*, in Bartlett, *Rimmer*.

77 See a different interpretation in Weidman, et al., *Rimmer*, 78, where *Sleeping* is considered Rimmer's "most intensely erotic work." The title is on the reverse, evidently written by Rimmer's daughter, Caroline. A pencil inscription on the reverse appears to read: "One of my Dear Father's Best paintings / & it is a perfect Shame the Varnish is / not good and I suppose will be sticky / always." In the past, it has been given a late date, ca. 1878, because the word "Best" has been misread as "last." Sharing a bitumen problem (a cause of stickiness) with the 1871 *English Hunting Scene*, it could be from that time; it is convincing as a wholly imaginary image, possibly influenced by remembrance of his daughters as children.

78 Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 95.

79 The title is from Rimmer's poetic inscription below the image which continues: "Out of Eternity into Time."Appropriately there is a rising sun below the wings. The concept of wings must come from a description in Psalm 57:1 of taking refuge in times of calamity in the shadow of God's wings and from Psalm 63:7: "Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice." Weidman dates the drawing 1869, which is possible, but there is no basis for an exact date, and it could be much earlier or later. See Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 3:959.

80 Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 326.

81 Ibid., 335, for quote. See also Emanuel Swedenborg, whose work Rimmer read (see chapter four), where he repeatedly makes the point that the angels in the highest or inmost heaven are naked because nakedness corresponds to innocence (Swedenborg, *Heaven and Its Wonders and Hell: From Things Heard and Seen* (1867. Reprint, Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1890), 112, 174.

82 For flesh, see Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 381; for similar thinking, see ibid. [8]. See also Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 32, for Rimmer commenting on such a duality. Rimmer's statement is a paraphrase of Emanuel Swedenborg's *On the Intercourse between the Soul and the Body Which Is Supposed to Take Place Either by Physical Influx, or by Spiritual Influx, or by Pre-Established Harmony* (Boston: Otis Clapp, 1848), 25–26.

83 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 125. The severed arms represent pain and condense the composition. Rimmer used this device to eliminate detail in his *Art Anatomy*, 105, 146–49. Weidman, *Critical Catalogue*, 1:342–43, 339–40, and Weidman, et al., *Rimmer*, 43, see the sculpture as symbolically multi-layered, including references to Rimmer's career and the Civil War.

84 Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 377.

85 Ibid., 153. The furrowed brow is clearer in the original plaster.

86 Ibid., 245.

87 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 67. For the influence of Darwin and others on Rimmer's typology, see Elliott Bostwick Davis, "William Rimmer's Art Anatomy and Charles Darwin's Theories of Evolution," *Master Drawings* 40 (Winter 2002): 345–59.

88 His students knew of his interest in past English poets. For this, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 42.

89 Edward Young, *The Complete Works, Poetry and Prose, of the Rev. Edward Young*, revised with a life of the author by John Doran (London: William Tegg, 1854), 2:439. The reference could have been recognized in Rimmer's day, but it was not known by Bartlett.

The typical response was to admire the artist's skill (Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 124, 136). Edward J. Nygren first connected the sculpture with Young in a 1969 graduate paper under Jules Prown at Yale University, but his find has not been sufficiently valued. See Weidman's essay on Rimmer's *Dying Centaur* in Ruth Butler, Suzanne Glover Lindsay, et al., *European Sculpture of the Nineteenth Century* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 2000), 448.

90 Young, *Centaur*, 2:453.

91 For greater clarity in a "modernized" edition (title page): see Edward Young, *The Centaur, Not Fabulous*, abr. and rev. with notes by L. Carroll Judson (Philadelphia: G.B. Zieber and Co., 1846), 142, on death; 38 for the quote.

92 In the drawing, the kerchief, supposedly over a head wound, appears to cover his eyes almost completely so that its meaning as a former blindfold is plainer; the dead Confederate soldier is removed; and the background church is larger, but — without a steeple — less easily identified. There are other minor changes as well such as in the position of the sword.

93 See Graham Hood, Nancy Rivard and Kathleen Pyne, "American Paintings Acquired during the Last Decade," *Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts*, 55, no. 2 (1977): 85, https://doi.org/10.1086/DIA41504594, and Weidman, et al., *Rimmer*, 64, who contend that this Civil War picture is a companion piece to *Victory* (fig. 67) which, however, does not refer to the Civil War. No one was then able to decipher the drawing's inscription.

94 An inscription identifies *To the Charge* as a sketch although it appears finished; a second version (unlocated) has never been described or photographed. It may not have existed. On the latter, see Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 2:673. Penthesilea's story comes from a lost ancient epic, *Aethiopis*. Published discussions of *Battle of the Amazons* do not mention the white flag, but it is key to the picture's meaning.

95 For his fame, see Anon., "Ruskin on America," *The Daily Evening Bulletin* [Philadelphia] (April 12, 1867), 6. For invention, see John Ruskin, *Modern Painters* 4 (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1856), 16. For aesthetic pleasure, see [John Ruskin], *Modern Painters* (New York: J. Wiley, 1848), 37.

96 See divine truth in [Ruskin], *Modern Painters*, [1]: 407. For excellence, see Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, 4:62. For more on Rimmer contrasted with Ruskin, see Melissa Renn in Keith Hanley and Brian Maidment, ed., *Persistent Ruskin: Studies in Influence, Assimilation and Effect* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2013), 142.

97 Unidentified newspaper clipping on "Dr. Rimmer's Ninth Lecture," Sydney Richmond Burleigh's sketchbook, 1876, folder 350, Kirstein Papers, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

98 Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 85.

99 Ibid., 113, for angelic state; 109 for the quote.

100 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 113, taken from student notes. See the interpretation in Weidman, *Rimmer*: *Critical Catalogue*, 2:626n52.

101 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 113.

102 Ibid., 113.

103 See, for instance, Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 127, saying Rimmer's *The Master Builder* must have one meaning or one dominant idea.

104 Rimmer's lecture of February 22, 1873, as given in the Anon., "Dr. Rimmer's Ninth Lecture," *Providence Daily Journal*, February 28, 1873, 2. He recommends the same in his 1876 Ninth Lecture (clipping, Sydney Richmond Burleigh's sketchbook, Kirstein Papers, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts). A different quotation from him in Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 114, makes the same point. See also ibid., 110, for Rimmer on how a viewer projects memories on what is seen.

105 Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses on Art*, edited by Robert R. Wark (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), xxvi. See Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, 12.

106 Washington Allston, *Monaldi: a Tale* ... (Boston: C.C. Little and J. Brown, 1851), 16. Allston made the observation — typical of his thinking — regarding an imagined picture of "the visible struggle of a soul in the toils of sin." The picture's effectiveness was due to its impact on "every man's imagination."

107 Rimmer described "an artist's theme" as clearly singular in his Ninth Annual Report to the Trustees of the Cooper Union, July 1, 1868, p. 17, Archives and Special Collections, Cooper Union Library, New York. Bartlett quoted him without giving the source in *Rimmer*, 100.

108 The drawing is in the Rimmer Sketchbook in the Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine, Boston. It is misidentified as *Three Angels* in Weidman's *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 3:835.

109 For wings, see William Blake's Conscience who is a winged woman in Blake's print, ca. 1797, which illustrates Edward Young's *The Complaint, and The Consolation; or, Night Thoughts*, p. 27 (Yale Center for British Art, Yale University, New Haven, CT). She is veiled, dressed and prepared to record with pen and paper the moral life of a nearby sleepless man.

110 The owl, associated with darkness, can be a symbol of Satan and is so in Rimmer's poem, "The Midnight Ride," Rimmer Commonplace Book, Boston Medical Library. It also resembles the owl in one of that poem's illustrations, *The Demon Feast* (fig. 126).

4. Swedenborg and Enigmatic Pictures

Many of William Rimmer's small pictures appear to be allegories or otherwise highly personal expressions, but, because they are so enigmatic, they have never been satisfactorily explained or, in some cases — such as *Horses at a Fountain* (fig. 59) — interpreted at all. With such inaccessible content, their marketability seems to have been of little or no concern. These paintings and drawings had another purpose which was to express the artist's moral values, social criticism, and thoughts on life. They were created when Rimmer had something to say and contrived in such a way that the viewer had to labor to arrive at their precise meaning. That is, they were intended for pondering and probably for those individuals who knew the artist well and thus could recognize most of the clues.[1]

Rimmer had a natural inclination toward an intellectual art that required unusual inventiveness on the part of the artist.[2] In this, he belonged to long, rich traditions for the use of personification and symbolism in Western art, usually for the purpose of political and social criticism. Indeed, American genre painters characteristically used allegory to enhance or to clarify the meaning of their narrative schemes. However, rarely was its use as personal or as complex and esoteric as in Rimmer's case.

For this kind of painting in general — that is, symbolic painting — he would have found theoretical support especially in the outspoken views of the English art critic John Ruskin, whose five books on modern painters found a receptive audience, particularly among artists and art connoisseurs, in the United States. Ruskin played an important role in defending the use of allegory and personification against all detractors.[3] This included those who thought such contrivances degraded art, reducing it to the service of ethics or theology instead of its rightful concern, the beauty of Nature.[4] In its defense, Ruskin called allegory "a legitimate branch of ideal art," employing a now-rare use of the word "ideal" to mean representing a mental conception.[5] According to such thinking, an ideal work of art is the visual embodiment of an idea — an abstraction — rather than the careful copying of what can be seen. It might be, for instance, an image based on symbols or, more broadly, the imagination. This was exactly Rimmer's preference.

He had American precedents for allegorical painting, and one of the most successful was the New York painter Thomas Cole. Especially well known in Rimmer's day was his set of four pictures from his 1840 Christian allegory, *The Voyage of Life* (Munson-Williams-Proctor Art Institute) and the reproductive engravings after them that appeared in 1856. As if anticipating an objection, Cole wrote of the project that, although the subject was allegorical, it was "perfectly intelligible."[6] Nonetheless, in 1842, he complained of a public opposition to allegory: "The fashionable taste ... is for works of another order [,] pictures without ideas, mere gaudy displays of colour & chiaro scuro without meaning, showy things for the eye."[7] Yet Cole's symbolic pictures, recording the moral progress of a man at different stages of his life and geared toward broad public appeal, were ultimately well received.[8] Not only were they on a much larger scale than Rimmer's allegories — better suited for exhibition and, unlike Rimmer's work, they were exhibited — but also the moral imagery was far more explicit.

With a few exceptions, Rimmer's small paintings were not shown until after his death.[9] Along with other works by him, they appeared in the memorial exhibition at Boston's Museum of Fine Arts in 1880 and in the art gallery of a Boston dealer, J. Eastman Chase, in 1883. The most telling review responded to the latter. An anonymous critic wrote of being put off by Rimmer's "bent of fancy" which was inclined to contemplate "ancient legends or abstract qualities of the human mind," concluding that "there is such a thing as too much knowledge

https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0304.04

in art and Dr. Rimmer's works very clearly prove it." They had "little in common with the impatient utilitarian spirit of the present day."[10]

Rimmer's moral awareness is behind many of his pictures but his perspective is characteristically unconventional. For example, although he identified as a Christian, he used Jesus' words "Knock and it shall be opened" (Matthew 7:7), referring to entrance to the kingdom of God, as the title for a drawing (fig. 58) that questions those very words. With this inscription outside the oval, the sketch shows a weary traveler, identified by his satchel and walking stick, pausing before an enormous heavenly door (emblazoned with wings) that is shut and stunningly blocked. The effect of obstruction by overgrown grass and tree roots is emphasized with a faint stroke of red crayon on the tree's root to the right. Near the man's feet is apparently the symbolic end of a river or of his life's journey. Adding to the symbolism of a potential moment of transformation, nearby is a damaged tree that begins to sprout with new growth.

Fig. 58 *Knock and It Shall Be Opened*, probably late 1860s. Graphite on paper with red crayon, 17 7/10 x 12 1/2 in. (45 x 32 cm). Boston Medical Library, William Rimmer Collection

The same title's promise of welcome appears over a gateway in John Bunyan's well-known allegorical novel, *Pilgrim's Progress*. But, when the pilgrim, Christian, arrives and identifies himself, Goodwill opens the gate without further hindrance.[11] Unlike these texts, Rimmer's addition of obstacles is suggestive of his feelings of moral inadequacy before the incomprehensibility of God. He even expressed the possibility that heaven's door might be shut to him in "Stephen and Phillip."[12] There are echoes here of the sense of being locked out, or potentially so, that is in the *Dying Centaur*.

As Bartlett noted, Rimmer was not confined to the tenets of any particular Christian denomination.[13] Yet his surviving oil paintings, from about 1855 on, show a marked strain of anti-Catholicism that is period based but can also be related to the published writings of the eighteenth-century philosopher and Christian mystic, Emanuel Swedenborg.[14] Rimmer's friend William James Linton, an engraver who met Rimmer in New York, even described him as a "follower" of Swedenborg.[15] Although this is an impression from the later 1860s, the artist likely became drawn to the Christian mystic at the beginning of a period of primarily upper-class interest in him in the United States — including the Boston area — in the late 1840s and early 1850s.[16]

Swedenborg believed in the presence of spirits and angels in everyday life and had visions of visiting heaven and hell in which truths were revealed to him alone so that he was able to provide his own interpretation of the

Bible. Although he did not intend to start a new denomination, his followers began a movement called the New Church and regarded his eighteen, published accounts, and his additional manuscripts provided after his death, as actually divinely inspired.[17]

Rimmer's small picture, *Horses at a Fountain* (fig. 59), was so important to him that he worked on it over a period of two years and signed and dated it twice, 1856 at lower right and 1857 at lower left.[18] As remote as it might seem, the depiction is an allegory of the corruption of the Roman Catholic Church. The oddity of the shortness of the apron on the man at the left and the evil effect of the fountain at the right are perhaps the most obvious signs of symbolic intent. Rimmer sets up a moral opposition between the apron, which had touched Paul the Apostle and through his divine power could protect the wearer from evil, and the large reliquaries, over the fountain, which were created by Catholic priests to contain saint-related objects and to foster a belief in their miraculous powers. The setting — indicated by the small apron, a gift from Paul (Acts 19:11–12) and the temple dedicated to Artemis, the huntress, in the background — is Ephesus, an ancient city in Turkey connected with Paul. Shown as the sun sets, it was known for both its famous Greek temple and its devil-related sorcery.

The fountain — ornamented by reliquaries at top center with small Christian crosses — projects from near the high, darkened doorway of a cathedral. This fountain, which is not just a shrine but also a symbol of the church, is alarmingly inhabited by a scabrous, winged devil. He rides atop a standing man, curving his tail around him, and, like the man, offers a flowing waterspout to those who approach. Water from the two spouts mingles so that it is necessarily polluted by the devil's offering. Advancing toward the fountain, a group of horses — unlike their masters — sense the presence of evil, especially the frightened one at left and the reluctant, smaller horse responding to a whip. The aproned man intercepts this group in an apparent attempt to warn or protect them.

Opposite what should be a health-giving fountain, there is a timeworn, wooden cart with possibly a broken wheel; a cart shaft; a vehicle crosspiece; and an empty barrel. They appear to be symbols of spiritual decay or death shown opposite tainted spiritual nourishment. But, more than that, the cart shaft has a split top and part of a lop-sided wrap strap below that resembles — as if accidentally — a Christian cross. Rather than a perfect cross, it is nearly completely disguised by the neglect it has sustained. Yet it is the key symbol of the founding belief of the Christian church in Jesus Christ, who was crucified. As such, it stands for the once pure, original belief. The cart is upturned and has lost its cargo which is the empty, wooden barrel near the picture's bottom center. Its emptiness surely refers to a spiritual void in Catholic followers.

In the shadows of the arched cathedral doorway, a deluded pilgrim who has been refreshed by the fountain enters the building, while, in the foreground, two growling hound dogs face each other as if equated. Rimmer habitually used such secondary elements as these dogs to epitomize his meaning. That is, they are arguably a synecdoche that stands for the whole image. Significantly the animals are near duplicates but with a different outer coat, the one on the left being plain and the one on the right elaborate or parti-colored, the result perhaps of selective breeding. In their equation, they could well refer to a contrast between what is God-created and what — in its enhanced decorativeness — is man or priest-created. That the latter is superfluous and only self-serving is part of Paul's message (Acts 17:24–25). In an anti-Catholic, book-long rant of 1854, a Boston Swedenborgian wrote that the "pomp and splendor" of Catholic worship provides a "striking ... contrast with the barrenness and nudity of the Protestant worship." This is a quote from an easily available journal at the time, *The Boston Daily Bee*.[19]

Rimmer pits Paul figuratively against the apostle Peter, the first head of the Roman Catholic Church, who is the bald, bearded man usurped by the devil in the fountain. As the picture suggests, Peter (who is traditionally bearded and bald) is at the apostolic fountainhead with the authority of a succession of popes or the Catholic Church stemming from him, but this authority has long been co-opted and is no longer based on Christ.

Rimmer almost certainly read an 1845 biography of Paul by the German Protestant and biblical scholar Ferdinand Christian Baur, who drew an unusual — if not unique — link between the miraculous power of Paul's aprons and the supposed similar power of saints' relics, preserved in "a later age."[20] Further, Baur — whose work was read by the American Transcendentalists — commented that, given the city's heathen-temple history,

Fig. 59 *Horses at a Fountain*, 1856-1857. Oil on canvas, 8 1/4 x 10 5/8 in. (21 x 27 cm). Art Institute of Chicago. Gift of Mrs. Eugene A. Davidson

Christianity at Ephesus merely exchanged "one form of superstition for another."[21] The city had been notorious for "the worship of demons."[22] Rimmer evidently saw the reliquaries in an even more nefarious light as the creation of self-serving priests, and he developed this theme in an implied condemnation of the superstition (reliquaries), self-aggrandizement (cathedral size), and duplicity (look-alike dogs) of the Catholic Church — all of which might be considered as derived from the devil.[23]

By using infrared reflectography, it is possible to see some underdrawing which shows how Rimmer originally conceived the picture. The infrared image, with a tracing of the underdrawing on top (fig. 60), reveals a pointy-eared devil's head, with a central horn on it, in the center reliquary; another devil's head over the doorway; the special cross of the pope, with three horizontal bars, on globes (dominion over the world) surmounting the fountain's two end columns; and the melding of the cathedral into the temple dedicated to Artemis. The devils' heads call to mind Swedenborg's attacks on Catholicism. After a visit to heaven, he reported that the "worship of saints is such an abomination in heaven that the bare hearing of it causes horror."[24]

Fig. 60 *Horses at a Fountain* (Infrared, with tracing by conservator Kelly J. Keegan)

It has been assumed that Rimmer was raised a Catholic because of his connection with the French throne and the Irish ethnicity of his mother. But his parents were members of an Anglican congregation when they married in England.[25] It seems likely that his father became a Catholic, as part of his belief in his real identity, at around the time of his arrival in North America, and he shared his religion with his children. This would explain Rimmer's friendship with Catholic priests who were his first important patrons as well as his fairly extensive knowledge of Catholicism.[26]

Regardless of his background, what is known is that the artist married Mary Peabody, who, as a Quaker, believed in direct, unmediated communication with God, and arranged to have his marriage ceremony performed in 1840 at a Boston Unitarian church.[27] The minister, Mellish Motte, had recently converted from the Episcopal Church and enjoyed the reputation of being a riveting speaker. This church (South Congregational Church) claimed that by "Unitarian," it meant the "purest form of Christianity." Amicably, it specifically welcomed Roman Catholics as well as Quakers.[28]

Years later, Rimmer rejected — as he might have then — the reformist perspective of the prominent Boston Unitarian minister, Theodore Parker. Parker recognized one God (not as Father, Son and Holy Spirit) and coupled this with a reduction of the Christian status of Jesus to that of role model. Rimmer objected to his dismissal of Jesus's miracles and the resurrection as well as undoubtedly Parker's denial of the devil's existence.[29] He also dismissed the ideas of the Unitarian-based Transcendentalists whom he included in a satirical poem, "The Love Chant," as Darwinite Christians who prayed to "nature's forces."[30] Their agreement with him on conscience did not mean agreement on other matters.

When Rimmer lived in Randolph, Massachusetts (1845–1855), he painted a large altarpiece (lost) and played the organ for a Catholic church. Furthermore, he "took an active interest in all intellectual movements."[31] Most memorably, he joined a local debating society and, as a debater, got into repeated public arguments over Catholicism with the well-known preacher and essayist Orestes Brownson.[32] Brownson, who lived in Boston and traveled on lecture circuits, was a former Transcendentalist who had become a zealous Catholic convert. On one occasion, they retired to a hotel bar room to continue the argument, and Rimmer seemed to win. Afterward, Brownson, who prided himself on his familiarity with Christian texts, confessed to being impressed with Rimmer's breadth of reading, calling him "a remarkable man."[33]

From his writings, Rimmer certainly believed that anyone could have a relationship with God, without needing Catholic intermediaries.[34] He would have found particularly offensive Brownson's contentions that the Catholic Church, being infallible, was the only path to heaven, and Catholicism should be the state religion because it teaches different classes to be satisfied with their social position.[35] In strong opposition to the latter, Rimmer supported social justice.[36]

In the same year that Rimmer finished *Horses at a Fountain*, he created *Juliet and the Nurse* (fig. 61) which bears an 1857 date and also has an anti-Catholic component. This is not a specific scene from Shakespeare's play, *Romeo and Juliet*, but, rather, an apparent allegory using the characters to commemorate a conjugal love that, in its purity and constancy, rises above the influence of the church. The protagonist is shown with her nurse, now her opponent, who has urged her to marry Count Paris although, as the nurse knows, Juliet has already been secretly married by a Christian friar to Romeo. Unlike Juliet's parents who are in ignorance but insist she marry the count, the nurse, whom Juliet has trusted all her life, makes light of a possible betrayal of Juliet's marital vows (Act 3, Scene 5). In a sign of her hypocrisy, the frowning nurse wears a pendant cross with her beads (barely visible in its present condition). Adding to a theme of moral failure, the dome of the site where it is implied that Juliet should marry Paris — St. Peter's (in a switch from Verona to Rome) — is in the background near Juliet's head. As her erstwhile protector, the nurse with her assistant follows Juliet, but Juliet separates from them and stands alone, wearing pure white, under a spotlight. The marital decision is hers and she makes it as she moves, with great dignity, toward a dark, cavernous room — the Capulet family tomb — foreshadowing her death. The picture is not about lost innocence, as has been suggested, but, rather, innocence modestly and heroically upheld.[37] Kirstein, convincingly, thought this an allegory of innocence and corruption.[38] Juliet displays the virtue of steadfast love, a personal code of honor that is here separate from the marital rite of the church.[39]

With regard to wearing a cross, Swedenborg made a point of repudiating the Catholic belief in salvation by means of faith alone. He contended that, like the remission of sins by an over-reaching church, this would have little impact on one's actual destination in an afterlife. Placing such emphasis on faith also has the detrimental effect of deadening the role of conscience. Instead, according to Swedenborg, salvation could be achieved only by leading a moral life, and, above all, by being charitable toward others.[40] Rimmer probably had this in mind in adding the nurse's pendant. Given her betrayal, it seems that she believes in salvation by faith alone or, worse, simply by its profession in wearing a symbol.

Reconceiving scenes from Shakespeare to make a moral point is almost unheard of as subject matter, but Rimmer also followed more conventional means to portray questions of ethical choice and of how one relates to God. From his surviving biblical subjects, it is clear that the hugely consequential confrontation between Job and God, in the book of Job, held a particular attraction for him. In the text, at the instigation of Satan,

Fig. 61 *Juliet and the Nurse*, 1857. Oil on canvas, 27 x 22 in. (68.58 x 55.88 cm). Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA. Gift of Lincoln Kirstein. Photo Credit: Art Resource, NY

God — knowing how virtuous and pious Job is — agrees to have Job's faith tested by Satan through a series of personal catastrophes that strip him of his wealth, family, and health. After being devastated by these trials, Job, in a crisis of faith, proclaims his past devotion to God and questions how God could possibly have cause to punish him (Job 6:24).

The search for theodicy or the reason for the allowance of evil by a God who is defined by virtue and power is, significantly, not only the theme of the book of Job but also a major theme of Rimmer's imagined narrative, "Stephen and Phillip."[41] In striking parallels, Rimmer in his story, like Job, speaks of an unequal world and asks God for some guiding revelation (Job 3:20); both Rimmer and Stephen, at different times, assume the role of Job with such intense suffering that, like Job, each rues the day of his birth (Job 3:3); and Rimmer likens men to "grubbing worms" while Job's accusing friend Bildad describes man as like a worm (Job 25:6).[42] Rimmer also echoes one of the possible conclusions in Job by speaking of the truth of right and wrong as a "sacred mystery" known only to "the Omnipotent," while what human beings perceive as the truth is colored by the filter of "our needs." Yet later in his manuscript, he returns repeatedly to the unanswerable question of why.[43]

Of the related drawings, four that are unfinished provide a visual image for the biblical line "And Satan Came Also," referring to Satan's attendance in heaven after raising havoc while roaming the earth (Job 1:6). Three of these sketches, reproduced by Bartlett, are lost, and the fourth (fig. 62) shows a multi-eyed, monstrous Satan hovering above the consequence of his influence: chaotic destruction with horsemen engaged in battle, a horse fallen on its rider, and lions locked in a fight to death.[44]

Fig. 62 *Study for "And Satan Came Also"* (cropped), ca. 1877. Graphite on paper, 12 5/8 x 14 ½ in. (32 x 36.8 cm). Harvard Art Museums / Fogg Museum, Gift of Mrs. Henry Simonds. Photo © President and Fellows of Harvard College

Fig. 63 *Job and His Comforters*, 1865. Oil on millboard, 9 13/16 x 12 in. (25 x 30.5 cm). Harvard Art Museums / Fogg Museum, Daniel A. Pollack, Class of 1960, American Art Acquisition Fund. Photo © President and Fellows of Harvard College

The climactic later scenes of Job addressing God or confronting his sudden misfortune with three friends who claim that, because God is just, Job must have sinned are the situations that most interested Rimmer (Job 9:10). He completed a small painting and two drawings on these themes that survive. Although Bartlett thought Rimmer favored Job, it is the late-appearing character Elihu whom, as his work shows, he truly admired.[45]

In the painting, *Job and His Comforters* (fig. 63), Job, as a wealthy man, is shown standing and wearing a wig with fancy clothing that he has torn in his despair, but the ripping exposes his nakedness and frailty as a human being. He is protesting his unjust treatment to mysteriously billowing clouds that obscure God's presence (Job 16:18). Even his drapery participates in his anguish. But out of this partly brightened and partly darkened sky descends a white dove — symbol of the Holy Spirit — toward Elihu, seated at the right.[46] Instead of the biblical three friends sharing in Job's tragedy, there are two plus the younger and wiser Elihu, a visitor, who listens patiently to all the others and receives the understanding of the Holy Spirit before speaking.

The drawing, *Job and His Comforters* (fig. 64), dated 1867, depicts a similar scene with Job, now thinner with his head shaved, raging over the wrongs done him while his friends listen. In the distance, at right, is a naked — and thus, innocent — Elihu, paying attention.[47] One friend carries a shofar, or ram's horn, which symbolizes the friends' call for Job's repentance because of their assumption that he has sinned. The other two friends are partially stripped or covered in sack cloth in self-imposed penance. Job's house is the ruined building behind him, inhabited by a crane with its neck curved, tending a nested chick. The migrant crane, who changes location by season, is praised in the Bible for its instinctive wisdom in contrast to mankind's lack thereof with regard to God (Jeremiah 8:7). Based on this, the crane is a reflection on Job who, being a man, lacks natural wisdom (Job 34:35). Likewise, in front of the despairing friend wearing sackcloth is a broken, clay pitcher with evident meaning. Probably this is either a reference to Job's comment that God made him as if of clay and could break him into dust (Job 10:9) or to the complaint of God's neglect in Psalm 31:12: "I am forgotten as a dead man out of his mind; I am like a broken vessel." The latter follows the imagery more closely and sums up the entire scene. In his tendency to be original, Rimmer could easily have jumped to the psalm.

Fig. 64 *Job and His Comforters*, 1867. Brown ink over graphite on paper in a printed mount, oval: 9 ¼ x 11 ¾ in. (23.5 x 29.8 cm). Harvard Art Museums / Fogg Museum, Louise E. Bettens Fund. Photo ©President and Fellows of Harvard College

Other references are more explicit. The snake or serpent, in the foreground vignette, with a frog protruding from its mouth alludes to Satan who is spitting out an evil spirit, described as looking like a frog, in preparation for the final battle between good and evil in Revelation (16:13–14). To the right is a large leaf or "any green thing," referring to the inexplicable wonders of God's creation or the essence of God's reply to Job (Job 39:8). One of the messages of Job's story that this would signify is that everything of importance comes from God; to presume otherwise is vanity (Job 42: 2–6).

The charm attached to Job's ankle — an anomaly not in the story — serves as a clue to Rimmer's wider context. This charm, which Job depends on, is a likely allusion to his practice of making burnt offerings with the expectation of God's protection in return (Job 1:5). Hidden as it is, the charm is a sign of hypocrisy. It demonstrates, in Rimmer's version, that Job is relying on a show of devotion and daily bribes that reveal he does not completely trust or sufficiently revere God.

In the second drawing, *Job with His Comforters* (fig. 65), Job sits to the right against a low wall while Elihu occupies the center against a hefty, gnarled tree. The three friends — presumed sages — who answer Job include one learned man with a large, opened book; Bildad, groveling at lower center, who described mankind as resembling worms in relation to God (Job 25:6); and a third, less visible adviser. Job leans on his wall, possibly recalling his "walled in" path (Job 19:8), as he cries to God with a small, covered-top bottle next to his hip. This could well represent part of God's answer, concerning the mystery of divine power: "Who can stay the bottles of heaven?" (Job 38:37). Similarly, Elihu's hidden anger (turning away) and wisdom (signaled by probably the tree of knowledge from Eden) reflect his characterization (Job 32:1–6; 33:34–35). So too, in contrast to the impressive size of the nearby tome, Elihu's scroll is small, as a sign of his humility (Job 32:13). Including anachronisms, such as a bound book, would not have bothered Rimmer.

Fig. 65 *Sacred Subject* (re-identified as *Job with His Comforters*), probably after 1867. Graphite on paper, 12 ½ x 21 ½ in. (31.75 x 54.60 cm). McGuigan Collection, Harpswell, Maine

The drawing's subject can be confusing because of Elihu's radiance and resemblance to images of Jesus, but this oddity conforms to the context of biblical scholars who actually believed that Elihu was Jesus.[48] In Rimmer's day, the connection was not accepted, but it is just the kind of puzzling inclusion that Rimmer, who knew the scholarship involved, could use for an arresting impact.[49] It serves a thought-provoking purpose and helps to explain why God when he appears at the end of the story vindicates Job and criticizes Job's friends but does not mention Elihu (Job 42:7). Congruent with this, Elihu alone lays claim to divine inspiration. He asserts that Job is currently sinning in professing greater righteousness than possessed by God (a sin of pride), and he defends God's wisdom by arguing that misfortunes are not necessarily an indication that the sufferer is being punished. Rather, they might be intended, in a formative way, for the ultimate benefit and greater piety of the sufferer. Furthermore, human beings should not presume to know God's reasoning or how the present might fit into a larger design not formed by a human mind (Job: 32:8–36:26).

As with much of Rimmer's work, the dating of the pictures on the theme of Job is open to question. That is except for the drawing dated 1867 and the series on the theme of "And Satan Came Also", tentatively dated 1877 because one work is inscribed with this year.[50]This kind of approximation would be on firmer ground if more work survived and the style of Rimmer's surviving work showed more variation.[51]

These years are reportedly when Rimmer was interested in Swedenborg, but Swedenborg got only as far as Exodus in interpreting what he considered inner spiritual codes in each book of the Bible and then leaped to include Revelation, so that he skipped Job. Despite this omission, Rimmer's unusual elevation of Elihu might be explained in terms of Swedenborg as well as idiosyncratic biblical scholarship. A crucial tenet of Swedenborg's belief, and that of his followers, is that the Holy Trinity, a description of God derived from the New Testament, is in no way three separate entities. More precisely, Jesus, God and the Holy Spirit — conjoined as the Holy Trinity — are all one and the same being, and the Christians, while claiming to be monotheistic, are actually blasphemous in their worship of a trinity of three gods (Nicene and Athanasian Creeds).[52] According to such thinking, since Jesus — melded with God — existed at the beginning of time (confirmed in John 17:5), he could have visited the Old Testament Elihu in the form of the Holy Spirit, or Elihu could truly have been Jesus. Although Rimmer incorporated imagery suggesting this, there is no real evidence of Rimmer's belief in this regard.

Relatedly, Rimmer's drawing of the divine creator (fig. 66), originally titled "Creation" and dated 1869, is clearly the symbolic expression of a Swedenborgian concept of God.[53] The depicted scene is the fourth day of creation when, according to the Bible, God made the sun and the moon (Genesis 1:16). As shown, the sun is beyond God's right hand as if cast into being, the crescent moon is near his left hand, and the orb of Earth is under his left knee. Rimmer follows traditional portrayals in art — particularly from the Renaissance onward — in presenting God, in the role of father, as a bearded old man. In compliance with a biblical prohibition (Exodus 33:23) and his own preference for mystery, he also does not reveal God's face. But his depiction is highly unusual — if not totally unprecedented — in rendering him nude. Why is God shockingly naked? The apparent answer is that he is a Swedenborgian three-in-one deity. That is, the unnaturally muscular shoulders and authoritative gestures express power like that of the Father; the naked buttocks and unused legs signal he is human like the Son; while the flame-like beard suggests tongues of fire like those of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:3). The equilateral triangle, in such close proximity to God's head that it reads as part of him, is a standard sign of the Trinity.[54] In a revealing emphasis, this symbol as a whole — rather than the head of God — emits rays of light as an indication of holiness.

Rimmer's drawing makes the difference between concepts of the Trinity clearer. The Christian concept of the Trinity is three persons in one God. Swedenborg is insistent that his version is different: one God with three aspects. His is a Trinity of essential components in a single person of God, which is quite literally what is shown in Rimmer's drawing.

Significantly, the seven dots within the triangle symbolize the seven days of creation, which for Swedenborg have an added layer of meaning, or a "correspondence," as the seven stages in the progress of a person's spiritual life. They are stacked, with four on the bottom, so as to culminate in the top dot or seventh stage which is a spiritual objective that is rarely achieved.[55]

Fig. 66 *Creation* (*God the Father Creating the Sun and the Moon*), 1869. Sanguine over graphite on paper in a printed mount, oval: 11 ¾ x 9 ¼ in. (29.8 x 23.5 cm). Harvard Art Museums / Fogg Museum, Louise E. Bettens Fund. Photo © President and Fellows of Harvard College

Since Rimmer represented only the fourth day or fourth state, this interval might have had special meaning for him as, in Swedenborgian terms, his present "regenerative" stage or, at least, his desired destination. This state builds on the first, which is emptiness and darkness; the second, which is a manifestation of any stored-up knowledge of faith so that the internal person begins to develop as separate from an external self, typically in response to temptation, sorrow, or misfortune; and the third state which is one of repentance in which the person undertakes good actions such as works of charity.[56] The fourth state is when a person "becomes affected with love, and illuminated by faith." Like the sun and moon of the fourth day, faith and charity constitute the two "luminaries" of this state.[57]

Just as Swedenborg is the key to understanding Rimmer's drawing of God, he is also the key to Rimmer's horse and rider barreling through dark space in the oil painting, *Victory* (fig. 67). Signed at the lower right and again, with the date 1870, under the horse's rear legs, the picture has a title that comes from an old inscription on the reverse. But titles can be misleading. Despite the odd armor and lack of joy in the image, it has been misinterpreted as celebrating the end of the Civil War which happened five years prior in 1865.[58]

More convincing is an identification of the subject as part of a biblical prophetic vision, the Last Judgment, described as the greatest of victories (Revelation 6:10). The scene relates to the violent elimination of forces of evil in the world in preparation for a return of Jesus Christ to pronounce moral judgment on humanity. The evidence for this interpretation is the lamb (symbol of the resurrected Christ) standing below the horse in an underlying version, as exposed in a recent X-radiograph of the picture (fig. 68).

Rimmer painted out this section but retrieving it brings the picture closer to a description of the Last Judgment in the book of Revelation. In the X-radiograph, the lamb emerges with telltale marks of slaughter (gashes) on

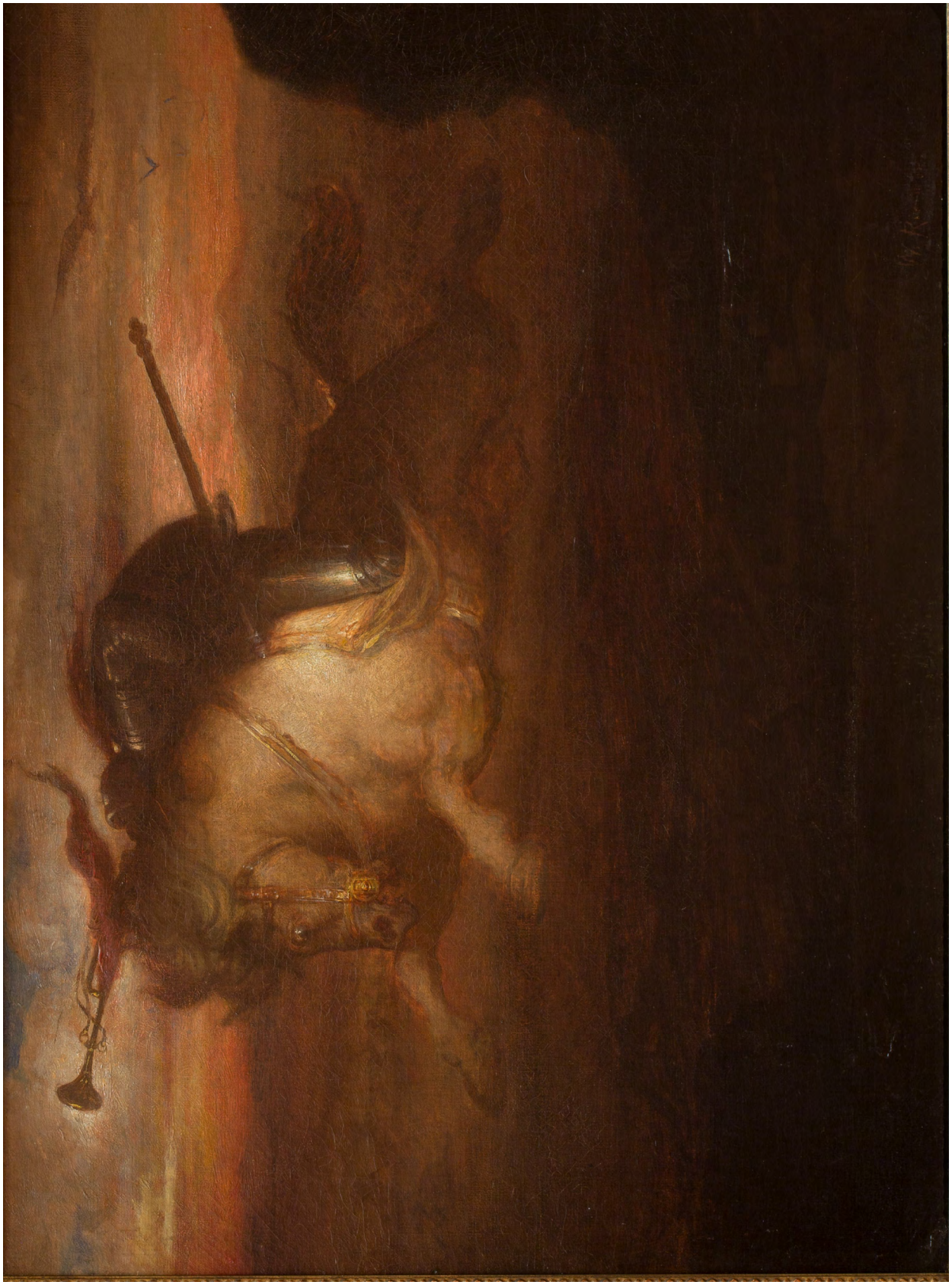

Fig. 67 *Victory*, 1870. Oil on canvas, 20 x 27 in. (50.8 x 68.6 cm). Detroit Institute of Arts. Founders Society Purchase, Dexter M. Ferry Jr. Fund, 69.293

Fig. 68 *Victory*, 1870 (X-radiograph)

its side, referring to Jesus' death through crucifixion (Revelation 5:6; 5:12)).[59] According to the text, the lamb breaks seven seals on a written scroll, and at the breakage of each seal, an act of vengeance occurs. As shown, the opening of the fourth seal releases Death riding on a pale horse, the last and most terrible of four avenging horsemen (Revelation 6:8). Death has been given the right to kill the wicked by sword, pestilence, famine, and wild beasts.

A preparatory sketch (fig. 69), which humanizes the rider with an actual face and a striped shirt rather than armor, is far less sinister than the painting but adds an appendage — the letter "D" for Death — on the horseman's back. Blowing his trumpet, Death awakens the world and heralds the consequences of his entrance. In both the drawing and the painting, Rimmer's emphasis is less on killing than on an expression of triumph in a final retribution.

Fig. 69 *Victory*, 1870 or before. Pen over graphite on paper, 3 ¾ x 5 3/16 in. (9.55 x 13.20 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

The hidden prompt that this is a Swedenborgian interpretation is the peculiar configuration of the tip of the rider's staff in the painting. It is a trefoil, a Christian symbol for the Trinity often found in church architecture; but, in a significant change, its three lobes unite (as facets of one God) in a conglomerate bulge at its base to emphasize unity.[60]

As an original design, the modified trefoil evokes the Trinity insignia that Rimmer invented to decorate the top of the pole held in *The Sentinel* (fig. 44): three flames combined by a knot below. There the allusion is to Swedenborg's description of tongue-like flames from heaven that descend and make non-believers finally understand and believe that the biblical Trinity is actually one God.[61] With this addition to *The Sentinel*, Rimmer's presentation of Fortitude is as a human strength, reinforced in the past by ancient stoicism and now by the Swedenborgian Christian faith. Indeed, this duty-bound sentinel is physically supported by his special, symbolic pole.

