In trying to formulate a title for this essay, I was struck by the number of romantic themes punning on the artist’s name that rapidly came to mind: «Uneasy Ryder,» «Ryder in the Pale Moonlight,» «Ghost Ryder in the Sky,» etc. I suspect that their origin relates to my having cut my eye teeth on Lloyd Goodrich’s small monograph published in Braziller’s «The Great American Artists Series» in 1959, the only piece of creditable – and affordable ($1.50) – literature on the painter in the post-World War II era. There Albert Pinkham Ryder is portrayed as the quintessential romantic genius: private, unworldly, incorruptible, and totally dependent upon others for his custodial needs. In this formulation, even his disregard for technique and the deterioration of his paintings are seen in the same light as his indifference to material goods generally. Goodrich began his essay with the tendentious generalization: «The American mind is generally thought of as practical, matter-of-fact and extroverted.» You can fill in the rest of the paragraph yourself. This image of the hapless painter born under the sign of Pisces (19 March) appealed to this Pisces (17 March) with the same first name, teetering on the threshold of the sixties and wallowing in the identity of the dreamy intellectual taking solitary moonlit walks (!) along the riverfront in the Big City.

Now, over thirty years later, two major works on the painter have appeared almost simultaneously to supersede Goodrich’s essay by distinguishing fact from legend and fleshing out with the aid of primary sources and more careful scrutiny of the known facts the historical circumstances of Ryder’s life and social space. These handsomely produced volumes, William Inness Homer and Lloyd Goodrich’s «Albert Pinkham Ryder: Painter of Dreams», published by Abrams, and Elizabeth Broun’s «Albert Pinkham Ryder», published by Smithonian Institution Press to accompany the Ryder exhibition that opened at the National Museum of American Art in Washington, D.C. on April 6 and moved on to Brooklyn in September, 1990 provide a storehouse of new valuable material and are now the standard texts for all future Ryder scholarship.

In setting out to deconstruct «the Ryder myth» Broun argues on levels of complexities avoided by Goodrich and Homer, yet both contributions complement one another and need to be studied together. Broun did not have access to some archival materials available to Goodrich and Homer. The two texts are richly suggestive and lucidly presented, develop reliable chronologies, and illuminate the dark recesses of previous Ryder studies. Ryder’s known poetry – often attached in fragmentary form to the frame of his pictures or quoted in exhibition catalogues – correspondence, and other archival sources are published in extenso for the first time, the question of the numerous forgeries and the identity of his forgers is discussed in separate chapters (with a special chapter in Homer-Goodrich on Ryder’s technical procedures by the noted Ryder conservator Sheldon Keck), and an exhibition history (Broun) and chronological list of Ryder’s paintings (Homer-Goodrich), overwhelmingly illustrate of the fresh impetus given to Ryder studies in these volumes. In addition, the meticulous and densely informative catalogue in the Broun (compiled by her in collaboration with Eleanor Jones, Matthew Drutt, and Sheri Bernstein) will stand as the basic reference tool for Ryder studies. The Homer-Goodrich study is drier, more clinical and concentrates on the biographical facts, while the strength of Broun’s book is its interpretation of the social interactions of Ryder.
with his patrons, dealers, and critics and its inference from these interactions about the political and historical conditions of fin-de-siècle America. Thus efforts to promote Ryder may now be seen as one component of a large-scale defensive effort to maintain clan, race and gender privilege.

The Homer-Goodrich effort was tragically overshadowed by the death of Goodrich in March 1987, with the result that his half was left in an incomplete state. Homer then assumed the responsibility of merging their two separate contributions into a single text and providing the scholarly apparatus. This he accomplished with the lucidity that marks his previous scholarship, and despite the heavy hand of Goodrich who seems to have been bent on amplifying, rather than on updating, his 1959 effort. Goodrich's share included, however, an invaluable archive of interviews and personal reminiscences of Ryder by friends and fellow artists, many of whom Goodrich himself interviewed.

My reading of the Homer-Goodrich and Broun texts stimulated me to reflect on what I perceived to be intriguing parallels between Ryder's initial reception in the 1880s and his current arrival in the 1980s. It was little over a hundred years ago (June 1890) that the first major article on Ryder appeared, and its author, Charles de Kay (under the pseudonym Henry Eckford) presented Ryder as an authentic American genius whose naive and eccentric qualities were misapprehended by Francophilic critics. Unwittingly, he claimed, these critics discouraged native art and artists and betrayed their own uneasiness with modern American culture. De Kay then went on to interpret Ryder in terms of his own ideological position: «But perhaps American art, like American mechanics, literature, politics, has a mission of its own. Perhaps it may teach the great lesson in the Fine Arts which the United States is teaching in many other fields – individuality, freedom, rejection of the authority of any one school».