According to Swedenborg — in a departure from the Bible — mankind is redeemed from sin by the Last Judgment, not the Crucifixion, and the Last Judgment has occurred three times: at the time of the Flood, at the time that Christ lived, and at a beginning time of church enlightenment in 1757 (which Swedenborg witnessed).[62] It is an occasion of re-assessment that takes place not on Earth, as the Bible says, but in the spiritual world — in a false heaven or purgatory — where outwardly good but inwardly evil people are placed to be judged. Other deceased people are regularly divided between heaven and hell.[63]

At the same time as this long-awaited judgment, the repeatable victory (which is depicted) is a conquering of the old, corrupt Christian church by a new impetus for renewal and enlightenment — in this instance, sweeping away fallacies such as the belief in the Trinity as three gods. At the urging of angels, this perversion (which is not in the Bible) was exposed by Swedenborg when he returned from heaven.[64] He now had authority on the matter, having visited the spiritual world or world of causes where the physical world is the effect.[65] The painting's recognition of the Trinity problem through a subtle emblem implies that Rimmer's portrayal is the 1757 event that concerned Swedenborg. Unlike in the Bible, this Last Judgment is not the final triumph for all time, but, rather, an upheaval that will bring a new moral clarity and a new balance to the forces of good and evil.[66]

In the painting, Death's purpose as a slayer is only implied. Four hardly visible — but clearly long-necked — vultures replace his biblically mentioned sword; they follow Death, in anticipation of carrion. Although the vultures are not in the Bible, Rimmer basically depicted the biblical account (with hints of Swedenborg's interpretation), while avoiding what might be grotesque or inartistic, such as the horrific slaughter and wild chaos in Benjamin West's huge, 1817 *Death on a Pale Horse* (Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts).[67]

As will be seen, Rimmer did not always agree with Swedenborg, and, in this case, he left out the theologian's further decoding of the biblical account. Swedenborg saw the four horsemen as not merely avengers of the lamb as in the original, symbolic text but also symbols — in a second context — of different, morally deficient human perspectives. Accordingly, Death, being the worst, represents a person's complete lack of spiritual life.[68] Yet Rimmer rejects this and includes a contradiction in the trefoil symbol. This figure of Death is spiritually motivated.

At the edge of the trumpet blast, there is a change in the sky's thick layer of overcast. Shot through with the vivid colors of a setting sun, this layer breaks apart to reveal puffy white clouds and patches of blue sky in what appears to be a symbolic reference to the eventual outcome which will be, in Swedenborgian terms, a newly enlightened Christian church.

Perhaps the dramatic impact of *Victory* is closest to that of the 1865 biblical version by the French artist and prolific engraver Gustave Doré (fig. 70), but the differences are noteworthy. Instead of Doré's more conventional Death as the grim reaper, with a tell-tale scythe and trail of skeletons, Rimmer leaves his rider a mystery and puts the full passion of his message in the body of his horse — a nightmare with supernatural power. The contrast in energy is striking. Rimmer shows not just an end but also an explosive, new beginning.

Rimmer painted secular subjects too, with spiritual overlays that are related to Swedenborg's opinions, such as his two pictures of women in mysterious interiors. The largest and compositionally simplest is *At the Window*

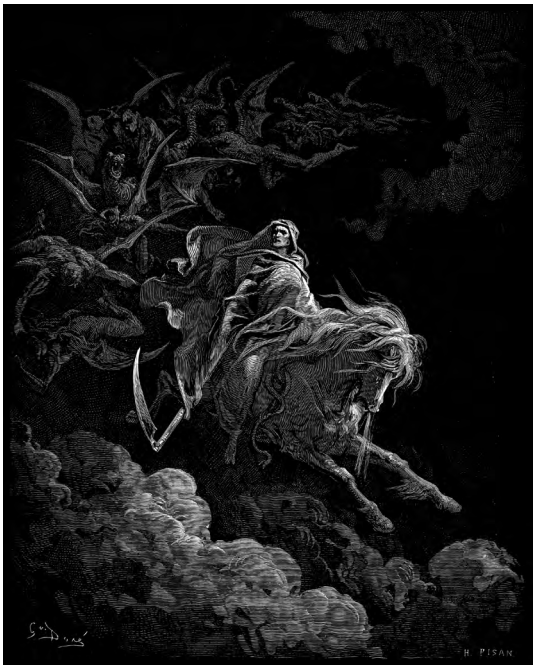

Fig. 70 Gustave Doré, *Death on a Pale Horse*, 1865. Engraving from *The Doré Bible Gallery* (Philadelphia: Henry Altemus, 1890), 100

(fig. 71), datable from a commercial label.[69] As shown, a young woman in her prime — seductively posed with hip extended and a perfect Greek classical profile so that she is an aesthetic ideal — turns away from a tall silver ewer, apparently a prize possession with a large, cabochon jewel. She gazes, with rapt attention, through a partly veiled window as an almost-hidden, pink flower dangles from her hand. Through this juxtaposition, a contrast is set up between a shiny, costly object and enticing woman on one side and the brilliant sunshine that pours through the window. Even the living flower, shown drooping, is as nothing compared to the expression of divine light.[70] With good reason, the subject could be identified as an allegory of earthly and divine beauty. Given the focus on this lone woman and Rimmer's interest in the psychological, it is her thinking that is the subject. A viewer might expect her to be longing for an absent lover, but then there would be no need for featuring a fancy ewer.[71] Having lost interest in herself, her possessions, and even her symbol of nature (the flower), she looks outside in a moment of quiet contemplation and revelation. Swedenborg wrote that "to 'look out from a window' is to perceive those things which appear by means of the internal sight."[72] This goes beyond what the physical eye observes and is essentially spiritual insight.

Entering further into the interpretation, the pairing of the woman and the pitcher is not meaningless. The Bible (1 Peter 3:7) refers to a married woman as the "weaker vessel." This is not the thinking of Rimmer who wrote in his diary (missing) of women as "all soul," but he would have known the biblical description.[73] In this comparison, like the pitcher, the woman is a vessel but potentially a spiritual one.

Rimmer's style changes slightly within *At the Window*, and this record of his range is informative. That is, he moves from relatively defined and detailed drawing at the middle — including the woman's profile and body outline — to more impressionistic and brushy painting in the area of the curtains and window at the right. There is the same range, about twenty years earlier, in *Scene from The Tempest* (fig. 6). Details that are carefully drawn bear some resemblance to his highly finished pencil drawings such as his 1875 caricature, *Doing the Mountains on Foot* (fig. 72), which was inspired by hiking in Franconia, New Hampshire, and probably meant for sale.[74] Other sections of *At the Window* fade into a general murkiness, such as her lower legs and feet, which are left to the viewer's imagination.

Concerning *Interior / Before the Picture* (fig. 73), the clue that it has a covert meaning is the unexplained short shaft of light above the framed portrait (held on an easel) that does not come from the darkened window.

Fig. 71 *At the Window*, 1868 to the early 1870s. Oil on canvas, 20 ¼ x 14 1/8 in. (51.45 x 35.88 cm). Smithsonian American Art Museum, Museum purchase

Rimmer never accidently included a detail that could be spiritually momentous. The effect (fig. 74), like that of the light on Conscience in *Flight and Pursuit*, which was completed in the same year of 1872, is to give the propped-up painting a sacred or otherworldly aspect. There are also a few unavoidable anomalies that come into play here. The background Gothic revival chair, globular glass oil lamps, and adjoining desk are white, indistinct, and transparent as if phantom images. They resemble Conscience in their dematerialized condition but do not logically occupy space or, rather, are crammed together unrealistically with a sculpture's stand. Moreover, the two, long window curtains not only join as if they were one but spill dramatically into the room, partially encasing the gold framed portrait. Not coincidently, the Spiritualists — a group descended from Swedenborg that Rimmer joined — referred to the separation between our world and the next as a singular dividing veil.[75]

There is more to this mysterious veil. Swedenborg wrote that those who perceive nothing else but what they discern by their senses, such as sight, "close the interior of their mind, and interpose as it were a veil, and afterwards think under the veil." Such people are "not able to comprehend the state of the soul after death otherwise than sensually and not spiritually."[76] However, this veil is turned aside so that it is possible for the woman portrayed to see internally. What the divided veil means is less clear. In another text, Swedenborg speaks of a "spiritual light, which is abstracted from time and space."[77] This pairing might be symbolized by the two parts to the veil.

Fig. 72 *Doing the Mountains on Foot*, 1875. Graphite on paper, 12 11/16 x 15 7/8 in. (32.3 x 40.3 cm). Harvard Art Museums / Fogg Museum, Louise E. Bettens Fund. Photo © President and Fellows of Harvard College

In Rimmer's way of summarizing meaning, the full message is arguably in the fact that the young woman, leaning on a fashionable Renaissance Revival case piece, looks beyond the decorative vase — which almost interrupts her line of vision — to the spiritually illuminated portrait, with her head lifted slightly to see it better.[78] She holds a fan — a suggestion of gentility but also an excuse to display her left hand with a wedding band. The vase, like the ewer in *At the Window*, is rendered as a losing competing interest. The woman's focus is inarguably not so much on a beautiful object as on the representation of an indistinct, but special, human being. This is believably the woman's husband, shown standing outdoors against patches of blue sky and wearing a wide-brimmed hat similar to the one worn by Rimmer's pupil, John La Farge, in his 1859 *Portrait of the Painter* (fig. 75). In this hallowed context, the man's left arm — crossing the body and gesturing upward, out of the picture — might signal not just his departure but also his death.

The background, ghost furniture acts as perhaps a silent commentary on the scene. That is, the woman seems to associate her husband only with his portrait, not with her actual world which includes an oddly placed desk and chair. But Rimmer connects the apparitional furniture with the image of a likely-deceased man because of the otherworldly effect of the forms themselves, as if imprinted with mysterious energy. Spiritualists believed in such imprinting.[79] Furthermore, the pale, carved chair, with its Gothic historical reference, could be considered masculine (as it was), especially in contrast with the modern and non-referential reclining chair next to it.[80] To underscore the point, the latter is made identifiably feminine by the draped shawl, matching footstool, and coded use of the color pink.[81]

The title *Interior* (inscribed on the reverse by Rimmer's daughter Caroline) is a double entendre in that it refers to a parlor interior that also synthesizes the woman's moral interior (in Rimmer's construction), showing her concern with material possessions, and, until this moment, her lack of spiritual awareness. Unlike the viewer (or potentially so), the woman is oblivious to her husband's enduring presence. Her possessions, like the decorative vase, are obstacles to her understanding of the continuity of life. In this sense, the picture is understandable as an allegory of the conflict between a material and spiritual life, but it is within a very specific context.

According to Swedenborg, there are three states leading to conjugal love: the "good" that initiates it is "beauty, or agreement of manners or an outward adaptation of the one to the other." This first state appears to be signified by the statuette of the goddess of beauty and love, a revised copy of the *Venus de Milo* (Louvre Museum), shown with the addition of an arm and cane as if to indicate her priority in the past. The distinct forward, bent knee,

Fig. 73 *Interior / Before the Picture*, 1872. Oil on board, 12 x 9 in. (30.5 x 22.9 cm). Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas, 2006.78. Photography by Dwight Primiano

Fig. 74 *Interior / Before the Picture* (detail), 1872

Fig. 75 John La Farge, *Portrait of the Painter*, 1859. Oil on wood panel, 16 1/16 x 11 ½ in. (40.8 x 29.2 cm). Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/11383

classical clothing and hair identify her. Opposite on the mantle, is a figure that appears to be her husband, Vulcan, a virile god of fire and the forge, with his hammer and anvil. He joins her in an expanded tableau of the initial marital state, now outdated. The second stage is the "conjunction of minds, wherein the one wills as the other," which is symbolized by the wedding ring on the woman's finger. The third is a culmination in shared religious beliefs and a timeless, conjugal love, or "heavenly marriage," which can happen after one partner is deceased.[82] The scene is staged to present this not-yet-attained possibility. Swedenborg says, by the death of one partner, the pair "are still not separated, since the spirit of him or her deceased cohabits continually with the spirit of him or her not yet deceased, and this even to the death of the other."[83] This co-habiting seems to be signaled by the presence of the husband's possessions.

Following Swedenborg's way of thinking, the man in the portrait, as a deceased person, has developed into his true interior self, which from the light above, means that his destiny has been heaven.[84] The woman, still alive, is necessarily in an exterior state, and this might or might not be the same as her interior — or spiritually real — self.[85] The moment shown is apparently a critical instance of awareness for her as she looks beyond her valued vase to the supernaturally lit likeness of her husband. Since his death, she has moved on (no widow's garb) and noticeably acquired new furniture. Whatever the meaning — and there is no sign of the woman's religious belief — it hinges on Swedenborg's concept of the highest form of marital love. The man's gesture in the painting might even be one of hopeful summoning. For his wife to join him after death, she apparently must reject her materialism with its cultural pretensions, or "the allurements and vanities of the world."[86]

To understand, *Interior* requires a close inspection that is the kind of parsing that Rimmer recommended in 1873 for viewers of artworks. His example of the rewards of careful observation with his students was the French artist Jean-Léon Gérôme's 1859 *Ave Caesar! Morituri Te Salutant* (fig. 76), a well-known work.[87] Focusing on seemingly minor details in a photograph, he pointed out appreciatively that the gladiators appearing before Emperor Titus, in advance of their combat, exhibited different attitudes. The martial bearing and confidence of one meant he would be successful while the lowered sword and dejected attitude of another predicted his defeat.[88] In another example, using an unidentified work by William Turner, a background area was so ambiguous that he was pleased to say there were two possible readings of what could be seen, which enhanced interest by appealing to the imagination.[89] Rimmer's comparable use of this ambiguity is in the man's gesture within the portrait in *Interior*.

Fig. 76 Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Ave Caesar! Morituri Te Salutant* (*Hail Caesar! We Who Are about to Die Salute You*), 1859. Oil on canvas, 36 5/8 x 57 ¼ in. (93.1 x 145.4 cm). Yale University Art Gallery. https://artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/9187

Just as Rimmer created works in response to the Bible, Shakespeare, Swedenborg, and the biblical scholar Baur, he produced *Gladiator and Lion* (fig. 77) in an apparent response to Gérôme's interpretation.[90] Making the connection, it borrows not only the arena view with its canopy transformed into a distant mountain (possibly a dormant volcano) but also the idea for the festoon relief at upper right in Rimmer's version, which comes from the wall below the emperor. Yet Rimmer's small picture offers what might be considered a corrective to the large, exhibition-destined work by Gérôme. Instead of following its precedent in an attempt at historical reconstruction — and a dispassionate view of what happens between events at the Roman Colosseum — it explores the emotional and moral circumstances of a single, intense confrontation.[91]

Fig. 77 *Gladiator and Lion* (*Lion in the Arena*), before 1876. Oil on pressed wood pulp board, 8 5/8 x 11 5/8 in. (21.91 x 29.53 cm). Reynolda House Museum of American Art, Affiliated with Wake Forest University. Gift of Barbara B. Millhouse

In Rimmer's version, originally titled *Gladiator and Lion*, two adversaries from different species prepare to lunge at each other in a final death struggle. On one side, there is an unnaturally darkened, shielded and threatening gladiator — whose head is so obscured as to appear almost inhuman as he draws back his sword — and, on the other side, a snarling, crouching lion against a wall. Their bodies are strikingly opposite in that one is youthful and tense muscled while the other is old and flaccid. The plight of the lion is all too evident. He was unable to protect his nearby mate, shown dead at the left, whereas a younger lion in the background, with one thrust of his body, is able to overpower his tormentor amidst a melee of lions and gladiators. The aged lion faces certain death as the extended sword will slice into his body just as he makes his final leap.

Curiously, in his frightened condition, the lion has raised his tail so that it echoes the tail position on a nearby background statue. Rendered in bronze, this man-made lion with the upright tail establishes a pairing that is encouraged by the paired men at center left. The vertical lighting along the edge of the stone relief and spot of sunlight above the living lion's tail bring attention to the similarity. Also, strangely, the arena dust stirred up by the lion's hind paws is much more than would be natural so that it becomes a semi-hidden factor that enters into Rimmer's meaning. Unlike the dust near his front paw, this is a kind of condensed ether that, given Rimmer's tendencies, suggests something transcendent. Its effect is to intensify what is intangible such as the lion's deep, soulful stress.[92]

To regress, Gérôme's two insignificant, distant statues of walking lions (far left) are converted into the raised sculpture of one frontal, growling beast in Rimmer's version. With its challenging stance, Rimmer's statue is presumably dedicated to the indomitable spirit of the male lion — powerful even as a captive in the arena.

Following the cue of this statue, the picture appears to be a tribute to the instinctive ferocity of the foreground, trapped and terrified lion that, despite his declining strength, has the tenacity of his species. Yet this old lion cannot achieve the undefeated glory of his forebear in bronze. The picture seems to be a meditation or allegory about power — whether innate or extrinsic.

Despite his protective shield and sharp sword, the gladiator, too, is not powerful. His leather armor has prominent lacing across the back, indicating the participation of another person, and, as the background vignette shows, he can be overcome by lions. Rimmer wrote compassionately of a gladiator in "Stephen and Phillip" as controlled by others and having "no calling but to shed his blood at others' will."[93]

The dramatic contrast between human and animal, and the lion's glance at the viewer — as if threatened from that direction too — might well be meant to stimulate thoughts on the moral implications of the scene. One such line of thinking is Swedenborg's observation that beasts act according to instincts and are "not able to pervert them" or explain themselves "by depraved reasonings, as men do."[94] As the faintly defined but vast audience implies, these two opponents are forced to fight for the purpose of callous entertainment. The twisted thinking — or the evil — behind this interaction is the work of humankind, represented by the robotic and anonymous gladiator. The sin here is likely the degradation of an aging but magnificent creature as suggested by the statue. Rather than record a sensational scene without apparent comment as Gérôme did, Rimmer paid tribute to a courageous but out-maneuvered animal, one that had special meaning for him.

As a reviewer noted, on seeing *Gladiator and Lion* in 1880, Rimmer did not mean to "stupidly" copy a lion. Having seen menagerie lions, he relied on his memory to create one that, through exaggeration, conveyed what he wanted: "the execution was only a means of expression."[95] Indeed, he taught his students to work in the same way from their accumulated knowledge. The gladiator, too, the reviewer concluded, is "perhaps unlike a human being."[96] In both cases, this is anatomy that moves beyond the natural for the sake of stronger expression of an idea. Another 1880 reviewer, the artist Frank D. Millet, wrote of this picture and a study of a lion (unidentified) by Rimmer: "Neither of them resemble in anything but the ferocity of the expression and the character of the action the animal which they are supposed to represent. Yet in spite of their originality, they impress one as the type of a lion of the highest class."[97] That is, the lion's basis in reality is subservient to the operative idea.

Two of Rimmer's last works reflect on Swedenborg's beliefs and reportage. One, *The Gamblers*, *Plunderers of Castile*, is crossed with a second source, and the other — *The Shepherd* (fig. 78) dated 1877 — depends on an obscure reference that many Swedenborg followers would not recognize.

Specifically, *The Shepherd* is based on Swedenborg's concept of a "man-wolf," a sophist who can lead others astray spiritually and convince them with false arguments.[98] This is the closest Rimmer actually got to illustrating Swedenborg's imagery, the way the English artist John Flaxman did (but with different subjects), rather than incorporating Swedenborg's ideas as one component of a complicated work.[99] Yet Swedenborg never spoke of man-wolf as possessing a tail, just as he never described God as an old man or spoke of a modified trefoil symbol, portraits of the dead, or feminine and ghost furniture.

A man-wolf is a type of fallen man that Swedenborg ran across during his visit to the afterlife. Such people might be called "Christians," but inside they were "men-beasts. " He identified two of them: a Catholic priest and a politician who supported the priest as a way of controlling people.[100] One man-wolf — worse than the others — that Swedenborg met was an evil spirit who tried to infect Swedenborg "by magic arts" with his "sphere of ideas." After being repulsed, he returned "with an earthen jug in his hand" and wanted Swedenborg to take a swallow. It contained a special liquor that took away the understanding of those who drank it. The man-wolf oddly resembled "a black cloud," and he did not appear with a face or had a face with only teeth. While he mocked others, he knew nothing himself of truth.[101] Swedenborg, who gained information from other spirits, was told that this creature, when he lived in the world, had been a distinguished character. His real self was hidden then and known only to some.[102]

Somewhat like the woman in *At the Window*, in Rimmer's reconception a man-wolf's naked body is on seductive display, although modestly covered by shadow and the presence of a long wolf's tail (which catches

Fig. 78 *The Shepherd*, 1877. Oil on canvas, 27 x 22 in. (68.58 x 55.90 cm). Boston Medical Library, William Rimmer Collection

the viewer's eye because of a patch of light just above it). As the glistening collar around his neck and cordage that surrounds him indicate, he is totally enslaved by the contents of the black jug he carries. Because this is a sunlit day, the general effect of depravity is reinforced by the symbolic dark shadow that envelopes him. He holds his shepherd's crook but has either lost the sheep that evidently belonged to the distant town on which he fixes his gaze, or he has not yet received them. According to Swedenborg, a man-wolf once drove the sheep that had been foolishly entrusted to him "from the pasture into the wilderness," where he immediately killed them.[103] Thus, he is a symbol of successful, devious and demonic leadership. Yet, with the cordage, Rimmer has departed from Swedenborg and made man-wolf his own victim. Although he cheats others, he is himself deceived and has thereby lost understanding.

Rimmer developed some of his ideas for pictures from his spontaneous blackboard drawings of different poses for people and animals and also drew blackboard images that were related to pictures in progress. In 1876, for example, his student Sidney Richmond Burleigh copied a figure that Rimmer drew in front of a Providence, Rhode Island class that resembles the one in *The Shepherd* but without all the details.[104]

That a person's exterior or apparent self (as in the case of a man-wolf) can be very different from the interior, true self, which can be hidden until after death, is a major Swedenborgian concept. It is also the basic idea behind *The Gamblers*, *Plunderers of Castile* (fig. 79) which was left unfinished at Rimmer's death in 1879.[105]

The scene appears to be derived from Charlotte Mary Yonge's 1878 book, *The Story of the Christians and Moors of Spain*, with the focus on the eleventh century reconquest of Spain.[106] She mentions Alvar Fanez, a close friend and kinsman of the national hero El Cid, and, like him, a famous military leader and Castilian nobleman. Fanez — who is shown in the left background (fig. 80), dressed in armor and gesturing toward the larger room — vacillated in his allegiance between the Christian kingdoms and the Muslim Moors.[107] After he helped the Muslim emir, Al Kadir, in a battle near Valencia, Al Kadir "presented him with a castle, where all sorts of lawless people collected and lived by plunder, accompanied by horrid cruelties."[108] The emir stands next to Fanez, and in front of them

Fig. 79 *The Gamblers, Plunderers of Castile*, 1879. Oil on canvas, 14 x 17 in. (35.56 x 43.18 cm). Purchase, Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, Massachusetts

is a lawless crew, comparable to El Cid from Castile because of their soldier's life of plunder, but operating on a baser level. According to Yonge, they captured both Muslims and Christians and held them prisoner for ransom.[109]

Fig. 80 *The Gamblers, Plunderers of Castile* (detail), 1879

With Rimmer building on this premise, men in the foreground, dressed as soldiers, gamble over stolen loot or ransom in the middle of a long table, with Spaniards on the left teamed against darker skinned Moors on the right. An ace of spades (a sign of death in fortune telling) has just been played by a now distracted Moor, and his opponent is considering his response.[110] One man advises this player over his choice of cards while another surreptitiously hands him a pistol in exchange for a money pouch.

Appearing somewhat alarmed, Fanez gestures with his left arm and looks upward toward the light source that illuminates the column behind him. But the gambling and background suggestion of violence are the logical outcome of his own and El Cid's "roving habits," as described by Yonge who disparaged both sides, "feeding" their bands "upon plunder alike of Moor and Christian."[111]

Immediately what is conspicuously strange is that the whole scene takes place within a gigantic interior, and yet the Moors have exterior walls behind them. Reading this from a Swedenborgian perspective, the Moors — with darkened or covered faces — stand next to an exterior as their symbol which means they are ruled by their outer selves (their earthly concerns).[112] The player who drew the fateful card completely turns his head so as not to exhibit any facial expression.[113] This adds to a deliberate ambiguity concerning him, but the face of his Spanish adversary closely resembles one that Rimmer drew for his *Art Anatomy* and labeled, in moral terms, "Monstrous."[114]

The three Spanish card players are also backed by an exterior, indicating that they share the same worldly values. But this is a portico, and Fanez and Al Kadir stand in it as if half outside and half inside, suggesting that they are partly spiritual. Farther to the left, there are more deeply interior figures, with the last figure shown frontally and higher up as if descending a staircase. This man is unfinished and has a white collar or the

beginning of a white garment. The general effect, because of the lighting, is that this mysterious compartment is on the more metaphysical side.

A crucial piece of evidence for interpretation in this picture is the broken glass decanter on the floor, at foreground center. It is lined up, like the lion's tail in *Gladiator and Lion*, by a crease in the table cloth with a bronze rosewater sprinkler above, but what Rimmer meant by calling attention to this relationship is unclear.[115] Swedenborg introduced the concept of correspondences as relationships between two levels of existence, such as between the spiritual and the natural.[116] Possibly the broken glass, with its emphasis on interiority, refers to the spiritual world and the bronze sprinkler, with its emphasis on a decorated exterior, refers to the material world.

To the right and behind on the table is an extinguished, white candle. In a Swedenborgian context, the snuffed candle means that since the men's spiritual minds are not open, they cannot see the light of truth.[117] As a whole, the picture portrays the debasement of men who once fought for or against the Christian — more exactly, Catholic — Reconquista of Spain from the Moors. Although not fully worked out, the two sides are not defined by religion. Rather, self-interest and sheer greed have triumphed over Christian and Muslim principles alike. Avarice, one of the seven deadly sins, is the probable theme.

Although Rimmer made use of Swedenborg's ideas in his pictures, he cannot be traced as attending a particular Swedenborgian church, and his beliefs differed from Swedenborg's in important ways.[118] For instance, the two men held very dissimilar views with regard to a conscience. Rimmer believed it was God-given and inborn; everyone had a conscience.[119] Swedenborg appears somewhat muddled in his thinking but disagreed: a conscience was acquired from one's religion, and not everyone had one.[120] He explained that "they who do good from natural good, and not from religion, have no conscience."[121]

Beyond this contrast, the way that Rimmer most startlingly separated himself from Swedenborg is that, like the English artist William Blake (also, for a time, a Swedenborgian), Rimmer had his own visions and even talked to angels.[122] Given his own sojourns beyond this world, he did not need Swedenborg as an intermediary.

Swedenborg warned others against having conversations, as he did with spirits, but, to many, his successful ripping of the veil to another world was an act to be followed.[123] Led by his own inquisitive mind, Rimmer was more of a Spiritualist — with his numerous attempts to contact the dead — than a Swedenborgian.[124] This theological independence made him all the more inscrutable in his work.

In the end, the critic who claimed Rimmer's thought-provoking pictures could never appeal to a mercenary age or, more precisely, an "impatient utilitarian spirit" proved to be prescient.[125] The artist's complicated messages were too dependent on a personal symbolism. Surely Rimmer could have predicted this reaction, yet he did not adjust to it with explanations. Thus, with little or no attempt to enlighten the public, he accepted a fate for his paintings of forgotten meaning.[126]

Endnotes

1 See Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 122, concerning painting with the critique of his wife.

2 For Rimmer stressing the importance of expressing an idea, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 62.

3 John Ruskin, *Modern Painters* 3 (London: J.M. Dent and Co.; and New York: E.P. Dutton and Co. [1860]: 92–93.

4 For criticism, see Anon., "Allegory in Art," *The Crayon: A Journal Devoted to the Graphic Arts, and the Literature Related to Them* 3 (April 1856): 114.

5 John Ruskin, *Modern Painters* 2 (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1846): 97.

6 Thomas Cole, *Journal* (November 5, 1834–February 1, 1848), entry for March 24, 1839, Thomas Cole Papers, New York State Library, Albany, NY.

7 Ibid., entry for May 22, 1842.

8 Anon., "Allegory in Art," 115.

9 The exceptions include *Flight and Pursuit* in 1872 (for sale) at the Williams & Everett's art gallery in Boston and Mr. Brown's gallery in Providence; *Gladiator and Lion* which was shown at the Boston Art Club in 1876 (for sale) and the Star of Bethlehem Lodge, Chelsea, in 1877; and *Interior/ Before a Picture* which was perhaps exhibited as *Contemplation* at the Star of Bethlehem Lodge in 1877. The lodge exhibitions were under the auspices of the Review Club of Chelsea.

10 Anon., "The Fine Arts," *Boston Evening Journal*, February 3, 1883, [4].

11 John Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress: from This World to That Which Is to Come* (Boston: Massachusetts Sabbath School Society, 1834), 14.

12 Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 27. This drawing, like several others that survive, has been placed within an oval mat that is lithographed with an ornamental border. This appears to have been done after Rimmer's death for exhibition. The mat has been inscribed by probably Caroline Rimmer.

13 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 95.

14 See [Rev. James P. Stuart], *Popery Adjudged, or the Roman Catholic Church Weighed in the Balance of God's Word and Found Wanting, Extracted from the Works of Emanuel Swedenborg with an Introduction and Appendix* (Boston, MA: Redding, 1854), 19–20. In the decades before the Civil War, a large influx of immigrant Catholics — chiefly Irish — threatened Protestant dominance. On this, see John Davis, "Catholic Envy: The Visual Culture of Protestant Desire," in David Morgan and Sally M. Promey, ed., *The Visual Culture of American Religions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 109–12. Most published attacks were against the priestly hierarchy, and the charge of idolatry was particularly common. (112).

15 W.J. Linton, *Threescore and Ten Years, 1820–1890; Recollections by W.J. Linton* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1894), 206.

16 Timothy Miller, *America's Alternative Religions* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1995), 79. This would explain Bartlett's ambiguous report that Rimmer's beliefs "differed radically from the prevalent religions in Brockton," where he was studying with Kingman from about 1841 to 1847. See Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 16. Bartlett was not told about Swedenborg.

17 Miller, *Religions*, 79. See also Swedenborg, *Heaven and Its Wonders*, 11–12.

18 A distantly related pencil drawing by Rimmer, *Horses and Man before a Fountain* (Fogg Museum) shows a helmeted man — possibly Roman — watering two horses at a tiered fountain with a cross on top. His thinking about the painting might have evolved from this. I am indebted to conservator Kelly J. Keegan for using infrared reflectography in examining the painting with me.

19 [Stuart], *Popery Adjudged*, 130. The book's context is fear of the possible election of Catholics to positions of authority in the U.S. (132).

20 Baur, *Paul*, 189. In his studies of early Christianity, Baur discerned a fundamental conflict between the Jewish-Christian church led by the apostle Peter and the Gentile-Christian church led by Paul, and, for Baur, this temporary division influenced the books of the New Testament. One option would be for the dogs to represent Paul versus Peter, or, because Paul was a hero of the Protestant Reformation, Protestantism versus Catholicism, but, the painting, as a whole, does not support this.

21 On Baur, see Henry A. Pochmann, *German Culture in America: Philosophical and Literary Influences, 1600–1900* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1961), 305. Baur, *Paul*, 191.

22 Ibid., 192.

23 See the criticism of the pope, including the aim for world dominion, in Emanuel Swedenborg, *The Apocalypse Revealed, Wherein Are Disclosed the Arcana There Foretold, Which Have Hitherto Remained Concealed* (Boston: Otis Clapp, 1836), 2:372.

24 [Stuart], *Popery Adjudged*, 89.

25 For Catholic, see Johnson, *American Symbolist Art*, 48. From family information, Kirstein thought Thomas had been raised a Catholic so probably he became one later. He points out that Rimmer was patronized early by the Catholic Church (painted altarpieces) but "never a communicant in his maturity." See Kirstein, "Rimmer: His Life," 686, 689. For the Anglican parents, see the Marriage Register, 1813–1826, p. 60, for Holy Trinity, St. Anne Street, Liverpool.

26 See Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 9, 19, 95, and 107.

27 For Quaker, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 16. He was married on December 17, 1840, by the Rev. Mellish I. Motte who presided at the South Congregational Church, Boston, which was Unitarian. See "Massachusetts, Town Clerk, Vital and Town Records, 1621–2001," database with images, *Family Search.org*. Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 9, says he had an outstanding voice and sang in the Methodist church, but that may have been a special occasion. There is no evidence that he was ever a member of the Methodist Church. I am indebted to Kara Jackson, Archivist and Preservation Librarian, Boston University School of Theology Library, for her research into Methodist churches of the Boston area.

28 For Motte and the quotes, see Anon., *Memorials of the History for Half a Century of the South Congregational Church, Boston, Collected for Its Jubilee Celebration, February 3, 1878* (Boston, MA: Franklin Press; Rand, Abery and Co., 1878), 23, 17.

29 On his disagreement with Parker, expressed to Louisa May Alcott, see Kirstein, "Rimmer: His Life," 689. Regarding the devil, see Octavius Brooks Frothingham, *Theodore Parker: A Biography* (Boston: J.R. Osgood and Company, 1874), 287.

30 See "The Love Chant," Rimmer Commonplace Book, Boston Medical Library. The line is also in the full poem transcription in Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 4:1277.

31 Bartlett, "Dr. William Rimmer," 19, 336 (quote). He worked on the altarpiece, the *Holy Family*, and two small pictures (lost) for Father [John] Roddan who became pastor of St. Mary's Parish in 1851. The two pictures, a *Crucifixion* and an *Infant St. Peter*, are reproduced, but not very clearly, in Bartlett, *Rimmer*, figs. 13 and 14. Earlier Rimmer painted "several" religious pictures (unidentified and lost) for Father [Terence] Fitz Simmons of South Boston (ibid., 18).

32 Bartlett, "Dr. William Rimmer," 336.

33 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 21.

34 Rimmer repeatedly addresses God directly in "Stephen and Phillip" as on pp. [4–5].

35 For infallible and the only path, see Anon., "Orestes A. Brownson," *Maine Cultivator and Hallowell Gazette*, March 7, 1846, 3, and Anon. "Mr. Orestes A. Brownson," *New Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette*, May 22, 1845, [1]. On state religion, see Anon., "Rev. O.A. Brownson: Young Catholic's Friend Society," *Morning News* (New London, CT), January 10, 1845, [2]. In 1857, he continued the argument that Catholicism would lead to a more noble national character. For this, see Orestes A. Brownson, *The Convert: or, Leaves from My Experience* (New York; E. Dunigan and Brother, 1857), 448. For Rimmer as a Christian Socialist, see Kirstein, "Rimmer: His Life," 716.

36 See, for instance, Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 259.

37 For *Juliet and the Nurse* and *Massacre of the Innocents* as paired and each conveying a loss of innocence, see Weidman, et al., *Rimmer*, 58. Although the pictures are the same size, their provenances and subjects are quite different.

38 See [Kirstein], *Rimmer*, no. 20. The nurse and her assistant, Peter, have coarse features but their faces do not correspond to the limited examples of readable physiognomy in Rimmer's *Art Anatomy*.

39 The power of wedded love is a theme that Rimmer also used in his drawing *Sadak in Search of the Waters of Oblivion* (Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh).

40 On faith and conscience, see William White, *Swedenborg: His Life and Writings* (London: William White, 1856), 49. On charity, see Emanuel Swedenborg, *Gems from the Writings of Swedenborg with a Memoir by O. Prescott Hiller* (Boston: T.H. Carter, 1868), 2:190.

41 Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 347 and 371.

42 For world, ibid., 9; for revelation, ibid., 57; for birth, ibid., 169 and 237; and for worms, ibid., 55.

43 Ibid., 103, 369, 371.

44 The drawing is inscribed at lower right, recto, that it is a study for a picture, but no related finished work is known.

45 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 95.

46 For the dove, see Mark 1:10 and for the Holy Spirit as the same being in that scene, see Luke 3:16 and John 1:33. Rimmer likely originally intended to create a scene of Job with his three friends. Then he added the dove to make one of the men Elihu.

There is a "Winsor & Newton" company label on the verso of the millboard that refers to the death of Prince Albert in England. It dates between 1862 and 1863 when the label changes again to add a reference to the Prince and Princess of Wales.

47 For nakedness as innocence, see Swedenborg, *Heaven and Its Wonders*, 174.

48 Albert Barnes, *Notes, Critical, Illustrative, and Practical, on the Book of Job: with a New Translation, and an Introductory Dissertation* 5th ed. (New York: Leavitt, Trow and Company, 1849), 1:cxxi. See Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 3:753, for the identity of the subject in doubt.

49 Barnes, *Notes*, 1:cxxi, where the opinion is treated as outdated. Yet Barnes acknowledges there is no Old Testament character who would "more obviously suggest" Jesus than Elihu (142n). The spirit of God had taught Elihu, and he was speaking in God's stead (139).

50 Bartlett reproduces all four drawings, one of which (no. 31) is visibly dated 1877 (*Rimmer*, opposite page 68). Caroline Rimmer wrote on the upper right front of the drawing *Sacred Subject* that it is a "very early work," but her dating has not been reliable.

51 Concerning the painting, the millboard label refers to the London firm, "Winsor & Newton," and dates from about 1840 to 1855. Weidman has tried to discuss Rimmer's images of Job as derivative from William Blake's illustrations but there is no visual connection other than the same subject matter. See Weidman et al., *Rimmer*, 91.

52 Emanuel Swedenborg, *The Four Leading Doctrines of the New Church Signified in the Revelation, Chapter XXI, by the New Jerusalem, Being Those Respecting the Lord, His Divine and Human Nature, and the Divine Trinity; the Sacred Scripture; Faith; and Life: Translated from the Latin of Emanuel Swedenborg* (Boston: Otis Clapp, 1838), 82–83.

53 The original title of *Creation*, which came from Rimmer's family, has recently been changed by the museum to *God the Father Creating the Sun and the Moon*. The first title is closer to Rimmer's meaning.

54 See, for example, its use in Francisco Goya's 1772 fresco, *Adoration of the Name of God by Angels*, in the Basilica del Pilar, Zaragoza, Spain.

55 Emanuel Swedenborg, *Arcana Coelestia. The Heavenly Arcana, Contained in the Holy Scriptures or Word of the Lord Unfolded, Beginning with the Book of Genesis: Together with Wonderful Things Seen in the World of Spirits and in the Heaven of Angels*,

revised and edited by John Faulkner Potts (New York: American Swedenborg Printing and Publishing Society, 1984), 1:5–7.

56 Ibid., 6.

57 Ibid., 6.

58 Weidman, et al., *Rimmer*, 64–65, discusses it as a Civil War reference and paired with *Civil War Scene*. The inscription, in an unidentified hand, on the lower stretcher reads: "Victory [illegible] subject / painted by W. Rimmer." From 1946 on, parts of the word "last," or the letters "ar" or "war" have been seen before "subject," but they do not appear to be there now. See the discussion in Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 563–65. With the reading as "last," the picture has mistakenly been given a second date of 1878–1879.

59 I am indebted to conservator Ellen Hanspach-Bernal for taking a new X-radiograph of the painting which reveals slashes on the lamb. An older X-radiograph did not show them.

60 It is a unique variation on the trefoil symbol for the Trinity. For the trefoil, see Thomas Inman, *Ancient Faiths Embodied in Ancient Names: or An Attempt to Trace the Religious Belief, Sacred Rites, and Holy Emblems of Certain Nations* (London and Liverpool: Printed for the Author, 1868), 1:152.

61 Emanuel Swedenborg, *The True Christian Religion, Containing the Universal Theology of the New Church, Foretold by the Lord in Daniel VII. 13, 14; and in Revelation XXI. 1, 2*, translated by T.G. Worcester and revised by the Rev. T.B. Hayward (Boston: J. Allen, 1833), 93.

62 For redeemed, see ibid., 99–100. On judgment, see Emanuel Swedenborg, *Miscellaneous Works of Emanuel Swedenborg* (New York: American Swedenborg Printing and Publishing Society, 1857), 459.

63 Emanuel Swedenborg, *The Four Leading Doctrines of the New Church, Signified by the New Jerusalem in the Revelation: Being Those Concerning the Lord; the Sacred Scripture; Faith; and Life* (New York: American Swedenborg Printing and Publishing Society, 1870), 197.

64 Emanuel Swedenborg, *A Brief Exposition of the Doctrine of the New Church: Which Is Meant by the New Jerusalem in the Apocalypse* (London: James S. Hodson, 1840), 119.

65 The changes instituted by the Last Judgment will be known immediately on earth, and a new church formed, because mankind is so closely connected to the angels of heaven and the spirits of hell. See Swedenborg, *True Christian Religion*, 100.

66 Ibid., 100.

67 The dark bluffs at lower left and right are two mountains. Swedenborg mentions that the horsemen appear between them as predicted in the vision of the Old Testament prophet Zechariah (Zechariah 6:1). Emanuel Swedenborg, *A Compendium of the Theological and Spiritual Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg: Being a Systematic and Orderly Epitome of All His Religious Works* (Boston: Crosby and Nichols, and Otis Clapp, 1854), 56. Rimmer once spoke of sensational subjects, focused on action, as inartistic, but it is unclear where he drew the line. Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 114.

68 Swedenborg, *The Apocalypse Revealed*, 1:260.

69 The dress is part real and part imaginary (the Tudor slashing) but, when pressed, Aileen Ribeiro (professor emerita and fashion historian at the Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London) thought it might date from the late 1860s. The hair might date from then or the early 1870s. As stated on a label, the stretcher was produced by "F.C. Hastings & Co." which, according to an 1885 Boston directory had the given double address from 1868 until then. Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 2:653n, discusses the problem of the label and date.

70 Rimmer seems to have used sunlight as a metaphor for divine presence. A more obvious example is his lost, signed but undated, drawing, *Figure Rising from the Sea*, offering a profile view of a woman with arched back ascending from water, with a rising sun behind her. It is a symbol of Christian baptism with, at the bottom, the words of John the Baptist, given in John 1:29. See the glass negative (16B23.3/1932) of it in the Visual Archives at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

71 See woman at a window in Lorenz Eitner, "The Open Window and the Storm-Tossed Boat: An Essay in the Iconography of Romanticism," *The Art Bulletin* 37 (December 1955): 286, https://doi.org/10.2307/3047620.

72 Swedenborg, *Arcana Coelestia: The Heavenly Arcana*, 4:349.

73 Quoted in Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 121. He was stating his view in contrast to that of Muslims. Perhaps relatedly, he painted an undated, signed still life, *Vase of Flowers* (Alfred T. Morris) which is inscribed on the lower right corner "ANIMA," meaning soul or breath. It has an illegible poem on the reverse and an unidentifiable, male profile in a medallion on the front of the vase.

74 See Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 84, where the artist used a microscope for especially detailed drawings.

75 For a single veil, see G.A. Redman, *Mystic Hours, or Spiritual Experiences* (New York: C. Partridge, 1859), 184; and William Britten, *Ghost Land; or Researches into the Mysteries of Occultism. Illustrated in a Series of Autobiographical Sketches* [...] , translated and edited by Emma Hardinge Britten (Boston: Published for the Editor, 1876), 255.

For a different interpretation of Rimmer's *Interior/ Before the Picture*, see Charles Colbert, *Haunted Visions: Spiritualism and American Art* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 253–54. Knowing Rimmer was a Swedenborgian, he sees the woman as enthralled by the picture because the essence of the artist, whom she admires, remains in it. But this indirect self-praise is not characteristic of Rimmer, and it does not explain the rest of the picture.

76 Emanuel Swedenborg, *Angelic Wisdom Concerning the Divine Providence* (Boston: Otis Clapp, 1844), 327, 330.

77 Emanuel Swedenborg, Robert Baldock, and John Spurgin, *The Apocalypse Revealed, Wherein Are Disclosed the Arcana There Foretold Which Have Hitherto Remained Concealed* (London: J.S. Hodson, 1832), 2:549.

78 She is not in theater-derived, fancy dress as has been suggested, but her outfit is inspired by mid-sixteenth century Tudor attire, popular at the time. For this, I am indebted to Aileen Ribeiro. On her dress, see Weidman, et al., *Rimmer*, 67.

79 Rimmer was particularly sensitive to the transfer of energy. He could cure his patients with his hands alone. For this, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 21. The transformed objects might be real objects that bear an imprint from the man's use or, more likely, they are not actually present, but he is. Rimmer's co-Spiritualists believed a piece of furniture or any object could leave an imprint in a space that it had once occupied for a long time. For this, see Louis-Alphonse Cahagnet, *The Celestial Telegraph; or Secrets of the Life to Come, Revealed Through Magnetism* (New York: J.S. Redfield, 1851), 32–33.

80 On male taste, see Philip Gilbert Hamerton, *Thoughts About Art* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1871), 350. Because of his teaching, Rimmer almost certainly knew this text which also gives the basics of how to paint. Notably Hamerton declares that gentlemen, as opposed to tradesmen, prefer furniture with age and wear and at least some hint of history (350). He particularly likes the Gothic style for men although it is out-of-date (358). He concedes, however, that a drawing-room is "a lady's own territory" (364). The woman's chair is a fashionable Hunzinger-type chair. See Barry R. Harwood, *The Furniture of George Hunzinger: Invention and Innovation in Nineteenth-Century America* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Brooklyn Museum of Art, 1997), 40, fig. 23.

81 See Charles L. Eastlake, *Hints on Household Taste in Furniture, Upholstery and Other Details* 2nd ed. rev. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1869), 209, a very popular resource. He calls pink and mauve the "effeminate hues of the day." Several pieces of furniture in Rimmer's parlor have a deep fringe hiding the legs. This addition was connected with the notion of elegance. See ibid., 87.

82 Emanuel Swedenborg, *Heavenly Arcana, Which Are in the Sacred Scripture or Word of the Lord, Laid Open, Together with Wonderful Things Which Were Seen in the World of Spirits and in the Heaven of Angels: Genesis* (Boston: Otis Clapp, 1843), 5:371.

83 Emanuel Swedenborg, *Delights of Wisdom Concerning Conjugial Love; After Which Follow Pleasures of Insanity Concerning Scortatory Love* (Boston: Otis Clapp, 1833), 262. The husband might even be in heaven and in her room at the same time because, according to the Spiritualists, a spirit can be in two or more places at the same moment. For this, see Cahagnet, *The Celestial Telegraph*, 31–32.

84 Ibid., 50. The flame-line decoration on the wall, near the portrait, is also suggestive of a spiritual presence in the room. Incidentally there is no corner to the room as there should be, and the furniture is illogically crammed together. The

foreground chair, for instance, is given insufficient room to exist. This weirdness not only defies expectation but recalls the background wall patterns in *Flight and Pursuit* (fig. 37). Both pictures are visually puzzling or mysterious, and this quality is perhaps best explained by their concern with perception and the supernatural.

85 Ibid., 51.

86 Ibid., 50.

87 For Gérôme's work as well known to Americans through photographs, see William P. Blake, *Reports of the United States Commissioners to the Paris Universal Exposition, 1867, Published under the Direction of the Secretary of State by Authority of the Senate of the United States* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1870), 1:20.

88 Anon., "Dr. Rimmer's Ninth Lecture," undated clipping in Sidney Richmond Burleigh's Sketchbook, 1876, Folder 350, Lincoln Kirstein Papers, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York. The clipping is from the *Providence* [*R.I.*] *Daily Journal*, February 28, 1873, 2. Gérôme anachronistically portrayed the emperor as Vitellius. Rimmer, who knew that Titus is historically correct for the Colosseum, gave Gérôme's emperor this identification.

89 Anon., "Dr. Rimmer's Ninth lecture."

90 It was probably created sometime between his mention of Gérôme in class and the picture's first exhibition at the Boston Art Club on January 12, 1876. See Weidman, et al., *Rimmer*, 70.

91 Gérôme was known for his supposed historical accuracy. See Blake, *Reports*, 20; and Gerald Ackerman, *The Spectacular Art of Jean-Léon Gérôme* (*1824–1904*), exhibition catalogue (Paris: Skira, 2010), 126.

92 From Rimmer's treatment of Phillip, who descended from Heaven, in "Stephen and Phillip," it is evident that he considered lions soulful. For instance, see p. 139.

93 Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 203.

94 Emanuel Swedenborg, *On Intercourse between the Soul and the Body, Which Is Supposed to Take Place Either by Physical Influx, or by Spiritual Influx, or by Pre-Established Harmony* (Boston: Otis Clapp, 1848), 26.

95 Anon., "The Fine Arts: Exhibition of Dr. Rimmer's Works," *Boston Daily Advertiser*, June 11, 1880, [2].

96 For students, see Anon., "Dr. Rimmer's Art School," *Boston Daily Advertiser*, May 7, 1870, [1]. The quote is from Anon, "The Fine Arts," [2].

97 F.D. Millet, "The Paintings — The Rimmer Collection," *The American Architect and Building News* (October 30, 1880), 8:212.

98 Swedenborg, *The True Christian Religion*, 305. The notion that "false teachers" are "wolves" evidently comes from Martin Luther. See Luther's *Sermons on the Gospels for the Sundays and Principal Festivals of the Church Year*, trans. E. Smid (Rock Island, Ill.: Lutheran Augustana Book Concern, 1871), 2:69.

99 On Flaxman, see Jane Williams-Hogan, "Influence of Emanuel Swedenborg's Religious Writings on Three Visual Artists," *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* (May 2016), 19:122–26, https://doi.org/10.1525/nr.2016.19.4.119.

100 Ibid., 136 (quote), 234.

101 Swedenborg, *Arcana Coelestia: the Heavenly Arcana*, 7:421–22.

102 Ibid., 422.

103 Swedenborg, *The True Christian Religion*, 305.

104 Burleigh's Sketchbook, Kirstein Papers, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, n.p.

105 Caroline Rimmer described it, in a label on the reverse, as "unfinished." It was exhibited with this added notation and as his "last" work in the second through fourth editions of the 1880 Rimmer exhibition catalogue at the Museum of Fine

Arts, Boston (no. 7). This information is also given in the 1883 sales catalogue for J. Eastman Chase's Gallery, Boston (no. 84), where it was shown with a preliminary drawing, *Gamblers* (no. 61). The drawing is lost, and there is no known photograph of it. See the discussion in Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 2:696–700. As he notes, Caroline added the subtitle after 1883 (699n2).

106 I could not find another source for this story, even in the book sources Yonge gave at the beginning of her text.

107 Technically, this was not a reconquest because Spain had not been a nation when the Moors from North Africa invaded in 711 CE. During their battles, Christian and Muslim rulers of parts of what is now Spain fought among themselves so frequently that there was little difference. With the development of a Spanish national identity in the mid-nineteenth century, there was increased interest in this period, including on the part of such authors as the American Washington Irving.

108 Charlotte M. Yonge, *The Story of the Christians and Moors of Spain* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1878), 140.

109 Ibid., 140.

110 Edward Samuel Taylor, ed., *The History of Playing Cards, with Anecdotes of Their Use in Conjuring, Fortune-Telling, and Card-Sharping* (London: Hotten, 1865), 472.

111 Yonge, *Story*, 139. While Fanez, like El Cid, hired himself out, he was loyal, courageous, and much admired (134–35).

112 Emanuel Swedenborg, *Concerning Heaven and Its Wonders, and Concerning Hell; From Things Heard and Seen* (Boston: O. Clapp, 1854), 48. See also Emanuel Swedenborg, *Angelic Wisdom Concerning the Divine Providence* (Boston: Otis Clapp, 1844), 330, where there are people who think only exteriorly. Another good discussion is in Swedenborg, *Arcana Coelestia*. *The Heavenly Arcana*, 1853, 1:344–45.

113 See Swedenborg, *Concerning Heaven and Its Wonders*, 48, where he claims the face cannot really dissemble and is therefore the index of the mind. The standing, bare-headed Moor that the player addresses ostensibly provides restraint, but his face is so shadowed as to be incomprehensible.

114 William Rimmer, *Art Anatomy*, 29, no. 103.

115 The objects on the table are not Moorish or properly medieval. Rather, they are invented vessels that seem exotic, but some approximate Art Nouveau designs from the 1870s. I am grateful to Kirstin Kennedy, Curator of Metalwork, Victoria and Albert Museum, for her opinion.

116 Swedenborg, *Concerning Heaven and Its Wonders*, 48.

117 Concerning the light of truth, see Emanuel Swedenborg, *The Apocalypse Revealed*, 1:106–07. On candlelight and truth, see Swedenborg, *The Apocalypse Revealed, Wherein Are Disclosed the Arcana*, 1:106–07. This light of truth is elaborated with regard to interior and exterior people in Swedenborg, *The True Christian Religion*, 543.

118 One possible major separation concerns the crucifixion. Swedenborg did not believe it was an act of atonement, but Rimmer makes the point that it is, in an undated drawing in his sketchbook, showing the empty cross and the "Agnus Dei" prayer (John 1:29). The drawing is stylistically close to *Midnight Ride* (late 1840s) and possibly pre-dates his interest in Swedenborg. See Swedenborg, *Four Leading Doctrines of the New Church, Signified by the New Jerusalem*, 94; and the Rimmer Sketchbook, Countway Library, Boston.

119 Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 11, 181, 331, 377. He specifically denies that a sense of right and wrong is externally acquired (101).

120 Emanuel Swedenborg, *On the New Jerusalem, and Its Heavenly Doctrine, as Revealed from Heaven: to Which Are Prefixed Some Observations Concerning the New Heaven and the Earth*, ed. by James Mitchell (London: J.S. Hodson, W. Newbery; [etc.], 1841), 74. Swedenborg also speaks of man as "endowed with a conscience [consciousness?] of what is good" and describes it confusingly as a "faith" (75).

121 Ibid., 76.

122 Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 39, 87–89, 135 (spoke to angels), 245–47.

123 Marguerite Beck Block, *The New Church in the New World: A Study of Swedenborgianism in America*, with an introduction and epilogue by Robert H. Kirven (New York: Swedenborg Publishing Association, 1984), 57.

124 Block, *The New Church*, 57. Despite Swedenborg's rejection, the Spiritualists claimed him as the first of their number (57).

125 Anon., "Fine Arts," [4].

126 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 123, cites Rimmer's fatalist attitude over broken clay models, which was perhaps more pervasive than with just these models.

5. A Challenge to International Neoclassicism

In the fall of 1863, English novelist Isa Blagden made her way through the streets of Florence, Italy, to report on two sculptures by William Rimmer, his *St Stephen* and *Falling Gladiator*. They had been taken abroad and placed for viewing in the American sculptor Larkin G. Mead's studio at the instigation of Rimmer's friend, Stephen Perkins. On seeing them, Blagden, who was a prominent member of the English community in Florence, responded with unreserved enthusiasm. According to her article for the London journal, *Once a Week*, the unusually high quality of both pieces took her by surprise.[1]

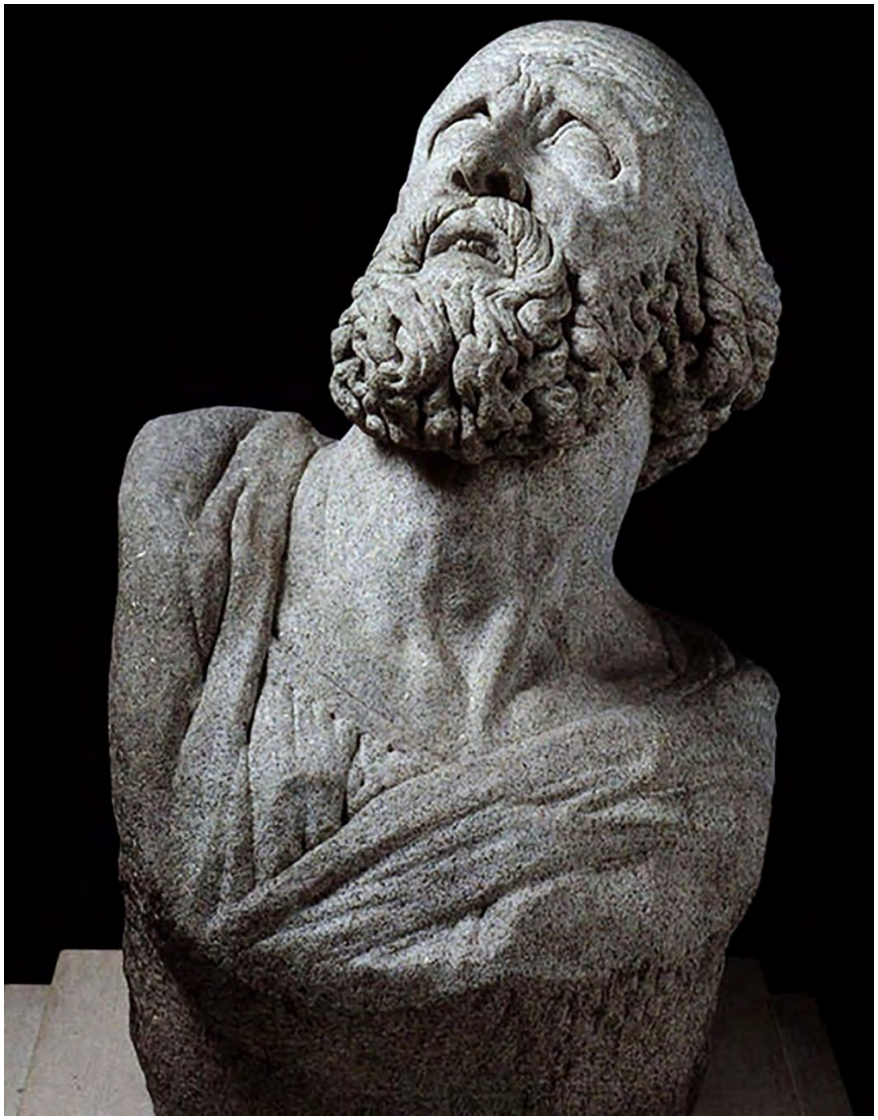

Fig. 81 *St. Stephen*, 1860. Granite, 21 ¾ x 13 1/8 x 15 in. (55.3 x 33.3 x 38.1 cm). Art Institute of Chicago. Roger McCormack Purchase Fund

https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0304.05

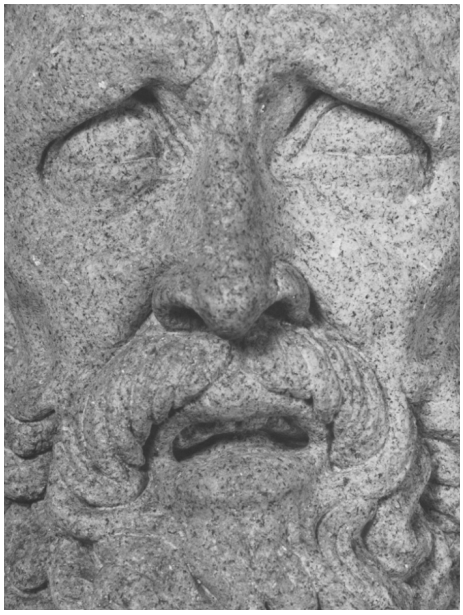

Fig. 82 *St Stephen* (detail), 1860

Blagden realized that Rimmer's dramatic bust of St. Stephen (figs. 81, 82) is essentially a revision of the priest's head from the famous statue, *Laocoön and His Sons* (figs. 83, 84). The latter depicts the Trojan priest (mentioned by Homer) and his young sons as they struggle in agony while being attacked and strangled by sea serpents.[2] Indeed Rimmer's bust invited visual association with a work so well known that a copy of it existed in the Boston Athenaeum's plaster cast collection, which he habitually used in teaching.[3] The connection was certainly meant to be recognized.

A comparison of the faces is revealing. Rimmer took the original — a Roman work probably after a Hellenistic Greek original — as his starting point and built from it to create something new just as he did with changed sources in his pictures. The fact that St. Stephen is an old man is in itself indicative of its origin: this early Christian martyr is almost always represented as young. As Blagden noted, Rimmer transformed the pagan head so that it appears to show a slightly different person who is balding and facing upward, with stronger cheekbones, and, most importantly, a newly spiritual aspect. This is St. Stephen in the process of being stoned to death, or as originally titled, *Stephen in the Trial of his Martyrdom*.[4] Rather than sheer pain, the expression on his face conveys anguish combined with a strength of mind that is quite unlike the emotional collapse of Laocoön. Basically, there is no surrender. The new energy in the face extends even to the mustache. To return to Blagden, she explained that from the pose of the head and shoulders, Rimmer suggested a kneeling position as if he had "fallen on one knee, beaten down" by his rock-throwing foes.[5] The gray granite bust (broken with flecks of color) struck Blagden as emotionally powerful: "sublime in its expression of suffering, sublimer still in its expression of faith." As she stated, "St. Stephen triumphs over death — Laocoön endures it."[6] Another review supported hers in describing the effect of *St Stephen* as an "expression of mortal agony," combined with "celestial aspiration."[7]

Unlike with his pictures, Rimmer created most of his sculpture for exhibition and teaching purposes. Along with art anatomy, he taught principles of art by using historical art. But, as an independent thinker, he was prone to questioning the international preference for neoclassical sculpture, which revived and extended the classical aesthetic of the ancient Greeks of the fifth to fourth century BCE.[8] In other words, he both used the neoclassical mode and disparaged it. As Bartlett recognized, "Rimmer's statues were executed, not as studies from nature, but as exemplifications of certain great principles of sculpture."[9] In essence, he thought outside of any one style and was highly unusual in the variety of his approaches.

With regard to the *Laocoön*, Rimmer used it in much the same way that Hiram Powers' acclaimed *Greek Slave* (National Gallery of Art, Washington), from 1846, imitated the *Venus de Medici* (Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence)

Fig. 83 Unknown, *Laocoön and His Sons*, Roman copy after an original of the second century BCE. Marble, 6 ft 10 in. x 5 ft 4 in. x 3 ft 8 in. (208 x 163 x 112 cm). Vatican Museums, Vatican City https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ Laocoön_ and_ His_ Sons

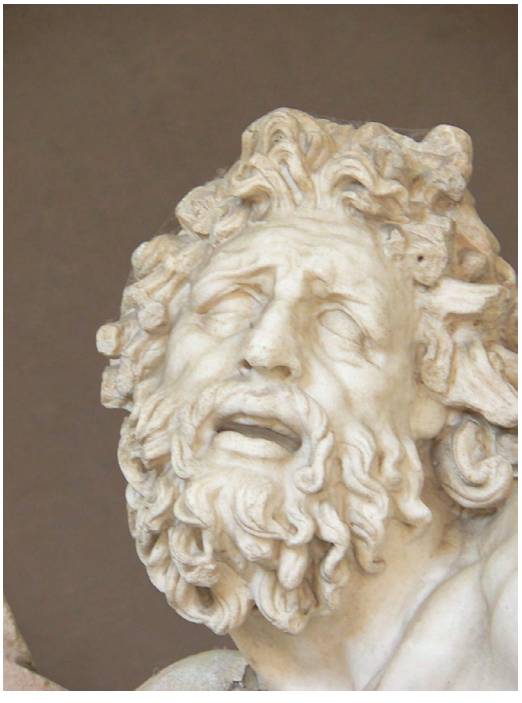

Fig. 84 *Laocoön and His Sons* (detail), Roman copy

from the first century BCE. Both changed the subject of the original. But, in switching to the challenge of representing a Christian saint, Rimmer addressed a supposed inherent flaw that had been acknowledged in ancient Greek art, particularly recently among Christians. As the art critic John Ruskin phrased it, "The Greek could not conceive a spirit." That is, ancient statues lacked an "elevated character of soul."[10] The American art critic James Jackson Jarves agreed that Greek sculpture was "form without soul."[11] This was Rimmer's self-imposed task: to take a famous secular head and make it Christian.

Reviewers of Rimmer's sculpture, like Blagden, typically voiced surprise on learning that he had never visited Europe or "studied sculpture professionally."[12] As with many of his pursuits, Rimmer had taught himself.

His earliest surviving sculpture is an 1849 bust of his three-year-old daughter Mary (fig. 85) which he carved directly in marble, without a preliminary model, as she played nearby.[13] It has the gravity, serenity and simplicity of the neoclassical style with characteristically blank eyes — eyes that bring to mind classical Greek heads in their surviving, unpainted state and give an otherworldly or timeless aspect to the piece. Yet it is also individualized as an asymmetrical head, with the hair distributed unequally at the sides (an aesthetic choice) and the nose and cheeks not symmetrical. In another break with the neoclassical preference for symmetry, one eyebrow is higher than the other, and the shoulders are not matched.

Fig. 85 *Mary Rimmer*, 1849. Marble, 13 ½ x 7 x 7 ½ in. (34.28 x 17.85 x 19.08 cm). Boston Medical Library, William Rimmer Collection

What seems to have especially intrigued Rimmer was the challenge of turning hard stone into an effective deception of the soft, yielding flesh of a young child. He polished the marble to enhance the translucent effect — comparable to the luminosity of living skin — but, as if to emphasize his achievement, he left the lower part of the bust rough to reveal the nature of the material. The textural contrast makes the flesh seem softer and adds to the impact of the head as an artist's creation. Despite the unfinished effect, the bust is signed and dated as a completed work.

About a decade later, in gratitude for Rimmer's help as a physician, a former patient who was in the Quincy granite business gave him some blocks to work with. But granite is a much more obdurate stone to carve than marble. From one block, Rimmer produced a head of a woman (figs. 86, 87), slightly turned with part of a cloak arranged around her neck to enhance the impression of circular movement.[14] According to Rimmer's granddaughter, who remembered this bust as a child, it represents St. Cecilia. She was an early martyr and the patron saint of music, which continued to be a great interest of the Rimmer family, especially the artist. Rimmer not only played several instruments but also liked to sing or whistle as he worked.[15] The flowers clustered in her

Fig. 86 *Head of a Woman* (re-identified as *St. Cecilia*), ca. 1859. Granite, 25 x 9 1/16 x 9 3/8 in. (63.50 x 23 x 23.80 cm). Height includes upper pedestal base of 6 in. (15.75 cm). Corcoran Collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington. Gift of Mrs. H. Simonds

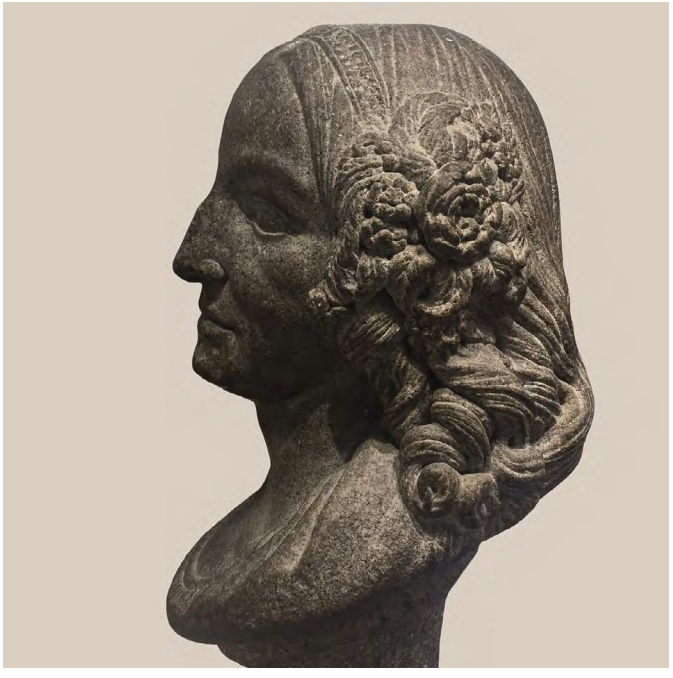

Fig. 87 *St. Cecilia*, ca. 1859

Fig. 88 *Falling Gladiator*, 1861. Plaster, 63 ¼ x 42 7/8 x 42 5/8 in. (160.68 x 108.90 x 108.25 cm). Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of Caroline Hunt Rimmer

hair and held by a band can be identified as small roses and a water lily, which are attributes of Saint Cecilia. This is not a classical head; rather, it is more individualized with an aquiline nose, large eyes, prominent cheek bones, and faintly visible muscles around her mouth.[16] The loose ringlets of her hair are not only unusually luxuriant, but they also swirl at the nape of her neck so as to suggest the movement of music. Although the flowers are part of her usual identification, these additions are so delicate with projecting edges as to provide a near-insurmountable obstacle to render in hard granite with chisel and mallet. The handling is necessarily broader than with marble. Clearly Rimmer made use of what he had and was not easily deterred by drawbacks.

A second block from the patient was used to create the *St Stephen* for which the *St. Cecilia* had been practice. Accomplished within four weeks, the bust included much realistic detail such as the wrinkles across Stephen's brow, the swollen veins at his temples, the soft skin over the muscles of his neck, and the detailed curls of his beard. He is not paired proportionally with *St. Cecilia*, but, as patron saint of stonemasons, he shares her particular status. In the end, Rimmer, who was then forty-four, had hands that were "blistered and torn" and his arms swollen from the effort of chipping stubborn material.[17] Blagden relayed the story that "every twenty minutes the chisels became blunted" and had to be re-sharpened.[18] Rimmer left marks of his presence and non-conformity in the chisel cuts on the base of the bust that, like the roughened lower front of his daughter's bust run counter to the neoclassical taste for a smooth, preferably white marble, surface. Also not part of the neoclassical aesthetic are the flickering specks of mineral that enliven the granite surface. Again, the work is signed and dated as finished.

Blagden went to Mead's studio to see not only the *St Stephen* but also Rimmer's spectacular *Falling Gladiator* (figs. 88, 89). The life-size plaster sculpture was cast from a clay model that Rimmer carved out of a mound of hard clay. Even hereafter, the artist created his large-scale models not by building up form but by cutting into or carving, hard-packed clay. Having little experience, he braced the figure with no more than inner iron "sticks" rather than a supportive armature.[19] The casting was for greater durability.

Rimmer's friend and patron, Stephen Perkins, had given him a hundred dollars in January of 1861 to begin the statue.[20] Later, as further support, Perkins sold photographs of *St Stephen* — which had been exhibited locally — at five dollars each to obtain funding to have the *Falling Gladiator* cast in plaster of paris.[21] After carving refinements in the cast, Rimmer sold tickets to view both sculptures in a Boston studio in October.[22] Then, Perkins, having bought the *St Stephen*, found reason to travel abroad and arranged for Rimmer to send his purchase to him plus a second cast of the *Gladiator* (destroyed). He was convinced that their exhibition overseas would make the artist's reputation.[23]

Although Perkins' cast of the *Falling Gladiator* arrived in Paris with damage to both legs (partly supported by the stump), the French sculptor Pierre Loison fashioned a repair that carefully disguised the defect, and, after much consultation, this cast and the *St. Stephen* were entered for consideration at a government-sponsored annual exhibition: the Salon of 1863.[24] That year, an unusually conservative jury rejected so many submissions — including the *Falling Gladiator* and *St. Stephen* — that, in response to a public outcry, Napoleon III ordered the creation of a Salon des Refusés. It was to be held at the same time (opening in May) in another part of the same site, the Palace of Industry.[25] Fewer than half of those eligible submitted their works to the second exhibition, and most did not decide in time to be in the catalogue. Possibly because of hesitation over acknowledging the rejection, the *Falling Gladiator* and *St. Stephen* were exhibited but did not make the publication. Even so, the reaction to the *Falling Gladiator* was not as expected.[26]

In an indication of trouble, Perkins wrote to Rimmer from Paris in November of 1862, that several French sculptors claimed the *Falling Gladiator* was much too realistic. They thought, at the very least, parts of it must have been cast from a real person. Cheating such as this had occurred in the past.[27] But Perkins assured them that he had watched the work in progress, and Rimmer lacked so much as a "living model" to copy.[28] For guidance, he used his own body and his prodigious memory that enabled him to draw nudes accurately and quickly on a blackboard.[29] In fact, as became clear to anyone who tried it, the pose — a dynamic balance — was too unbalanced for an actual model to maintain.[30]

The *Falling Gladiator* reconstructs the action of a powerful warrior who is about to attack an enemy in front just as he receives a heavy, fatal blow to his head from behind. That is, he is killed unfairly by being taken by surprise,

receiving a gash from a sword at the back of his skull. As he opens his mouth in a possible cry, the damage to his head is made visible by a sharp cut in his tight cap. The gladiator's short, squared-end sword looks peculiarly stunted — as if shortened purely for compositional reasons — but it can be identified as the weapon of a Gaul. Plutarch, whom Rimmer is known to have read and quoted, described the Gauls as fighting naked against the Roman army with swords that, significantly, lacked a point.[31] Many of the Roman gladiators, as Plutarch also mentioned, were captive Gauls, which might explain the nakedness.[32] Showing his erudition, Rimmer used a fairly obscure reference, and it was not publicly recognized at the time.

Fig. 89 *Falling Gladiator*, 1861

As a Gaul or a man who lived in present-day France, this gladiator is convincing as a covert reference to Rimmer's father. His manner of death perfectly corresponds to the supposed treachery involving his father's claim to the French throne.[33] Relatedly, Rimmer even spoke in "Stephen and Phillip" of "the son of a great King who knowing not his heritance was as a Gladiator" in a probable reference to his father.[34] Understood this way, the sculpted warrior — or symbolically, Rimmer's father — was humiliatingly forced into a public arena where he fought with all he had — an inferior, blunt sword. Completely outmaneuvered but admirably spirited, he lost his heritage. The Gallic sword is a particularly crucial piece of evidence because this sculpture has been mistakenly associated with the Civil War.[35]

On another level, the statue addresses the neoclassical sculptor's embrace of the ancient Greek male nude, with prototypes such as the Hellenistic *Borghese Warrior* (Louvre Museum) which includes a similar armguard or manica. The emphasis in these works was on male physical beauty, but Rimmer's figure, reeling backwards

in a sweeping curve, did not conform to what his neoclassical contemporaries were doing. The pose was too sensational, and the figure was, in Blagden's words, "singularly lifelike." She particularly appreciated the effect of "living flesh," in which "blood and life are beneath the skin," as well as the captivating, compositional curve which is a remarkable feature of the sculpture. She also admired "the massive yet elegant proportions, the noble throat, the herculean chest, the vigorous tension of one side contrasted with the fast approaching collapse of the other." In the end, she sided with Rimmer's naturalistic, non-classical stance by observing that "the smooth, hard, flat surface which so many sculptors seem to think expressive of beauty is a falsehood."[36] A few years later, an English artist echoed her view on the sculpture and approvingly noted the more realistic portrayal of muscles than seen with the "antique method."[37]

Rimmer's student, Daniel Chester French — known for creating the *Minute Man* (Concord, MA) and the *Lincoln Memorial* sculpture (Washington, D.C.) — declared that Rimmer's "work became extraordinarily individual. It is not like anything else at all." Concerning the *Falling Gladiator*, he added: "Rarely in the history of art has a professed idealist carried into his work such intensity of feeling and such strength of imagination. [Antonio] Canova certainly did not. His Italian *Boxers* are mere oxen" compared to it.[38] The comparison highlights the greater aesthetic appeal, as French saw it, of Rimmer's statue. Canova's famous Greek boxers, *Creugas* (fig. 90) and *Damoxenos* (fig. 91), are posed unnaturally but according to how their final blows were dealt. They appear stiff, overly contrived, and inhuman compared to Rimmer's work. Rimmer broke out of this neoclassical mode with more naturalistic and imaginative imagery and, in so doing, questioned its premises.

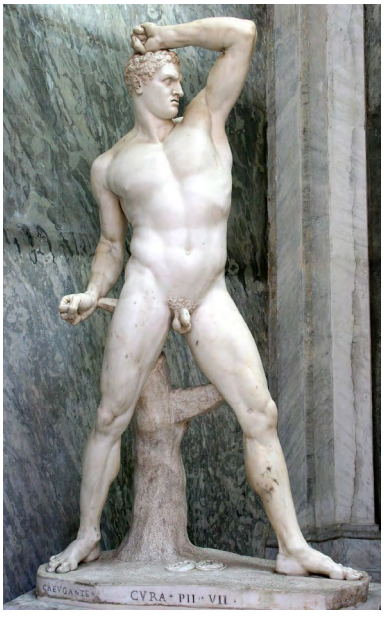

Fig. 90 Antonio Canova, *Creugas*, 1801. Marble, 88 3/5 x 47 1/5 x 24 2/5 in. (225 x 120 x 62 cm). Vatican Museums, Vatican City
https://www.flickr.com/photos/9619972@N08/2879227785

Quite deliberately, Rimmer improved upon the classical Greek prototype with anatomical modeling that, instead of being formulaic, was more accurate. Perkins makes this point, doubtless echoing Rimmer, in a letter to Hiram Powers: It is the "antique with an original modern treatment."[39]

An additional aspect of the *Falling Gladiator* drew attention. Contrary to what Ruskin thought of the spiritual deficiency of Greek sculpture, Rimmer's student, Edward R. Smith, contended that there was a spiritual quality in certain classical Greek originals. But it was overlooked by the neoclassicists, such as Canova, who mastered only the "conventions" of the prototypes. He claimed Rimmer had a deeper understanding and captured the underlying "immense spiritual power" in the *Falling Gladiator*.[40] This desideratum was not a Christian expression, as Ruskin would have preferred, but, rather, a vital essence.

Fig. 91 Antonio Canova, *Damoxenos*, 1806. Marble, 84 3/5 x 51 x 26 4/5 in. (215 x 130 x 68 cm). Vatican Museums, Vatican City https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Statue_of_Damoxenos_by_Antonio_Canova_at_Museo_Pio-Clementino

Having heard from Rimmer, Perkins knew that he was working on sculptures of a *Chaldean Shepherd* and an unidentified figure that Perkins titled (apparently from a photograph) *Endymion* (both lost). He advised him to send the *Endymion* to him in Paris for display at the Salon with the *Falling Gladiator* to show the art world that Rimmer understood "the ideal as well as the real."[41] Months later, he adjusted his thinking and wrote from Florence to ask him to finish *Endymion*. He now wanted him to make "the outline of the face a little *more classic* [italics his] not because that is really better but because it is more marketable — The classic prejudice rules still and the body of Endymion is so like the best grecian that it may override all criticism if the face corresponds."[42] That *Endymion*'s head was not sufficiently classical is enlightening in terms of Rimmer's eventual direction.

A Boston journalist described the completed *Endymion* by mid-July of 1863 as "a beautiful statue." "It has been pronounced the finest work of modern art. I have not seen it, but my informant is a sharp-eyed critic, and a lover and knower of beauty." The plan was to send it to Paris.[43]

Later, in October of 1863, when Perkins learned that Rimmer was going to leave out the right arm of the *Chaldean Shepherd* as if in a broken statue, he responded with some disbelief that he was against doing anything so radical.[44] To leave a sculpture in a deliberately broken condition meant that it did not have to be whole — an astoundingly daring and hugely unsettling claim. Just as troubling, the breakage made the point that to truly imitate antique sculpture, as everyone seemed to want to do, the artists should copy the existing, broken examples. In effect, Rimmer said this in class: "We should look at the real world and strive to express it, for that is what they [the Greeks] did."[45] Rimmer's sculpture was not only irreverent but also highly original.

There is no preserved response to Perkins' objection, but the *Chaldean Shepherd* and *Endymion* were exhibited together at the Boston Athenaeum, and the *Chaldean Shepherd* was "severely criticized," presumably for lacking an arm.[46] Having seen faded photographs (lost), Bartlett described them as over-life-size male nudes (likely plaster).[47] Sometime after their exhibition, Perkins lamented the loss of *Endymion* which had been accidentally destroyed. He considered it a "more *pleasing*" [italics his], more artistic subject than a gladiator, and more likely to sell.[48]

With marketing as their aim, one of Perkins' ideas had been to sell subscriptions for copies of Rimmer's sculptures in Rome, but that did not materialize.[49] His hope in 1864 was that Rimmer could send him a figure "in which beauty is the leading feature" that might be copied in Italian marble. In support, he noted that female subjects were particularly saleable. The detailing of the anatomy, he added, "should not be beyond the reach of

the finishers in marble," which was the case with the *Falling Gladiator*. For that one, Rimmer would have had to have been present.[50] There was further talk, but no sculpture made the voyage abroad.

About a year or more earlier, Rimmer took a different direction with his small *Seated Man*, or *Despair* (figs. 92–94). It has been mistakenly published — on the authority of apparently his daughter, Caroline — as a very early work carved in gypsum when Rimmer was fifteen.[51] But the statuette is more persuasively dated from sometime between 1855 and 1863, when Rimmer lived in the small hamlet of East Milton and acted as physician to its inhabitants who were mostly quarrymen.[52] Bartlett titled it *Despair* and sprang to the conclusion that it portrayed Thomas Rimmer, the artist's ill-fated father. Yet if the profile of the carved head is compared to the profile that Rimmer drew of his father (fig. 95), there is no question that the two heads do not represent the same person.[53] Furthermore, the Rimmer family rejected Bartlett's identification in his 1882 publication by referring to the piece, when they exhibited it the next year, as "Figure in Gypsum."[54] Rimmer did sculpt gypsum figures (lost) in the 1830s, but this piece was not among them.[55] The *Seated Man* shows a knowledge of internal anatomy that is much more appropriate for Rimmer's later life.

Considering the subject, this lean but muscular man, seated on a rock with one leg drawn up, appears to illustrate a withdrawing into an inner self. His sunken eyes and hand-over-mouth gesture are generally expressive of mental anguish: perhaps despair but also fear.[56] What is more apparent than his precise psychological state is his physical state. His forearms exhibit a condition called vascularity that might be found in body builders or fitness enthusiasts. It might also be found in a quarryman who is accustomed to heavy lifting. The bony enlargement of his knees is another clue to his vocational identity. This could well be osteoarthritis or wearing of the cartilage and growth of osteophytes on the sides of the knees.[57] Such damage, resulting in a painful condition, would fit a laborer used to carrying heavy loads over many years.

Like Rimmer's 1841 portrait of a man with misshapen fingers, the sculpture could portray a specific patient — one whom Rimmer, who retained the piece, asked to sit. But despite the portrait-like singularity of the face, the sitter is more likely to be totally Rimmer's creation. This is because of his unusual nakedness, his timeless hairstyle, and his improbable stepped rock. He could be a sufferer or combination of sufferers done from memory with tell-tale symptoms. In any case, the statuette — elevated by being painted to resemble a small bronze — can be understood as a statement about a man's physical vulnerability. It is a poignant portrayal of an ailing, individual laborer whose job, evidently seasonal in the quarries, is menial and, because of its dependence on his health, of uncertain duration.

Given the sensitivity of the artist, the subject is understandable. Rimmer himself was quite poor during the time that he chose to live near the quarries and tend to the needs of its workmen. Their poverty made his move to join them baffling to some.[58] But most of his life, he identified with those who were disadvantaged or impoverished. Having lost several of his own children to illness, he could easily commiserate on more than one level. In his manuscript, "Stephen and Phillip," Rimmer wrote movingly of a man's grief as "often his only fortune, and his sorrow, like his poverty, the only indication of his life."[59] One of his quarry patients reported that Rimmer "seemed to regard himself as responsible for the lives of those he attended, and he shrank from no sacrifices in their behalf [...] nothing could equal his devotion to the poor and suffering."[60] In an example of his involvement, Rimmer grieved over a particular "stone layer" who had his arm blown off and whom he treated for lockjaw. Unable to prevent his death, he described that man's life as one of "miserable woe."[61] Such thinking surely reflects his opinion of the life of the subject of his sculpture.