The construction of Ryder in the late capitalist period shares with the earlier reception a moment of rapid social mobility, economic instability, and aggressive individualism. The bond that linked Ryder to his patrons was part of an attempt to consolidate the power of white, middle-class, native-born American males against the challenge of the new immigrants, the industrial working class, postbellum blacks migrating northward, and upstart women demanding entry into the public sphere. While these opposing forces persist today, their overt recognition in every realm of public and academic life creates the conditions for a reflexive form of scholarship that has been made self-con-

1 Alice Boughton, Photograph of Albert Pinkham Ryder, 1905. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Gift of Everett Boughton

I want to express my gratitude to Elizabeth Broun, Director, National Museum of American Art, William Innes Homer, Chair and H. Rodney Sharp Professor of Art History, University of Delaware, Joan Washburn, Washburn Gallery, and Saul Zalesch for their valuable help and encouragement in the preparation of this paper.

scious by the seemingly unbounded limits of the contemporary art market.

This shift coincides with what I call «postcapitalist» (rather than «postmodernist») cultural scholarship, a search less for an original or undiscovered artist or body of work than for the contextualization or interpretation of the well-established artist and this work. In postcapitalist culture it is impossible to accept the system as inevitable or flawless, if only because the flaws have become so concrete and articulated. The rush of enthusiasm over the breakdown of authority in the East European bloc belies the state of crisis in the western industrial states and the steadily decreasing confidence in a totally capitalist world system. The division of the ruling elite—where once a consensus was guaranteed—over the Iraqi invasion has now to be articulated within the concept of a «New World Order» to accommodate the relativizing of the «Old World Order».

In this context, Ryder comes to the fore once again to bear witness to the supposed visionary and individualistic ethos of the system whose capacity for innovation and originality has drastically declined. Some of this is voluntary; a Jesse Helms, for example, would place restrictions on adventurous creative acts in the name of national morality and thus contribute to the very decadence that frightens him, while the increasing monopolization of art patronage by multinational corporations further militates against independent expression. The corporate capacity to manage and channel expression also threatens to block the latent creative energies of the people in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, denying to art history the potential renaissance it needs as the twentieth century comes to a whimpering close.

The conflict between the need to stress innovation and creativity as the source of American success and the corporate demand for mass consumption (and mass conformity) generates the blockbuster exhibition that safely glorifies traditionally proclaimed genius. This includes the avant-garde artists of the nineteenth century who were so «misunderstood» in their own time, and who now are only too well understood by their modern corporate sponsors. Ryder may be «unpacked» now for a new generation of consumers eager to identify their consumption with their subjectivity.

De Kay declared in 1890 that Ryder had «the humility of genius, but also the fine impatient scorn that goes with genius.» The lavish publication from Abrams (1989) by Homer and Goodrich, entitled appropriately Albert Pinkham Ryder, Painter of Dreams, opens and ends on the same note of «genius». Homer’s introduction stresses that the painter’s work «flowed from the deeper recesses of his mind, often unconsciously.» If on occasion he relied on earlier traditions, it was never in the «literary» sense and his art remained individual and personal. He was the «maverick» seemingly out of touch with his times, but who, in classic storybook guise, eventually «rose to fame and prominence» after his death. The book concludes with Ryder’s inspiration in the twentieth century for a number of artists including Jackson Pollock and places him in the native tradition as a true American genius.»

Ryder’s exalted position at the Armory Show and post-World War I popularity attest to his primary position in the valorization of American creativity. During the isolationist, post-World War I period, Paul Rosenfeld, an art critic closely affiliated with the Stieglitz circle, began his seminal book, Port of New York: Essays on Fourteen American Moderns (1924), with a chapter on Ryder that sets him out as the quintessential Whitmanian of the new generation. Rosenfeld, whose stated aim was to capture what he perceived to be «a new spirit dawning in American life,» proclaimed that Ryder’s works «are the first deep expressions of American life in the medium of paint.» He then conjoined Ryder’s lyricism with the materiality of his society: «Their tender mysterious tones and sensitive forms, their shades of sundown and midnight, harmonies of argent and indigo, speak what we as Americans have lived in the society of the red, white, and blue».

The latest writers on Ryder do not hesitate to extend this tradition to the present. Broun’s *Albert Pinkham Ryder*, produced as both monograph and catalogue for the exhibition at the National Museum of American Art, also ends with a probing analysis of Ryder’s influence on the American avant-garde, especially Pollock, and calls attention to the emblematic status of his work as a transcendent world of the most intimate expression of the imagination, made visible through a personal language, asserting a higher reality. « Ryder is now privileged as the symbol of the artist’s inner voice,» and his influence, ever shifting from margin and mainstream and back again, « has proven to be a magically renewable resource.»

This linking of Pollock and Ryder defers to the mythology already in place to valorize the Americanness of Abstract Expressionism. Pollock could claim that, «The only American master who interests me is Ryder,» a shrewd soundbite that has since proven as appealing for the nationalist mindset as Benjamin West’s expression before the Apollo Belvedere: «How like it is to a Mohawk warrior!» I do not believe that it is coincidental that Pollock was included in the same 1959 Braziller series as the Ryder and that the author, Frank O’Hara, referred to Ryder’s influence as paramount in Pollock’s formation. The blurb on the back of the Ryder cover claimed him to be «one of the great ancestors of American painting» and that «Twenty-first-century taste discovered him and his mystical pictures have had a profound effect on modern abstract art.» In this sense, the primitivist Ryder was constructed to legitimatize the New York School just as African art was constructed to legitimatize Cubism. Both constructions aimed at
justifying the claim to something «transcendent» in the work. In the 1890 article cited above, de Kay admonished those who faulted Ryder for his drawing errors to rethink their position: «Reflection on the arts in savage nations and on the probable genesis of the plastic arts ought to make them less doigmatic.»

Thus despite their quantum leap in Ryder scholarship that opens the way to fresh perspectives and an increased understanding of the painter’s life and work, both of the new monographs preserve the legendary status of Ryder articulated by Goodrich in 1959. Ryder emerges as the progenitor of the «imaginative» side of American painting, just at the moment when American industry and culture are desperately groping for innovation and invention. The appeal of Ryder today coincides with the international revival of expressionist experiments and their infusion into the marketplace. These neoexpressionist trends strive for the status of painting as a transcendental art, and it is no coincidence that a number of the younger American painters working in this mode – Bill Jensen, Joan Nelson, Jim Poag, Mark Innerst, Tobi Kahn and April Gornik, to name a few – admit to Ryder’s influence. His combination of pictorial inventiveness and visionary imagery make him a role model for the depoliticized mind-set fostered by the politics of the Reagan-Bush era. What neither Homer nor Broun – who is especially brilliant in showing how Ryder and his reputation were exploited – do is to draw the inevitable conclusion from their study that Ryder was himself a conservative, a self-made type like his patrons, who pursued a pure and lofty culture while caught within the meshes of a middle-class existence he professed to despise.

Of course, this did not preclude the turning of a profit for Ryder and his patrons based on his unique qualities. The New Bedford native could not have been all that naive. His brother William left the town for New York just after the Civil War which had a catastrophic impact on the whaling fisheries (Confederate raiders terrorized whale-ships on the high seas) and textile mills of New Bedford, and a time when Pennsylvania oil wells began rivalling the whale oil production of New Bedford’s oldest entrepreneurs. William’s successful business ventures allowed him to send for the rest of his family who followed around 1867–68. Ryder’s own entrepreneurial flair is seen in his steady production of decorative work for Daniel Cottier who provided domestic furnishings for the luxury market. Later, Ryder demonstrated his economic awareness in his sensitivity to the prices of his pictures and stated that he would never sell below their current market value and even sell higher in anticipation of their steady increase. He also preferred to cut out the dealer when he established his reputation and made direct sales himself or allowed his friends to act as agents. He invested a high percentage of his earnings in the stock market and attracted patrons who were skilled in high finance.

The pioneer collector of contemporary American painting, Thomas Benedict Clarke, shrewdly assessed the art market from an investor’s point of view. Analogous to the comparison of a company’s earnings with the undervalued price of its stock, Clarke discovered that snob appeal kept prices for American pictures well below comparable European examples. He put aside his previous interest in Chinese porcelains, and systematically began to collect American works. He employed his already well-honed marketing skills for the promotion of American art and gained the allegiance of well-known artists and critics. Ryder, who sold Clarke two major canvases in 1885, fell right into line and wrote his patron that he was «happy to be identified with your mission.»