Rimmer's *Inkstand with Horse Pulling a Stone-Laden Cart* (fig. 96) might also be located within this context of the granite quarries. Carved from apparently soapstone, with glass inkwells in the rock on the cart and in the boulder on the ground, this sculpture of a stalwart horse dragging a heavy stone is elaborate enough to include hints of a landscape such as the body of water in front where pens might be laid. The piece is unique within Rimmer's oeuvre and signed probably as a gift. That it should be partly colored — dark brown on the harness and hooves — is unusual. Possibly this is the result of whim, but perhaps one precursor for this partial painting of stone influenced him. The well-known English sculptor in Rome, John Gibson, defied the neoclassical preference

Fig. 92 *Seated Man* (*Despair*), 1855–63. Gypsum with bronzed paint, 10 1/2 x 7 ¾ x 4 ¼ in. (26.67 x 19.68 x 10.79 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Gift of Mrs. Henry Simonds. Photograph © 2022 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Fig. 93 *Seated Man*, 1855–63. Photograph © 2022 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Fig. 94 *Seated Man*, 1855–63. Photograph © 2022 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Fig. 95. *Thomas Rimmer*, before 1852. Possibly crayon on paper, dimensions unknown. Unlocated. Truman H. Bartlett, *The Art Life of William Rimmer: Sculptor, Painter and Physician*, Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1890, no. 4

for white marble by introducing color — as he knew the ancient Greeks had done — in the 1830s, but he did this mostly on request and his practice remained controversial.[62] The principal objection claimed that partial coloring degraded a white marble sculpture (cream-colored stone in this case) by adding an element of vulgarity.[63]

Fig. 96 *Inkstand wit*h *Horse Pulling a Stone-Laden Cart*, 1855–63

The desk ornament's melancholy mood is also highly unusual. Rimmer could empathize strongly with animals and wrote in "Stephen and Phillip" of beasts that "in their helpless weakness are forced to drag us about."[64] Rather than being weak, however, the sturdy horse in the sculptured scene struggles heroically to fulfill assigned duties without any human direction. That is, the theme of this inkstand is surely the selfless character and absolute loyalty of a workman's horse. As the piece reflects, in Darwin's wake, there was increased public interest in the moral character of animals.[65]

In contrast with Rimmer's vivid depiction of a man in distress, the internationally successful sculptors who were neoclassicists avoided as much as possible any distortion of the beauty of a completely symmetrical face, especially in the case of a female subject. Most notably, the American sculptor William Wetmore Story struggled over attempts to suggest emotion and, at the same time, to retain the perfection of an undistorted face. He tried to do both with his 1861 *Libyan Sibyl* (Metropolitan Museum of Art) who is shown calmly contemplating the destruction of her people.[66] His failure was evident when one of the visitors to his Rome studio in 1873 complained that all his female characters have "the same expression."[67]

An example is Story's full-length *Cleopatra*, modeled in 1858 and carved in 1869. As a detail (fig. 97) shows, she sits impassively while a poisonous asp coils itself around her forearm. With her smooth brow and seeming indifference, she gives little indication, if any, of the state of her inner being. Likewise, Story avoided the aquiline nose of her actual coin portraits because it would mar the effect of perfect beauty in classical terms.[68] His efforts prompted a rare degree of success. Story's *Cleopatra* received such enthusiastic praise in Italy that Perkins wrote to Rimmer about its fame, and American author Nathaniel Hawthorne included mention of the statue in *The Marble Faun*, a book published in 1860.[69] In it, a female painter dares to criticize *Cleopatra* as unoriginal, like all the works after an ancient precedent. As she says, "you sculptors are, of necessity, the greatest plagiarists in the world."[70]

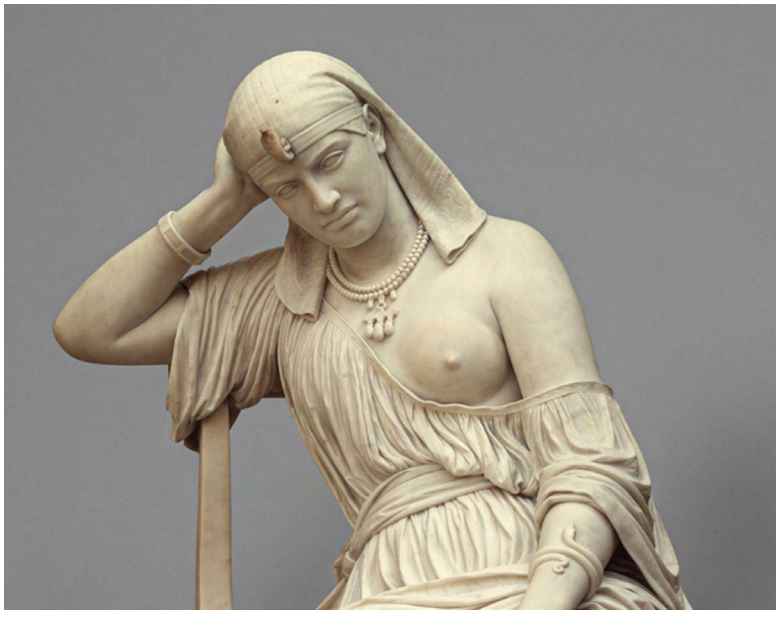

Fig. 97 William Wetmore Story, *Cleopatra* (detail), 1869. Marble, 55 1/2 x 33 1/4 x 51 ½ in. (141 x 84.5 x 130.8 cm). Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. https://images.metmuseum.org/CRDImages/ad/original/DT10855

It is this strict conformity to the neoclassical ideal that Rimmer's Egyptian god, *Osiris*, confronts in two versions, the second of which is shown (fig. 98). The first version challenged the neoclassical formula, and the second questioned and subtly satirized it. In 1864, the original *Osiris* plaster cast had a hawk's head placed incongruously on what appeared to be a classical Greek male nude. Despite this complication, the whole work was completed in seven days. Osiris's body, with his right hip extended and his left leg slightly bent, imitated the contrapposto pose of ancient Greek sculpture, although — unusually — Rimmer employed a live model for a short time to simulate the pose of the legs, probably to counter the quotation with a contrasting natural effect. This is achieved in the more naturalistic knees than in the Greek prototype. His student, French, might have had a photograph of this hawk-headed version or the armless *Chaldean Shepherd* in mind when he described Rimmer's work as "always strong and sometimes repulsive."[71]

Fig. 98 *Osiris* (*with the Hawk-Head Replaced*), 1864-68. Plaster, dimensions unknown. Destroyed. Photograph: Lincoln Kirstein and Richard Sherman Nutt Research Material on William Rimmer, Archives of American Art

The human head that replaced the hawk's head (lost) on the plaster cast in 1868 was apparently a concession to Perkins and added at his request.[72] However, even in this revised form (destroyed), the statue — "about seven feet" tall — caricatured classical Greek sculpture.[73] Much depends on the one extant photograph of it which is an image that Rimmer never liked.[74] But it shows that the contrapposto posture now included a long, tilted neck to create a body line that exaggerates the Greek desideratum by almost conforming to a reversed letter "S." Since the body in Rimmer's first version was described as flawless or "ideal," he amputated the arms — which would have been shockingly imperfect — only for the second iteration.[75] Thus, even as it evolved and lost its hawk's head, the Osiris always remained a satire of the Greek and neoclassical concept of perfection.

Rimmer's contemporaries did not know how to respond to the eccentricity of the hawk-headed rendition, but some had an inkling — as his biographer did — that such an aberration was his way of teaching (surely it was meant to be thought provoking).[76] Unlike the satyrs and centaurs which are animal hybrids from classical antiquity, this creature harkens back to Egypt. The humor was lost to most, but one viewer understood and called it "a youthful and smoothly graceful figure of 'heroic size,' with a droll eagle's head on the neck."[77] Although

Rimmer added a hawk's face, apparently the head was not monstrous because the whole piece conveyed an "air of the antique." It was possible to describe it — as one reviewer did — as "noble and commanding, the attitude easy, and the head expressive."[78] Yet Rimmer's figure lacked Osiris's traditional kilt, and, with a hawk's head worn like a mask covering, the human body below appeared offensively naked despite a fig leaf. When it was first exhibited at Childs and Jenks' gallery on Tremont Street in Boston, it remained on view for only a short time because of objections to its nudity.[79]

Bartlett believed that, through *Osiris*, Rimmer was demonstrating a classical figure in repose as an alternative to his classical figure in action, the *Falling Gladiator*. He completely missed the satire and helped lead subsequent observers to do the same. The two figures are comparable but in a more challenging way: the earliest criticizes classical Greek art by being more anatomically natural and the second criticizes neoclassicism, in its preferred pose, by being outrageously imaginative.[80]

By taking up the subject of repose, Rimmer tackled the vexed question of the perfect proportions for a young, male nude. As in antiquity with the established canon of the Doryphorus, or spear-bearer (original lost), by Polykleitos, the problem of ideal proportions was a serious one for his contemporaries. There was, for instance, the solution provided by the sculptor William Story in his *Proportions of the Human Figure, According to a New Canon for Practical Use*, published in London in 1864, and reissued in 1866 with an illustration (fig. 99) added to his earlier description of the best prototype (the Diadoumenos, or fillet binder, after Polykleitos). In an informing way, Rimmer upset any such calculations by introducing a hawk's head that necessarily ruined the canon's effect of a harmonious whole. The change magnified the character of the individual represented and was far more creative than the Greek precedent. Why a hawk's head? Plutarch made the mistake of confusing Horus — the hawk-headed son of Osiris — with Osiris in a lengthy essay on the father that described Osiris as not only a hawk but also as having the "shape of a man."[81]

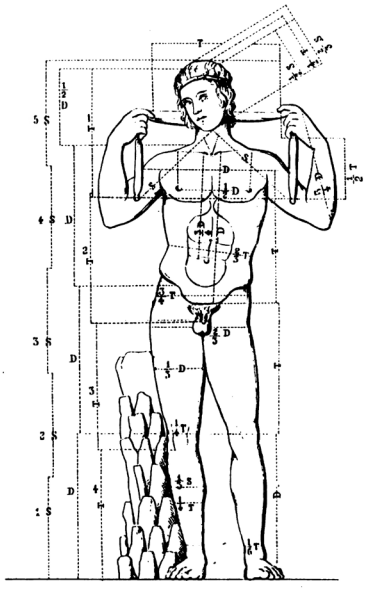

Fig. 99 William Wetmore Story, Illustration from *The Proportions of the Human Figure, According to a New Canon for Practical Use*, London: Chapman and Hall, 1866, after p. 60

Those who understood declared that Rimmer's *Osiris* was either unusually instructive or about "classical theory."[82] He had begun teaching art anatomy in Boston in 1861, on the strength of the positive response to his *Falling Gladiator*, and had moved from East Milton to a nearby location in Chelsea in 1863.[83] As with his enigmatic paintings, Rimmer seems to have lost interest in selling his sculpture. The sale would have been as duplicates in marble or bronze of the originals in plaster. In fact, as Rimmer became increasingly involved

with instruction, Perkins came around to realizing this.[84] Probably sometime in 1863 — when his daughter was Rimmer's student — Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote in his journal that Rimmer wished "to make a statue which will not be bought," possibly *Osiris*.[85] The American essayist seemed to think this extraordinary on the part of an artist, particularly one who so obviously needed an income.

When Rimmer taught on the women's end of the Cooper Union (a free vocational school for men and women) in New York from 1866 to 1870, he shifted his focus more to teaching. This gave him the chance to put his sculpture — the *St. Stephen* in plaster (a cast), the *Falling Gladiator* and *Osiris* in plaster — on display and his thoughts into words. He also reworked his ideas in clay for *Endymion* and *Chaldean Shepherd* (both lost) which had been destroyed in the earlier versions.[86] But what he did with *Osiris* was to undermine any ancient or recent authority on proportion.

As Story had to admit, the Greeks' first standard of proportions for a male "undoubtedly" came from the Egyptians.[87] Nonetheless the Greeks, he asserted, by establishing their widely accepted canon in the form of the Doryphoros — a canon that Story had analyzed mathematically and wanted to re-establish — had reached a pinnacle of achievement not surpassed by others. They had "reduced art to a science and made sculpture erudite."[88] This sweeping and pretentious statement was truly offensive to Rimmer, given what he stood for with regard to art. Story illustrated his argument with his tracing (fig. 99) of an engraving after a Roman copy of Polykleitos' sculpture of an athlete tying a victor's ribbon around his head, which followed the same canon.

In his classes, Rimmer countered: "No attempt should be made to draw or model by the use of any unit or standard of proportions: if the sensibilities are not sufficient for the work, the workman is no artist." More strongly, "No standard of proportions can supplant the feeling in the production of any work of art."[89] For Rimmer, the nude is a means of artistic expression rather than a mere study of nature, and it should be far removed from conformity to any mathematical formula. "Art," he declared, "is not a scholarly matter, but one of feeling and sensibility."[90]

In effect, the *Osiris* is a reply and an intellectual rebuke to Rimmer's fellow Bostonian — William Story — who, at the time, enjoyed international renown in his capacious studio in Rome. In either form, the *Osiris* disrupts Story's formula with a reference to classical precedent that is so evident that *Osiris* is arguably more about what it is not than what it is. In truth, the hawk's head incarnation, in its blatant inconsistency, made such an important point that it was Rimmer's favorite sculpture.[91] The artist was well aware of the almost irrational admiration for Greek classical art. He told one of his talented female students at the Cooper Union's School of Design for Women, where he was director, that if her life-size sculpture of Andromeda, in the antique mode, were "to be found without the head in an old ruin, it would be admired as a noble specimen of classic art."[92] That is, it could fool the already-gullible neoclassicists.

Rimmer's hawk-headed *Osiris* carried additional — including personal — meaning because this Egyptian god held the important role of judging the dead. With the help of Horus and others, it was he who, after a deceased person's heart was weighed, determined who would receive punishment or reward following death.[93] But by the first century BCE, a Greek historian claimed that a deceased Egyptian was judged by forty-two Egyptian judges in a trial on Earth before being sent on to another trial in the spirit world conducted by Osiris.[94] This seems to be the origin of Rimmer's satirical references to "these Egyptian judges, judging the dead" in his narrative, "Stephen and Phillip," suggesting that they epitomized excessive judgment conducted in ignorance.[95]

At the time that *Osiris* was created in 1864, art academies with sterling reputations recommended that students begin by copying plaster casts after antique originals. As Robert Knox in his 1852 *Manual of Artistic Anatomy* (a book that ran through many later editions) recommended, first you fill your mind with Greek classical sculpture and afterward you create in that mode.[96] You then can correct Nature with a perfect or more beautiful form that is "the impersonation of Nature's ultimate aim."[97] It did not matter whether you were a painter or sculptor, but the influence of the classical precedent was much stronger — almost overwhelming — on sculpture. Knox is clear that he considered "sadly mutilated" limbs in the originals — and copied in *Osiris* — an ugly sight to be avoided. The aim should always be "transcendent beauty."[98]

Rimmer complied to an extent in that he produced a classical head (now lost) of probably Mercury, which was used for teaching.[99] Furthermore, his students in 1863 and 1864 visited the Boston Athenaeum to draw from the large collection of plaster casts there after famous Greek originals. To be sure, Rimmer admired particular classical sculptures, and he weighed their strong points in front of his classes, but he also discouraged the practice of repeated or mindless imitation.[100]

As he pointed out, copying from precedents taught the "alphabet of art" but required nothing more than "mechanical skill." Nor was constant study from nature — another form of copying — the best path. Instead, he wanted his students to be as original, imaginative, and independent as possible.[101] Indeed, one's imagination is suppressed in the presence of a model. Significantly, his students had to submit "original" drawings or clay sculptures to him weekly. These were to be based on their accumulated knowledge and achieved without models.[102] Related to this, he wanted and expected "diversity" or an individuality in what they produced.[103]

In general, his pupils learned from his blackboard anatomy drawings and drew or modeled from living models in a set pose, which, late in his career, went so far as to include a masked, naked male in front of an all-female class.[104] For the time, this was not just progressive but also predictably controversial, and rare enough that Bartlett apparently did not know about it.[105] Nevertheless, anatomical accuracy was not Rimmer's main concern. Artistic quality was, and he could easily switch into a theoretical discussion of art. One student reported acquiring an "enlightened eye," while another wrote that "It was not in our work that he helped us, so much as in teaching us to see things."[106] By enriching their associations, he meant to broaden their capacity for appreciation.[107]

In his class explanations, he divided sculpture into three types: the classical, after Greek or Roman originals; the natural, which is done from life; and the ideal by which he meant that which is imaginary or idea oriented.[108] Of the known sculptors, many of his contemporaries worked in the classical mode into the 1870s; others — fifteen or twenty years younger such as John Quincy Adams Ward and Augustus Saint-Gaudens — worked in the natural manner, and Rimmer alone fell into the ideal or inventive category which is why French thought him so revolutionary. On seeing Ward's realistic *Indian Hunter*, which was cast in bronze in 1866 and dedicated in New York City's Central Park in 1869, Rimmer observed with disappointment that it was "literally an Indian, and nothing more."[109] As sculptors competed for greater naturalism, they moved further from a use of the imagination. For Rimmer, it was not the subject but the artist's expression of the subject — what he or she added to it — that made a work of art.

Realizing there might be a message, one visitor to the art display at the Cooper Union thought the *Falling Gladiator* — with its emotional impact and momentary pose — must typify "the romantic school" in contrast to the "classical" school, exemplified in the *Osiris*.[110] Rimmer defied easy explanation, and the visitors who commented had undoubtedly never seen any sculpture comparable to the psychological confrontation of *Seated Man*, which was never on view.

Left out of this discussion is portrait sculpture, which is not only pinned to reality but potentially a profitable business. Perkins knew that a large public commission for a statue would help to make Rimmer's reputation, and, while still abroad, he helped to make this happen through Boston connections. Thus, in 1864, Perkins' fellow merchant, Thomas Lee, contributed $5000 to have a granite statue of Alexander Hamilton designed by Rimmer and erected in Boston. For Rimmer, this was a major opportunity and much would depend upon acquitting himself well. As Bartlett recounts, he secured space in "an unoccupied church" and completed the clay model, of between nine and ten feet high, in the astonishingly short time of eleven days in December of 1864.[111] Despite his speed, he could have been faster if he had not had to contend with clay that repeatedly froze or fell. After the clay figure gained the requisite committee's approval, it was cut by precise measurements in Concord granite — Rimmer's choice of material — in Quincy.[112] When finished, the statue (figs. 100, 101) was erected on Commonwealth Avenue Mall on an eight-foot-high granite base designed by Col. Edward C. Cabot, a local architect. Lee had made the additional request that, for the base, Rimmer model profile heads, larger than life, in relief of George Washington, Hamilton, and John Jay.[113] The resulting clay plaque, with overlapping busts, was reproduced in a granite carving (fig. 102) on the front of the pedestal. Finally, the monument was unveiled on August 24, 1865, and the main inscription supplied later.[114]

Fig. 100 *Alexander Hamilton*, 1864-65. Granite, figure: 10 ft x 3 ft 4 in. x 3 ft 4 in. (304.8 x 101.6 x 101.6 cm.); pedestal: 8 ft 5 in. high (256.5 cm). Commonwealth Avenue Mall, Boston. https://Alexander-1755-1804-Statesman-Commonwealth-Massachusetts/dp/B07C81N2QV

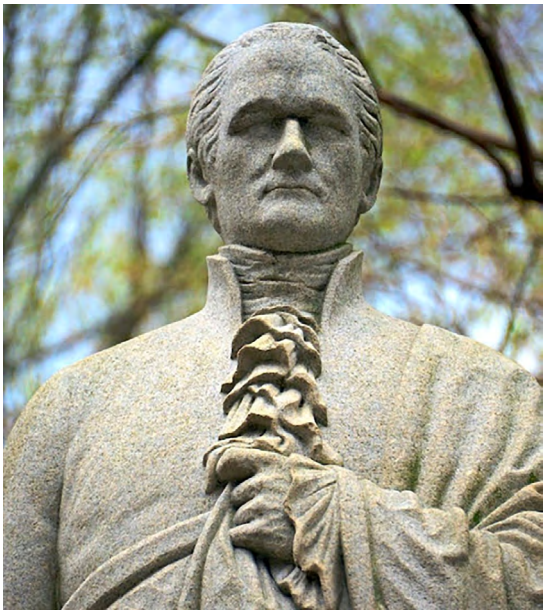

Fig. 101 *Alexander Hamilton* (detail), 1864-65 https://bostonzest.typepad.com/.a/6a00e54fc42bb8883401b8d2609654970c

Fig. 102 *Alexander Hamilton* (pedestal detail), 1865. Granite, outer frame: 21 ½ x 31 x 2 in. (54.93 x 78.76 x 5.10 cm) https://bostonzest.typepad.com/.a/6a00e54fc42bb8883401bb097966d1970d

The Lee commission was atypical in requiring the copying of three portraits. Hamilton's likeness is based on Giuseppe Ceracchi's 1791–1792 life portrait (lost), probably using the plaster copy (fig. 103) by John Dixey at the Boston Athenaeum. For the profiles, the head of Washington is after Jean-Antoine Houdon's likeness (based on a life mask), most likely from his replica, from about 1786, at the Boston Athenaeum; the head of Hamilton uses the Ceracchi likeness again, and the head of Jay appears to be based on one of the many copies of the life bust, from about 1792, by Ceracchi (U.S. Supreme Court). Thus, the project allowed for little originality. For someone as creative and as averse to copying as Rimmer, the constraints must have seemed stifling.

Fig. 103 John Dixey after Giuseppe Ceracchi, *Alexander Hamilton*, ca. 1815. Plaster 23 11/16 x 12 13/16 x 9 3/16 in. (60.2 x 32.5 x 23.4 cm) (integral base). Boston Athenaeum. https://www.bostonathenaeum.org/paintings-sculpture-online/alexander-hamilton

According to a pamphlet issued by the mayor of Boston, Lee chose the subject because Hamilton first "set foot on American soil" in Boston. It was also because, on a return visit to the city in 1774, Hamilton converted to the patriot cause.[115] Aside from being a military commander, founding father, and statesman, he played a major role in establishing a robust financial system as the first Secretary of the Treasury. Washington, Hamilton, and Jay were understandably grouped together on the pedestal (with Jay innermost) as the three crucial supporters of the Jay Treaty with Great Britain which benefited the United States' participation in international trade. Hamilton designed the treaty, Jay negotiated it, and Washington signed it. This connection plus Hamilton's stabilization of the young nation's finances would have been paramount to Lee as a successful merchant.

Rimmer's figure of Hamilton, although not carved in marble, generally follows the most approved standards for such a statue at the time.[116] It almost necessarily includes a classical reference in the form of a toga-like cloak. Not only does this mantle add dignity by its association with the republican values of the Roman Republic, but it can also be a symbol of Hamilton's governmental stature as the first Secretary of the Treasury. In fact, the public had become so habituated to the toga metaphor that, by 1859, it was further associated, in its simplification of costume, with "the idea of the beautiful in sculpture."[117]

The closest precursor for Rimmer's statue is Sir Francis Chantrey's 1826 marble portrait of George Washington (fig. 104) — also robed and on a high pedestal. This was an expensive commission completed in England for a niche in Boston's State House. On its arrival at its destination, Chantrey's sculpture received near-universal approval. Surely some of its welcome stemmed from being the first large-scale marble statue in New England.[118]

Despite Chantrey's success, Rimmer has noticeably improved upon his approach. He raised the left hand higher than in Chantrey's version and through this gesture — with a connective shirt ruffle, and vertical drapery lines — brought attention to Hamilton's face which is confident, serene, and thoughtful. This single focusing on the head characterizes Hamilton as a man of intellect.[119] Indeed, the deep-set eyes (which Hamilton did have but which are exaggerated through simplification) enhance this effect and a degree of mystery by creating a dark veil of shadow. The cloak, drawn up much higher than in Chantrey's statue, also reveals through the eighteenth-century clothing (including wrinkled silk stockings) that Hamilton was no god but rather a man of his time. In contrast, Chantrey's Washington assumes a somewhat tentative stance and gazes aside while Rimmer's frontal Hamilton moves forward in a show of confidence.

Fig. 104 Sir Francis Chantrey, *President George Washington*, 1826. Marble, figure: 88 x 26 x 34 in. (223.52 x 66.04 x 86.36 cm). Courtesy Commonwealth of Massachusetts, State House Art Commission

The overall emphasis on simplified form and sculptural mass in this statue (aided by the cloak's creation of a harmonious unit) was unusual and unappreciated at the time. Although Hamilton's family and Lee were pleased, Rimmer's *Hamilton* met with a mixed response. Rimmer sent an early review to Perkins, who replied: "The critique is dry, but intended to be very favorable — Where is it going to be put?"[120] This identified a problem. Having planned the statue for a niche, the artist had put little effort into the back, and his neglect of that side became a point of contention. Recognizing this weakness, Bartlett thought Rimmer should have refused to allow the sculpture to be placed in the open, and he was surprised by Rimmer's indifference. Only later did Rimmer admit that, given a second chance, he would put more detail in the back.[121]

On the negative side, some critics thought *Hamilton* should have been completed in bronze to allow for sharper edges, clearer lines, and more naturalistic detail. These observers would have preferred a display of illusionistic skill in the differentiation of textures as well. Rimmer's choice was a characteristic one in that greater ambiguity and lack of definition invite a use of imagination. However, the most consistent complaint concerned the cloak which seemed over-abundant, so that "the object seems to have been to keep the block of granite as solid as possible."[122] Admiring the statue's simplicity, Bartlett provided insight in seeing the work as not just conveying the form of one man but also expressing the character of an epoch.[123] In this hierarchical context, the symbolic drapery — in its heaviness — is perhaps not overdone. Its massiveness as compact stone confers increased dignity.[124]

Possibly because of this first commission, Rimmer imagined a more ambitious kind of public monument to create. He conceived it, through drawings and studies in clay, as a symbolic representation of Boston as three contiguous hills. The city — built on Beacon Hill, Mount Vernon, and Pemberton Hill — had such a distinctive appearance that it was once called Trimont or Tremont. The only surviving sketch is *Tri Mountain* (fig. 105), said to be the first version of the proposal.[125] It shows three lethargic, male giants sprawled across high ground so that their heads form peaks above secondary mounds. As with the actual hills — which were diminished and leveled later — the highest one is in the center. Significantly, Rimmer wanted to sculpt *Tri Mountain* on a colossal scale. If he had done so, it would have been astonishing for the period. According to Bartlett, "it would have made the city famous."[126] To describe a hill or mountain as resembling a person was not rare, but to create a large-scale, secular sculpture with a wildly imaginary subject was not only bold but also professionally risky.[127] In the sixteenth century, Giambologna did it with his Appennine Colossus (Vaglia, Italy), a personification of the Apennine Mountains, but that was a whimsical commission for a private estate.

Fig. 105 *Tri Mountain*, ca. 1864. Graphite on paper, 7 1/8 x 10 3/8 in. (18.75 x 26.35 cm). Boston Medical Library, William Rimmer Collection

Rimmer's naked giants are not classical Greek nudes, but rather more ordinary, muscular men who seem to shift their bodies in an expression of latent energy. One mustached face, turned to the viewer, perhaps speaks for the group in showing contentment. In a telling detail, the figures to either side of the center have arched wrists which reveal the influence of Michelangelo — bringing to mind such antecedents as the right wrist of his *David* (Accademia Gallery, Florence) or the wrists of his *Dawn* from the Tomb of Lorenzo de' Medici (San Lorenzo, Florence). The latter is more appropriate because she is reclining and turning as she awakens. Like the giants, she is also a personification. Clearly, Rimmer used Michelangelo's precedent to obtain a very different result, calling upon visual associations with the outline. His plan is an example of his ideal art, using the mind's eye. He urged one of his students to pursue the project in hopes of gaining public attention, but it was not to be.[128]

Unfortunately, some of the response to *Hamilton* hurt Rimmer's reputation. A rumor circulated that he spent little time on it and neglected the back because art for him meant no more than a convenient way of earning money. His friends objected that he suffered from ill health and the strain of work.[129] But his next big commission seemed to support the more negative viewpoint.

Domingo Sarmiento, ambassador to the United States from Argentina from 1865 to 1868, and later president of the Argentine Confederacy, sought to obtain marble busts of two of his heroes — the educator Horace Mann and the recently deceased Abraham Lincoln. He asked Mann's Spanish-speaking wife, Mary, for assistance, and, on being consulted, her sister, Elizabeth P. Peabody, recommended the commission go to Rimmer.

In the fall of 1865, Rimmer was lecturing on artistic anatomy at Harvard University, and, by the beginning of 1866, had moved to New York and was teaching at the National Academy of Design prior to his commitments at the Cooper Union. Peabody — a fellow educator and an intellectual like her sister — probably met him through

teaching an overlapping subject in Boston. She wrote of using Rimmer's methods with great success in drawing lessons on a kindergarten level. She thought him "bold and original" and praised him because he could draw "the human figure illuminated with the expression of the spirit."[130]

In November of 1865, Mary Mann wrote to Sarmiento that Elizabeth had seen Rimmer who "would be most happy to cut the heads for you." She added "he is the most able artist in the country tho [sic] not as extensively known by works as some who are his inferiors." Knowing that Sarmiento (like her late husband and Rimmer) was deeply invested in public education, she made a point of mentioning Rimmer's reputation as an outstanding teacher. As she maintained, even artists who had studied in Europe "flocked" to Rimmer's studio for instruction in art anatomy.[131]

After Rimmer's winter term ended, he turned to the busts, offering to do both for a reduced rate of $1200 if they could be done in the summer. He had just finished a bust in clay (lost) of the industrialist, Peter Cooper, the philanthropic founder in 1859 of the Cooper Union. Rimmer charged Cooper $800 and would charge $800 more to put it into marble.[132] These negotiations are relevant because, although the Sarmiento agreement was that Rimmer would cut the marble, he produced only clay busts for Sarmiento and paid, out of his earnings, for someone else to cut and polish the marble. Similarly, Rimmer is not known to have completed a marble bust for Cooper.

With both Cooper and Sarmiento, Rimmer seems to have lost inspiration and energy. He might have fallen into his recurring depression, or, as other sculptors reported of themselves, lost interest after creating the original likeness.[133] Mrs. Mann noted that Rimmer had agreed to do a bust of her deceased son (doubtless based on a photograph) if all went well in the Sarmiento commission, but there is no evidence that this bust was ever attempted.[134]

The bust of Mann (fig. 106) was either based on Emma Stebbins' 1865, full-length bronze statue of him at the Massachusetts State House in Boston, or, more likely, Elizabeth Peabody's photograph of him (lost) on which the head of the Stebbins statue depended.[135] Stebbins' sculpture received very little public comment when it was unveiled, as if in disapproval, which might be why she did not receive the Sarmiento commission.[136] Rimmer's bust of Lincoln (fig. 107) is a copy of Leonard Volk's 1860 portrait which exists in several editions; the precise source is not known. The accuracy of Volk's original is confirmed by the fact that it is closely based on Volk's life mask of Lincoln (National Museum of American History).[137]

Fig. 106 *Bust of Horace Mann*, 1866-67. Marble; height including pedestal: 26 in. (66 cm). Sarmiento Historical Museum Collection — Argentina

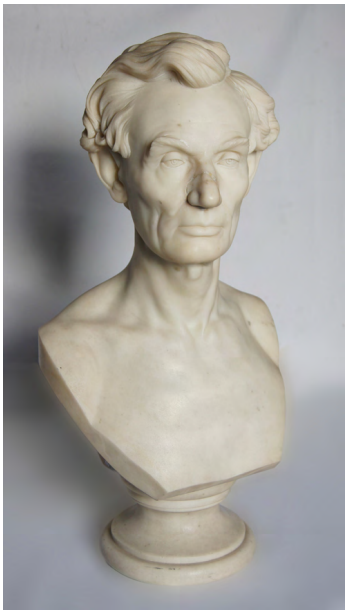

Fig. 107 *Bust of Abraham Lincoln*, 1866-67. Marble; height including pedestal: 26 ¾ in. (68 cm). Sarmiento Historical Museum Collection — Argentina

Unfortunately, Rimmer's probably-clay models of Mann and Lincoln are lost, and the marble versions done from them have veining defects. Having paid the marble carvers, Rimmer could not have been pleased by the result. In the sculptures, the right side of Mann's neck has a narrow streak (erased in the image), and there is the same kind of ingrained staining in a short strip across Lincoln's nose. Upon learning in March of 1867 of their arrival in Argentina with imperfections, Mrs. Mann replied to Sarmiento that she had written Rimmer that he should take the busts back, refund the money and try to sell them elsewhere.[138] The busts were not returned, but there is some evidence that he apologized and perhaps offered to refund all or at least his portion of the payment. Rimmer met Sarmiento in New York, in 1867 (apparently early June), and carried with him an introductory letter from Peabody which survives. In it, she calls Rimmer her "friend," which suggests agreement with regard to the busts, but what happened at the meeting is not known.[139]

With possibly the Sarmiento commission in mind, Rimmer told a listener: "Mere portrait-sculpture belongs to the mechanical arts."[140] His dislike of copying and his interest in inventions — having created such things as an improved gunlock — were doubtless behind his enthusiastic response to an 1859 French invention called photo-sculpture which could produce clay portrait busts quickly, accurately, and mechanically.[141] Other sculptors were moving in this direction, such as the American Joel T. Hart in Florence, Italy. Before 1855, Hart claimed he had a new kind of measuring instrument that reproduced a person's exterior in clay after a sitting of fifteen to thirty minutes, but he refused to divulge his secret without a patent, and nothing further seems to have developed.[142]

In the fall of 1866, James Steele MacKaye, an artist and inventor who later became a playwright, returned from Paris to New York with patent rights for the United States to the photo-sculpture process.[143] At about this time, Rimmer joined him in the venture in a position actually above MacKaye's, but MacKaye would draw a salary and run the mechanical part of the business. So, as a known sculptor and newly appointed director of the Cooper Union's School of Design for Women, Rimmer lent his considerable prestige to the budding American Photosculpture Company. The advertising brochure even made the point that he brought artistic credibility to the company's "workshops." He became not only one of the seven trustees but also president of the organization.[144]

There are many ways that the company's prospectus, which Rimmer approved, would appeal to his idealism. In short, the plan enabled people who were not wealthy to purchase inexpensive portrait sculptures with accurate likenesses. It also had the potential to provide jobs for his female students, who — no matter how

talented — were often not granted opportunities to succeed. They might oversee the mechanical process or be the skilled sculptors who provide the finishing touches. Pointedly, as the prospectus stated, it was expected that thousands of people, especially "women," might be employed.[145] The completed product — a bust, full-length statue, medallion or even architectural decoration — could be furnished in clay, plaster of paris, marble, bronze, iron or some other material in multiples of up to twelve. Without question, Rimmer — with a wife and three daughters to support — hoped that this investment of his time would also result in his own financial gain.[146]

In a second company brochure, Rimmer joined other recommenders and praised the accuracy of a sample figurine in plaster that had been produced of the victorious General Ulysses S. Grant (fig. 108). The likeness, showing Grant seated with a cigar, is based on photographs from a live sitting of a few minutes at the Union League Club in New York. MacKaye's process — with improvements over the French version — placed the sitter in a circle formed by twenty-four cameras, spaced at equal intervals from each other. After twenty-four simultaneous photographs were taken, they were used as synchronized projections of surface edges onto a block of clay which was cut, following these edges.[147] The whole procedure was similar to the point system used in cutting marble.

Fig. 108 James Steele MacKaye (American Photosculpture of New York), *Ulysses S. Grant*, 1867. Painted plaster; height: 19 in. (48.3 cm). Collection of the New-York Historical Society

Early on, after producing a small number of statuettes — including of Admiral Farragut and Horace Greeley — the company ran into financial difficulty. A major setback occurred when, before Grant's presidential campaign in 1868, a workman stole the bronze figurine of Grant that was the basis for all the plaster casts of him. This destroyed hopes for a large financial return.[148] Just prior to this, during discussion of the prospectus that Rimmer had not yet read, Rimmer reminded one of the MacKaye businessmen that a loss of money was "nothing" compared to a potential "loss of character" through failure.[149] Unsatisfied with his pay and his workload, MacKaye left the organization in 1868. He mentioned the anxiety and stress of an overleveraged project, without sufficient stockholders, as a reason for leaving.[150]

In a sign of desperation in 1871, Rimmer joined two company officers in offering the sale of 800 shares "to secure the working capital necessary to carry on its business." The letter of offer pointed out that photo-sculpture was to sculpture what photography was to portrait painting.[151] At the time, Rimmer was no longer in New York,

the company's location. Bartlett, who could not comprehend Rimmer's involvement, said Rimmer was originally offered one-tenth of the profits and $2000 in stock. He might have invested money in it, but the company never really developed after 1868 and eventually went bankrupt.[152]

Two of Rimmer's finest sculptures are late works: *Dying Centaur* (fig. 109) and *Fighting Lions* (figs. 110–11). The 1869 *Centaur* is a hybrid creature like the hawk-headed *Osiris* but opposite in that the upper body is human. Once again, Rimmer had created a piece that runs against the grain of naturalism and neoclassicism in contemporary sculpture, because it is neither. It is a wholly imaginary or ideal work. When first shown at the Boston Art Club's second exhibition in 1871, it was met with "entire silence."[153]

Fig. 109 *Dying Centaur*, 1869. Plaster, 21 x 25 x 24 in. (53.3 x 66.30 x 61 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

The bulging eyes and truncated arms would have been disturbing factors. In *Osiris*, the arms play a secondary role and refer to unevenly broken antique statuary, but the *Centaur*'s raised, chopped-off right limb is both featured and suggestive of intense suffering. It terminates cleanly at the elbow and the left arm is very roughly severed at the shoulder. Their difference, as a summary of the whole, surely symbolizes the centaur's offered self — one part more perfect and the other less so.[154] In addition, their distortion adds to the tragic state of a creature divided against himself in terms of manly good and bestial evil. Faced with death, he is penitent and begs to be accepted into a better world. As in the *Falling Gladiator*, half the body rises in resistance while the other half gives way to fate. Through the dramatic upward appeal and soulful eyes, Rimmer has imbued a secular mythological creation with an inescapable and modern spirituality. Moreover, Rimmer spoke of self-expression in art, and this figure appears to reflect the artist's own yearning for transcendent meaning.[155]

Daniel French observed that the "Centaur is quite unique, and without a peer."[156] Another late Rimmer student, Winthrop Peirce, avowed that "one cannot think of any living sculptor who could have equaled the stark power of Dr. Rimmer's *Dying Centaur*."[157]

Rimmer's *Fighting Lions* (figs. 110–11), created by 1871, pairs a male and female in a vicious battle. It took its original, finished form as a plaster cast which, after Rimmer's death, was painted bronze and lost or destroyed

after 1947.[158] Fortunately, the Rimmer Memorial Committee had it cast in bronze by January of 1907, along with the *Falling Gladiator* (1907) and the *Dying Centaur* (1905–1906). The piece was described by a journalist, when it first appeared at Williams & Everett in about 1870, as "lions at play," but this is definitely not play when the lion sinks his teeth into the lioness' neck and claws her back so ferociously that he leaves deep cuts.[159] In fact, the male is in the process of suffocating the female to death by clamping his jaws on her throat (a characteristic strategy). The dead tree stump next to them enters into the swirling compositional rhythm (as with *Falling Gladiator* and *Dying Centaur*, one must circle the piece to see it), but the stump is also a common symbol for death.[160] Rimmer was not likely to have included an unnecessary accessory like this without a purpose. In a related example, a prominent dead tree appears at a death site in his *Scene from "Romeo and Juliet"* (University of Michigan Museum of Art).

Fig. 110 *Fighting Lions*, by 1871. Plaster, 16 ½ x 26 x 20 in. (41.03 x 66.30 x 50.80 cm). Destroyed. Truman H. Bartlett, *The Art Life of William Rimmer: Sculptor, Painter, and Physician*, Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1890, no. 47

Certainly it is telling that the only known pair of fighting lions that Rimmer made within a larger context occurs in his drawing, *Study for "And Satan Came Also"* (fig. 62), which has a title taken from Job (1:6). The scene (Job 1:7) shows Satan's head as he hovers over the Earth, sowing chaos which is indicated by the melee below and by the wrestling lions at left. Connected with this is a drawing (fig. 112) in Rimmer's sketchbook that depicts a male and female lion locked in combat. Next to them is a contorted palm tree that, in its abnormality, encapsulates the scene.

In sections of "Stephen and Phillip," Rimmer wrote of animals battling in pairs with epic, symbolic significance — such as for control of the universe — so that it is clear that he used animals to illustrate human desires.[161] In his art, his favorite animals for such metaphorical use were lions, possibly because they could convey both bestiality and nobility. The most obvious case is *The Duel* (fig. 9), an allegory using lions to exemplify human bravery versus human cowardice, with an inscribed quotation to make the message clear.

The sculpture can take its meaning from the drawing of the lions fighting beneath Satan which is so explicit in its reference to moral chaos, but with this difference: a male is pitted against a female. This is its most important point. Given Rimmer's involvement in a specific social conflict at the time, *Fighting Lions* is convincing as an allegory of male tyranny or male dominance gone amok. It calls attention to a senseless act where the male disrupts nature or God's plan (Matthew 19:6) by attacking and suffocating the female. The same idiocy — as Rimmer would have it — of this pairing is seen in *Battle of the Amazons* (fig. 56). If this is the theme, it was created to alarm rather than to appeal. Perhaps because it appears to enthrone brutality, it did not sell.

Fig. 111 *Fighting Lions*, by 1871; 1906–07. Bronze cast, 17 x 23 ¼ x 17 in. (43.2 x 59.1 x 43.2 cm). Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Gift of Daniel Chester French, 1907

Although there is no explanation of the work, the likely catalyst is the women's suffrage movement and, most especially, the fight for a woman's right to earn a living wage. Elizabeth Cady Stanton was in the great hall of the Cooper Union, standing before the National Woman's Rights Convention, when she memorably asked: "Can a woman be said to have a right to life, if all means of self-protection are denied her?"[162] The year was 1860, six years before Rimmer's arrival, but the Cooper Union supported related and equally significant meetings while Rimmer was head of the woman's branch of the school.[163] Particularly relevant is an 1868 meeting of the American Equal Rights Association where the demand was for a woman's "right to earn a living."[164]

In June of 1868, Rimmer revealed his opinion on the women's struggle in an immediate response to a prominent *New York Tribune* art critic. Writing anonymously, Clarence Cook had claimed that a female graduate of the Cooper Union, who should have been taught "to design for manufacturers," would, under Rimmer, be unlikely ever "to earn her own living."[165] Cook had cause to think this. Rimmer had been hired specifically "to fit the pupils directly for industrial occupations."[166] According to Cook's complaint, Rimmer's leadership of the women's school had changed its direction and raised ambitions unrealistically.[167] This charge — concerning an attempt to increase his students' earning capacity — and similar ones were likely what prompted the sculpture.

In his reply, Rimmer questioned Cook's ability to judge and noted that tastes differ, but he could produce a student who would meet any standard Cook wanted.[168] As the school's director, Rimmer had reason to feel strongly about the rights of women. He even subscribed to a pro-suffrage journal, *Demorest's Illustrated Monthly*, which had links to the Cooper Union and advised women against marrying "men who wanted to be master in their homes."[169]

As for the timing, the National Women's Suffrage Association, composed largely of the Working Women's Association members, was founded in New York City in 1869, and the broad question of women's rights — concerning earnings and property as well as voting — remained hotly debated issues into the 1870s.