Ryder’s first important dealer, Daniel Cottier, allowed his decorative arts gallery to be used as a kind of Salon des refusés in 1875 by the nascent Society of American Artists. Cottier, a native Scot, exploited the «America First» idea, joining with the new association whose object was the «advancing [of] the interests of Art in America.» Cottier continued to support and to promote the group after their formalization, and at the same time commissioned Ryder to do decorations for some of the interior furnishings executed by his craftsmen, including images on gilded leather for
folding screens and panels for custom designed furniture. Here is the first historical moment when the naive and spiritual qualities of Ryder could assume both a nationalist and profitmaking guise. His eccentric behavior and unorthodox style could be privileged by patrons and dealers as marks of innovative taste and modernity. At de Kay's urging, Ryder was elected to the Society in February 1878, shortly before the official opening of its first exhibition. Although the artists wanted to hold annual exhibitions of works embodying the new spirit to contrast with the academy exhibitions, Cottier seized the opportunity to ally himself with this vanguard to build a fresh clientele and audience that would feel themselves participants in the new movement and wish to embellish their surroundings with the fine and applied arts promoted in his firm. While there was disagreement among its supporters as to whether this movement should be seen as exclusively "American" or part of a more cosmopolitan approach to art, all who supported the Society stressed the need for a new aesthetic response to modern life centered in the United States.

The period of the founding of the Society of American Artists coincides with a crucial turning point in American history. In 1877 the country was in the depths of a Depression that had been touched off in 1873 by the failure of the banking house of Jay Cooke and would continue through the rest of the decade. Widespread homelessness and unemployment in 1877 led to labor marches and strikes in the textile mills of Fall River, Massachusetts and the coal mining districts of Pennsylvania. The same year occurred a series of tumultuous strikes — representing a response to wage cuts, death and injuries on the job, and kickbacks and profiteering by the railroad firms — by railroad workers in a dozen cities, shaking the nation as no previous labor conflict had done. Also in 1877 President Rutherford Hayes began withdrawing the remaining Federal troops from South Carolina and Louisiana (to be used against the Native Americans in the West and against the militant workers in the East), thus ending the commitment of the nation to giving equal rights to newly enfranchised African American citizens. 1877 could be seen as the year which signaled the government commitment to prevent blacks and white workers from sharing in the American Dream. The gain from this was a merger of the political and economic elites of the North and South into an effective coalition that would forge an economic turnaround. But the subsequent acceleration in economic growth came at the expense of African American labor, Chinese labor, European immigrant labor, female labor, who were awarded differently according to class, race, place of national origin, and gender and manipulated through these divisions to prevent solidarity among them.

Not unexpectedly, the great patrons of Ryder were self-made and self-taught gentlemen — idealists in life and tough-minded in politics who clearly perceived his art as complementary to their outlook. They participated in the great economic upswing at the turn of the century and supported the exploitation of the new labor force. They were fortunate enough to live out the Horatio Alger myth and then reinvent themselves as elites (John Gellatly, a classic case, made his fortune in insurance and real estate and liked to sport a pure white suit that once belonged to Mark Twain). Taking themselves as the starting point, they claimed that anyone could accomplish similar achievements if they kept their eye on a distant star and never worried about their paycheck. Ryder was recruited and supported by the entrepreneurs to the extent that he imaginatively distanced himself and them from the materialism they fostered. His "visionary" style helped them escape from the world they made and systematically degraded. After classifying Ryder among those artists "who move on higher planes of thought and emotion" and therefore enjoy "little financial fame," de Kay went on to characterize his work: "For the most part they are creations of his own fancy. They have wings; they hardly touch earth at all. For Mr. Ryder is that rarest and at present most scorned artist, an idealist... Before his pictures we find ourselves suddenly invited to enter fairyland. His color is an enchantress. We follow her lead and presently discover a new country, like earth and of it, but not
earth exactly, in which the fancy can travel uncontrolled».