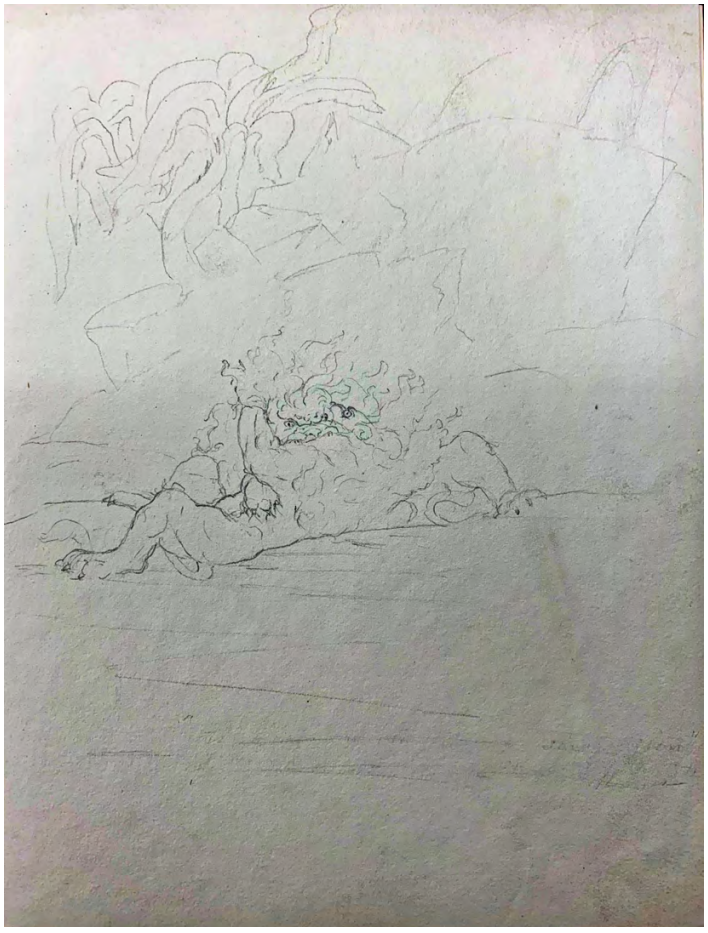

Fig. 112 *Lion Fighting a Lioness*, probably late 1860s. Graphite on paper, 10 ¼ x 8 ¼ in. (26.05 x 20.95 cm). Rimmer Sketchbook, Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine, Harvard University

Rimmer's sensitivity to women is significant in this instance and worthy of attention. He regularly praised their ability as artists as equal to that of men. Writing in 1864, he proclaimed in their defense that art is "intellectually as independent of sex as thought itself."[170] If thought is independent of sex, then women should have the right to vote and should be paid equally for mental labor. With regard to jobs, Rimmer not only acknowledged the unfair exclusion of women. He also worked overtime on his students' behalf — advertising their ability with well-directed circulars — to try to find positions for them.[171] Going further, he started a "Teachers' Society," or free course for advanced pupils, in which he instructed them in pedagogy to prepare them for self-supporting, teaching careers.[172] As Bartlett reported, his female Cooper Union pupils were "to him as his own children, their success occupying all his thought."[173] His concern and the extra course (not covered by his salary) exceeded what would be expected of someone in his position.[174]

Admittedly, the allegory was too abstruse (like most of his allegories) to be understood by people who did not know him, the patterns in his work, or the precedent of lions representing human interactions in *The Duel*. Although the content of *Fighting Lions* — as broad social criticism — resembles that of *Horses at a Fountain* and other works not for sale, it would be quite unexpected in an object to be sold. But unlike the paintings, *Fighting Lions* could win admiration as purely sculptural form, as "a masterpiece," when compared formalistically to comparable work.[175]

Although originally a plaster cast, Rimmer's *Fighting Lions* is similar to the small-scale, bronze animal groups that the French artist Antoine-Louis Barye turned out in quantity. One of the best known was his *Lion and Serpent* (fig. 113) which is a flattering, allegorical reference to King Louis-Phillippe.[176] Rimmer's Boston friend and fellow

teacher, William Morris Hunt, studied with Barye in Paris and collected Barye's bronzes, but, even without this connection, Rimmer would have known of Barye's work.[177] Rimmer's piece might well have been a reaction, but they were quite different artists. Rimmer created a writhing mass of animal cruelty with an energy that Barye's work typically lacks. The lions by both artists are not accurate recreations of real animals, but, rather, changes were made for expressive purposes. This is another case where Rimmer abandoned naturalism for the ideal — an intensification of the leonine ferocity of this interaction that came from his observation and imagination.

Fig. 113 Antoine-Louis Barye, *Lion and Serpent*, 1832-35. Bronze, 53 x 70 x 38 in. (135 x 178 x 96 cm). Louvre Museum. https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010091396

Rimmer's *Hamilton* was not his only public commission. In March of 1875, a Boston architect, Joseph Billings, hired Rimmer to create a plaster model of a figure of "Faith," nine feet high, to be used as the basis for a thirty-six-foot statue for the National Monument to the Forefathers at Plymouth, Massachusetts. In an affront to Rimmer's creativity, the model had to follow the design specifications of Hammatt Billings, an illustrator and the late architect of the monument, and was to "be done to the entire satisfaction" of his brother, Joseph Billings.[178] As an aid, Rimmer received a model (lost) of Hammatt Billings' design as the template to be followed.

Rimmer's plaster model no longer exists, but it was photographed (fig. 114) by Joseph Billings before it was given to a less experienced sculptor to be reworked. The artist had completed the statue in two and a half months for $2000, as required, but he altered the template in ways that included — for compositional purposes — changing her raised arm (indicating reliance on God) to a crooked one and freeing her thumb in that hand.[179] As the photograph demonstrates, in Billings' opinion, the sculpture was unnecessarily influenced by the semi-naked Hellenistic statue of the *Venus de Milo* (Louvre Museum), which is included for comparison in a small copy at lower left. Actually, Faith's body is quite different from that of the Greek goddess. Not only does she have arms, a more erect posture and greater drapery coverage, but also specific identifiers — scripture in hand and one foot on a rock. More relevant for the photograph, Rimmer's drapery is shown as wet. This is because the figure is a symbol of faith pitted against the perils of an Atlantic crossing and because — to Rimmer's mind — its wet appearance enhanced the artistic presentation of a female body.[180] But the clinging quality of the clothing is a key justification for likening Faith to a pagan Venus. The inappropriateness of its semi-transparency appears to have been the greatest cause for disapproval. To make the point more obvious, Billings added a properly attired woman to his photograph.

Fig. 114 *Faith*, 1875. Plaster; height: 9 ft (274.30 cm). Destroyed. Truman H. Bartlett, *The Art Life of William Rimmer: Sculptor, Painter, and Physician*, Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1890, no. 20

The second sculptor altered the head (still classical) and thickened the drapery so that Faith's figure (National Monument) is no longer revealed beneath. Rimmer's sculpture was proportionally taller and more elegant with a graceful contrapposto sway in the body that this sculptor also eliminated. Adding to the revision, the granite carver made further changes to approximate Billings' design.[181] Despite such reworkings, the composite result — appearing heavy and squat — on top of the Plymouth monument seemed to satisfy no one. Although Rimmer, himself, regretted his interpretation, a Chicago journalist defended him, concluding that the citizens of Massachusetts were not yet "entirely civilized."[182]

The remains of Stephen Perkins' side of an eight-year correspondence with Rimmer preserve the artist's reaction to his reception as a sculptor. The two consulted, for instance, about creating art not for money or fame but, more resignedly, for the future. From the discussion, Rimmer did not expect public acceptance. In June of 1868, Perkins replied from Italy: "I need hardly preach to *you* that all excellent things must be done for their own sake [...] there is no true art, powerful, creative, divine ex- [sic] excepting art for arts sake."[183] Using a phrase that occurred increasingly abroad, Perkins continued to provide strong support for Rimmer.[184] Six months later, he opined on seeing the work of many European sculptors: "There is no man in the field who can do in this matter what you can do if you put your soul into it. — The work might not be valued at its true value during my lifetime or yours — but all truly meritorious work [...] is fairly estimated at last."[185]

Rimmer's last known sculpture, *Torso* (fig. 115), a plaster cast signed and dated 1877, is his most radical and original work — far more experimental than the exhibited pieces by his contemporaries. It resembles an incomplete part, the torso, of the famous figure of Adam in Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel fresco, *The Creation of Adam*, and borrows from the content the moment chosen, which is when God has instilled life into the first man.[186] But one way that it differs, significantly, from the torso of Michelangelo's Adam is that Adam is securely seated

and braced by his right arm. In contrast, the *Torso* rises miraculously from the ground by itself. It is inert matter that is empowered by a mysterious source of energy or the presence of a soul or spirit.[187] In this respect, it follows Genesis 2:7, where God formed Adam's body from clay or the "dust of the ground" and then breathed life into it so that Adam had a soul, implying that its location is in the lungs. Even the slightly tipped base enters into the upward sweep of the chest, and the upper shoulder juts forward so that the *Torso* goes beyond mere rising to squirm with life. Furthermore, showing his *Torso* was created and not born, Rimmer corrected Michelangelo's error by removing the umbilicus. Defying Darwin, this part of man is divinely formed.

Fig. 115 *Torso*, 1877. Plaster, 11 ¾ x 14 ½ x 8 in. (29.84 x 36.83 x 20.32 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

The *Torso* also quotes and revises the body of a far-larger Greek sculpture (fig. 116) — a figure tentatively identified as "Ilissos," a river-god, in Rimmer's day — from the west pediment of the Parthenon in Athens.[188] Although the direction is reversed, the curved chest of Rimmer's *Torso* actually recalls that of *Ilissos* more than that of Michelangelo's Adam in its articulation and in the angle of its rise. If the body of *Ilissos* did provide a point of departure, Rimmer attempted to reconceive and spiritualize the torso of a revered Greek classical sculpture just as he re-did the head of Laocoön as *St. Stephen*.[189]

With its lacerated, knobby surface, *Torso* rejects the smoothly defined, three-dimensional replication of nature that can be characteristic of sculptured stone. Instead, it is, as much as possible, crude and imperfect. More precisely — especially in the back — it is expressive of the manipulation of pure clay. As Rimmer once said, "Form accompanies being, and describes it."[190] The inchoate form of *Torso* fosters an effect of transition or the messiness of a being in the process of creation. In odd collaboration, a seam from the separation between two molds is still visible across the top and down the sides into the base. Perhaps this began as accident, but it suggests the process continues beyond Adam.

The removed head in the Parthenon sculpture leaves a slick surface, worn down through time, while the corresponding section of the *Torso* is a disturbed, meaty area which conveys a greater sense of materiality. There

Fig. 116 *West Pediment Figure* (*Ilissos?*), Parthenon, 438-432 BCE. Marble, 32 x 74 x 22 in. (81.28 x 188 x 56 cm). British Museum, London https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1816-0610-99

seems to have been nothing like this coarsely formed sculpture before the twentieth century, yet it draws on its visual association with other works of art. The emphasis on corporeality underscores the miraculous quality of the presence of spiritual transcendence in the fact of the body's autonomous movement. Overall, the work is an answer to the challenge of physically representing an abstraction — the human soul, here awakened in bodily form.

In one of his lectures, Rimmer asked: "How…can one whose every energy is spent in mastering the form of a thing, ever reach its spirit?"[191] More particularly, what is gained from endlessly copying a classical exterior such as that of *Ilissos*? What of the interior? How does one represent an inner spiritual self? The answer might be foreseen in Rimmer's reference to a torso as "disembodied" form.[192] That the representation of the supernatural should be one of his aims is suggested by a student's report that "Every lecture was accompanied with a delightful rhapsody in which his unique conceptions of the spiritual side of art were developed."[193]

Rimmer so valued and prioritized his imagination that he easily lived in the world of the abstract. Witness his collapsing gladiator's impossible pose that reveals that it originated not in a model but in fantasy. Most emphatically, the pose is deliberately unattainable. Noticed by only one writer — and in 1880 — this point was almost certainly meant to be recognized.[194]

Sometimes Rimmer's reliance on the mind's image must have seemed bizarre. For instance, his 1868 annual director's report on the School of Design for Women (where his teaching included sculpture) refers to the "Department for form in the abstract, viz. the Sculpture Department."[195] By "form in the abstract," he meant form invented from memory and from the imagination. This rejection of a dependence on replication is what he wanted from all advanced students, not just the sculptors.

Likewise, he pushed for and led a new course in "creative design" when he was a faculty member at Boston's School of the Museum of Fine Arts for three years at the end of the 1870s. The aim was not just to test students' knowledge of the human figure but also to make them practice "their imaginative and creative powers," and, thus, resist imitation or — as mentioned in an annual report — "what is perhaps the chief defect of schools like our own."[196] Approvingly, the school called it "intellectual work."[197]

Endnotes

1 For Mead, see Stephen Perkins' letter of October 14, 1863, to William Rimmer, Boston Medical Library. See also I.B., "Studios in Florence," *Once a Week: An Illustrated Miscellany of Literature, Art, Science, & Popular Information* 9 (December 19, 1863): 721–22. Except for its short introduction, the article was republished in Anon., "Dr. Rimmer's Bust in Florence," *Boston Daily Advertiser*, January 23, 1864, [2]. The author clearly is Isa Blagdon, who wrote for this journal, although she identified herself only by initials.

2 I.B., "Studios," 721.

3 See the Boston Athenaeum's note of official permission given to Rimmer and his pupils to use the sculpture gallery without charge, October 6, 1860, Boston Medical Library.

4 The sculpture appeared with this title when first exhibited in an unidentified Boston print shop in 1861. For this, see Anon., "The Lowell Institute," *The Round Table: A Saturday Review of Politics, Finance, Literature, Society and Art*, March 5, 1864, 1:184.

5 I.B., "Studios," 721.

6 I.B., "Studios," 721.

7 Anon., "Dr. Rimmer's Works at Florence," *Boston Daily Advertiser*, January 13, 1864, 2. This article repeats Anon., "Italy," *London Daily News*, December 24, 1863, 3. James Jackson Jarves also praised its "lofty expression" in his *The Art-Idea: Part of Confessions of An Inquirer* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1864), 278.

8 On principles, see William James Linton's letter, April 16, 1870, to Anne Charlotte Botta, Archives and Special Collections, Cooper Union Library, New York. Rimmer's lectures included the historical basis for neoclassicism and cited the influential promoter of Greek sculpture, Johann Joachim Winckelmann. For this, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 71.

9 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 49.

10 John Ruskin, *Modern Painters* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1856), 2:215.

11 James Jackson Jarves, *Art-Hints: Architecture, Sculpture, and Painting* (London: Sampson Low, Son, and Co., 1855), 57.

12 Anon., "Dr. Rimmer's Works," 2.

13 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 20. Bartlett notes that there was not enough marble to make the ear so Rimmer inserted it from another piece. The slightly darkened areas, especially in her left eye, are finger smudges accrued during hand transport.

14 Ibid., 26. The donor is quoted as giving the granite for "the female head and the St. Stephen," as if that was the order of creation. *St. Cecilia* acquired a lower tier to the base after being reproduced in Bartlett's book as no. 16 "Head in Granite."

15 Lapthorn, "Stories and Memoirs," 8. Rimmer played the flute, organ and piano and composed music (compositions in the possession of Jeffrey Weidman). See Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 4, 19, 120. For his singing and whistling, see ibid., 9, 120.

16 This head is evidently partially based on the artist's wife. Stephen Perkins wrote Hiram Powers, May 3, 1861, that the *St. Stephen* was Rimmer's third attempt at sculpture. His first two trials, cut directly in stone, were of his wife and child. See Hiram Powers Papers, box 8, folder 27, Archives of American Art, Washington, D.C.

17 See J. Eastman Chase Gallery, *Catalogue of Drawings, Paintings, and Sculpture by the Late Dr. William Rimmer on Exhibition and Private Sale*, 7 Hamilton Place, Boston, 1883, no. 95, "Granite Head," which is evidently *St. Cecilia*. It is described as having been cut as practice for the *St. Stephen* (sales catalogue at the Boston Public Library). The quote is from Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 29.

18 I.B., "Studios," 722.

19 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 31–32. Bartlett speaks of "bracing up with sticks" and reports that the statue had to be remade many times because of the clay's freezing or drying. Perkins mentioned that, by the time the *Falling Gladiator* reached Florence,

the "irons" put in the plaster (in the repair in Paris) "as well as the old ones" had come loose. He recommended that the *Endymion* be "heavily ironed." See Perkins' letter, December 16, 1863, to Rimmer, Boston Medical Library. Wayne Craven assumed, from Bartlett, that Rimmer did not use an armature with either *Falling Gladiator* or *Hamilton*, but Bartlett is merely unclear on *Hamilton*. See Wayne Craven, *Sculpture in America* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1984), 350, 352.

20 His process of direct carving is in Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 32. See ibid., 31, for monetary support on January 27, 1861, and for the clay sculpture's completion on June 10, 1861.

21 *St. Stephen* was exhibited at Williams & Everett's art gallery in Boston in 1860. For a review of this and for selling images, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 30, 33.

22 On carving, see I.B., "Studios," 722. For tickets, see "Exhibition of Statuary," *Boston Daily Advertiser*, October 28, 1861, [2]. The original advertisement, dated October 7, also is repeated on November 11. They were in No. 23 Studio Building, Tremont Street. He continued to exhibit the original plaster cast for the *Gladiator* there from 1861 to 1866. He then showed it at the National Academy of Design. For this history, see Anon., "National Academy of Design: West Room," *American Art Journal* 5 (June 14, 1866):116.

23 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 36–38; and Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 1:163–68. Inscribed in the front with merely the word "Stephen," it was probably always destined for Stephen Perkins.

24 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 36. Bartlett mistakenly says both works were casts and exhibited in London before being shown at the Salon. The *St. Stephen* alone was sent to London and placed in the studio of the illustrator E.H. Wehnert for comments, but it was somewhat hidden. For this, see Stephen Perkins' letter to Rimmer of November 15, 1862, Boston Medical Library. Perkins had plaster casts made abroad of *St. Stephen*, and one of these was the likely version sent. Weidman estimates that Perkins had eight plaster casts (lost or unlocated) of *St. Stephen* made in Florence (Weidman, *Rimmer, Critical Catalogue*, 1:168–72). Loison's repair of the gladiator cast is in Perkins' letter of October 3, 1862, to Rimmer. When the gladiator cast was sent later to Florence, it again had to be repaired (Perkins' letter of October 14, 1863).

All of Perkins' correspondence with Rimmer, 1860–1868, is at the Boston Medical Library and transcribed in Weidman, *Rimmer, Critical Catalogue*, 4:1279–1307.

25 For more, see Marcia Goldberg, "An American in Paris: William Rimmer's 'Falling Gladiator' in the Salon des Refusés," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* (November 1979), 6:175–82.

26 There was one mention of the *Gladiator* in a Salon review by the art historian and art critic Paul Mantz. He thought the refused sculptures were not particularly interesting except for the *Gladiator* by "docteur Rimmel (sic)." See his "Le Salon de 1863: Peinture et Sculpture," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* (July 1, 1863), 15:62.

27 Perkins' letter of November 15, 1862, to Rimmer. For evidence that Hiram Powers used a life cast for part of his *Greek Slave*, see Karen Lemmey, "From Skeleton to Skin: The Making of the Greek Slave(s)," *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide*, Summer 2016, online at *19thc-artworldwide.org/Summer16*. Tellingly, Powers noted that the mistake with regard to Rimmer using casts from a live model could be taken as a compliment. See him quoted in the pamphlet, Anon., "Opinions of Some Distinguished Artists and Connoisseurs in Reference to Dr. Rimmer's Works," 7, probably from 1864, Clipping Scrapbook, Boston Medical Library.

28 Perkins' letter of November 15, 1862, to Rimmer.

29 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 31, reports he used his own body. According to Bartlett, ibid., 124, this figure was meant to be "one of a series." On Rimmer's memory, see ibid., 129.

30 Anon., "Opinions," 5.

31 Rimmer inscribed his 1867 drawing, *Philip Preparing the Funeral of Pompey the Great* (Fogg Museum) with a reference to Plutarch. See John Langhorne and William Langhorne, *Plutarch's Lives, Translated from the Original Greek: With Notes, Critical and Historical; and a Life of Plutarch* (Baltimore: William and Joseph Neal, 1835), 217n.

32 Ibid., 382.

33 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 2. Kirstein seems to have been right in interpreting the statue as a "spiritual portrait of his father." See Kirstein, "Dr. Rimmer?" 118.

34 Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," Boston Medical Library, 203.

35 The original plaster cast is currently displayed with a Civil War connection on the basis of Goldberg, "Flight and Pursuit," 240. Her explanation (that it symbolizes the struggle) is based on the sculpture's timing, which was three months before Fort Sumter, and the fact that Rimmer did later make Civil War drawings of gladiators, such as *Secessia and Columbia*. But this makes the point that, when Rimmer referred to the Civil War, he was explicit. Secessia and Columbia wear helmets and clothing that characterize them. In contrast, a Gallic sword and nudity identify the *Falling Gladiator* with no reference to the Civil War.

36 I.B., "Studios," 722.

37 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 145, from 1867.

38 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 136. This page quotes French anonymously but repeats wording found in French's letters. The relevant section is in French's letter of February 14, 1916, to William H. Downes, Daniel Chester French Papers, Manuscript Department, Library of Congress. Bartlett also identifies his source as listening to lectures given in Worcester by Rimmer which fits French in 1871–1872. Rimmer too thought Canova's work imperfect because he was too mannered, strained too much for effect, and sacrificed beauty for action (Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 122).

39 John S. Crawford, "The Classical Tradition in American Sculpture: Structure and Surface," *American Art Journal* 11 (July 1979):49, https://doi.org/10.2307/1594165. Stephen Perkins' letter, November 7, 1861, to Hiram Powers, Hiram Powers Papers.

40 Edward R. Smith, "Dr. Rimmer," *The Architectural Record* 21 (March 1907): 197.

41 Perkins' letter of November 15, 1862, to Rimmer. Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 48, saw photographs (lost) of the *Chaldean Shepherd* and *Endymion*, but they were too "faded" to be reproduced.

42 Perkins' letter of June 3, 1863, to Rimmer.

43 Anon., "From Boston," *Springfield Weekly Republican* (Springfield, MA), July 18, 1863, 3.

44 Perkins' letter of October 14, 1863, to Rimmer.

45 Quote from Rimmer in Anon., "Art Instruction for Women — The Cooper Institute School of Design," an undated article in the Clipping Scrapbook, Boston Medical Library.

46 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 48, says they were exhibited and mentions the criticism as at the time of exhibition. Unfortunately, the Boston Athenaeum has no record of this. Their display must have been informal. On June 18, 1863, Perkins wrote to Rimmer, from perhaps what he had heard, that he hoped "[James Elliot] Cabot [would] put the Chaldean Shepherd before the public." Cabot was a Boston Athenaeum trustee. The Fine Arts Committee Report, January 4, 1864, 2–3 (Boston Athenaeum) mentions that Rimmer and his students used the cast collection in the past year.

47 Perkins' letter of January 10, 1864, to Rimmer.

48 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 48.

49 Perkins' letter of January 10, 1864, to Rimmer.

50 Ibid.

51 The early date, on hearsay, is in Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 6. Caroline, the probable source, was not always accurate.

52 See ibid., 24, for East Milton.

53 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 6. The shape and length of the nose and the shape of the forehead are different. Thomas Rimmer also did not have deeply sunken eyes and straight hair.

54 *Catalogue of Drawings, Paintings, and Sculpture by the late Dr. William Rimmer, on Exhibition and Private Sale, at J. Eastman Chase's Gallery* (Boston, 1883), no. 93. Microfilm at the New York Public Library or Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 4:1248. See the family references in Marcia Goldberg, "William Rimmer's Flight and Pursuit: An Allegory of Assassination," *Art Bulletin* 58 (June 1, 1976): 234n5, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00043079.1976.10787276.

55 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 6, mentions Rimmer in 1838 (at age 22) exhibiting unidentified gypsum figures at Colton's art-store in Boston.

56 Rimmer's intent with his facial expression is unclear. See his *Art Anatomy*, 54, where pain, grief, remorse, and melancholy have the same facial expression. Without Rimmer's input, it is not possible to pinpoint the precise feeling.

57 I am indebted to Dr. Patience H. White, specialist in rheumatology at George Washington University, for this deduction. The figure's vascularity is meant to be noticed. After Rimmer painted the piece, he removed paint over the protruding veins on the right arm to make them even more noticeable.

58 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 26. Bartlett thought Rimmer's move to live near the quarries was professionally foolish because the workers had hardly the means to pay him (24). Dr. Abel Kingman, Rimmer's mentor in medicine, also could not understand why Rimmer moved to East Milton to practice (18). The empathy expressed in this figure is a possible explanation.

59 Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 171. The character Stephen is speaking.

60 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 25.

61 Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 317–19. He also reflected on the unfairness of fate (9) and the load and misery of those in a "common life" (321).

62 See Gibson, writing in 1856, that other sculptors did not dare follow him, in T. Matthews, *The Biography of John Gibson, Sculptor, Rome* (London: Heinemann, 1911), 184.

63 On painted sculpture, see James Ferguson, *An Historical Inquiry into the True Principles of Beauty in Art, More Especially with Reference to Architecture* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1849), 416.

64 Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 55. Rimmer's sentiment reflects the period as it was a time of newly considering whether animals could feel emotion or pain. The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was founded in 1866.

65 On character, see Charles De Kay, *Barye: Life and Works of Antoine Louis Barye* … (New York: Barye Monument Association at New York, 1889), 2.

66 He tried to make "her head as melancholy and severe as possible," and yet it is hardly expressive. For this see William Wetmore Story's letter to Charles Eliot Norton, August 15, 1861, quoted in Henry James, *William Wetmore Story and His Friends, From Letters, Diaries, and Recollections* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1903), 2:71.

67 Marian Adams, *The Letters of Mrs. Henry Adams, 1865–1883*, edited by Ward Thoron (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1936), 94. Rimmer also criticized the ideal Greek head as having "little personality of expression." See his seventh lecture (1876) in Sidney Richard Burleigh's Sketchbook, Kirstein Papers, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

68 See her nose discussed in William J. Clark, *Great American Sculptures* (Philadelphia: Gebbie and Barrie, 1878), 92.

69 See Perkins' letter of October 22, 1865, to Rimmer in answer to his request for information on Story. He says Story avoided the challenge of any great artistic difficulties.

70 Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Marble Faun: or, The Romance of Monte Beni* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1860), 1:158. The lack of originality was a concern. See Edward Falkener, *Daedalus; or, The Causes and Principles of the Excellence of Greek Sculpture* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1860), 277, where imitation of ancient Greek sculpture is promoted and excused as "emulation" rather than copying.

71 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 48 (seven days and model), 136. The quote is part of a page attributable to French.

72 Perkins' letter of June 25, 1868, to Rimmer.

73 Anon., "Dr. Rimmer's Statues at the Cooper Institute Art School," *Watson's Art Journal*, February 29, 1868, 254.

74 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 48–49. Rimmer thought the human head too large, but he did like the legs. Possibly because the view is from below, the legs seem disproportionate in relation to the torso.

75 See "ideal" in Anon., "Art Items," *National Anti-Slavery Standard* (NYC), February 1, 1868, 3

76 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 48. Bartlett thought Rimmer made the two heads together as interchangeable, but there is no indication of this in the one surviving photograph or in Perkins' letter.

77 Anon. "Artistic Anatomy," ca. October 1866 (New York City newspaper unknown). For this, see Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 1:263.

78 See the first quote in Anon., "Art Gossip," *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* (February 29, 1868), 371. The second quote is from Anon., "Dr. Rimmer's Statues," 254.

79 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 49.

80 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 48. Rimmer exhibited the statues at either side of him in a classroom that also included a large drawing board and a skeleton. See Anon., "Artistic Anatomy," *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, February 24, 1866, 4.

81 Plutarch, *Plutarch's Morals*, translated from the Greek by several hands; revised by William W. Goodwin; with an introduction by Ralph Waldo Emerson (Boston: Little, Brown, 1871), 4:111.

82 Anon., "The National Academy of Design: Forty-First Annual Exhibition," *New-York Tribune*, July 4, 1866, 5.

83 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 39. Stephen Perkins, William R. Ware, and Col. Edward C. Cabot arranged for him to open a school in Boston in 1861.

84 Perkins' letter of June 25, 1868, to Rimmer. Perkins wanted him to compromise to some extent to succeed socially and financially.

85 See the repeated, undated journal entry in Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson, with Annotations*, edited by Edward Waldo Emerson and Waldo Emerson Forbes (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1914), 15:10, 30. The entries are near others dating from 1863 (5, 31).

86 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 59. On *Endymion*, mentioned as "colossal," see Anon., "Art Gossip," 371. The *Chaldean Shepherd* is described in February of 1868 in Anon., "Dr. Rimmer's Statues," 254, as "measuring the stars with his fingers, illustrating the birth of Astronomy." The reviewer thought it "possesses great merit." The *St. Stephen* is mistakenly cited (ibid., 254) as a work in granite, but the New York version is reported as a plaster cast in Anon., "Art Gossip," 371. Perkins had the granite original. The original, plaster *Falling Gladiator* was returned to the Rimmer family after the artist's death; the other plasters by Rimmer in New York (St. Stephen and Osiris) seem to have been destroyed. There are further sculptures mentioned as having been begun in New York — *Orpheus*, *David*, and *Prometheus* — that also disappeared or were misidentified. See Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 1:298.

A journalist reported that Rimmer "has been engaged by some gentleman in Italy [evidently Perkins] to undertake a nude figure, heroic size, of a *Chaldean Shepherd*, to be cut in marble and exhibited in Florence." See "Art," *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, February 15, 1868, 3. This, then, was the plan for the clay version at the time.

87 William W. Story, *The Proportions of the Human Figure, According to a New Canon, for Practical Use; with a Critical Notice of the Canon of Polycletus, and of the Principal Ancient and Modern Systems* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1866), 16.

88 Ibid., 17.

89 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 107. He objects here to all the proportional precedents that have been offered which includes Leonardo da Vinci's *Vitruvian Man* (Gallerie dell' Accademia, Venice) among others.

90 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 102.

91 Ibid., 48.

92 Anon., "The Cooper Academy of Design," *Harper's Weekly*, June 13, 1868, 12:371.

93 Thomas B. Thayer, *The Origin and History of the Doctrine of Endless Punishment* (Boston: James M. Usher, 1856), 88.

94 Ibid., 86–88.

95 Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 255. Rimmer was particularly aware of the flaw of judging too harshly. It was Phillip's weakness. He also asked: "What better are we for our punishments, how holier for our rewards; who can tell when we think of the endless future and the misery and trials that nature's self includes." See his "Stephen and Phillip," 105, 133 (quote).

96 Robert Knox, *A Manual of Artistic Anatomy, for the Use of Sculptors, Painters, and Amateurs* (London: H. Renshaw, 1852), 141.

97 Ibid., 164.

98 Ibid., 141, 171.

99 A missing bust of Mercury was in the 1880 Rimmer exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The lost *Ideal Bust in Plaster* is reproduced in Edward R. Smith, "Dr. Rimmer," 194. On their identification, as probably the same, see Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 1:390–92.

100 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 118. Students met in the sculpture room of the Boston Athenaeum for drawing classes with Rimmer in at least 1860, 1863 and 1864. An October 6, 1860, note of permission for Rimmer and his class is in the archive of the Boston Medical Library. His students visited independently as well to study photographs of works of art. See Ellen Tucker Emerson's letter of December 26, 1863, to Edith Emerson Forbes; and her letter of March 2, 1863, to Sarah Hopper Gibbons Emerson, Manuscript Department, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, MA. Also see Anon., "The Lowell Institute," *The Round Table, A Weekly Record of the Notable, the Useful, and the Tasteful* (March 5, 1864), 1:184, where Rimmer recently met "frequently" with students at the Athenaeum. The Fine Arts Committee's report for January 4, 1864, mentions that a class of his students was admitted to draw and more such visits might be possible in the future (Letter Collection, Boston Athenaeum). On admiration, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 102, 118.

101 For alphabet, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 119. Rimmer's criticism of copying is perhaps strongest in his report quoted within Anon., *The Ninth Annual Report of the Trustees of the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art*, July 1, 1868 (New York: G.A. Whitehorne, 1868), 17. See also Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 99 (quote), 135, 119, 143, and 104.

102 For original, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 92, 134. For without models, see ibid., 53.

103 Rimmer quote in Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 144.

104 On his teaching, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 40, 92–93. Rimmer's aversion to male erotic content was so strong that he habitually omitted the genitalia in male nude blackboard drawings. In protest, some of his female students drew "filthy and obscene" images on his blackboard, in various alcoves, and in the water closets. On this, see Rimmer's letter, March 8, 1870, to A.S. Hewitt, "Correspondence with or about Dr. William Rimmer," 1870–1873, box 4, Archives and Special Collections, Cooper Union Library, New York. Addressing rumors, Bartlett wrote that Rimmer objected to the use of a male nude in a female class, but such nudes were used in his absence (*Rimmer*, 118). Disapproving of Bartlett's comment, Caroline Rimmer wrote that her father required that all male models wear "trunk hose," or short trousers, in his classes (her annotated copy of Bartlett's book, p. 49, Robert Haskell Korndorffer Collection). According to information from French (a student in 1871–1872), nude models of both sexes were used in male classes, and nude females in mixed classes. On this, see Margaret French Cresson, *Journey into Fame: The Life of Daniel Chester French* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947), 55. In a later account from Boston, a visitor reported witnessing a large all-female class of students under Rimmer, drawing from a naked male model, wearing a mask. Unfortunately there is no date for this, but it might have occurred in about 1875. For this, see James Jackson Jarves, "A Sculptor's Complaint: Loose Management of an Art Committee," *New York Times*, December 27, 1880, 3.

105 See Bartlett reporting about a parent's complaint but not realizing that nudity occurred (*Rimmer*, 118). The controversy over naked models continued even to the end of Rimmer's life. The governing Permanent Committee of the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, was pleased to report on Rimmer's class in the spring of 1879 that "no inconvenience" was found with an advanced, "mixed" class studying from the living model because the model was "wearing swimming

drawers." See Permanent Committee Minutes, March 31, 1879, [p. 1], Archive of the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Tufts University, Medford, MA.

106 On accuracy, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 70. On theory, see Rimmer's offer to teach the "Principles of Art" in his letter of September 1, 1870, to A.S. Hewitt, Archives and Special Collections, Cooper Union Library, New York. See also Charles O. Thompson's letter of December 7, 1871, to "Dear Sir," regarding complaints in Worcester that Rimmer's evening class in drawing at the Free Industrial Drawing School was too "theoretical" (Archives and Special Collections, George C. Gordon Library, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Worcester, MA). On eye, see Ellen Tucker Emerson's letter of March 2, 1863, to Sarah Hopper Gibbons Emerson (Ellen Tucker Emerson Letters). See Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 143, for the second quote.

107 See Rimmer's explanation in Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 109–10.

108 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 76–77.

109 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 72. See ibid., 112, for more on Rimmer and naturalism.

110 Anon., "The National Academy of Design," 5.

111 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 45.

112 On hardship, see ibid., 45. Rimmer thought granite a more durable, and therefore preferable, medium for outdoor sculpture than marble or bronze. His choice of it over bronze was particularly controversial. For this, see "Sea Urchin," "From Boston," *New York Daily Tribune*, November 25, 1865, 10.

113 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 46. Cabot was Stephen Perkins' cousin. For this, see Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 3:793. Like Perkins, he was a friend..

114 See Kirstein, "Rimmer: His Life," 711. The main inscription describes Hamilton as "ORATOR, WRITER, SOLDIER, JURIST, FINANCIER. ALTHOUGH HIS PARTICULAR PROVINCE WAS TREASURY, HIS GENIUS PERVADED THE WHOLE ADMINISTRATION OF WASHINGTON." See Robert Winthrop's letter of advice in reply to Col. Henry Lee Jr. (Thomas had died in 1867), December 4, 1869, on the inscription, praising Hamilton's new financial system. Lee Family Papers, box 8, folder 12, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

115 Anon., *Presentation of the Statue of Alexander Hamilton to the City of Boston, by Thomas Lee* (Boston: Printed for the City Council, 1865), 9.

116 Hamilton's height was about five feet, seven inches. See Harry MacNeill Bland and Virginia W. Northcott, "The Life Portraits of Alexander Hamilton," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 12:2 (April 1955), 188.

117 James Dafforne, *The Sculpture Gallery: A Series of Eighty-One Engravings Accompanied with Descriptive Prose and Illustrative Poetry* (London: Virtue and Company [1859], p. [117].

118 Ilene D. Lieberman, "Sir Francis Chantrey's Monument to George Washington: Sculpture and Patronage in Post-Revolutionary America," *The Art Bulletin* 71 (June 1989): 265–66, 255, https://doi.org/10.2307/3051197.

119 Hamilton had a large head, just as Rimmer portrayed him. For this, see the plates in Bland and Northcott, "The Life Portraits," 187–98. Archibald Robertson's painted portrait of him (fig. 13) — in two versions (one unlocated) — has the same shirt ruffle as in Rimmer's statue and might have been a source. A flattering review of the statue as that of a "great man" is given in "Our New Statue," *Boston Daily Advertiser*, September 7, 1865, 2.

120 On family, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 46. On Lee, see Kirstein, "Rimmer: His Life," 712. See Stephen Perkins' letter of October 22, 1865, to Rimmer (Boston Medical Library).

121 Bartlett, "Dr. William Rimmer," 468. On indifference, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 47. The back shows the mantle draped over his left shoulder, falling in folds, and caught up in a bundle around his waist.

122 On detail and texture, see Peirce, *History of the School*, 54. Sharp edges, Rimmer's choice, excess material, and the quote are in Anon., "A Talk About Boston," *National Anti-Slavery Standard* (December 16, 1865), [4]. Chantrey also portrayed Washington with drapery falling behind, but Rimmer — who was further from the period referenced — featured

period clothing as part of his interpretation. Its use, although not unusual, is similar to Rimmer's exposure of Job's nakedness under Job's cloak in his repeated images of Job.

123 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 47; and Bartlett, "Dr. William Rimmer," 467.

124 The critic, William Howe Downes, ridiculed its indefiniteness as "a snow image which is partially melted." See his "Monuments and Statues in Boston," *New England Magazine* 11 (November 1894) New Series: 370.

125 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 124. Caleb H. Snow, *A History of Boston, the Metropolis of Massachusetts, from Its Origin to the Present Period; with Some Account of the Environs* (Boston: Abel Bowen, 1828), 32. The hills are described as like the head and shoulders of a man (ibid., 112).

126 Bartlett, "Dr. William Rimmer," 510.

127 Like many, John Ruskin linked mountains and hills to the muscular appearance of a man's body. See his *Modern Painters* (London: J.M. Dent and Co., [1860]), 2:3.

128 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 124.

129 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 46.

130 For her teaching and the quotes, see Mary Tyler Peabody Mann and Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, *Moral Culture of Infancy, and Kindergarten Guide* (Boston: T.O.H.P. Burnham, 1863), 50, 31n and 31.

131 Mary Mann's letter, November 7, 1865, to D.F. Sarmiento, Archive, Museo Historico Sarmiento, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

132 Elizabeth Peabody's letter, May 2, 1866, to D.F. Sarmiento, Archive, Museo Historico Sarmiento.

133 See the quote from Harriet Hosmer in Elizabeth Milroy, "The Public Career of Emma Stebbins: Work in Marble," *Archives of American Art Journal* 33:3 (1993), 10.

134 Mary Mann's letter, November 28, 1865, to D.F. Sarmiento, Archive, Museo Historico Sarmiento.

135 Milroy, "The Public Career," 4–5. On behalf of the Mann Memorial Committee, she would send the photograph.

136 Ibid., 10.

137 Rimmer probably did not know that Volk had patented his likeness of Lincoln in 1860. See Karen Lemmey on Volk in Marie-Stéphanie Delamire and Will Slauter, eds., *Circulation and Control: Artistic Culture and Intellectual Property in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, U.K.: Open Book Publishers, 2021), 389–90, https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0247. Volk's interpretations varied slightly with some heads of Lincoln more aged. Whether copying Volk in this respect or not, Rimmer seems to have preferred less realistic detail. As in this case, it is difficult to discuss his interpretation of the Mann bust with the source unknown.

138 Rimmer's originals were likely clay, like the missing portrait of Cooper, but they could have been plaster casts. On the marble busts, see Mary Mann's letter, March 7, 1867, to D.F. Sarmiento, Archive, Museo Historico Sarmiento. She explained that she had heard from the cutter's brother that there was a stain in the marble used for Mann so they had turned the head to diminish it, but she had not seen the bust before it was sent.

139 Elizabeth Peabody's letter, undated, to D.F. Sarmiento, Archive, Museo Historico Sarmiento. Because of Sarmiento's location, Barry L. Velleman, editor of a 2001 edition of Mary Mann's correspondence with Sarmiento, assigned the letter to 1867 (archive note). Sarmiento had been at the address on the envelope — 8 Clinton Place, New York — in May of 1865; on June 15, 1867 before sailing for Europe; and on August 1, 1867, before traveling in the U.S. Peabody describes Rimmer as director of the School of Design for Women at the Cooper Union, a position that began in October of 1866. The school year ran until the first of June.

140 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 107.

141 Ibid., 89. He also invented a mechanical means of counting people on streetcars and an unbreakable trunk.

142 Jarves, *Art-Hints*, 162–63.

143 Percy MacKaye, *Epoch: The Life of Steel MacKaye, Genius of the Theatre* (New York: Boni and Liveright [ca. 1927]), 1:122–23. The process of acquiring full rights was prolonged. Steel's father, Col. James M. McKaye (sic), re-negotiated the deal in Paris in 1867. See his letter to Steel, June 7, 1867, James Steel MacKaye Papers, Rauner Library, Dartmouth College, Hanover, N.H. Rimmer was not yet involved when Charles S.P. Bowles wrote to Steel MacKaye in Paris on July 18, 1866 (MacKaye Papers). The plan then was to present the process to the "American Directors," put some "wealthy men" in charge — with some skilled businessman as chief manager — and Steel would handle the invention and art end in a salaried position which would supplement his income from his father. Bowles thought the company would make $60,000 a year.

144 Rimmer is quoted in the 1866 pamphlet, [James Steel MacKaye], *Statuette of Gen'l U.S. Grant, by the New and Wonderful Process of Photosculpture*, n.d., MacKaye Papers. The date and authorship are given in Edwin Osgood Grover, ed., *Annals of an Era; Percy MacKaye and the MacKaye Family, 1826–1932; A Record of Biography and History, in Commentaries and Bibliography* (Washington, D.C.: The Pioneer Press, 1932), 366. See Steel MacKaye's letter of resignation to Rimmer, August 29, 1868, MacKaye Papers. See Rimmer in Anon., *Prospectus of the American Photo Sculpture Co. of New York City* (New York: Phair and Co., n.d.), [2], [18 quote], [17].

145 See Rimmer's letter to Henry G. McKaye [sic], August 7, 1868, mentioning that he had not yet read the *Prospectus*, MacKaye Papers. See Anon., *Prospectus*, [6]. Bartlett mistakenly thought Rimmer wrote the *Prospectus*. See Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 87.

146 Anon., *Prospectus*, [13]. His family was with him in New York as he mentions in a letter of April 4, 1870, to the Ladies of the Advisory Committee and the Trustees of the School of Design, Archives and Special Collections, Cooper Union Library, New York. Caroline Rimmer even won a silver medal as a student at the Cooper Union in 1870. Each summer, Rimmer returned to Chelsea, Massachusetts. See Anon., "Cooper Union," *New York Herald*, May 29, 1870, 6.