Among Ryder’s key patrons was de Kay’s brother-in-law, Richard Watson Gilder, who as assistant editor of Scribner’s Monthly Magazine, and subsequently chief editor of its successor, Century Monthly Magazine, helped put together one of the most influential magazines in American history. Gilder not only commissioned and purchased several of the painter’s most important works, it was his magazine that ran de Kay’s seminal article on Ryder’s work (June 1890). The pivotal decade of Ryder’s career, roughly 1880–1890, coincided with the height of Gilder’s power over the most powerful literary voice in the U.S.A. The son of a Methodist minister and proprietor and headmaster of a girl’s school, Gilder was raised in a fairly strict environment and assumed adult responsibility while still relatively young. His father died of smallpox during the Civil War, contracted in the line of duty as a chaplain in the Federal army, and young Gilder was forced to find a job to support the family. Eventually, he found his way into editorial work and ultimately became editor-in-chief of Century.

Gilder’s home at 103 East 15th Street became a focal point for a brilliant artistic and literary society in New York. Every Friday evening Gilder and his wife, the artist Helena de Kay, hosted musicians like Paderewsky, von Stosch and Kellogg and writers like Twain, James, Harte, Howells, and Whitman. These authors represented the backbone of the magazine which in a few years after its founding dominated every periodical of its type in the English language. Meanwhile, Gilder also wrote poetry during his spare moments and published several volumes of verse that went through several editions. He was one of the most popular poets in America in his own day, although, unlike Ryder, he is largely forgotten today. His poetry was of the ultrarefined «idealistic» sort with a heavy dose of Christian sentiment, looking back to writers like Longfellow, Lowell and Whittier and thus antago-

nistic to the «realist» and «materialist» trends. He could be labeled as a «romantic reactionary» like Ryder with his relentless moons and sea and forest refuges. Whitman was to say that Gilder was «rich on the emotional side,» and «essentially a troubadour singer.»

Scribner’s political position is best seen in its popularity in the South during the period of Reconstruction. Founded after the Civil War, it escaped the onus of abolitionism that attached itself to Harper’s and Atlantic Monthly. The series by the conservative Edward King entitled «The Great South,» which began in 1873 and continued during the next two years, was an attempt at reconciliation through emphasis on Southern literary culture and traditional lifestyle. This position was compatible with Gilder’s lofty viewpoint that muted social and political criticism in culture. Gilder in fact promoted a southern renaissance in publishing the work of writers from all parts of the South, including the author of the racist Uncle Remus stories, Joel Chandler Harris. While slavery could not be defended in the pages of Scribner’s, the stories often assumed the racial and social inferiority of African Americans and their acceptance of their lot. They made use of Negro dialect that ruthlessly lampooned the speakers and their attempts at self-improvement.

Gilder arrived at a position of literary influence at a time when American editors, publishers and writers were striving to establish an independent and national school distinct from English traditions. By 1880, the quest was hardly new, but it was during the next twenty years that concrete steps towards American literary independence were taken. Gilder’s editorial policies stressed «America first,» and did everything possible to give American writers status equal to that of English writers in competition for American publishers. The concept of American nationality embodied in a strong union carried an almost mystical significance for Gilder, perhaps most strikingly symbolized for him by his idol Abraham Lincoln. His idealism in literature had its political complement in his defense of the American intervention in Cuba in 1898. Force was acceptable in this case because of «higher

Eckford (pseud.), note 1, 254.
considerations of the justice and righteousness of the American position. Gilder could use the pages of Century to approve force as "the rescue of an oppressed people from an incompetent and medieval rule." It was precisely this nationalist position that predisposed him to promote Ryder, who, although steeped in European traditions of art and literature, provided a clear-cut case of a highly original artist forging a romantic style in a period given over to realism. Although Gilder published the writings of authors belonging to various ethnic and religious minorities, he drew the line on philosophical liberalism with a view towards Century's audience. "We think it no more than honest that a magazine whose principal audience (an audience that mostly pays in advance, on trust) is of a certain opinion should not too rudely shock that opinion."

Gilder despised the popular press that he felt not only "expresses the vulgarity of the American masses, but increases it," that is, to a large extent. Here is another explanation of Gilder's taste for Ryder's work, an imaginative experience that depends upon the literary knowledge and refined sensibility of the elite. Examples of Gilder's bias are seen in his need to censor anything potentially offensive to the typical American girl, and his confession that he did not want to "unduly shock or distress the readers of the magazine which does not intend to be a battleground of opinion." In one instance, Gilder requested of the Western writer Hamlin Garland that he substitute Grant for a reference to Blaine since "the name of Blaine (the Republican candidate for president in 1884 and unscrupulous railroad promoter) brings up such violent and disagreeable controversies." In another instance, he asked William Dean Howells to eliminate a reference to the word "dynamite," which had become a highly-charged term in the mid 1880s with growing anarchist activity. Gilder found it easier to accept the more sentimental, escapist theme than the socially oriented and veristic genre of realistic writing at the end of the century.