147 See Rimmer and Grant in [MacKaye], *Statuette of Gen'l U.S. Grant*, n.d., MacKaye Papers. On improvements, see MacKaye, *Epoch*, 124. See the description in *Prospectus*, [12–13] as follows. Twenty-four photographs were simultaneously obtained and then projected by a magic lantern onto paper or card where the lantern image was traced as an outline. The card was then fixed to a board with the upright axis of the figure parallel to the upright axis of the clay on the platform of the machine. Next a pantograph was used with one arm following the lines of the tracing on the card and the other containing a clay-saw or needle that was governed by the tracing arm. The figure was "cut by revolving the clay upon its axis (while tracing from the drawing), by degrees corresponding with the intervals of view between the photographs obtained." After the twenty-four tracings were cut, a sculptor finished the work.

148 MacKaye, *Epoch*, 124.

149 Rimmer's letter of August 7, 1868, to Henry G. McKaye [sic], MacKaye Papers. This seems to concern Rimmer's delay over the *Prospectus*. Part of it is illegible.

150 MacKaye, *Epoch*, 124–25. See also Steel MacKaye's letter of resignation to Rimmer, August 29, 1868, MacKaye Papers.

151 Steel MacKaye's letter to Rimmer, August 29, 1868, MacKaye Papers. Christian von Hesse's letter of February 2, 1871, to "Dear Sir," MacKaye Papers.

152 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 87–88.

153 See the undated clipping, "Art and Artists," in an extra-illustrated copy of Bartlett's *Rimmer*, p. 36, container 52, Paul Wayland Bartlett Papers, Library of Congress. Rimmer spoke of fixing what one sees on one's mind (Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 146) and working from it, but he occasionally used a model. For the centaur's back, he could have used the back of the YMCA gymnast Henry K. Bushnell, which he sketched repeatedly. For this, see James D' Wolf Lovett, *Old Boston Boys and the Games They Played* (Boston: Riverside Press, 1906), 108–09.

154 See Rimmer's use of a synecdoche in *Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn* (hourglass), *Horses at a Fountain* (paired dogs), *Victory* (modified trefoil), and *Interior / Before the Picture* (Venus and Vulcan). The centaur's right arm is mended (date of repair unknown) so that a faint, horizontal seam is visible.

155 On the centaur, see James Hall, *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art*, revised and edited with introduction by Kenneth Clark (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 61. His inner struggle is clarified in George Ferguson, *Signs and Symbols in*

Christian Art: With Illustrations from Paintings of the Renaissance (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), 14. On self-expression, see Rimmer's letter, October 19, 1862, to Botta, Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, MA; and Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 119.

156 French quoted anonymously in Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 136. The unidentified student, who heard Rimmer lecture in Worcester, perfectly fits French who was his "special pupil" at the time (1871–1872). The student also closely paraphrases French's letter of February 14, 1916, to William H. Downes, French Family Papers, box 3, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. For instance, that particular quote is repeated in the letter.

157 Peirce, *History of the School*, 54. Rimmer's achievement can perhaps best be seen in contrast to contemporary work such as the centaur in Barye's bronze *Theseus Fighting the Centaur Bianor* (1849–ca.1867, Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC) which does not have the naturalistic, organic quality of Rimmer's more-believable creation.

158 The date is based on French's letter of February 14, 1916, to Downes. He mentions that Rimmer had already created *Fighting Lions* when he (French) became his student which was in 1871. Verifying the timing of his instruction, there is also an unlocated bust of a deceased young woman, Mary Fay, that French created with some help from Rimmer in the "Winter of '71 & '72," as it is inscribed. See Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 1:376 and 1:381n2. On lost, see note 175 below.

159 On bronze copies, see chapter seven. For the quote, see Anon., "Fine Arts," *Sunday Herald* (Boston), ca. 1870, Clipping Scrapbook, Boston Medical Library. See Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 1:357, for newspaper identification of the undated clipping. Weidman mistakenly calls the Scrapbook the Commonplace Book.

160 For the stump, see Nicolai Cikovsky Jr., "'The Ravages of the Axe:' The Meaning of the Tree Stump in Nineteenth Century American Art," *The Art Bulletin* 61 (December 1979): 626, https://doi.org/10.2307/3049941. Rimmer's stump has stunted limbs which also must have significance.

161 See Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 153, where a serpent and lion fight in a battle over the universe; 155–56, where a huge ape (vice) and lion (virtue) fight for mastery of humanity; 239–41, where Stephen as a dragon fights an evil sea monster. There is a pattern of epic, symbolic battles and easy transformation between humans and animals.

162 Her speech, "A Slave's Appeal," was first given in Albany, N.Y., and then two days later at the Cooper Union. See Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, ed., *Man Cannot Speak for Her, Volume II: Key Texts of the Early Feminists* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1989), 170, 167.

163 Usually the meeting rooms at the Cooper Union had to be rented, but Peter Cooper paid for the hall occasionally for charitable purposes, such as in the case of the Working Women's Association. See Vincent Colyer, "The Cooper Union," *New York Tribune*, November 17, 1868, 2. According to newspapers, the Working Woman's Association met there on December 19, 1868, and February 25, 1869. This is just a sample of the role played in social causes by the Cooper Union.

164 Anon., "Women's Rights," *The Daily Dramatic Chronicle* (San Francisco), June 11, 1868, 2. The article speaks of ridicule of this meeting by men.

165 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 54–56 (quote), in response to Anon., "Fine Arts. The Cooper Institute Schools of Design, Male and Female Departments," *New-York Tribune*, 4. The author is Cook who was the newspaper's art critic.

166 Extract from the *Seventh Annual Report of the Trustees of the Cooper Union for the Enhancement of Science and Art*, July 1, 1866, Research File: Cooper Union, Kirstein and Nutt Research Material, Archives of American Art. This was the expectation when Rimmer became director.

167 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 54. As in the case of Cook, the criticism repeatedly of Rimmer at the Cooper Union was that he dispensed with amateur classes and taught on too high a level with his lectures on art principles. The Cooper Union was meant to teach industrial art skills that served a practical purpose. See April F. Masten, "The Work of Art: American Women Artists and Market Democracy, 1820–1880" (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 1999), 194–203.

168 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 54–55.

169 See Ishbel Ross, *Crusades and Crinolines: The Life and Times of Ellen Curtis Demorest and William Jennings Demorest* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 86, on the Cooper Union. Peter Cooper was a "good friend" (179) of the Demorests. The staff writer, Jane C. Croly, was especially adamant that women "had a right to work" (55). For the quote, see p. 154. Rimmer's preliminary drawing, *Soldiers* (fig. 136), is on the reverse of the January 1872 magazine cover for *Demorest's Illustrated Monthly*.

170 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 42. Rimmer's defence of female artists was paraphrased in *The Revolution*, a New York journal edited by feminist Susan B. Anthony. See "The Women's School of Design," *The Revolution*, June 10, 1869, p. 364. She commented on Rimmer's teaching in a number of issues, including that for May 27, 1869, where she reported that he took a class of young women to Staten Island to sketch scenery (327).

171 See Bartlett, *Rimmer*, for exclusion, 43; for circular, 54. The circular was sent to New York publishers from Rimmer, advertising the fact that the Cooper Union students in engraving had superior skills. Relatedly, Henry T. Tuckerman cited Rimmer's benevolent work for "poor women." See his *Book of the Artists: American Artist Life* [etc] (New York: G.P. Putnam and Son, 1867), 13.

172 Anon., "Art Notes," *New York Herald*, March 10, 1868, 7.

173 See Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 142, 54 (quote). Rimmer's protective response toward women comes across in his self-titled drawing, *A Border Family* (Fogg Museum), showing an armed father embracing two daughters as he prepares to defend them against an 1862 guerilla raid on the Kansas-Missouri border. By swathing the man and his daughters in a large robe so their clothing is not revealed, he universalizes the content — the father's feeling.

174 His salary at the Cooper Union was consistently $500 a month for the eight months of the 1868 school year, October through May. No extra expenses were noted for an added class in March. See Cash Journal B, volume 4 (1867–1874), Archives and Special Collections, Cooper Union Library, New York.

175 For the quote, see Anon, "Fine Arts" (Clipping Scrapbook, Boston Medical Library), akin to French's appreciation in Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 136. Eventually Rimmer presented it to the Boston Art Club. He had been a member of the club from 1862 to 1866; he rejoined (year unknown) after returning from New York in 1870; and he donated the sculpture sometime thereafter, possibly when it appeared in the annual club exhibition of 1876. For this, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 94–95; and Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 1:363–64. Unfortunately, the early club records do not survive; the piece was deaccessioned sometime between 1947 and 1950. Letter to the author from John Curuby, president of the Boston Art Club, June 5, 2018.

176 It refers to the king's ascension to the throne under the constellations of Leo and Hydra, the lion and the sea serpent. See Glenn F. Benge, *Antoine-Louis Barye, Sculptor of Romantic Realism* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1984), 34–37.

177 On Barye, see Helen M. Knowlton, *Art-Life of William Morris Hunt* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1899), 70.

178 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 87.

179 Ibid., 87, for the design, photograph (taken without Rimmer's knowledge) and payment. On changes, see James F. O'Gorman, *Accomplished in All Departments of Art: Hammatt Billings of Boston, 1818–1874* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 205.

180 See Rimmer's 1876 "Ninth Lecture" where he recommends the use of clinging drapery in painting (Burleigh Sketchbook, n.p., Kirstein Papers, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts).

181 For the second sculptor, Edward Perry, and granite carver, Joseph Archie, see O'Gorman, *Accomplished*, 205.

182 For regret, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 87. Anon., "Fine Arts," *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 19, 1875, 5.

183 Perkins' letter of June 25, 1868, to Rimmer. This is a Romantic ideal, to create not for money but — more nobly — for the pleasure of creating. See Erika Schneider, *The Representation of the Struggling Artist in America, 1800–1865* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2015), 29.

184 The influential John Ruskin also mentions creation for its own sake as a desirable motive. See his *The Works of John Ruskin* (New York: T. Y. Crowell and Co. [1851]), 13:348.

185 Perkins' letter of December 23, 1868, to Rimmer.

186 Rimmer copied Michelangelo's figure but changed Adam's right arm and the direction of Adam's head in a surviving drawing, *Reclining Male Nude*, in drypoint and pencil (Boston Medical Library). He also mentioned Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam* in an 1876 class (Ninth Lecture, Burleigh Sketchbook, Kirstein Papers, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts).

187 For his combined use of soul and spirit, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 109. That Rimmer thought in these terms is suggested by his mention of "unconscious matter ... quickened into life" ("Stephen and Phillip," 21). The torso can be associated as well with Michelangelo's unfinished prisoners or slaves (Accademia Gallery, Florence) in which animated form comes out of the inanimate, as in the *Awakening Slave*. Swedenborg speaks of what is infused as the "vital spirit" and then "divine spirit," but an anonymous translator points out that he calls it a "soul" elsewhere. See Emanuel Swedenborg, *On the Worship and Love of God; Treating the Birth of the Earth, of Paradise, and of Living Creatures, also of the Nativity, the Infancy, and the Love of the First-Begotten, or Adam* (Boston: J. Allen, 1832), 49n–50n. Rimmer also apparently followed convention in representing the soul symbolically as a butterfly. See his oil painting, *Cupid with Butterfly* (Alfred T. Morris Jr.), in which a mid-air, baby Cupid reaches out to capture a butterfly. This refers to the lovers Cupid and Psyche and shows love (Cupid) capturing the soul (Psyche in Greek).

188 See Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 71: Rimmer drew "Illissus" (sic) from memory in front of his class and praised the sculpture for its "truth to nature."

189 Rimmer undoubtedly knew that the Laocoön, once thought to be Greek, is a Roman copy. See the influential determination, first published in 1766, by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laocoon: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, tr. by E.C. Beasley, with introd. by the Rev. T. Burbidge (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans [etc.], 1853, 192–93.

190 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 110 (quote).

191 Ibid., 114.

192 He was referring to the *Belvedere Torso* as a "disembodied Hercules." See Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 72.

193 Smith, "Dr. Rimmer," 201.

194 That the *Gladiator* was necessarily a creation of the imagination was noted in S.G.W. Benjamin, *Art in America, A Critical and Historical Sketch* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1880), 163. Bartlett overlooked the importance of this point.

195 Anon., *The Ninth Annual Report of the Trustees of the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, July 1, 1868* (New York: G.A. Whitehorne, 1868), 19. In 1867, he taught art anatomy of humans and animals; drawing; sculpture; crayon portraits; botany as related to art; composition; and use of light and shade. Aside from teaching women, he taught an evening drawing class for men. See Anon., "The Cooper Union," *New York Tribune*, May 31, 1867, 8. Except for William James Linton in wood engraving, Rimmer was the sole art instructor at the School of Design for Women. On this, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 61.

196 For "creative design," see Anon., *Museum of Fine Arts. School of Design and Painting. Third Annual Report of the Permanent Committee in Charge of the School* (Boston: Alfred Mudge and Son, 1879), 12. The other quotes are from Anon., *Museum of Fine Arts. School of Design and Painting. Second Annual Report of the Permanent Committee in Charge of the School* (Boston: Alfred Mudge and Son, 1878), 8.

197 Anon., *Museum of Fine Arts* (1878), 8.

6. Visionary Depictions

Whenever William Rimmer drew landscapes, they were typically pencil sketches of places he had visited, such as the Flume Gorge in New Hampshire or the Wellfleet shoreline on Cape Cod (Fogg Museum). With the exception of small landscapes in oil (lost) that were commissioned for a couple of dollars when he was young, these pieces were little more than easily portable mementos.[1] Thus, from what is known, *English Hunting Scene* (fig. 117) deserves attention — just on the basis of size — as a potentially unique undertaking.[2] Not only signed but also dated, it was completed in Boston in 1871, where Rimmer had opened an art-anatomy school after his return from New York the year before.[3] Although it is by far the largest of Rimmer's known pictures, there is no indication that it was ever intended for public exhibition or for sale. Instead, it seems to have been meant for private viewing in Rimmer's home. Some thirty years later or sometime before 1910, his descendants sold the painting — which had still not been exhibited — outside of the family.[4] The new owners called it a "medieval hunting scene," but, by the time it appeared in the 1946 Rimmer exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art, it had acquired the title, *English Hunting Landscape*, which is a misidentification.[5] The real subject is definitely not a hunt scene.

When completed, the painting had the potential to attract interest as a colorful, springtime landscape with budding foreground plants, centuries-old ruins, medieval-appearing characters like those in historical novels, and the unifying tonality of a warm sunset. The foreground is richly dark — recalling Rembrandt's biblical scenes — which adds an air of mystery to an otherwise happy mood. To create this effect of a lustrous, deep brown-black, Rimmer added bitumen to his oil paint in the darker sections.[6] Also contributing to the original beauty of the piece, the softened color throughout conveys a sense of atmosphere, and the pigments are harmonized by a repetition of shades of green and orange. The one accent is the stronger reddish hue on the pointing man's cape at lower right.

Nonetheless, this is not an ordinary scene. By including two women at the right in present-day costume, a sixteenth-century or Tudor interaction in the center, and a distant modern, railroad-truss bridge, the picture is quite inconsistent temporally, which calls attention to the point being made. Beyond the shadowy foreground, it reveals the eternal presence of the past. It reflects Rimmer's belief, reinforced by séance experiences, in an afterlife — where one retains one's identity — and in the related, omnipresent reality of a spirit world.[7] The occasion shown is a learning opportunity for the young women — evidently his daughters, Adeline and Caroline — who are accompanied by an imaginatively dressed spirit guide from the world of the past.[8]

As a landscape, the picture is remarkably original. Unlike possible precedents, it is not a scene of visitors to purgatory or heaven or even to a specific location, such as a ruined European abbey or the Roman Forum in Italy.[9] It is perhaps visually closest to Thomas Cole's 1838 paired paintings, *The Past* (fig. 118) and *The Present* (fig. 119), in which the first shows a medieval castle in its heyday, at the time of a grand tournament with jousting knights on horseback. The second picture provides the same view, but centuries later, so that the castle is now an abandoned ruin, overgrown by nature and contemplated by a lowly goat herder. As in this pendant, Rimmer amalgamates past and present in one scene, but as a temporal impossibility. His past is still current through the inclusion of spirits of the dead.

There is also a resemblance to the joining of past and present in American artist Thomas Moran's 1858 *Haunted House* (fig. 120). But the connection would be closer if the indistinct figure in blue at right center, approaching the multi-tiered ruin, were unquestionably a ghost. In Moran's case, the status of this person is unclear, but usually presumed to be living.[10]

https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0304.06

Fig. 117 *English Hunting Scene,* 1871. Oil on canvas mounted on wallboard, 47 7/8 x 72 1/4 in. (121.6 x 183.51 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Bequest of David M. Davis.
Photograph © 2022 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Fig. 118 Thomas Cole, *The Past*, 1838. Oil on canvas, 40 ½ x 60 ½ in. (102.9 x 153.7 cm). Mead Art Museum, Amherst College. © Mead Art Museum / Bridgeman Images

Fig. 119 Thomas Cole, *The Present*, 1838. Oil on canvas, 40 ¾ x 61 5/8 in. (103.5 x 156.5 cm). Mead Art Museum, Amherst College. © Mead Art Museum / Bridgeman Images

Moran's scene has been considered a loose interpretation of the eerie, haunted house in a well-known literary source, Edgar Allan Poe's 1839 *The Fall of the House of Usher*.[11] Although pictures by professional artists of ghosts and haunted places were almost non-existent, the exception was book illustration. Several American authors during Rimmer's lifetime — such as Poe, Washington Irving and Nathaniel Hawthorne — produced popular ghost stories that offered opportunities for illustration. But what these tales have in common is a frightening or terrifying situation which is unlike Rimmer's display of apparent contentedness.

Another American artist, George Inness, resembled Rimmer in being a Swedenborg follower whose work was affected by his belief. But he confined himself to landscape and worked from nature with a quite different result.

Fig. 120 Thomas Moran, *Haunted House*, 1858. Oil on canvas, 34 x 28 in. (86.4 x 71.1 cm). Image Courtesy of Sotheby's, New York (2020)

He preferred to paint a "civilized landscape" (such as cultivated fields rather than the pristine wilderness) because the effect he sought included a reference to man.[12] From the mid-1860s on, his blurry landscapes with a lone figure and mysterious lighting can be more evocative than earlier of an unseen, spiritual presence. Indeed, his deliberate mystification brings Rimmer to mind, but there is never a haunted building or inclusion of an actual spirit. Inness was like a number of other American artists of the period in revealing religion through nature, but, unlike all of them, Rimmer elaborated on an afterlife experience that was personal.

Rimmer was not only a Swedenborgian but also — in defiance of Swedenborg — a Spiritualist who (inspired by Swedenborg) had his own visions and his own communications with the dead. These seem to have included manic hallucinations.[13] He wrote in his narrative, "Stephen and Phillip," of the sensation of his spirit "wandering through infinity, time, space, and matter, scarce anchored to the world by the weight of fleshly sense."[14] As is plain from this manuscript, it was not unusual for him to speak to angels or to see demons. He even reported feeling a passing sensation of God inhabiting his body. More relevant to the picture, he spoke, in visions, to those he loved who had died.[15] According to Spiritualist belief, he could see these beings through an inner sight, the vision of his spirit.[16]

Taking an unorthodox path that was fashionable in the mid-nineteenth century, he joined others in trying to connect with deceased friends and relatives through a spirit medium who claimed to be able to contact the dead. In arranged séances with participants in a darkened room, usually seated around a table or in a circle, the medium took questions to be relayed to a specific dead person either directly or through an intermediary spirit guide from the world beyond. Answers were typically funneled back to the questioner through the medium who held special status as someone chosen and empowered by spirits.[17] The medium might even, in a trance state, be possessed by the particular spirit called upon (such as a deceased relative) and speak for that spirit.[18] Eventually the whole Rimmer family became Spiritualists and habitually used slate chalkboards that a spirit medium would bind together and then untied to reveal a spirit's written response on one of the boards.[19]

Rimmer's involvement with séances is understandable. He had lost his mother before his marriage and his father when he was thirty-six, but, more unusually, five out of eight of his children died as babies, despite his probable ministrations as a physician. Without doubt, he would have wanted to learn about their welfare. An additional incentive to attend séances would have been to ask the question of spirits who might know, such as Napoleon's generals, whether Louis XVI's son survived. It is a famous question that other interested parties were known to pose in these sessions.[20] But, to Rimmer, as the eldest son of the supposed heir, it would have had unique consequence.

After participating in séances, Rimmer acted as a medium himself on at least one occasion when he labored to obtain a message from Abel Kingman, the dead father of his friend, Dr. Kingman, who had been his mentor in studying medicine. Rimmer took a pencil, held it high in the air, and let it descend to the table to write. Apparently he intended to engage in psychography where he would totally relax his hand (as if in a trance) and the pencil he held would write by itself under the control of the spirit of the dead man. But the resultant writing made no sense. Kingman told Rimmer so and realized, from Rimmer's reaction, that he had hurt his pride by seeming ridicule.[21]

Not just Rimmer's family but also others thought of the artist as psychic, which might have been a reason to ask him to sculpt or paint pictures of the dead.[22] One known case is his commission to create a bust of a daughter who had recently died. Rimmer confessed in his missing diary that, although he had been paid well, he did not consider the portrait (lost) entirely successful. Surprisingly, he added that, if it had been better, it would have been entirely due to the participation of the deceased sitter.[23] This suggests that the result could have been spirit art, based on a vision of her that she provided. Whether this was a supernatural visitation or a mania-induced hallucination is not something that can be determined.[24] Whatever the circumstance, Rimmer thought he was acting as an intermediary between worlds.

Exactly when Rimmer became a Spiritualist is not known. He experienced a paranormal event when he was visited by his sister's spirit just before she died, but that was not the beginning of his involvement.[25] Jane Rimmer's death occurred in 1866, and Rimmer had been associated with Spiritualism from at least as early as 1855 when he made his living as a physician. Fortunately, a census record for that year provides some insight by showing that the Spiritualist Louisa P. Hunt lived with him then as either a boarder or guest. After she died a year later, her gravestone in Quincy employed a peculiarly Spiritualist phrase in referring to her death as the moment when she "left the form," or left her materialized existence.[26] At least this early, Rimmer very likely shared her belief in communication with the dead.

Apparently, the Rimmer family sold *English Hunting Scene* without any valid explanation of the people shown. Despite the somewhat fanciful costuming, the picture has enough Tudor touches — such as the feathered hats — to pass as an English sixteenth-century genre scene.[27] It opens to a relatively flat, grassy expanse, with a hill to the left and the beginning of a sunset in the sky. At the left of center, two female equestrians, riding side saddle, are engaged in conversation while their male companion, riding next to them, gestures toward a towering, overgrown ruin that was once part of a grand estate. If he is hailing the man on the caparisoned horse (which is wrong for a hunt) that person would be expected to react, but he stares straight ahead as if unaware of the presence of anyone else. Perhaps he envisions a tournament. Dogs are present as would be appropriate in a fox hunt — but only two — and no hunting horn. To add to the puzzle of this presentation, two helmeted soldiers advance on the supposed hunter as if he were not there.

Despite the spindly, semi-transparent figures to the left and right in the background, there is not much indication that this painting could contain ghosts. From the emphasis on the full-bodied figures, it is no wonder that the subject was misidentified. Most people thought that ghosts — if they were not totally invisible — were at least transparent, just as the English author Charles Dickens described them in his widely read 1843 tale, *A Christmas Carol*.[28] Their defining transparency was the reason the Boston photographer, William Mumler, could fool customers in the 1860s — some of whom were Spiritualists — into thinking his multiple-exposure photographs caught the image of spirits hovering near his sitters (fig. 121).[29]

Fig. 121 William H. Mumler, *Unidentified Man with a Long Beard Seated with Three "Spirits,"* 1861–78. Albumen silver print, 3 7/8 x 2 3/16 in. (9.8 x 5.6 cm). Getty Museum Collection. https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/107N9D

Despite such assumptions, according to Spiritualists, spirits can take various forms. Thus, the abbreviated ghosts in the background could be disembodied spirits, free of material encumbrance as they haunt the ruins on either side. But the life-like ghosts closer to the foreground are visible three-dimensionally because they wish to be.[30] According to the Boston Spiritualist newspaper, *Banner of Light*, when a spirit was asked how his kind could materialize themselves, he replied that they "hitch on" to a place and then "will" themselves into a full-bodied existence.[31]

After much study, the English Spiritualist, Catherine Crowe, became perhaps the most well-known authority on the phenomenon of visible ghosts. She wrote in 1853 that the spirit of a deceased person, if returned to Earth, tended to repeat the acts of that person's life or at least "simulate a repetition of them."[32] This might be what is happening with the figures on horseback or walking near the so-called hunter who is probably a local lord near the remains of his manor. These people undoubtedly rode or walked through that area before.

The supposed hunting scene is not only the result of séances. Rimmer also had a fondness for the Middle Ages and the subsequent Tudor period. This is revealed in earlier pictures, such as *Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn*, and in his narrative, "Stephen and Phillip," which includes a tragic story of medieval lovers who are star-crossed because of their class difference.[33] In his story, a young woman, who is a poverty-stricken serf, has fallen in love with a wealthy boy who courted her since their childhood but has grown up to become a knight, leaving her far behind. The tale is an empathetic portrayal, in Rimmer's words, of "serfdom" during a time of "feudal tyranny."[34] His sensitivity to the issue of class is a reason to identify the more active, distant and vapory spirits (fig. 122) as serfs who choose to remain separate and stay among themselves.[35]

Any spirit, as Crowe confirmed, appears as she or he prefers (including clothed or unclothed) and can be visibly distinct according to the receptivity of the viewer. This explains the physical difference in spirits. Furthermore, the spirits might not see viewers, just as the onlookers might not see them.[36] In the painting, the spirits do not seem to be aware of the red-caped spirit guide or Rimmer's daughters who are symbolically separated from the mundane world by a low wall. As the two women are on the inside, their eyes are figuratively unveiled.

Rather than observing the past, Rimmer's daughters are witnessing the spirit world that is eternally present. Its representatives are traversing a common piece of turf, so they are related spatially but not necessarily temporally. That is, they are locked into the time when they were alive in that space, and they might interact within a group that was present then but not see the other spirits who are present now. This certainly comes out of séances where spirits from different periods in time can be called into the present.

Fig. 122 *English Hunting Scene* (detail), 1871

Relatedly, Rimmer was attuned to the possibility of suggesting time differences within one space. Dr. Kingman said he and Rimmer would talk about "powers of observation, perception," and "the internal recognition of things," that might not be seen.[37] As already noted, a clairvoyant might see a ghost repeating actions. But Rimmer's co-Spiritualists also believed that a person could leave a psychic residue in an occupied place as if part of that person was left behind, and a clairvoyant could see the person as still there.[38] This is similar to the situation in Rimmer's *Interior / Before the Picture* where the pale furniture, as if containing residue, is a symbol of an invisible presence. It is also the basis for the curious inclusion of Cupid twice in *Morning: Venus and Cupid* (fig. 123). The penciled rendition of Cupid asleep is slightly paler (as if in the past) than his duplicate, standing nearby as he greets his mother. As unusual as it is, this double imagery within one scene conveys a time lapse.[39]

Fig. 123 *Morning: Venus and Cupid*, 1869. Red crayon over graphite within a printed oval mount, 18 1/16 x 12 7/8 in. (45.8 x 32.7 cm). Harvard Art Museums / Fogg Museum. Gift of Mrs. Henry Simonds. Photo © President and Fellows of Harvard College

Akin to this is Rimmer's drawing, after an Aesop fable, *Lion and Mouse* (fig. 124). The story begins with a confused mouse that infuriated a sleeping lion by accidentally running across his nose. When the lion captured her, she begged to be let free, claiming that someday she would definitely repay him. As it happened, he did release her and she did repay him by freeing him from a hunter's net. Rimmer shows the mouse twice: dangling from the lion's mouth (legs and tail visible) and then speaking in front of him. This richness of invention might be expected of Rimmer, but he has gone further in suggesting not just a time lapse but movement as well. He went over the drawing of the lion with increased pressure on his pencil as he repeatedly sketched the lion's right leg, chest, and tail, implying shifts in position by leaving disparate outlines. The disheveled mane, sprouting in different directions, seems to move as well. Surely, this illusion of movement to the point of vibration is a means of expressing the intensity of the lion's irritation — his perfect fury. Rimmer's interest in ways of portraying sequential timing, as in the repeated mouse, reappears a year later — but in the subtle overlay of unrelated or unseeing spirits — in *English Hunting Scene*.

Fig. 124 *Lion and Mouse*, 1871. Graphite on pink paper, 14 5/8 x 11 7/8 in. (37.1 x 30.2 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Apart from the ghosts, the scene is about Rimmer's daughters experiencing a vision or an epiphany that is not available to everyone. The fact of a vision is actually a theme in Rimmer's artwork, exemplified even in his sculpture of St. Stephen. The artist seemed to be fascinated by break-through views to a spirit world that he knew to exist because, as he believed, he had seen and visited it himself. Indeed, the supernatural world he depicted went beyond the Spiritualist preoccupation with the dead to include angels, devils, and fairy-like beings from another realm.

Several visionary scenes by Rimmer, concerning the presence of spirits on Earth, survive. The earliest are drawings, *The Midnight Ride* (fig. 125) and *The Demon Feast* (fig. 126), from probably the late 1840s.[40] They illustrate an original poem — "The Midnight Ride, A Tale" — by Rimmer from likely the same time and now

bound with them in a commonplace book. His daughter, Caroline, mistakenly gave both drawings and the poem a date of 1830, when Rimmer would have been fourteen.[41] But this date is not believable, primarily because the poem is written about the anguish of a father who is certainly metaphorically himself.

Fig. 125 *The Midnight Ride*, late 1840s. Graphite on paper, 6 x 7 ½ in. (15.27 x 19.08 cm). Rimmer Commonplace Book. Boston Medical Library, William Rimmer Collection

Fig. 126 *The Demon Feast*, late 1840s. Graphite on paper, 6 x 7 ½ in. (15.27 x 19.08 cm). Rimmer Commonplace Book. Boston Medical Library, William Rimmer Collection

As the first drawing shows, the father (in medieval dress) hugs his young son protectively as he races on horseback through an onslaught of devils toward a Christian haven but — early on — passes a cross and burial ground on the way. It seems to be a symbolic portrayal of Rimmer's need to protect his infant sons, three of whom died between 1841 and 1847 before any daughters were born.[42]

The second drawing illustrates part of the last half of the poem when hideous, hybrid creatures — "alive — rotten — and dead" — dance and threaten the riders. Among them are an "infant blazing" (naked and strapped to a tall, burning pole), an ape, a "blue imp," a "monster child," and a bat of "horrid size" with "demon eyes" (at right). Through it all, the child's constant praying — at the father's urging — and the father's determination are what saves them both. The poem ends with praise of the saints and the "Blessed Virgin," of whom there is also a drawing, which might suggest a date before the anti-Catholic influence of Swedenborg.[43]

Given his interests, Rimmer must have created other, now-missing images that were inspired by similar imaginings. As a grandniece reported about artwork by Rimmer and his daughter Caroline, the family had a "mania… to always destroy any thing that was criticized or not satisfactory" to themselves.[44] From this reaction, it is quite likely that any ecstatic creation or odd-seeming work that Rimmer produced under the influence of a powerful vision would have been destroyed. Either he would have done the censoring or a family member would after his death. That is, the otherworldly fantasies and horrifying monster descriptions in "Stephen and Phillip" are almost without a visual counterpart, but that counterpart once existed.[45]

Proof of this assertion can be found in a conservator's photograph of *Sleeping* (fig. 127) that documents the presence of a predatory monster at the far right, beneath a layer of over-paint.[46] This snouted creature, seeming to exude evil, stares fixedly at the naked child, with gleaming eyes, an open mouth, and implied sexual interest. In her sleep, the girl's face is not expressive of anything unpleasant which means that the intruder is not a projection of her thoughts — not a nightmare. Rather, this dark figure calls to mind a threatening demonic spirit and resembles the bear, dancing with a young girl, at mid-lower left in *The Demon Feast* (fig. 126). In the context of Rimmer's work, the added demon implies that the picture is a meditative juxtaposition of inborn innocence and its violation or corruption.

Fig. 127 *Sleeping* (under conservation), ca. 1878. William Suhr Papers, Getty Research Institute. Courtesy of the Getty Research Institute

Other exceptions to the relatively mild work that survives are two disturbing female heads on academy board that Rimmer created from his imagination and possibly remembrance of nightmares: *Head of a Young Woman* (fig. 128) and *Young Woman* (fig. 129). Their faces express their reaction to unseen spirits or, in the second case, perhaps the "eyes of demons watching." This is how Rimmer described the cause of a terror he felt in "Stephen and Phillip."[47] Another relevant passage in the same text is his questioning of what is hidden by night but might be present: "What opposite reality is there in the sphere of darkness that puts the soul in its gloom to such wild imaginings, quickening its fears; confusing its thoughts, and setting it to groping with its sensibility for unseen powers, angels and demons, and warnings [...] and all the unfathomable beings and circumstances of another world?"[48] This opposite reality is what these women appear to experience.

Fig. 128 *Head of a Young Woman*, 1866 and 1867. Oil on academy board, 17 x 14 in. (43.20 x 35.55 cm). Unlocated. Courtesy of Richard Salisbury Nutt

The *Head of a Young Woman* (fig. 128) either evolved over a span of two years or was once incorrectly dated. It is reportedly dated twice: "1867" on the front and "1866" on the reverse, where it is also inscribed as having been painted in Chelsea, Massachusetts. Although the picture has not been publicly seen or located since 1947, two black and white photographs of it and a limited description survive. As recorded, she is shown against a "greenish brown" background with brunette hair, brown eyes, and golden, impastoed ornamentation at the neck of her garment.[49] Most notably, her eyes are extraordinarily large with a wild, haunted look — suggesting that she is possessed.[50] Fortunately, the earlier photograph preserves the painting's original state which included a thickly impastoed, white streak at the upper left corner.[51] Its insertion, which was removed in the twentieth century, gives the picture singular meaning. In his manuscript, Rimmer described a spirit more than once as being able to assume the form of a "vapor mist or small cloud."[52] Strange as it may seem, this indicates that the woman is accompanied by a spirit, and it is potentially in control.

The second painting, *Young Woman* (fig. 129) — dated a year later in 1868 — is similar but more expressive of anxiety, as the woman looks over her shoulder as if conscious of being followed. She has the same enlarged, soulful eyes as her predecessor and wears a dreamlike, black cap with a long feather.[53] As in the earlier depiction, this woman reacts to the presence of invisible spirits who perhaps threaten ensnarement. She can see them, beyond what is natural, with, in Rimmer's words, her inner "soul's eyes" which recall the bulging eyes of the *Dying Centaur*.[54]

Fig. 129 *Young Woman*, 1868. Oil on millboard, 15 1/16 x 11 ¾ in. (38.73 x 29.85 cm). Morton and Marie Bradley Memorial Collection, Eskenazi Museum of Art, Indiana University 91.286

Fig. 130 *Home Sweet Home*, probably the 1860s. Graphite on dark buff-colored Bristol board, 11 7/8 x 13 3/4 in. (30.2 x 34.9 cm). Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Gift of Lincoln Kirstein, 1965

From devils, Rimmer sometimes switched to angels as in the drawing, *Home Sweet Home* (fig. 130), which depicts them in various positions on and in front of a house and barn as if sanctifying the homestead.[55] The inscribed title is taken from an American song written by John Howard Payne, which gained popularity during and after the Civil War. But the only wording that the picture reflects, other than the title, is: "A charm from the sky seems to hallow us there." Even the foreground fence is adorned with angels who "hallow" the area. Yet no angels are mentioned in the lyrics, and the image does not otherwise closely follow illustrations of the song.

Parts of this drawing are so loosely drawn as to be indecipherable, but certain details are featured. A child opens the fence gate for the spectator; a group of people huddle near a cross in the sky; a person waves from a bench; and an angel reclines in a tree.[56] The cypresses, an emblem of mourning, stand out because of their height and their backing by a rayed sun.[57] Combined with the action in the clouds, they probably stand for mourned but immortal family members. While the song conveys longing, the open-gate interpretation is more expressive of a joyful welcoming. The charm that hallows in this case is certainly visible, divine support.

In another imaginative introduction of angels, Rimmer added one in his 1878 gillotage (print) of an impoverished worker's family. His illustration, *The Poor Man Has Nothing to Lose* (fig. 131), was used to show the impact of a textile mill strike in Fall River, Massachusetts. In an unusual — if not unique — occurrence for him, he provided an image for a short-lived periodical, *The Porcupine*, which fell partly under the supervision of his son-in-law, William O. Haskill, as co-editor. Unfortunately, although a proof from Rimmer's print exists, no edition of the publication is known to survive.

Fig. 131 *The Poor Man Has Nothing to Lose*, 1878. Gillotage, Plate image: 8 x 7 1/8 in. (20.3 x 18.1 cm). Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Richard Nutt. Courtesy of the RISD Museum, Providence, RI

The catalyst for this incident in Fall River was a glutted market and depression in business that led to reduction of the wages of textile weavers and spinners. A cutback of fifteen percent took place on April 1, 1878, although the workers adamantly protested. Then the price of cloth fell so that the benefit of trimming wages did not go to the manufacturers, and the bosses responded by closing the mills for weeks. When trade revived, they hired the workers back at the lower wage.[58]

Truman Bartlett assumed that Rimmer's title (inscribed outside the border of the illustration) came from a newspaper discussion of the strike, but he did not cite a specific source, and there might well not have been one.[59] The expression, "the poor man has nothing to lose," was not rare at the time and refers to the risks a capitalist assumes, as opposed to the laborer, in backing an enterprise that might fail and bring financial ruin. Apparently Rimmer used the expression satirically in the "humoristic weekly," because, as his history shows, he strongly supported the position of labor.[60]

"Before God," Rimmer once demanded in a complaint against unjust pay, "what right has any man to any thing that impoverishes another?"[61] Rephrasing and tempering this on another occasion, he asked: "Why should one man have more of the good of this world, save as he merits it in all righteousness, than another?"[62] As Bartlett noted from what he had heard, "Against the wrongs of unjust laws, the sufferings of the poor, and the inequalities of justice," Rimmer would not be silent.[63] Indeed his artwork embraced current social issues such as income disparity, increasing materialism, religious hypocrisy and a loss of spiritual certainties. Despite his supposed royal heritage, Rimmer's opinions reflected the viewpoint of a Christian with strongly socialist sympathies. His confidant, Stephen Perkins, held similar views with perhaps more pronounced socialist leanings.[64]

In keeping with the publication in which *Nothing to Lose* appeared, Rimmer's scene reveals that the poor man, in crowded quarters, has vibrant health (even a hero's physique), a loving wife and four healthy children. In an unseen vision behind him, a supportive angel implies that he has riches of a spiritual sort as well. Yet, with the whole family dependent on his earnings, the man's troubled face expresses anxiety.[65] Rather than nothing, he could lose all that makes life valuable. Perhaps the capitalist does not have as much.

The gillotage proof has been perplexing because Rimmer's signature, within the plate, is "Zeros." However, this term has special Spiritualist meaning. As explained by a Spiritualist in 1854, all people are born at zero on a moral scale. With free will at maturity, they either rise or fall according to their moral life relative to that of their parents. Even after death, they can continue to change their position on the scale and ascend or descend by numbered degrees or spheres in a positive or negative direction. For example, the seventh degree above zero is deemed very high but attainable.[66] In a characteristic act of self-criticism, Rimmer signed a number of his works — especially poetry — with his status as "Zero" or, considering both parents, "Zeros," meaning he judged himself as neither better nor worse than his parents.[67]

Rimmer's visionary depictions were not always earthbound with visiting supernatural creatures. In an extension of his daughters' role in *English Hunting Scene*, they included witnesses to heaven's events as well. Three examples of this, in roughly chronological order, are different enough to be biblical, Swedenborgian, and historical.

Rimmer's drawing, *Woman's Head and Soldiers* (fig. 132), from his only known sketchbook, has not previously been identified precisely, but it is of the Archangel Gabriel, as a phantom head, giving an order to celestial soldiers.[68] Evidently it was meant to complete the same subject begun by his Boston-area precursor, Washington Allston, and left unfinished. Rimmer owned a book of engravings after Allston's drawings — a present from Stephen Perkins — that included this uncommon subject (fig. 133) so he would have been especially aware of it.[69] Allston's drawing, despite the identification in the plate title, lacked the figure of Gabriel and therefore appears unfinished. The scene, taken from John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (Book 4: 865–73) is the moment when Gabriel sets the watch for a group of soldiers to guard Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden in order to protect them from Satan.