Gilder's preference for "idealism" in fiction corresponded to his pretended recognition of some higher values and motivation beyond self-interest, implying for him a religious or emotional sensibility that he equated with the "romantic spirit." His position mediated between realism and romanticism and answered to his ideal of the civilized person ready to conciliate opposites and achieve equilibrium. But this depended on a fictional capacity to set up extremes for a pragmatic solution and allow for the entrance on the scene of the "reasonable man." He could accept the realists up to the point that they opposed the cloyingly sentimental in romantic fiction, but then he felt they went too far in rejecting the beautiful and delightful "in the disgusting." Thus he would avoid the social conditions that revealed the inequities of modern American life, while his agenda was to project America as a shining beacon of creativity across the seas and himself as one of its lamplighters. In short, he championed escape literature and art that yet pretended to address the issues of modern life.

Gilder's chauvinism, his gentility, his prudery, his idealism, and sense of good taste cannot be separated from his attraction to the work of Ryder. Ryder's poems are pervaded by the same sentiment as Gilder's, and often display similar meter and rhyme (compare Gilder's "Thistle-Down" and "O Sweet Wild Roses that Bud and Blow" with Ryder's "Voice of the Night Wind" and "Spirit of the Flowers"). Gilder's poetry was perceived by his supporters as an antidote to the materialism and vulgar realism of the time. They emphasized the spiritual ideals of Anglo-Saxon political life, insisting on the need for modern statecraft to continue to be imbued with these ideals. Just as Gilder idealized Abraham Lincoln as faultless and spotless, so Ryder is his ideal of the ethereal, innocent artist.


Gilder admired Lincoln’s "genius for expression," the result of his being a self-taught primitive. Although raised without any educational advantages, Lincoln schooled himself on the canonical authors, unmixed "with trash." Lincoln’s intellectual development demonstrates that culture has less to do with the extent of the information than "with the depths of the impression." Lincoln "saw deeply, he felt intensely, he spoke at times with the voice of a poet-prophet."

There is a remarkable literary text by Gilder’s brother-in-law, Charles de Kay—who, as we have seen, early recognized and articulated Ryder’s idiosyncracies—that characterizes this position. De Kay’s novel of 1878, The Bohemian, A Tragedy of Modern Life, is set in a milieu remarkable akin to that of the Gilders. De Kay describes a dissident band of artists, writers, and "outsiders" who call themselves the "Expressionists" and entertain the deepest disrespect for Academicians. Their regular meetings allow for "perfect freedom of discussion" on all subjects, "except those in which a difference of opinion would have offended the president." Although for the bohemian Expressionists the term "bourgeois" had an "odious" ring, they made a concession to middle-class decorum every Sunday in going to church "clothed in the fashion of the day."

The group evolved from "the leveling atmosphere of New York," inspired by the example of its founder, Seth Bagger, who has reinvented himself under the persona of "Harpalion." Bagger is not only identified by the author as a "genius" but describes himself in the narrative as a "genius" misunderstood by jealous literary critics. The guiding principle of the Expressionists is that the poet or artist is a "denouncer, in a vague way, to be sure, of the shams of the world, and a believer in life founded upon sentiments and personal worth, not on stations or wealth." For them there are no caste distinctions "save those naturally created by intellect." The protagonist of the novel (whose chivalric sentiments make him a deadringer for Ryder), De Courcy Plantagenet Lee, was born to an aristocratic Virginian family but reduced to an impoverished existence in Manhattan working as a cashier in a large drygoods house on Broadway. His only solace was the meetings of the Expressionists, where his imaginative and intellectual qualities could achieve their full potential. In the tragic finale, De Courcy teaches the materialist Adelaide Bryce—the femme fatale who has become his fiancée only to betray her falseness—a spiritual lesson by committing suicide in front of an onrushing locomotive.