Rimmer's soldiers are generally like Allston's, with the same helmet, but in completely different positions and totally naked — a concept conveying their innocence.[70] The most innovative part of Rimmer's version is the

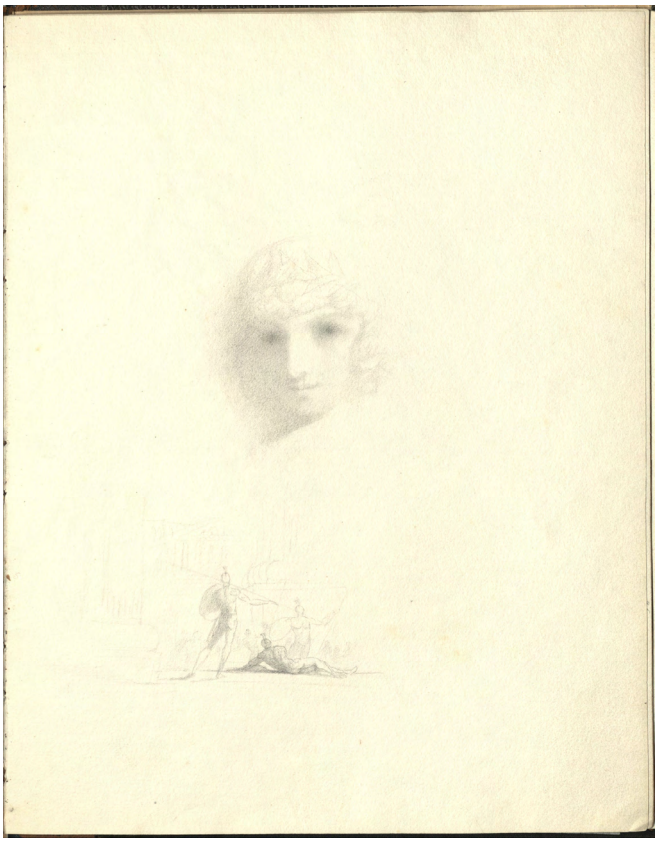

Fig. 132 *Woman's Head and Soldiers* (re-identified as *Gabriel Setting the Watch*), ca. 1866-69. Graphite on paper, 10 ¼ x 8 ¼ in. (26.05 x 20.95 cm). Rimmer Sketchbook, Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine, Harvard University

Fig. 133 After Washington Allston, *Gabriel Setting the Watch*, 1850. From *Outlines & Sketches by Washington Allston Engraved by J. & S.W. Cheney*, Boston: [Stephen H. Perkins], 1850, pl. 2. Courtesy of the Library of Congress

visionary portion: the looming, ethereal head of Gabriel, shown disembodied and with androgynous features. Rimmer, in the late 1860s, was using the vapory touch of sfumato to suggest a dematerialized form, a transient appearance, or an otherworldly agent of God which is the cumulative effect of Gabriel's visage.[71] Essentially,

Rimmer has added an overwhelmingly spiritual element which gives point to Allston's congregation of armed, celestial guards. They look toward a void that has now been filled with the sublime. Ultimately the sfumato effect comes from Leonardo da Vinci, who popularized it. He could have influenced Rimmer directly, from about 1850 on, or through a number of different intermediaries, including some of Allston's paintings.[72]

When Bartlett began his biography of Rimmer, he went through family-owned artworks that were shown to him and was struck by the number of "varied and beautiful" treatments of the earliest part of the day. They were not only "among the most poetical" of Rimmer's creations, but also characteristically visionary.[73] His drawing, *Morning* (fig. 134), is one such example. These images and family commentary suggested to him that Rimmer was not just an individual, "but rather the medium through which the ideal world took form on paper or canvas."[74]

Fig. 134 *Morning*, late 1860s or 1870s. Graphite on paper, 10 1/8 x 14 in. (25.7 x 35.56 cm). Wichita Art Museum. Gift of Berry-Hill Galleries in honor of Virginia and Howard Wooden

As if to confirm this, Rimmer wrote in his "Stephen and Phillip" of an instance of his own dreaming of sunlit fields and "morning beauty" as he fancied he was near the "gate of paradise." In his thoughts, he combined "tender romance with the bright reality" as he "sped along" in a wingless flight near the awesome gate.[75]

In Rimmer's drawing, a middle-aged man reclines on a hill to the right as he beholds a vision of spirits and angels — or naked, ecstatic couples floating and reveling in an atmosphere of contagious love. Swedenborg described angels — who were formerly human beings — as retaining their human appearance and becoming more beautiful as they approached God (different ranking in three spheres), but Rimmer adds the traditional wings.[76] According to Swedenborg — which this partly follows — all those in heaven (not just angels) are restored to their youth and paired with their former mate (their spouses, when the spouse dies, if they were happy together) or someone else, if they wish, who brings pleasure (including sexual) as a perfect soul mate. That is — as diminishing as this was to the Christian church — marital switches could be performed in heaven, and no one is alone unless by preference.[77] Furthermore, angels are particularly in a state of love in the morning;

their vitality lasts forever, and they live "the life of joy itself."[78] Spiritual angels, such as guardian angels, are clothed, whereas celestial ones (more exalted in a higher sphere) are naked in a sign of their innocence.[79] In Rimmer's simplified version, both the angels and the wingless spirits (newly departed) are naked and mingling in a state of euphoria over their growing love as couples become one after death. Observing them, the reclining man (possibly wearing a wreath) is probably meant to represent Rimmer himself or at least someone with whom he could identify.

In his signed, but unfinished, oil painting, *Soldiers by a Stream* (fig. 135), Rimmer turned to a celestial vision that had a world-wide impact on Christianity. The scene has not been recognized before because it is ambiguous, but this is no ordinary soldier's camp. The muscled soldier in the center points to the sky to indicate the presence of a midday vision.[80] What he sees is a cross of light at the Emperor Constantine's campsite before the Battle of Milvian Bridge. As he turns to his relaxing comrades, he faces a weapon, in the unusually perfect shape of a cross (not as long as a sword), on the hip of a soldier in front. This is an instance of Rimmer suggesting, but not being explicit about, his meaning. Reinforcing the religious significance of the moment, there is a pagan temple behind a dead tree. There is also a starving dog of war in the foreground.[81] According to reports, Constantine witnessed the vision with his army and, that night in his tent, Constantine had a dream in which Christ told him to carry the Chi-Rho monogram (a sign of Christ) to be victorious in his battle the next day. After he did so, his stupendous victory led to his conversion to Christianity and eventually the acceptance of the Christian religion by the Roman Empire.[82]

Fig. 135 *Soldiers by a Stream*, probably 1872. Oil and graphite on academy board, 18 ½ x 14 15/16 in. (47 x 37.94 cm). Unlocated. Courtesy of the Frick Art Reference Library

Fortunately, Rimmer made a preliminary drawing for the scene (fig. 136) on the reverse of a periodical cover (*Demorest's Illustrated Monthly*) that is dated 1872. This helps to establish the date of the final version and, through design differences, its meaning.[83] For example, the large, background tent in the drawing alludes to the site of Constantine's famous dream.

Fig. 136 *Soldiers*, probably 1872. Graphite pencil on paper, 11 5/8 x 8 ¾ in. (29.6 x 22.2 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

As a visionary artist, Rimmer produced amusing work too that transcended the physical world and portrayed an expanded reality based on his ingenuity. Even as a child, he had fashioned "fanciful forms" out of shoemaker's wax such as "dragons and other frightful beasts."[84] As an adult and teacher, he let loose sometimes at the backboard with fantastical creatures at the end of a session. One student wrote: "he would give us some delightful cupids floating upon clouds," personifications of "'Morning' and 'Evening' or some strange warlike figure; something to appeal to the imagination; and he would say, 'There, put that into your [copy] books: make ideal drawings [...] but try to acquire the power of expressing yourselves.'"[85] One critic called them "weird fancies."[86]

Examples of this kind of drawing include one inscribed "On the Wings of the Creator / Out of Eternity into time" (fig. 50), Rimmer's own poetic lines which accompany an image of a newborn soul. Other "weird fancies" include *Young Child Standing on a Flower* (fig. 137), *Nudes and a Forest Pool* (fig. 138) and *Shooting Stars* (fig. 140).

In the first instance (fig. 137), on one side of a sheet of paper, a tiny girl is balanced on an imaginary, drooping bell-shaped flower in a round archway and, on the reverse, three young maidens are admiring a less distinctly drawn flower — reminiscent of a meadow anemone — near a forest pool.[87] The human beings are so much smaller than the flowers that they are convincing as flower spirits, a concept that comes out of John Milton's *Paradise Lost* where they are part of the celestial Garden of Eden. Milton describes them as the culmination of plants which evolve from coarse roots to stems and the refinement of perfumed spirits exhaled by their flowers, in a development analogous to man's progress from a crude animal to a higher, intellectual and finally spiritual being (Book 5, Lines 469–85). Not only did this analogy agree with Rimmer's view of man's divergent path from the ape, but also Milton's passage concerning flower spirits was known well enough to be recognized.[88] It was repeated during the nineteenth century and developed by other poets, such as Elizabeth Barrett Browning.[89]

Rimmer's *Young Child Standing on a Flower* is perhaps the closest his imagery ever came to that of the English artist William Blake, as in his 1789 *Infant Joy* (fig. 139), which has the same curvilinear plant tendrils, but, revealingly, Rimmer's figure — with a greater consciousness of the real world — tries to balance her weight. This

Fig. 137 *Young Child Standing on a Flower* (recto), possibly ca. 1870. Graphite on paper, 9 ¼ x 5 7/8 in. (23.5 x 15 cm). Harvard Art Museums / Fogg Museum, Louise E. Bettens Fund. Photo © President and Fellows of Harvard College

Fig. 138 *Nude*s *and a Forest Pool* (verso), possibly ca. 1870. Graphite on paper, 9 ¼ x 5 7/8 in. (23.5 x 15 cm). Harvard Art Museums / Fogg Museum, Louise E. Bettens Fund. Photo © President and Fellows of Harvard College

kind of consideration was not one of Blake's concerns as he drew figures gathered on one side of an unaffected, large blossom. Rimmer's flower spirits also recall those by Elihu Vedder, such as his drawing, *Soul of the Sunflower* (Metropolitan Museum of Art), which is of a young woman's face, looking upward and surrounded by luxurious, flame-like hair. But Vedder's flower spirit has an earthy sensuality and dependence on reality that is unlike the fragile, poetic and visionary quality of the other two examples.

The drawing, *Shooting Stars* (fig. 140), is probably typical of whimsical blackboard illustrations that Rimmer would have used in class. It is partly line drawing to suggest two dimensions (the lower part) and partly shaded and highlighted to create an effect of three dimensions (upper part). In an image so fanciful that the subject

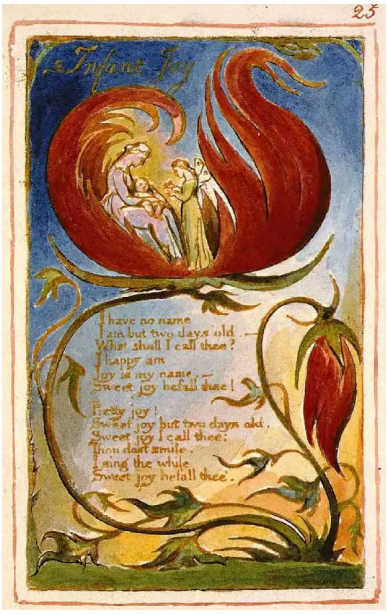

Fig. 139 William Blake, *Infant Joy*, from *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, pl. 23, 1789-1794. Hand-colored relief etching, book spine: 7 3/8 in. (18.7 cm). Collections.britishart.yale.edu/catalog/tms:57619

could not be recognized if not supplied by the Rimmer family, he has combined winged cherub heads with long, wavy tresses that provide the flaming tail on a cluster of shooting stars.[90] In real life, the sight of this phenomenon has long been understood to be a sign of good luck.[91] Because of the mood of the drawing, it could still have that meaning.

Fig. 140 *Shooting Stars*, 1860s or 1870s. Pen and white chalk on paper? Unlocated. Truman H. Bartlett, *The Art Life of William Rimmer: Sculptor, Painter, and Physician*, Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1890, no. 6

To return to *English Hunting Scene*, similar symbolic signs appear there as well, beginning with the odd pairing of two white birds circling at the top of the picture. The one on the left resembles a long-necked crane, and the smaller one on the right is probably a dove. If this is the case, the coming together of the birds — both of which Rimmer used symbolically elsewhere — unites the concepts of divine wisdom through the crane (Jeremiah 8:7)

and divine spirit through the dove (Matthew 3:16).[92] Such a combination is appropriate in that the daughters are granted special wisdom through this revelation of the existence of a spirit world.

An unidentified friend of Rimmer's might have been remembering *English Hunting Scene* when he sent Bartlett the following story. He described subsidizing Rimmer, at about age twenty, in his effort to create an eight-foot square painting of Adam and Eve mourning the death of their son Abel. When the scene was complete, they put it on exhibition with an admission charge, but their venture ended in failure. Rimmer apparently felt embarrassed over his friend's investment, and the friend sold the picture (since destroyed) at a loss. About thirty-five years later — which would fit with the year being 1871 — the friend happened to be near Rimmer's studio in Bromfield Street, so he decided, after their long separation, to pay a call. Finding an unlocked door, he walked in on Rimmer who was painting an unusual subject, with his back to him: "a large landscape with figures."[93] When the friend made a joke about his color not having changed, Rimmer spun around with anger on his face before recognizing his friend. They spent two hours talking about old times but the friend evidently never learned anything worth relaying about the picture.[94]

Whether this was the right painting or not, Rimmer had cause to be defensive about *English Hunting Scene* and the family had good reason never to exhibit it publicly.[95] Contacting or conjuring the dead, as in this picture, was not only prohibited by the Bible (Deuteronomy 18:10–12) but also denounced as the work of the devil by those caught up in a backlash against Spiritualism.[96] There had long been opposition, but it began to culminate in the United States during the 1870s. Inevitably the stories of the sensational success of well-known mediums elicited suspicion, and then self-appointed detectives started to attend séance sessions in order to expose them as fraud. As their findings were published, the Spiritualist movement became increasingly discredited.[97] Even without this, the circumstances of Rimmer's life had led him to expect to be misunderstood.[98] In apparent fear of criticism, Rimmer's wife and daughters avoided telling Bartlett not only about the dauphin connection but also about any family interest in Swedenborg or Spiritualism.[99] If one of Bartlett's interviewees had not reminisced briefly on the artist's attempt to contact the deceased Abel Kingman, there would have been little hint of either viewpoint in the biography.

But, as it happens, the location of Rimmer's studio widens the Spiritualist connection beyond the confines of the family. According to city directories, the studio was situated at 18 Bromfield Street which was only a couple of doors away from Marsh's Bookstore at number 14.[100] Most remarkably, Spiritualists held séances, conferences, and Sunday meetings in the same building as this bookstore.[101] Attendees could easily visit Rimmer's studio, and their presence might offer inspiration and emotional support. In fact, a major point of the painting — that dead people could look just as real and alive as the living — exemplified something that they strongly believed.[102]

Like Swedenborg, Rimmer was not a churchgoer.[103] Moreover, he lacked patience for anyone who could be considered religiously judgmental, intolerant or narrow-minded. This comes across in the hateful countenance of a clergyman (fig. 141) in his 1877 *Art Anatomy*. Used as his prime example of a facial type that is readable as "Brutal and Monstrous," the illustration shows the head of a man dressed as a seventeenth-century Puritan. Rimmer's Spiritualist daughter, Caroline, had a similar response to potential public disapproval toward her family, as evinced by the supercilious man in her 1908 drypoint etching, *The Self Righteous* (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston). With his nose in the air and his body nearly encased by imagined wings, he seems to float as if he were a veritable angel. But his appearance and Caroline's inscription below him belie this impression: "With feet scorning the earth and eyes closed to heaven stands the self righteous."

Perhaps Rimmer's friend interrupted him just as he was drawing his picture's hidden but most revealing component: the profile of an outdoor staircase (fig. 142), cloaked in darkness at bottom left. It has a meaning that is shared by the staircase in a second picture, *The Sentry* (fig. 143), which concerns an armed, nineteenth-century Middle Easterner, guarding an ancient tomb. Wearing prayer beads over one hip and a generally invented costume, the guard looks away from the symbolic staircase. That is, he is oblivious to the potential for another presence that it suggests.

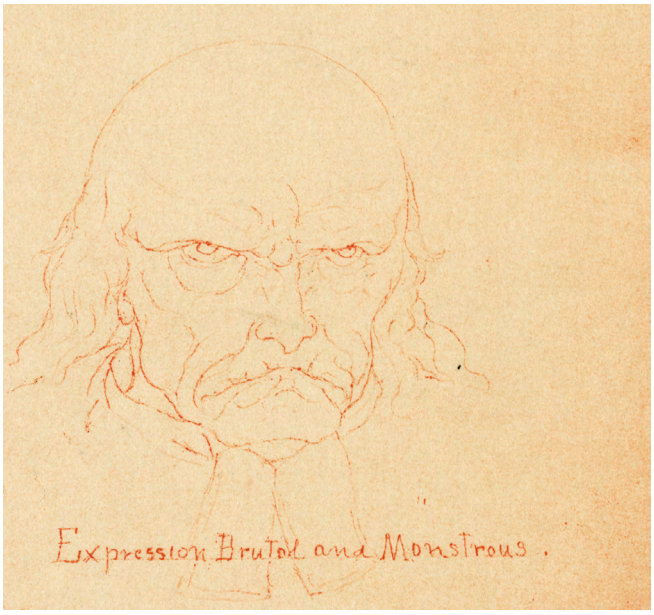

Fig. 141 *Expression Brutal and Monstrous*, 1877. From William Rimmer, *Art Anatomy*, (Boston: Little Brown, 1877), Section: Expression, p. 30, no. [196]

Fig. 142 *English Hunting Scene* (detail), 1871

Fig. 143 *The Sentry*, ca. 1872, Oil on academy board, sight: 11 5/8 x 8 3/8 in. (29.53 x 21.28 cm). Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Purchased with funds provided by Jo Ann and Julian Ganz, Jr. (M2002.70)

This interpretation stems from Swedenborg who spoke of a staircase connecting the worlds of the living and the so-called dead. In a passage that can be misread to advocate séances, he wrote that we have lost our connection with those in the afterworld through "want of spiritual sympathy." But a "likeness of mind" can lure the deceased back, so that they may be "led down, when the Lord pleases, by the stairs of the unforgettable past, and visit our abodes." The dead person has "only to open his mind worldwards, and straight he can commune with an earthly seer — if he can find one."[104] Through these means, he assures the reader, we can learn Virgil's biography, for instance, from Virgil himself.[105]

Accordingly, the stairway is for the convenience of visiting spirits who might wish to return to their former life. As the one thriving patch of greenery — and its repetition near the man's foot — clearly symbolizes in *The Sentry*, there is no death, only transformation as in the transition of plants from winter dormancy to rebirth in the spring. However, the guard is no "earthly seer," open to the possibilities that Swedenborg mentioned.

In addition to the stairs in *English Hunting Scene* — which are made more visible by tiny streaks of light on each step — there is another peculiar element in the dark, lower left corner. Directly above the signature is an unexplained incandescent spark, which is associated with the stairs by its location just beneath. This is likely a surrogate for the artist. Rimmer wrote of the soul that "freed from the presence of the sun and of the world doth then the soul begin to glow, burn of its own fire and shine of its own light," which is the situation in this darkness.[106] On another occasion, he wrote of his wife's soul as an "Image bright / A guiding star a beacon light."[107] Because of mood swings that could be animating or draining, he would have been particularly sensitive to the presence or absence of energy, but this effect is more than that. A spark or candle flicker would be a suitable metaphor for his soul as a divinely formed essence as he believed it to be.[108] It is like him to leave this nearly invisible mark as

something to be discovered. Its inclusion also makes *English Hunting Scene* the only known work by Rimmer that has a symbol as a kind of stamp of his presence or as part of his signature.

On the whole, *English Hunting Scene* is a testament to Rimmer's fondness for teaching. Indeed, following his advice, the "most prominent" color is the red on both the spirit-guide (teacher) and a member of his audience as "the central point[s] of interest."[109] This use of color is not only as Rimmer recommended, but it also signals the importance of experiential learning to the entire picture.

In the real world, Rimmer did instruct his daughters, including on such matters as the number of bones in the human body which they recited as a catechism.[110] But, outside his home, he fulfilled a broader teaching role that had a major impact. Numerous responses of his art students to Bartlett's request for information make plain his effectiveness and ability to inspire as a teacher.[111] He even successfully conducted an art class for children and admired their drawings — no matter how crude — if, instead of perfect copying, they had "something to say."[112] Daniel French spoke for others when he confessed to a journalist that he owed more to Rimmer, as his teacher, than to anyone else.[113]

But Rimmer was too original and distant to encourage a close following in the manner of some other Americans who excelled in the teaching profession, such as Benjamin West, Thomas Eakins, or Robert Henri. Like Eakins, but earlier and fleetingly, he was progressive enough to use nude models of the opposite sex, and his reputation for this helped make it possible for female students to be accepted as designers of monuments to male forebears.[114] Yet he had little in common with these teachers, and the differences are telling. Unlike West, Eakins, and Henri, he never studied abroad. Unlike them, he was an advocate for major change in the criterion for artistic excellence. Also unlike them, he welcomed idiosyncratic self-expression such as in children's art. Perhaps even more divergently, he used images in class from another dimension of reality — as personal and cryptic as *Shooting Stars*. To paraphrase Nathaniel Hawthorne, he did not, in myopic fashion, limit himself or see "too clearly what is within his range to be aware of any mystery beyond."[115] It is this beyond and the human soul that were often his subject.

Endnotes

1 For the lost oils, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 20.

2 Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 2:573, says *English Hunting Scene* might be related to two other oil paintings and a drypoint landscape (all lost but photographs survive) by Rimmer. There is no convincing visual connection, except that the print has a medieval subject.

3 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 60–62.

4 Rosalia S. (Rose) Myers (1878–1945) likely acquired the painting in Boston, her birthplace, sometime before she moved with her husband, Abram Davis, to New York City in 1910. Their son, David Myers Davis, inherited the picture at her death and bequeathed it to Boston's Museum of Fine Arts in 1969. See *ancestry.com*.

5 The early title is in David M. Davis' letter to Lincoln Kirstein, received November 16, 1945, in correspondence for November 2–19, Kirstein and Nutt Research Material. For the changed title, see [Kirstein], *Rimmer*, no. 17.

6 See the copy of Kirstein's letter to David M. Davis, November 1945 (Kirstein and Nutt Research Material), concerning the overuse of bitumen in *English Hunting Landscape*, leading to the deterioration of the picture. See also the 1988 condition report in the curatorial file on the painting, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

7 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 21, mentions his belief. He did not know about the existence of this picture.

8 Their older sister, Mary, had married in 1868, so Adeline and Caroline were the only children remaining with their parents. As Adeline (two years older) married on October 25, 1871 (the year of the picture), this would likely have been painted before then. See *familysearch.org*. Caroline, who followed her father as an artist, is probably the one with her head turned back. Their oval faces, although generalized, are consistent with this identification, based on a family photograph of the three in the Kirstein and Nutt Research Material, Archives of American Art. Their outfits were high fashion. For this, see "The Parisian Mode" in *Peterson's Magazine* for July 1871.

9 The precedent-location category also includes scenes in Arcadia, titled "Et in Arcadia Ego," in which shepherds discover a tomb with this Latin inscription. Whichever way it is translated, this message from the dead refers to the inevitability of death.

10 Email, December 20, 2020, from Phyllis Braff who is working with Stephen Good on a catalogue raisonné of Moran's work.

11 Thurman Wilkins, *Thomas Moran: Artist of the Mountains* by Thurman Wilkins with the help of Caroline Lawson Hinkley; foreword by William H. Goetzmann (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 28.

12 See Inness's statement in Colbert, *Haunted Visions*, 170.

13 On religious mania, see Jamison, *Touched with Fire*, 29, 299n.74.

14 Swedenborg could be considered the first Spiritualist, but he was adamantly against being followed. On this see Frank Podmore, *Mediums of the 19th Century* (New Hyde Park, N.Y.: University Books, Inc., 1963), 1:15 and 291. For the quote, see Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 83. For mention of visions, see ibid., 39, 45, 51, 87–89, 137.

15 Ibid., 135, when he also spoke to an angel. On demons, see ibid., 26, 49. On his body and the dead, see ibid., 245–47, 135.

16 For this Swedenborgian belief, see Swedenborg, *Gems from the Writings of Swedenborg*, 2:76.

17 Bret E. Carroll, *Spiritualism in Antebellum America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 144.

18 See the description in Robert Cozzolino, ed., *Supernatural America: The Paranormal in American Art* (Minneapolis and Chicago: Minneapolis Institute of Art and the University of Chicago Press, 2021), 77.

19 Marion Ward MacLean's interview, October 3, 1975, with Jeffrey Weidman. See Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 1:82n53. The family owned two slates (lost) with writing preserved on them. MacLean was a granddaughter of Rimmer's sister Jane. For Rimmer family genealogy information, see ibid., 4:1256–59.

20 Cahagnet, *The Celestial Telegraph*, 86.

21 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 18.

22 For psychic, see Marion MacLean in Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 1:82, n. 53. For this as a reason to hire him to produce portraits of the deceased, see Colbert, *Haunted Visions*, 94.

23 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 121. Weidman concluded the bust (lost) was unfinished, but the payment makes this seem unlikely. See Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 1:232–33, no. 20. The diary that Bartlett saw covered the East Milton years so the bust would date probably from between 1861, when he became known as a sculptor, and 1863 or early 1864 when he left East Milton. The sitter is designated as a Miss W.F.

24 For spirit art, see Cozzolino, ed., *Supernatural*, 70–71. For mania-induced, visionary hallucinations, see Jamison, *Touched with Fire*, 13, 93–95.

25 Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 2:479. The information comes from Marion MacLean. Rimmer arrived at his sister's home just after she had died and reported that he had been contacted. She had helped him medically during a smallpox epidemic of 1859–1860, and they were close siblings.

26 She appears as an addition to his household in Chelsea, along with probably an Irish maid, in the Massachusetts State Census for 1855. She evidently moved with the Rimmers to East Milton, near Quincy, that year, because she died in Milton (*ancestry.com*). For her Quincy gravestone, see T.B. Wyman, Jr., *Genealogy of the Name and Family of Hunt* ... (Boston: John Wilson and Son, 1863), 289. She died at age seventy. Next to her (ibid., 289) is the grave of an infant, "Louisa Hunt," identified on the marker as the daughter of "Mr. John and Mrs. Louisa P. Hunt." Faded images of both markers are online under *findagrave.com*. For the expression, see John W. Edmonds and George T. Dexter, *Spiritualism, with an Appendix by Nathaniel P. Tallmadge* (New York: Partridge and Brittan, 1853), 369. A collateral descendant identifies her as Louisa Packard French Hunt (1786–1856).

27 See the similar high boots, feathered hats, woman's neck ruff, capes, tights and breeches in Religious Tract Society (Great Britain), *England in the Sixteenth Century; or, A History of the Reigns of the House of Tudor* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1850), 397, 401, 411.

28 Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, [1843], 23, 31.

29 On fooling, see Anon., "Spiritual Photography," *The Illustrated Photographer*, [London], May 28, 1869, 254–55. The Getty example shows the faint images of three children.

30 Anon., *The Powers of the Air; or Spiritualism: What It Is and What It Is Not* (Dayton, Ohio: United Brethern Publishing House, 1867), 374–75.

31 Ibid., 374–75.

32 Catherine Crowe, *The Night-Side of Nature or Ghosts and Ghost-Seers* (New York: Redfield, 1853), 370.

33 Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip", 299–315.

34 Ibid., 312, 299. He was very concerned about the "unequal world." For this, see ibid., 9.

35 The four probable serfs to the right appear to be agitated and carrying a woman as if in a rescue. Five figures running down the hill at left are similarly painted, as partially transparent, but smaller. They might be serf children near the second building ruin.

36 Crowe, *The Night-Side*, 197, 298, 346, 450.

37 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 18.

38 Cahagnet, *The Celestial Telegraph*, 32–33.

39 The repetition of a figure to indicate a time lapse is more typical of the fifteenth century as in Lorenzo Ghiberti's famous *Gates of Paradise* (Baptistery of St. John, Florence, Italy), which Rimmer would have known.

40 Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 3:759–62, concludes that the drawings and poem are later because of the probable, ca. 1853, date of the Rimmer Commonplace Book, Boston Medical Library, which he calls the Rimmer Album, in which they are located. But this book, with its engraved title page (The Dream Album) and publisher (J.C. Riker), could date earlier. See the same album title page with an inscription dated 1846 (Bindings Coll. D No. 040) in the American Antiquarian Society. The child involved could be his third son and second namesake, William, who died at about age three (approximately the age of the boy in the drawing) in 1847. The other boys died younger. Stylistically, the "Midnight Ride" illustrations seem early as if from the 1840s.

41 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 124, 84. Caroline traced another version (lost) of the drawing, *Midnight Ride*, for Bartlett's book. Her tracing (lost) was used as illustration number 7, because Rimmer's original was too faint. There are only slight differences between her copy and the surviving version by Rimmer. Weidman follows her in thinking the one she copied dated from 1830, but her opinion on dates can be shown to be unreliable. See Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 3:733.

42 In the second stanza, one line mentions that the child sees a (family) "crest" under his father's mantle, which would refer to their heritage. See Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 4:1265.

43 "The Midnight Ride, A Tale," Rimmer Commonplace Book. See also Weidman's reading of the handwriting (with some questions) in *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 4:1265–69.

44 Marion MacLean's hand-written notes on Rimmer (untitled), p. 18, Research File: Marion MacLean, box 1, Kirstein and Nutt Research Material, Archives of American Art.

45 See, for instance, "the condemned's soul burst into flames" in Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 129. His descriptions are consistently visual and dramatic throughout the manuscript.

46 William Suhr took this photograph while he was conserving the picture, probably in the early 1970s. It shows crystalline growths and white infill in damaged areas. Unfortunately, no conservation report survives. See the William Suhr Papers, box 6, folder 4, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, CA. Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 2:690, cites a relevant letter of August 12, 1970, from Charles B. Ferguson, director of the New Britain Museum of American Art, to Richard S. Nutt, in which he says a Connecticut dealer, Edward Pawlin, recently showed *Sleeping* to him, and, under "a light," a "man's skull-like head" could be seen, but it was "perhaps due to scratching or tearing and restoration work." As far as is known — since the demon is not mentioned by observers before or afterward — Pawlin, after partially seeing the demon, took the picture to Suhr to have the over-paint removed and then, on second thought, to have it re-applied. This was before Pawlin sold the picture, by March of 1972, to Kennedy Galleries in New York.

Many contemporary artists experimented with bitumen and meglip (boiled oil) in their paints to emulate the rich, lustrous shadows seen in seventeenth-century Dutch painting. Rimmer's *Sleeping* is an exceptionally revealing example of Rimmer's late tendency to experiment in this way. But he went too far with his addition of oil, bitumen (which can fail to dry completely) and other possible ingredients. The varnish was also faulty, and, as his daughter wrote on the reverse, retained a sticky quality. This defect apparently had been corrected by 1944 when Vose Galleries had it. On its damage, see the 1985 condition report, mentioning excessive oil within the paint, in the curatorial file, Currier Gallery of Art. Another especially bitumen-laden work is *Battle of the Amazons*. On this, see Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 2:681.

47 Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 21. For the same idea, see ibid., 238–39.

48 Ibid., 15.

49 William Rimmer, *Young Woman*, mount number 127–27 a, Frick Art Reference Library, New York City. The Frick's information and photograph, of the picture without the white strip, date from the Rimmer exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, in 1946.

50 Rimmer thought in terms of "polluted creatures," demons watching for an advantage, and possible demons within. See Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 231, 239, 29.

51 The early photograph belonged to Lincoln Kirstein and is in the possession of Richard Salisbury Nutt of Brooksville, Maine — the son of Richard Sherman Nutt who assisted Kirstein in his Rimmer research. The picture's owner, Henry W. Stanley, sent Kirstein this photograph in 1946 and expressed dissatisfaction with a recent restoration, which probably

removed the white strip. See Stanley's letters to Kirstein of July 14 and September 9, 1946, in the Kirstein and Nutt Research Material.

52 For the quote see Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 129. For other references to these vapors as souls, see ibid., 149, 173.

53 Although this was once called an unidentified portrait (stretcher label), the eyes seem too large to be human and the whole demeanor is unlike that of a portrait subject. A drawing (*Head of a Woman in a Hat*) of the same imaginary model, but without the worried look and other changes, was once on the reverse of Rimmer's drawing "Victory." Having been separated, both drawings are at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

54 Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 245.

55 This large house is not believable as Rimmer's own home from any period in his life. After he married, he lived outside Boston in surrounding towns undoubtedly because life there — such as in Chelsea with its large Irish immigrant population — was less expensive. The 1850 Federal Census for Randolph shows that his neighbors were bookmakers and shoemakers. However, Rimmer did have an Irish maid. According to the Massachusetts State Census for 1865, when he lived in Chelsea, he still had an Irish maid and his nearest neighbors were Irish. Beginning in 1861, he acquired studio space as part of his teaching quarters in Boston. When teaching for the Lowell Institute in Boston, he had the use of "hired rooms" in the Studio Building on Tremont Street. For this, see Anon., "Lowell Institute," *Evening Saturday Gazette* (Boston), February 20, 1864, p. [1].

56 An inscription on the reverse by Caroline Rimmer clarifies the location of some of the angels, including in the tree. The date of the drawing could be in the 1860s because of the increased popularity of the song then. Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 3:909, dates it ca. 1868 because a photograph related to the Cooper Union School was once affixed to the reverse.

57 Josiah Hoopes, *The Book of Evergreens: A Practical Treatise on the Coniferae, or Cone-Bearing Plants* (New York: Orange Judd and Company, 1868), 341.

58 See the episode recalled in Anon., "The Fall River Strike: Strong Words from the Weavers and Spinners," *Pilot* (July 5, 1879), 42:1. There was much discussion over whether to strike at the time but it seemed self-defeating to do so. See, for example, Anon., "Fall River Operatives," *The New York Herald*, March 31, 1878, 14.

59 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 126.

60 See the expression explained in Anon., "The Advantages of Poverty," *Friends' Intelligencer* (Philadelphia, 1859–1860), 16:619. The second quote is from Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 126. An anonymous, old inscription on the reverse of the print at the Rhode Island School of Design Museum gives the circumstances of the print having been done at the request of Rimmer's son-in-law.

61 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 109. Rimmer is quoted without context, but, in the previous sentence, he speaks of "the rich" as oppressors. The quote has also been understood to refer to slavery. For this, see Johnson, *American Symbolist Art*, 51.

62 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 109.

63 Ibid., 22. Rimmer's defense of the poor is also in a statement quoted in ibid., 115.

64 See the reminiscences of Perkins' cousin, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Cheerful Yesterdays* (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1900), 80.

65 The angel in this gillotage has been mistakenly likened to the naked man with outstretched arms in William Blake's print, *Glad Day, or The Dance of Albion* (British Museum), with the implication that Rimmer actually copied Blake. This error is so egregious as to require rebuttal. The figures do not even have their arms, hands, and head in the same position. Rimmer was famous — among students and in newspaper accounts — for being able to draw human anatomy accurately and from his imagination with great speed on a blackboard. See the descriptions of him doing it in Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 134–35, or the memory of witnessing this in A.J. Philpott, "Little Appreciated Genius," *Boston Daily Globe*, February 20, 1916, 21. For the error, see Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 3:1134, and Weidman, et al., *Rimmer*, 118.

66 Josiah A. Gridley, *Astounding Facts from the Spirit World* (Southampton, MA: 1854), 87 (quote), 90, 106, 214. Gridley's spheres are similar to those described by Swedenborg (191, 194). Rimmer agreed with the belief that someone's progress toward perfection could consume eternity. On this, see, Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 123.

67 Rimmer uses "Zeros" or "W.R. Zeros" to sign a number of his poems (Rimmer Commonplace Book, Boston Medical Library). One of the poems, "Autumn" is dated 1858. For the four known examples, see Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 4:1270–74.

68 Rimmer Sketchbook, Francis A. Countway Library, Boston. Using an earlier title, Weidman calls it the "Bates Sketchbook," because of the owner, in *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 3:833. On *Woman's Head and Soldiers*, see ibid. 836, and Weidman, et al., *Rimmer*, 88.

69 The book, *Outlines & Sketches by Washington Allston. Engraved by J. & S.W. Cheney*, was published in Boston in 1850 and copyrighted by Stephen H. Perkins. Rimmer's copy, now in the possession of Richard Salisbury Nutt, is inscribed on the title page: "Dr. William Rimmer/ from Stephen H. Perkins/ July 4 1861."

70 The guards are described in Milton in lines 549–53, with no mention of clothing and their only possessions listed as shields, helmets, and spears (line 553). Adam and Eve are naked in their initial stage of innocence.

71 Rimmer sometimes repeated images from his own work in his drawing class. A copy of Gabriel's head by his Cooper Union student, Frances Eliot Gifford, is in her sketchbook (1866–1867) at the New Bedford Whaling Museum Research Library, New Bedford, MA.

72 Rimmer, as well as the Boston Athenaeum, had photographs of works by well-known artists. Rimmer probably also read Leonardo's *Treatise* which was still in print and discusses the effect of softened shadows, different facial expressions, and the "emotions of the soul." See Leonardo da Vinci, *A Treatise on Painting*, translated by John Francis Rigaud; preface by John Sidney Hawkins (London: J. Taylor, 1802), 98–99, 87 (quote), 47.

73 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 125.

74 Ibid., 125. On the reverse of this drawing, there is a sketch of a man's leg and drapery. For both sides, the provenance and a possible date of ca. 1869, see Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 3:932–34. Unfortunately, there is no solid evidence for dating many of the drawings, including this one.

75 Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 59.

76 Swedenborg, *Concerning Heaven and Its Wonders*, 42.

77 Swedenborg, *Delights of Wisdom Concerning Conjugial Love*, 51.

78 For morning, see Swedenborg, *Concerning Heaven and Its Wonders*, 81. For vitality and the quote, see Swedenborg, *A Compendium of the Theological and Spiritual Writings*, 296.

79 On nakedness, see Emanuel Swedenborg, *The Apocalypse Explained According to the Spiritual Sense: In Which Are Revealed the Arcana Which Are There Predicted, and Have Been Hitherto Deeply Concealed: From a Latin Posthumous Work* (Boston: Clapp, 1859), 1:320.

80 The *Soldiers by a Stream* was not identified beyond its title when it was exhibited by the family in 1916. The mount for this lost picture at the Frick Art Reference Library, New York, includes "pinkish yellow sky" as part of a brief color description from 1946. This supports a visionary experience. On the picture's history and disappearance, see Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 2:583–85.

81 The dog of war could come from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, Act 3, Scene 1, line 273, where Mark Antony says: "Let slip the dogs of war."

82 Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (Oxford: W. Pickering, London, and Talboys and Wheeler, Oxford, 1827) 2: 418–19, 421–22, 426. The story is based on Eusebius' early biography of Constantine.

83 Because of a New Year reference, this issue of the women's fashion and family magazine, from Volume 9, appears to be for January. The drawing shows various earlier conceptions. For instance, Rimmer considered different positions

for the soldier's left arm as he worked out the composition, with a tiny figure below in another trial pose. The adjacent figure, to the right, is an unrelated, preliminary sketch for a watercolor titled *Figure of a Man in Elizabethan Costume* (Fogg Museum). In the painting, as the drawing documents, Rimmer replaced the bearded soldier with a clean-shaven one — with a head closer to those of Michelangelo's Ignudi (decorative male nudes) from the Sistine Chapel in Rome — and a more elaborate, plumed helmet, indicating higher rank.

84 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 3.

85 Ibid., 139.

86 Sadakichi Hartmann, *A History of American Art* (Boston: L.C. Page, 1901), 2:37.

87 This double-sided drawing is difficult to date, as are most of Rimmer's undated drawings. I am following the dating here that has been done by Lincoln Kirstein and Jeffrey Weidman. See Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 3:941.

88 See the progression in Rimmer, *Art Anatomy*, no. 28A.

89 Browning's poem, *Flower-Spirits*, is directly based on Milton and has the "spirit-aromas of blossom and bloom" call mournfully to Adam and Eve as the first parents flee their paradise forever. See Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *The Poems of Elizabeth Barrett Browning* (London: E. Moxon, 1844), 20–21.

90 *Shooting Stars* is illustrated and given this title in Bartlett, *Rimmer*, no. 6, and in early exhibition catalogues after Rimmer's death where the title would be supplied with the family loan. This includes the 1880 exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, no. 69, and the 1883 exhibition at Chase's Gallery, Boston, no. 50.

91 [Milton Goldsmith], *Signs, Omens and Superstitions by Astra Cielo* (New York: G. Sully and Co. [1918], 129–30. Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 3:987–88, concluded that *Shooting Stars* refers symbolically to the soul's descent into human birth, but, according to Rimmer's inscription, that is what *On the Wings of the Creator* (fig. 50) represents.

92 The crane appears in the drawing of *Job and His Comforters* (fig. 64); the dove appears in the oil painting, *Job and His Comforters* (fig. 63).

93 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 11–13. It was highly unusual for him to paint on this scale. If the work was not *English Hunting Scene*, it would likely have been the only other known, large landscape in oils by Rimmer, which was painted over a *Cupid Relating His Adventures to Venus* and called *English Landscape* (unlocated and not photographed). The one shred of evidence is the mention of "figures," as if prominent. The two pictures are not identical because *English Hunting Scene* does not have a different scene beneath it. See Caroline H. Rimmer's mention of the repainted picture of *Venus and Cupid* in her letter, June 17, 1906, to Sadakichi Hartmann, Sadakichi Hartmann Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. The full painting title is given in Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 59. See Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 2:573, on an infrared scanning of *English Hunting Scene* that found no evidence of a second picture.

94 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 12.

95 On Spiritualist artists hiding their belief because of possible controversy, see Colbert, *Haunted Visions*, 16.

96 On the devil, see W. MacDonald, *Spiritualism Identical with Ancient Sorcery, New Testament Demonology, and Modern Witchcraft: with the Testimony of God and Man against It* (New York: Carlton and Porter, 1866), 33, 183, 190.

97 Bret E. Carroll, *Spiritualism in Antebellum America* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), 178. The attempt to reveal mediums as frauds was particularly strong in New England. For this, see Emma Hardinge Britten, *Modern American Spiritualism: Twenty Years' Record of the Communion between Earth and the World of Spirits* (New York: the Author, 1870), 173–85.

98 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 22.

99 Originally Rimmer's family did not cooperate with Bartlett and opposed his plan to write a biography. They later relented and assisted "some, but too late." See Lapthorn, "Stories and Memoirs," 4–5, in the possession of Robert Korndorffer. Mention of the dauphin, Swedenborg and Spiritualism is not in the obituaries either.

100 John Bent, *The Chelsea Directory for the Year 1872* (Boston: Rand, Avery and Co., [1872]), 110, which covers the years 1871 and 1872. Both the Chelsea house and Boston studio addresses are given. In 1870, Rimmer opened his school / studio at 36 Bromfield St. (Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 60–61). Because of its date, *English Hunting Scene* was painted at either of the Bromfield St. addresses.

101 Britten, *Modern American Spiritualism*, 168.

102 Crowe, *Night-Side of Nature*, 174.

103 On church-going, see Emanuel Swedenborg, *Emanuel Swedenborg: The Universal Human and Soul-Body Interaction*, edited and translated by George F. Dole; introduction by Stephen Larsen; preface by Robert H. Kirven (New York-Ramsey-Toronto: Paulist Press, 1994), 22.

104 Swedenborg, *A Compendium of the Theological and Spiritual Writings*, 85. The musket shown is an accurate depiction of an Afghan jezail. (I owe this identification to David Miller of the National Museum of American History.) Rimmer had a particular interest in guns, having designed an improved gunlock (Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 89). The site is imaginary, but inspired by specific excavation activity such as at Petra in Jordan and Tlos in Turkey. The guarded tomb's entrance is to the right, and behind the man are differently portrayed, rock-cut tombs. While the area above the staircase indicates the excavated depth, the difference in architectural styles hints at the presence of more than one past civilization.