De Kay shared his brother-in-law Gilder’s preoccupation with dispensing high culture to Americans, and this predisposed them to look for role models and exemplars. De Kay rationalized Ryder’s weak graphic skills as a means to the larger end of "feeling," and insisted that "it would indeed be difficult to find a more thoroughly native workman than Ryder." His attempt to distinguish Ryder as an American "modern" who beats out even the French colorists is inseparable from the programmatic efforts of Gilder to articulate a distinctive American culture capable of holding its own, along with indigenous industry and invention, against foreign competition.

Gilder tried to make his magazine a shaper of public opinion that affects the machinery of government as well as the entire community. Even the most diehard conservative would admit that the American democratic ideal was marred in the 1880s and 1890s by racism, labor exploitation, ruthless enterprise and monopoly, and a rampant epidemic of graft and dishonesty in government. Gilder saw the Congress governed at one end by the plutocracy, and at the other by the mobocracy, the twin evils threatening his ideal of organic harmony. Culture, he felt, provided the antidote to the materialism of the first, and the disorder of the second. The most political gesture was outspoken support for Civil Service reform, to replace the patronage system with the merit system. Here again Gilder wanted members of his cultivated class in control of public affairs.

America’s immigration policies came under attack in the late nineteenth century as an influx of alien peoples seemed to pose a threat to elitist ideals of American nationality. Gilder’s class felt their positions threatened by the potential inroads in
their power by these new groups, and this included their cultural ideals as well. This was most often expressed in the denunciation of industrial strife and incidents like the Haymarket bombing. Immigration would be blamed for every evil in American life including criminal activity, anarchy, labor unrest, political corruption, and even spreading atheism.

Yet Gilder was ready to blame alien influences when industrial strife got in the way of his idealized conception of the American nation. The strike riots were placed at the doorstep of the foreign-born; after the Pullman strike and other violent labor actions in 1894 occurred, an editorial of October 1894 in Century proposed an answer to the worker unrest by explaining that it was because «our laboring class is not as a body American, but anti-American.» Hence the calling out of federal armed forces to break the Pullman strike was a justifiable attempt to thwart those who would overthrow law and order. Gilder strongly supported President Cleveland's dispatch of federal troops to crush the strike of Eugene V. Debs's railroad union in 1894, and conversely condemned Governor Altgeld of Illinois for having refused to call for the troops.

The prudence of Scribner's and Century was well known, and women were typically assigned to guardianship of morals and domestic virtue. Gilder rejected women's suffrage and argued against the minority of feminists who were continually questioning for civil, economic, and social equality. In Gilder's genteel culture woman was assigned a sexually passive, which is to say inferior, role. This definition of the female role together with excessive male chivalry, reflects the sublimated fear of women characteristic of «bachelorhood» in the Victorian epoch. Here we may recall Ryder's romantic view of women, characterized by the famous anecdote about his proposing to a woman next door whom he had never met after hearing her sing. Charles de Kay observed that Ryder expressed «the highest, most chivalrous, but for the most part silent, admiration for women.» There is a disguised homophilic strain in Ryder's bachelor society; when his male friends deemed his feelings for an opera singer serious, they conspired to send him abroad on the grounds that such a relationship would interfere with his creative work.

For Gilder and his circle art served a critical purpose in a materialistic age. This meant that the conditions for aesthetic experience had to be satisfied independent of the moral message. He aspired to good taste and ideal beauty; realism had to be tempered with idealism. Gilder's reservations about realism in art and fiction — and its political implications — were seconded by another of Ryder's important patrons, Sir William Van Horne. Born in Illinois, Van Horne made his fortune when he moved to Canada to join the Canadian Pacific Railway Company. His relentless ambition culminated with the building of the transcontinental line to extend the railroad between Lake Huron and the Pacific Coast. Van Horne also felt that imperialism was all right, as long as it could be subjected to his grid of the iron rail. He dealt ruthlessly with the Indians as he built his railroad across the prairies of the southwest. He took advantage of the Spanish-American war to establish a system of electric railways in Havana. He wanted the railroad throughout Cuba and grabbed land on the cheap and acquired right-of-way lands while government and society were still in disarray. He appealed to the American government for sanction of his enterprise by convincing McKinley that the railroad would insure the speedy transportation of troops to any part of the interior and would make a fundamental contribution to the preservation of law and order on the island. His plan was to establish resorts along the railroad akin to what he had done in Canada, and invited artists and photographers to depict the beauties and extol the advantages of the country for tourism. It was claimed that Van Horne «capitalized the scenery.»