105 Swedenborg, *Compendium*, 85.

106 Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 15. Rimmer also thought of himself as psychic which might be a reason for being placed at the base of the stair. For this, see MacLean's typed manuscript on Rimmer (untitled), p. 3, box 1, "Research File: Marion MacLean," Kirstein and Nutt Research Material, Archives of American Art.

107 See his poem, "To Mary," Rimmer Commonplace Book. The concept of inner light has many sources, including biblical (Luke 11:35; Matthew 6:23).

108 See Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 181, where he writes of God's presence in himself and in everyone. Swedenborg also speaks of the soul as "a spark." See Swedenborg, *On the Worship and Love of God*, 45.

109 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 146–47.

110 On bones, see [Kirstein], *Rimmer*, no. 50. He also gave art instruction to Caroline. See Dora M. Morrell, "Workers at Work: Miss Rimmer in Her Studio," *The Arena* 21:1 (January 1899), 74.

111 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, vi. For Rimmer as having "no superior" in the U.S. for "exciting the enthusiasm" of students, see Anon., "Fine Arts," *The New York Times*, August 28, 1879, 9.

112 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 60–62, 119. He even intended at one time to create a drawing book for children (85).

113 Anon., "From Obscurity to Renown," *Success*, May 27, 1899, 437, in box 1, Scrapbook — Loose Pictures and Clipping, Kirstein-Nutt Research Material.

114 Jarves, "Sculptor's Complaint," 3. He attributes Anne Whitney's acceptance as a sculptor of such monuments to Rimmer. On Eakins' removal of a model's loincloth in 1886, see Kathleen A. Foster and Cheryl Leibold, *Writing about Eakins: The Manuscripts in Charles Bregler's Thomas Eakins Collection* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press for the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1989), 69.

115 Albert T. Gardner, "Hiram Powers and William Rimmer," *Magazine of Art*, 36 (February 1943), 43. Hawthorne was criticizing Hiram Powers who exemplified the opposite.

7. The Death and Legacy of a Maverick Artist

In his final years, Rimmer lived outside Boston in Chelsea while offering lecture courses — sometimes involving extended visits — at various locations. In addition to his self-organized art anatomy classes in Boston from 1870 to 1876 and more informal teaching, he taught courses at the National Academy of Design in New York; the Technological School in Worcester; the High School (later the Normal School) in Providence, Rhode Island; the Yale School of Fine Arts in New Haven; a night drawing school in Chelsea; the Normal Art School in Boston; and the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. His *Art Anatomy* was published in 1877 and a revision of his *Elements of Design* in 1879, the year of his death. Essentially, he drove himself to provide as well as he could for his ailing wife; his daughter, Caroline; and an unknown future. He even lectured on "Anatomy of Expression" to theater students in 1878 at the Boston University School of Oratory, but his performance could not be repeated.[1]

Instead, by the spring of 1879, Rimmer became overwhelmed by "extreme nervous prostration" or deep depression, and, on the advice of a physician, he abandoned his Museum School class about six weeks too early. Planning to return in the fall, he retired to the home of his married daughter, Adeline, in South Milford, to work on pre-prepared images, so he would not have to draw constantly on a blackboard. He also intended to continue revising his manuscript, "Stephen and Phillip."[2] But on August 20, he died in his sleep at age sixty-three.

According to an obituary, he suffered from exhaustion or "physical prostration" for "many years," but "his indomitable energy would not allow him to take the rest he needed."[3] Energy, such as this, is suggestive of mania, while "nervous and physical prostration" is indicative of melancholia.[4] An authority on the subject wrote, in 1869, that a "change of scene and occupation, will, we think, in the larger proportion of cases, preserve the patient from confirmed melancholia or mania."[5] Such thinking might have inspired the trip to South Milton. But, horrifyingly, the recommended remedy for the illness is arsenic, to be taken in unspecified amounts. This advice concurs with that of other period physicians. In touting the curative power of arsenic, the author portrayed it benignly as a "nerve nutrient."[6]

Suspiciously, the effect of arsenic poisoning approximates the description of Rimmer's father at his death in that it causes acute abdominal pain and chronic diarrhea.[7] Yet arsenic is not likely to have contributed to the death of the artist. Not only was he an independent-minded physician who found success by not following popular remedies, but also his final diagnosis differed from his father's diarrhea.[8] Instead his recorded cause of death is "blood poisoning," probably sepsis generated, as it often is, by pneumonia.[9]

Caroline scrawled on the "Stephen and Phillip" manuscript: "Dear father died from exhaustion [illegible] work — but even to the end stood between the pain of his illness and his loved ones, sparing them full knowledge of his sufferings — My dear mother ever his helper… then his nurse — survived my father a few years."[10] Caroline's message means that, in a change from Bartlett's later view, Rimmer's wife was not so ill as to be "feeble." Moreover, her father's unspecified "illness" (not mere exhaustion) involved long-term suffering, "even to the end," which could refer to mental illness.[11]

Rimmer's physical and emotional collapse is almost foretold in his reflection on his teaching as a performance in 1870: "They will not draw an outline after me," he said, "when my outline is not full of a life that I can only give by exertions that cover me with perspiration and make my heart beat. I cannot draw a face expressing anger that they will feel and copy, without for the time being in imaginary experience angry myself."[12] This is the kind of emotional intensity that others described as part of his creativity, and it did not fail to bring an enthusiastic

https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0304.07

response. One of his Boston students opined to a friend that Rimmer "was one of the greatest art teachers — art inspirers, one might almost better say — the world has ever known!"[13]

As for his legacy, Rimmer's pictures in oil at the Boston Museum's 1880 memorial exhibition were a revelation because, until then, he was virtually unknown as a painter. But the *Falling Gladiator* received most of the reviewers' attention.[14] As part of its fame, the story that accompanied it eventually became that its rejection at the Parisian Salon was because — and only because — the judges considered it a cast from a living model (the reason is not known).[15] Indeed, its degree of naturalism was unusual and modern. Yet the sculpture took a free-spirited turn that was not sufficiently noticed in that it depended pointedly on no model. Its 1880 exhibition inspired a movement to reproduce the *Gladiator* in bronze, and, although it was unsuccessful, Rimmer's friends made another attempt in 1905.[16]

It was during this second effort that Rimmer's style was linked to that of the government-employed French sculptor Auguste Rodin who formed large figures in clay or wax that were then cast in bronze or cut in marble. He continued to operate at the height of his popularity in the years before his death in 1917.[17] The two artists had expressive power in common, and both incorporated aspects of Michelangelo's male nudes in their work. But unlike Rimmer, the prolific Rodin — a generation younger — worked from live models, had the help of a workshop, and typically manipulated surface effects for bronze, his preferred medium.

Significantly, the two men were alike in creating fragmented figures. That Rodin did so has been an essential point in discussions of him as a canonical modernist. That is, his embrace of the fragment as a worthy subject in itself is seen as a key marker in the progression of Western sculpture from naturalism to abstraction.[18] But Rodin's relevant work has been misdated until recently.[19] The change in dates shows that Rimmer moved in this direction about a decade earlier, when he broke new ground by exhibiting partial figures as complete works of art, reflecting the current state of antique remains. He began with the 1863 *Chaldean Shepherd*; the 1868, human-headed *Osiris*; and the 1869 *Dying Centaur*. Yet his most extreme instance of this is his 1877 *Torso*.[20] The connection was so noticeable that two sculpture historians in 1924 argued that "it must be acknowledged" that Rimmer and Rodin had the "same interest in form in curious postures for form's sake."[21] But, in Rimmer's case, this is not true. The difference is important: content was unmistakably crucial to his development of form.

Rimmer did have a particular sensitivity to form. He would discuss sculpture in terms of sheer mass, without regard for subject, and he responded to the emotional impact or expressiveness of form alone when he described Michelangelo's semi-awake figure of *Dawn* (San Lorenzo, Florence) as the "Black Sea." He was comparing it to the ancient *Belvedere Torso* (Vatican Museums), a fragmented and condensed core of energy that he called "the ocean."[22] Tellingly, he interpreted both through personal, emotional associations.

As will be seen, after the exhibition, Truman Bartlett, as first biographer, inadvertently set the course for Rimmer to be misunderstood. However, his 1882 monograph remains indispensable as a primary source and the only book on Rimmer other than Jeffrey Weidman's 1983 doctoral dissertation.[23]At the outset, Bartlett seemed to be unusually well-qualified to write about the artist, having pursued a dual career himself as both a teacher and sculptor. He also wrote with the ability of a skilled novelist. Yet he did not have first-hand knowledge of Rimmer or the full cooperation of the Rimmer family.[24] Unfortunately, because of his presumed closeness, Bartlett helped lead to such sweeping distortions as the claim, more than a hundred years later in 1989, that Rimmer held "perfectly conventional attitudes" toward ancient art.[25] The combined research of Lincoln Kirstein and Weidman did nothing to undermine this far-reaching misconception.

Having been inspired by the memorial exhibition, Bartlett contributed primarily through his careful recording of first-hand recollections of those who knew Rimmer. These memories resulted partly from his mass-mailed information requests. Yet he was unable to weigh the relative value of contradictory responses. One stumbling block was that he could not identify the artist's illness or put it in a larger context. Just as limiting, he did not have sufficient perspective or independence of mind to fully appreciate the older sculptor as an innovator. He recognized him as an original thinker, but he could not defend this perception.[26]

For instance, Bartlett had little to say about the photo-sculpture project and certain of Rimmer's blatantly nonconformist pieces — the hawk-headed *Osiris*, *Dying Centaur, Torso* (no mention), and the proposed *Tri Mountain*.[27] In fact, he so downplayed the *Dying Centaur* that in his list of extant sculptures that demonstrate unusual diversity in approach and "a very high order of imagination," he neglected to mention it.[28] In sum, he too-often skipped over what would have been arresting to a later generation, such as a statue's lack of complete arms or a crudely sculptured torso with an aesthetically disturbing texture and no appendages.

As for the paintings and drawings, they are barely mentioned, if at all. To be fair, the family was not forthcoming about them, and Bartlett had little understanding of what he did see.[29] Thus, despite its size, *English Hunting Scene* is missing, and in a sign of ignorance, *Flight and Pursuit* is unexplained and reproduced in reverse in the 1882 and 1890 editions (corrected in the 1970 reprint).

On the positive side, Bartlett did share a substantial, overall insight — that Rimmer was partly teaching through his exhibited sculpture — but this knowledge was not expressed clearly enough and not picked up by later scholars.[30] He also recognized the artist's unusual inventiveness and correctly predicted that Rimmer would be better understood in the future. As he put it, "His charm is in the imagination, and his work appeals to another generation."[31]

As for the reception of Bartlett's book, *The Art Life of William Rimmer: Sculptor, Painter, and Physician*, it did not sell as well as expected. This is despite the author's promotion of Rimmer as not-sufficiently appreciated and despite his focus on such widely respected work as the *Falling Gladiator.*[32] Ironically, Bartlett defended the *Alexander Hamilton* from its early criticism so convincingly that one reviewer was not deterred from concluding that it represented the artist's finest achievement. If Rimmer had continued with similar work, this critic contended, "he might have ranked high among modern sculptors."[33] Granted, there was probably an initial bias on the part of the reviewer, but this gives a sense of how Bartlett's book could be read.

Bartlett's errors of omission were compounded when he threw in illustrations by other artists for "comparison" without saying much about the rationale for their inclusion.[34] Thus, the reproductions include work by Michelangelo (drawing titled *Falling Figures*), William Blake (two illustrations from the Book of Job), and — most puzzlingly — Jean-François Millet (*Feeding Her Birds* and *The Sower*). Bartlett wrote one line only about Millet — whose pictures appealed to Boston collectors at the time — and that did not explain the selection of his paintings or why they were included: "No greater extremes, perhaps, could exist than those between Rimmer and Millet."[35] With these visual additions, the book had the cumulative result of making Rimmer appear somehow derivative and, in Bartlett's wake, the most dedicated Rimmer researchers continued in this same direction.[36] They tried to match his work with antecedents without any larger concept of what Rimmer might be doing. This did the artist a great disservice. Naturally, he did not blind himself to previous artwork, especially as he was teaching from precedents. But, as an artist himself, he borrowed from others to create something new, to recall their work for an association, or to comment critically on what they had done. His grandniece made this point in writing to Kirstein, from family knowledge, that he "would not ape or copy — he must be original at any cost."[37]

In another major error with unforeseen consequences, Bartlett and others missed the spiritual meaning that was central to Rimmer's life and to much of his work. Certainly this is related to the family's reticence and the fact that *Dying Centaur, Torso* and many of the paintings — such as *Horses at a Fountain; Victory; English Hunting Scene; Interior/ Before the Picture; Flight and Pursuit; The Shepherd;* and *The Gamblers, Plunderers of Castile* — could not be understood. Along with the *St. Stephen* (and its missed revision of the *Laocoön*), this is a large chunk of his artistic identity.

Bartlett's oversight led to the sculptor Lorado Taft's conclusion in his authoritative 1903 survey of American sculpture (which referenced Bartlett's monograph) that there was nothing morally "edifying" in Rimmer's sculpture. Clearly annoyed that Rimmer would create nudes without models, Taft proclaimed his sculpture generally "valueless."[38] Taft's book had a wide impact as it ran through many reprints, including in 1969 and 2019. Fortunately, a few art historians dismissed his opinion entirely.

In his 1945 history of American sculpture, Albert Ten Eyck Gardner rightly called Rimmer a "creative genius," who was "far above his contemporaries as a sculptor."[39] The next year, art historian Lloyd Goodrich wrote: "Rimmer was one of the few Americans who can be called a master, and [...] America's failure to bring out all that he was capable of, is one of the major tragedies in our art."[40] Despite Rimmer's small number of works, William H. Gerdts, in his 1974 study of nudes, had no difficulty in pronouncing him "the most individual" and even "the greatest" of America's nineteenth-century sculptors.[41] Countering this, Wayne Craven, perhaps inadvertently, undermined Rimmer's growing reputation. In his 1968 history of American sculpture (the reissue of 1984 is still the standard survey), he recited the artist's biography from Bartlett but was unable to comprehend his work or assess his importance. At best, he admired Rimmer's "expressive power" and "innate drive toward true sculptural form."[42]

No art historian knew Rimmer the way he can now be understood with, for instance, the addition of Daniel Chester French's revelation: Rimmer's work "is not like anything else at all."[43] To put his assessment in context: At the time, French had not only an insider's knowledge of Rimmer and his sculpture but also of the competition both stateside and abroad.[44] He was a well-informed judge, and he had no personal stake in boosting his former teacher's reputation.

Without support from Bartlett, Rimmer's paintings were left out of surveys of American art. They tended to receive attention only when exhibited, such as in the 1916 centennial exhibition (commemorating Rimmer's birth) at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, or the 1946–1947 exhibition organized by Kirstein for the Whitney Museum of American Art, in New York, and the Boston Museum. This temporarily changed when art historian Edgar P. Richardson encountered *Flight and Pursuit* and included it in his 1956 survey, *Painting in America*.

Beyond giving attention in a seminal way to *Flight and Pursuit*, Richardson, on its basis, categorized Rimmer for the first time as a "visionary" painter, and the category stuck. He saw him as one in a loose, nineteenth-century cluster of such artists that began chronologically with Washington Allston, about whom he had written a monograph. This grouping served as a means of organizing a section of his survey, but there is little connection between the eight American painters, described as having a "brooding imagination" (akin to Hawthorne's) and depending more on "memory and reverie" than observation.[45] The others listed — including John La Farge, Elihu Vedder, and Albert Pinkham Ryder — while imaginative, are not known to have experienced extrasensory perception or spoken of "the world unseen" as Rimmer did.[46] He differed considerably from them all.

As for Rimmer's strengths, Bartlett particularly praised *Seated Man* (*Despair*) as possibly Rimmer's most "significant" work, revealing his "natural genius for expression."[47] He also called it "the first and only piece of real primitive sculpture executed in America."[48] The word "primitive" seems idiosyncratic, but he was speaking from the period in seeing an unusual rawness and lack of artistic amelioration in a sculpture that amounted to an empathetic, psychological and physical record.

The artist Francis D. Millet gave a slightly different slant to Bartlett's emphasis on emotional expression when he shifted to its intellectual impact and stressed Rimmer's use of art to convey ideas. His review of the 1880 Rimmer exhibition called attention to Rimmer's deliberate anatomical distortion, as in the anthropomorphic lion in *Gladiator and Lion*, for the sake of greater clarity of meaning. Then he added, appreciatively, that "It is the triumph of the idea that gives all of Dr. Rimmer's works their peculiar value."[49] As so often happens with Rimmer, the protagonists' bodies are signs to be interpreted for a larger meaning. As Millet knew, he recreated the spirit rather than the shell of the lion.

In a letter that Daniel French wrote in 1880 to a fellow sculptor, Thomas Ball, he expressed doubt about Bartlett's ability to write the monograph he proposed and about what its impact might be. Bartlett had just asked him for information, but, as French reported, Bartlett could not model clay "decently himself" and — despite his admiration for his subject — "did not consider it possible that an American could be a genius in sculpture &c." (French was wrong here: Bartlett did call Rimmer a "powerful genius in sculpture").[50] Startlingly, French followed these comments with an oddly encompassing statement about the homage expected to be paid Rimmer. Bartlett, he said, "seems willing, like Samson, to sacrifice himself for the pleasure of crushing his friends (?)."[51]That is, if the book stated the truth, it would diminish the status of some contemporary sculptors.

Bartlett's sometimes-difficult personality made him unpopular (hence the question mark in parentheses), but French's point is enlightening. He acknowledged that he thought they all — Bartlett, Ball, himself, and unknown others — were actually inferior to Rimmer as sculptors.[52] Considering French's mounting fame and financial success, this is a wholly unexpected appraisal. In a further tribute, he speculated that Rimmer was "perhaps the only sculptor of his generation in America who will be considered a great artist in our artistic period."[53]

In 1905, French tried to obtain backing to have Rimmer's best-known pieces cast in bronze, and his effort drew the aid of Rimmer's friends — his former student Edward R. Smith and the architect William R. Ware.[54] As members of the Rimmer Memorial Committee, as they called themselves, the three raised funding for the bronze casting of the *Dying Centaur*, *Falling Gladiator* and *Fighting Lions*. Their timing was influenced by French's membership on the Board of Trustees, and the trustees' Executive Committee and Committee on Purchases, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.[55] Through gifts (including a bronze *Fighting Lions* from French) and purchase, the museum acquired bronze casts of all three pieces between 1906 and 1907. Rimmer's two youngest daughters and anonymous subscribers followed this with the gift of a second bronze cast of the *Gladiator* to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston in 1908.

Earlier, the sculptor Gutzon Borglum, a former Rodin student, had been privy to the deliberations of the Rimmer Memorial Committee when he impulsively took action which provided the impetus for the others. With doubtless Caroline Rimmer's permission, he borrowed the original plaster cast of the *Dying Centaur*, which had been on loan in 1905 to Boston's Museum of Fine Arts and had a plaster cast made from it by the Gorham Manufacturing Company in Providence, R.I. From this, a bronze cast was made, on behalf of the Rimmer Memorial Committee, and presented as a gift to the Metropolitan Museum of Art by the foundry's president.[56] A plaster cast from the original was also made for Borglum. His son sold it to Kennedy Galleries who made an edition of fifteen numbered bronze casts in 1967 before selling the plaster to the Yale University Art Gallery.[57] Thus, Rimmer can now be remembered for his bronze sculptures, although he never actually worked in bronze.[58] The transition to a durable medium was not just necessary but also effective in perpetuating the memory of his work.

Borglum's decision to prioritize the *Dying Centaur* as the most valuable of Rimmer's remaining sculptures is a choice that deserves pause. Others might choose the *Falling Gladiator*, which Gardner claimed "symbolized the death of the neoclassic style and subject," but the *Centaur* is more daring, imaginative, and spiritual which reflects Rimmer's identity.[59] It also displays the deep feeling and understanding Rimmer had for the disadvantaged and the salvation seeker.

Somewhat surprisingly, Rimmer was chosen as one of the artists to represent American art in the legendary 1913 New York Armory Show, which was a survey of European and American art culminating in an avant-garde finale. It was a singular honor especially as the show did not include some of the more successful artists from the past who inspire comparison — such as Allston, William Morris Hunt, George Inness, La Farge, Vedder, Thomas Eakins, and Daniel C. French.[60] Perhaps as was said of Rimmer a couple of years later in another context, it was because Rimmer "was fortunate enough not to have been very closely imitative of his contemporaries."[61]

Maurice B. Prendergast, a Boston artist and good friend of Arthur B. Davies (the principal organizer) suggested Rimmer for the exhibit; and one of the organizers — with Caroline Rimmer — chose four of the artist's drawings for inclusion.[62] From Davies' own depictions of Arcadian fantasies, it is easy to imagine him making the selection. The visionary, dream-like qualities of many of Rimmer's drawings would have appealed to him. Of the chosen group, only one drawing is identified, *Evening, or the Fall of Day* (fig. 144), which was done on canvas. Lent by Boston's Museum of Fine Arts, it would have made an impressive drawing contribution partly because of its large size.[63]

Nonetheless, Rimmer's limited representation did not do him justice. In retrospect, although he belonged chiefly with the Romantics, he could justifiably be associated with the international Symbolist movement. The argument would be based on his emphasis on ideational art and his deliberate ambiguity in allegorical meaning. If Davies — who is considered a Symbolist — had known and understood the work, he might also have been

Fig. 144 *Evening, or the Fall of Day*, 1869-70. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

attracted to the supernatural aspects of *Flight and Pursuit* as well as *Interior: Before the Picture*, the unsettling effect of *Young Woman*, and the sinister overtones of *The Shepherd* (fig. 78). Rimmer had a recurring inclination for non-naturalistic, disillusioned work and a personal iconography that is perhaps best reflected in his demons and anthropomorphic animals. All of this relates to the mostly later Symbolist movement to which Vedder and Prendergast are linked as well.[64]

Other features of Rimmer's work that bring to mind more recent art include the suggestion of movement through duplicated or vibrating outlines, as in his *Lion and Mouse*, and the size of his proposed, colossal sculpture, *Tri Mountain*. Just as prophetic is his recognizable appropriation and transformation of other works of art, as in the case of *Torso*. Yet, given the period, the artist's most effective departure and publicly controversial move was his criticism of contemporary neoclassical sculpture as in the deliberately broken *Dying Centaur* and *Osiris*. In 1913, these amputated works still had avant-garde value even though they were historical. Sculpture influenced by the classical precedent that they addressed remained ubiquitous.

As it happened, Gutzon Borglum headed the committee in charge of the selection of American sculpture for the 1913 exhibition. But he interpreted his mission to be the choosing of "fair and representative" pieces, and ultimately resigned over a disagreement with Davies who had seen advanced art abroad and thought his choices too conservative.[65] The two had very different impressions of what the exhibition should be, and their final dispute partly concerned the question of whether to include French's sculpture, which Borglum favored.[66]

The question naturally arises as to why Borglum, who thought the "quality of [Rimmer's] imagery ranked with Da Vinci and [Michel] Angelo," did not make the case for him.[67] When the *Dying Centaur* was cast in bronze in 1905, Borglum himself applied the patina.[68] The likely answer is that he did not consider the *Centaur* "representative" of American art, and it would have been incongruous with work by living artists such as himself.[69] According to an article written in support of the bronzing of Rimmer's major pieces, the tortured arms (making the plea of a troubled *human* soul) were still not understood.[70] This remains usually the case today.

Suppose that in addition to the *Dying Centaur*, either version of the over-life-size, anti-neoclassical *Osiris* had been preserved to be cast in bronze, and both pieces exhibited in the Armory Show. Where is the evidence that Rimmer, working in the 1860s, was not America's first modernist sculptor? He did invent unnatural or abstracted forms. But more importantly, no one else, that early, attempted to redirect proponents of traditional art to an art of ideas or an art about art.

Another sign of recognition — almost as historically prestigious as the Armory Show — came when Caroline Rimmer was asked to submit work by her father for the historical section of the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco. Probably it helped that the Boston painter Frank W. Benson greatly admired Rimmer (his former teacher) and was on the Advisory Committee for New England. Caroline contributed two paintings, *Angel in the Garden* (unlocated) and *At the Window*. The latter, with its introspective woman and relatively brushy application of paint — as in the window curtain — fit in well with the modern section.[71]

By chance, part of Rimmer's legacy is the enduring fame of his dramatic drawing, *Evening, or the Fall of Day*. The English rock band, Led Zeppelin, chose it for their record label logo (Swan Song Records) in 1974 (fig. 145). Thereafter and until the present, this now colored image has served as a commercially successful band reference on T-shirts, patches, and tattoos. That this "Icarus" should once have been meant to be the rejected angel Lucifer — light bearer — which is why he lacks genitals and had an otherworldly spark on one wing, is now of little or no consequence.[72] The image survives with changes and without the compositional beauty of the original, but it has become an icon in popular culture. Both versions — in Albert Ten Eyck Gardner's phrasing — share a "vast evening sadness of space over boundless plains."[73]

Fig. 145 *Bad Company* (Swan Song Records), 1976. Album cover for music by Led Zeppelin. https://www.flickr.com/photos/bartsol/35057146534

What Rimmer contributed to American art was distinctive and, in a break in a long tradition, not foreign-derived. He championed a home-grown asset, an emphasis on self-expression — promoting, as much as possible, an inner wellspring of creativity. He fostered an imaginary strain in American art as a not-sufficiently tapped resource. More than that, he wanted a sculpture so released from nature as to be conceived of as an abstraction or largely a product of the imagination which was an extraordinary idea in 1868, or even fifty years later. According to students, "He confirmed one in the great things, which were dimly one's own."[74] Arguably his heirs were the artists in the twentieth century who totally abandoned the subject of nature in an attempt to express their own thoughts and feelings.

Almost twenty years after Rimmer's death, Horace Burdick voiced his teacher's opinion as his own in an article on modern art that would undoubtedly have pleased Rimmer as a legacy. He wrote: "It is the expression of nature and not nature itself that the artist strives to reproduce [...] If the painter is a true artist [,] his imagination and ideality [are] hampered in the presence of the model [...] His picture will be evolved from his soul."[75] This is the self-expression that Rimmer sought.

Endnotes

1 Mention of Rimmer as an Associate Lecturer for the expression course is in the 1878 prospectus for the Boston University School of Oratory, which had opened in 1873. This is in MacKaye, *Epoch*, 1:289. See also University Council, ed., *Boston University Year Book* 5 (Boston: Riverside Press, 1878), 16. The venture involved James Steele MacKaye, on the faculty, and might have been a second attempt to borrow Rimmer's prestige. More than a year after Rimmer died, a Boston art critic noted that he had given the Boston Museum's school "prestige" and "promise" that it now lacked. He had been an artist "whom all ... equally looked up to." See Greta, "Art in Boston Wears At Present a Discouraged Look," *The Art Amateur*, 4:3 (January 18, 1881), 51.

2 For the quote and advice, see Anon., *Museum of Fine Arts. School of Design and Painting. Third Annual Report of the Permanent Committee in Charge of the School* (Boston: Alfred Mudge and Son, 1879), 13. On "Stephen and Phillip," Boston Medical Library, see Caroline Rimmer's notations, [1], 258.

3 Anon., "Dr. William Rimmer," *Boston Evening Transcript*, August 22, 1879, 6. His funeral, held at the residence of his daughter, was presided over by the Rev. Adin Ballou, a Unitarian Universalist in Milford, who was a prominent Spiritualist. See also the obituary (identified only as "South Milford") in the Clipping Scrapbook, Boston Medical Library, and in Anon., "Convention of Spiritualists," *Trenton State Gazette*, October 2, 1852, [2].

4 On manic drive, see Jameson, *Touched with Fire*, 109, 113–14; on depletion of energy in depression, see ibid., 18.

5 E.H. Van Deusen, *Observations on a Form of Nervous Prostration* (*Neurasthenia*), *Culminating in Insanity* (Lansing, MI: W.S. George and Co., Printers to the State, 1869), 14.

6 Ibid., 17, 18 (quote).

7 On arsenic, see Thomas Hawkes Tanner, *Memoranda on Poisons* 3rd rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakiston, 1872), 69.

8 On his independence as a respected physician, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 25.

9 *Deaths Registered in the Town of Milford for the Year Eighteen Hundred and Seventy-Nine*, p. 356, no. 129, Vital Records, Town Clerk's Office, Milford, MA.

10 Caroline in Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 258.

11 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 22.

12 Anon., "Dr. Rimmer's Art School" [From the *Boston Daily Advertiser*, May 7], *New York Herald*, May 8, 1870, 3.

13 Lilian Whiting, "Boston Days: The Lovely Life of Sara Malcolm Freeborne," *The Times-Democrat* [New Orleans, LA], September 9, 1906, 38.

14 Anon., "Fine Arts," *The Boston Times*, July 18, 1880, 8.

15 Frederick W. Coburn, "Exhibit Revives Reminiscences of Rimmer: Centenary of Physician-Sculptor is Celebrated," [*Boston Herald*], February 20, 1916, clipping in the School of the Museum of Fine Arts Scrapbook, vol. 8, p. 30, Archives, Tufts University.

16 Charles de Kay, "Honors for William Rimmer," SM6. The 1880 exhibition also inspired the gift-purchase of twelve of Rimmer's finest drawings by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. This included the large drawing on canvas, *Evening, or the Fall of Day*.

17 De Kay, "Honors," SM6.

18 On progression, see Albert Elsen, *The Partial Figure in Modern Sculpture from Rodin to 1969* (Baltimore Museum of Art: Baltimore [1969]), 16.

19 Later scholars have pushed forward Elsen's dates for Rodin's relevant early work. For instance, his headless and limbless *Torso of a Man* (Musèe du Petit Palais, Paris) is now dated ca. 1887 (museum's date).

20 Without addressing content, the argument has been made that *Torso* is a precursor for "some of the sculptures of Gaston Lachaise," which speaks to Rimmer's degree of abstraction. See Abraham A. Davidson, "The Enigma of William Rimmer," *Arts Magazine* 61:2 (October 1986), 64.

21 George Henry Chase and Chandler Rathfon Post, *A History of Sculpture* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1924), 498.

22 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 70, 118. He was teaching at the Boston Athenaeum where plaster casts of both were on view.

23 Other scholars might not have pursued Rimmer because Weidman was expected to produce a book.

24 Lapthorn, "Stories and Memoirs," 4, and Bartlett, *Rimmer*, vi.

25 For knowing Rimmer and the quote, see William L. Vance, *America's Rome*, Volume 1, *Classical Rome* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 339, 338, https://doi.org/10.37862/aaeportal.00010.

26 See Bartlett, *Rimmer*, vi, on sending out "about five hundred circulars" to those who knew Rimmer. See Rimmer's character misinterpreted as "imperious" in Bartlett's biography review in "The Art Life of Dr. Rimmer," *Boston Daily Advertiser*, November 4, 1882, 9. On original, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 81, 98.

27 His praise of *Tri Mountain* as having the potential to raise Boston's stature is in his less cautious article, written before the book. See Bartlett, "Dr. William Rimmer," 510. *Torso* was not shown by the family until the 1916 exhibition on Rimmer at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Caroline bequeathed it to the Museum in 1919, where it has been kept in storage. The 1985 Rimmer exhibition included it.

28 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 49.

29 The obituaries would have been provided by the family, and they do not mention any paintings or drawings.

30 See Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 48, 49. The point is more clearly made by Rimmer's student Edward R. Smith who wrote that "The main purpose of the 'Gladiator' was academic; but the statue itself is not entirely so." See Smith, "Dr. Rimmer," 199.

31 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 23.

32 See the note about sales on the frontispiece of Bartlett's copy of his Rimmer biography, Paul Wayland Bartlett Papers, MSS 11940, box 52, Library of Congress.

33 Anon., "The Art Life of William Rimmer," *The Nation*, December 21, 1882, 537–38.

34 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 129.

35 Ibid., 129. On popularity, see the provenance of Millet's *The Sower* which was purchased by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, from William Morris Hunt, who studied with Millet and collected his work.

36 An example is the statement that Rimmer's lion in *Gladiator and Lion* is "based on" an 1810 engraved illustration of a lion, reproduced next to it, but there is no resemblance between the two images to suggest copying. See Weidman, et al., *Rimmer*, 70–71. Rimmer habitually drew lions freehand on his blackboard.

37 See Marion MacLean's letter to Lincoln Kirstein, October 1946, p. 12 (repeated on p. 2 of her typed notes), "Research File: Marion MacLean," box 1, Kirstein and Nutt Research Material, Archives of American Art.

38 Lorado Taft, *The History of American Sculpture* (New York: Macmillan, 1903), 187. The 1969 and 2019 editions are reprints respectively of the 1924 and 1930 editions which include an unchanged section on Rimmer.

39 Albert Ten Eyck Gardner, *Yankee Stonecutters: The First American School of Sculpture, 1800–1850* (New York: Columbia University Press for the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1945), 23, 41.

40 Lloyd Goodrich's letter to Lincoln Kirstein, August 17, 1946, in the correspondence file for "July 22–September 1946," Kirstein and Nutt Research Material.

41 William H. Gerdts, *The Great American Nude: A History in Art* (New York: Praeger, 1974), 100, 102.

42 Craven, *Sculpture*, 355. He generally avoids interpretation — except to repeat Bartlett on *Seated Man* (*Despair*) — and offers wrong locations for some of Rimmer's work. The bust of *Mary Rimmer* (Boston Medical Library) is not lost; the plaster of the *Gladiator* at the Smithsonian is the original, not a copy; and the plaster original of *Lions* is not at the Boston Museum but, rather, has long been lost. See Craven, *Sculpture*, 348, 351, and 355. In 1976, Craven wrote appreciatively that Rimmer "created some of the most exciting art of the century" but also, mistakenly, that he "was little admired in his day." See [Tom Armstrong, et al.], *200 Years of American Sculpture*, [Boston]: D.R. Godine in Association with the Whitney Museum of American Art, 1976, 74, 75. Craven's second edition of his survey does include revision but not concerning Rimmer.

43 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 136. Bartlett quoted French at length, in a separate section, without identifying the speaker by name, but the wording and ideas match those of French in his correspondence (see index). This identification gives the view more weight.

44 By 1880, French had already created his famous *Minute Man* (Concord, MA), studied abroad, and won American city commissions for large, marble allegorical groups.

45 Richardson, *Painting in America*, 163. In addition to Allston, LaFarge, Rimmer, Ryder, and Vedder, his list is diversified enough to include George Fuller, William Page, and John Quidor. The last three were within Rimmer's generation.

46 Rimmer, "Stephen and Phillip," 17. Although there is little resemblance in their work, perhaps he is most often compared to the more intuitive and less cerebral Ryder.

47 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 6.

48 Ibid., 6.

49 Millet, "The Paintings — The Rimmer Collection," 212. This is a review of the 1880 Rimmer exhibition. De Kay also emphasized the artist's ability "to express ideas in form." See de Kay, "Honors," *New York Times*, September 17, 1905, SM6.

50 French's letter, August 9, 1880, to Thomas Ball, copy in the Daniel C. French Papers, Library of Congress. On genius, see Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 24.

51 French's letter, August 9, 1880, to Ball. Kirstein, in his 1946 catalogue and its 1961 reprint ("Rimmer: His Life," 716), quotes French as saying of Rimmer: "He just missed being great." This is in the sense of having the chance to show what he could do. Kirstein identifies the letter as addressed to Mrs. Ball in Italy but does not give its location, and it has not been located since.

52 A note to the transcription of this letter describes Bartlett as "acerbic" in "Typescripts by Daniel Preston and Michael Richman for a Collection of French Family Papers," Chesterwood Archives, Chapin Library, Williams College, Massachusetts.

53 The quote is from Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 136, and part of a long quotation which, from the phrasing, came from French.

54 Charles de Kay, "Honors for William Rimmer," SM6. See also Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 4:1315.

55 French is listed as on the board and both committees in the *Annual Report of the Trustees of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, for 1904–1907 [and later], Museum Archives, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

56 Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 1:307–10. See also Lauretta Dimmick in Thayer Tolles, ed., *American Sculpture in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Vol. I, A Catalogue of Works by Artists Born before 1865* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1999), 55–56. The *Falling Gladiator* and *Fighting Lions* were put in bronze by the John Williams foundry in New York.

57 Weidman, *Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 1:316–29. Edward R. Smith presented plaster casts of all three sculptures to the Avery Library, Columbia University, where he worked, but the casts appear to have been destroyed (ibid., 314–15).

58 Rimmer lacked funding for conversion of his work into a more durable material. He painted *Seated Man* (*Despair*) to resemble bronze, suggesting an attraction to the medium. Nonetheless, something is lost in the transition of the magnificent, soft, off-white plaster cast of *Dying Centaur* into a hard, shiny version. Part of the loss is an expression of vulnerability that is entirely fitting.

59 Gardner, *Stonecutters*, 38.

60 Gail Stavitsky, Laurette E. McCarthy, and Charles H. Duncan, *New Spirit: American Art in the Armory Show*, 159–60.

61 Coburn, "Exhibit Revives," n.p.

62 See Prendergast in Stavitsky, et al., *New Spirit*, 76. The entries were together in Gallery L for American watercolors and drawings. For this, see Marilyn Satin Kushner and Kimberly Orcutt, ed., *The Armory Show at 100: Modernism and Revolution* (New York: New York Historical Society, 2013), 457. They traveled with the exhibition to Chicago but not Boston where, for lack of room, the American section was eliminated.

63 Stavitsky, et al., *New Spirit*, 76, and 95n 98. The three other drawings were lent by Caroline through the museum. According to Bartlett, the large version of *Evening* had been exhibited during Rimmer's lifetime, in New York and Boston soon after its completion (*Rimmer*, 125). Weidman locates this in Boston at the DeVries, Ibarra, and Co. gallery in 1870 (*Rimmer: Critical Catalogue*, 3:969). It was also in the 1880 Rimmer memorial exhibition. See Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, *Exhibition of Sculpture, Oil Paintings, and Drawings by Dr. William Rimmer* (Boston: Alfred Mudge and Son, 1880), no. 83.

64 Diane Chalmers Johnson in her *American Symbolist Art*, 47–59, includes Rimmer as a Symbolist artist. Abraham A. Davidson in *The Eccentrics and Other American Visionary Painters* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1978), 69, also connects him with the Symbolists. For Arthur B. Davies as Symbolist, see Emily Willard Gephart, "A Dreamer and A Painter: Visualizing the Unconscious in the Work of Arthur B. Davies, 1890–1920," Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Ph.D. dissertation, 2014, 57–61. For Vedder and Prendergast, see Edward Lucie-Smith, *Symbolist Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1972), 144.

65 Kushner and Orcutt, ed., *The Armory Show*, 246. See also Anon., "Borglum, Angered, Quits Art Circle; will Not Exhibit," *Washington Times*, February 7, 1913, 2.

66 Ibid., 2.

67 Gutzon Borglum, "Our Prophet Unhonored in Art," *New York Evening Post*, June 18, 1921, 9.

68 For patina, see Anon., "Special Notices," *New York Daily Tribune*, January 21, 1906, 7.

69 Borglum pulled out of involvement, but his brother Solon had seven unidentified sculptures in the exhibition, which, given his work at the time, were conservative. Borglum understood that the organizing body for the show, the Association of American Painters and Sculptors, was created to promote living artists. Hence, he complained that, with the modern foreign art shown, the American artist had "not been given a fair deal." See Anon., "Art," *Hartford Daily Courant*, March 1, 1913, 21.

70 Charles de Kay, writing in favor of converting Rimmer's best sculpture into bronze, mentioned not understanding the arms and speculated that the centaur might have been meant to hold a bow. See de Kay's 1905 article, "Honors for William Rimmer," SM6.

71 See Anon., *Official Catalogue of the Department of Fine Arts: Panama-Pacific International Exposition* (*With Awards*) (San Francisco: Wahlgreen Company, 1915), p. [5] for Benson and p. 55 for Rimmer's two entries. Benson's admiration is in a letter from his daughter, Eleanor Lawson, to Lincoln Kirstein, correspondence file for November 2–19, Kirstein and Nutt Research Material. A glass-plate photographic negative (no. 16B21.4) of the oil painting *Angel in the Garden* (visibly damaged), from the 1916 Rimmer exhibition, is in the Visual Archives of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The seated angel is apparently watching distant, fleeing figures of Adam and Eve.

72 The colored versions reveal Rimmer's wisdom in his lack of color which made the figure more phantom-like. Redesigned by the artist Joe Petagno as "Icarus," the image now has both arms raised as if in protest, the sun and spark removed, the legs shortened, and the wings shown as man-made.

73 Gardner, "Hiram Powers," 45. This is Gardner's description of some of Rimmer's drawings.

74 Bartlett, *Rimmer*, 139.

75 Horace R. Burdick, "Art and Criticism," *Modern Art* (Autumn 1895), 3:97–98.

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List of Illustrations

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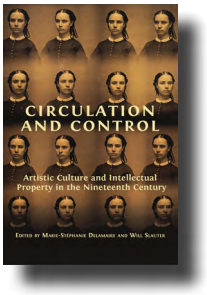

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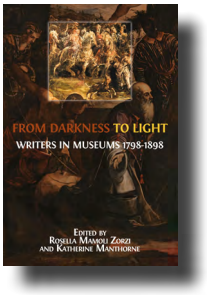

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William Rimmer

Champion of Imagination in American Art

Dorinda Evans

William Rimmer (1816–1879) is arguably the first modernist American sculptor, although his inventive originality has not been fully acknowledged. Rimmer cultivated an art of ideas and personal expression whilst supporting himself as a physician and, later, as a teacher of art anatomy at the Cooper Union School of Design for Women in New York.

Unlike his contemporaries, he advocated the creation of sculpture drawn entirely from the artist's imagination, as opposed to antique archetypes or live models. In this way, he sought to reframe excellence in American art as something that must be found within, rather than derived from Europe.

In this new monograph, the meaning of Rimmer's works is for the first time considered from a combination of perspectives, such as close visual analysis (including X-ray and infrared), historical documentation, and social context. These are enriched with discussion of the artist's own bipolar disorder, deeply-held spiritualism, and views on gender equality—considering women just as talented as men, he used naked male models in all-female classes long before his contemporaries, and produced an allegorical sculpture of fighting lions that criticized the tyranny of men over women.

This book will be of great interest to academics, students, art museums, collectors, dealers, art historians, and members of the public with an affinity for Rimmer's work. It will also appeal to those with a broader interest in American culture.

Cover image: William Rimmer, *'The Dying Centaur'* (1869; cast 1905), bronze
Metropolitan Museum of Art, https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/11915, public domain.
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