Van Horne opposed militant workers and the strike principle, hiring scabs, and never reemploying strikers. He despised the mob, a.k.a. «the people,» and their collective expression in the form of trade unions. He believed that every person had an equal opportunity to attain wealth and position through diligence and native intelligence. He held that the modern corporation constituted the back-
bone of contemporary civilization. He was outraged by the Sherman anti-trust legislation and the attacks on railway corporations and the monopolies. He defended John D. Rockefeller during the government’s suit against Standard Oil and argued against the radical policies of Theodore Roosevelt.

Van Horne’s culture was analogous to Gilder’s. He hated realist novels and realism generally; he preferred fantasy and adventure stories to escape from the reality of his everyday cutthroat operations. He liked naive painting; self-taught himself, he held that art could not be taught in the schools. He opposed the voyage to Paris which he thought would only lead to imitation of French ideas. It was more important for the North American artist to retain the homegrown feeling. He claimed that originality is a priceless jewel, and a painter who is not original is only a decorator at best. Thus originality and the imagination were for Van Horne the means for an escape into the fantasy world. Ryder’s style was made to order for Van Horne.

Both Broun and Homer-Goodrich examine the politics of Ryder’s patrons, but are somehow reluctant to submit the artist to the same scrutiny. Consciously, in the Homer, inadvertently perhaps in the Broun, the case for Ryder the genius who was always above the fray, is sustained. But that Ryder was every bit as political as his patrons is evident from his correspondence. We learn from Inglis in 1895 that Ryder was saving money to purchase $4,500 worth of Pullman stock, just a year after the strike by the Wobblies was ruthlessly crushed by 14,000 police, state militia, and troops. Ryder’s letter to his friend Sanden on July 7, 1912 declares his intention to vote for Woodrow Wilson and referred to a New York Times editorial stating that the Democratic Party has gone back to its era of dignified candidates. New York Times editorial refers to is that of July 3, 1912, “Woodrow Wilson for President,” and leads off, “In the nomination of Woodrow Wilson the Democratic Party regains its ancient estate of worth and dignity of power.” The editorial castigates the Populist Bryan, and emphasizes that Wilson “is not a radical.” Indeed, the radicals of the Democratic Party assailed him ferociously during the campaign of the primaries. The Times supports Wilson because he is a “moderate Progressive” who promises “the return of prosperity” by nourishing “our half-famished industries” and quickening “the sluggish currents of trade and enterprise.” Wilson is a candidate of “sanity and balance… a man of sobriety and principle, not a savage or a visionary.” Above all, the probusiness Wilson does not believe in all-out war against the monopolies and even accepts them as “an extremely successful means of economy and efficiency.” Thus Wilson comes on the scene as the embodiment of Gilder’s and Van Horne’s ideal type, although perhaps unexpectedly in Democratic guise. Ryder’s sympathetic response to the idea of the “dignified” president signals his rejection of Roosevelt’s Bull Moose Party and the visionary politics of the Populists. In short, he espouses the politics of Gilder and Van Horne.

One of Ryder’s patrons, however, Charles Erskine Scott Wood, was exceptional in subscribing to radical politics. Although his radicalism evolved over time (he lived to be almost ninety-two), he certainly held views antagonistic to his good friends Van Horne and Gilder who published his writings in Century. A protean talent, he was a specialist in maritime and corporate law, painted watercolors and wrote poetry that resembles that of Gilder and Ryder. His dramatized love story, A Masque of Love (1904), is strikingly reminiscent of the themes and sentiment of Ryder’s pictures (typical titles of individual scenes are “Eve at the Forest’s Edge” and “The Pool Called the Forest’s Eye”).

Wood fits the classic patron category of Ryder, self-made for the most part, but his politics set him apart. After just barely graduating from West Point, he served under General O. O. Howard who led the military campaign against the Native Americans of the Northwest. Wood participated in the pursuit of the Nez Perce tribe ruled by Chief

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Dabei ist eine kritische Sichtung und verlässliche Zusammenstellung des Œuvre in mehrfacher Hinsicht wichtig. Seit der Künstler in der Wilhelminischen Ära geradezu Popularität gewann, verunklären Kopien, Fälschungen und zu Unrecht zugeschriebene Arbeiten unser Bild vom Schaffen Feuerbachs. Dies zu bereinigen mußte die erste Förderung an einen neuen Werkkatalog sein. Sie zu erfüllen, scheint allerdings kaum möglich, ohne