Gorham Munson

WINSLOW HOMER OF PROUT'S NECK, MAINE

THE WINSLOW HOMER retrospect exhibition at the National Gallery of Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in late 1958 and early 1959 was an incitement to reappraisals of the Maine painter. The point was repeatedly made that Homer, like Manet, has survived his century and is a modern; we were told that we must not regard him as a painter of the Gilded Age but as a master of art in the Twentieth Century.

In what consists the modernity of Winslow Homer? First of all, in his originality. In his apprenticeship, Homer stated: "If a man wants to be an artist, he should never look at pictures". This youthful dictum used to perplex the critics but time has caught up with the independent spirit it displayed, and to a modern, Homer's meaning is clear. He meant simply that the artist should turn away from the academic tradition and see things afresh. At the outset of his career he knew for a truth what his contemporary, the essayist Thomas Wentworth Higginson, would later say: "Originality is simply a pair of fresh eyes."

A second modern trait of Homer's was observed—and disliked—by Henry James. "The artist", he said of Homer, "turns his back squarely and frankly upon literature". But his subjects!—"to the eye, he is horribly ugly". "We frankly confess", James said in the *Galaxy* in 1875, "that we detest his subjects—his barren plank fences, his glaring, bold, blue skies, his big dreary lots of meadows, his freckled, straight-haired Yankee urchins, his flat-breasted maidens, suggestive of a dish of rural doughnuts and pie, his calico sun-bonnets, his flannel shirts, his cowhide boots. He has chosen the least pictorial features of the least pictorial range of scenery and civilization". But taste has changed since 1875, and Homer's subjects are liked today just because they are democratic and realistic. In addition, and this is most persuasive to the modern, his subjects are always graphic, never literary. Even the unwelcoming James recognized this when he went on to remark that Homer had resolutely treated his subjects "as if they *were* pictorial, as if they were every inch as good as Capri or Tangiers, and, to reward his audacity, he has incon-

testably succeeded". There is more to be said on Homer's graphic subjects, which were not of the court and the *haut monde*, which were not artificial but natural.

Natural! That is the key-word in the evaluation of Homer's art. Use it and you will avoid the error of the critic Lewis Mumford, and even of the painter Marsden Hartley who should certainly not have fallen into it. "He was illustrator and nothing else", said Hartley in 1921, and in 1931 Mumford, probably following the lead of Hartley, called Homer "an historian and illustrator of our society. . . . Homer had an eye only for surfaces and the passing moment". How inadequate! Winslow Homer was a naturalist. He painted direct from nature. He was an outdoor painter. He was a great painter of *the forms of nature*. He was an illustrator, of course, but a selective naturalist like Homer is more than an illustrator. Moreover, the naturalist has an eye for more than surfaces; his greatness lies in his perceiving the forms of nature. How easy it is to devalue the photographic naturalism of Frederick J. Waugh's marine paintings while it is almost impossible to overvalue Homer's gift for selection and simplification. Homer's representation of nature was not a copy, but an expression of essentials in purely artistic terms. Both the literary picture and the photographic, meticulously imitative picture have gone out of favour. But the work of selective naturalism still holds the regard of the modern spectator.

Another element that signifies Homer's modernity is his close observation of outdoor light. He showed his preoccupation with light even before Impressionism, and this was revolutionary in his own time. His successors went farther than he did in making light the most important element in a painting, but Homer's paintings of light and its effect on objects is certainly in the modern style.

The modern critic has even found a commodious place for the storytelling in Homer's pictures. He has been strongly opposed to pictures that tell a story, yet he usually makes exception for Homer. As Forbes Watson remarked in his monograph on Homer, ". . . a picture can be good or bad with or without a story. It is not the story that can make a story picture bad; it is the triviality of the painting of it". Now Homer's story-pictures are self-contained, which is what was meant by Henry James when he said that Homer turned his back on literature—and is also what was meant when it was insisted above that his subjects were graphic. Roger Fry, who in 1906 inspected *The Gulf Stream* and recommended its purchase by the Metropolitan Museum, has supplied the terminology by which Homer's storytelling is made acceptable

to modern critics. Dramatic representation in a picture is "modelling psychological volumes". A good representative picture is a co-operative mixture of two distinct arts—the art of illustration and the art of plastic volumes. Co-ordination can occur between the modelling of psychological volumes and the remodelling of plastic volumes. Fry analyses Rembrandt's pen drawing, *The Parable of the Hidden Talent,* as a successful example of the combination of the two arts. It is because Homer's dramatic values and his plastic values are harmonized that his story-telling is today accepted and even liked.

Lloyd Goodrich, his biographer, has expressed the typical modern point of view about Homer's story-telling. "His subjects . . . were expressed in purely pictorial terms. Nature, physical action, the spectacle of the contemporary world were what attracted him, and ideas or moral values played little part in his work."

Winslow Homer was an extreme example of those artists who do not like to talk shop. In his younger days he was friendly with John Lefarge, J. Eastman Chase, and other painters, but there survives hardly any record of his opinions about art and artists, and he said very little about his own aesthetic credo. "He was a rare visitor to public galleries and exhibitions", Chase wrote. "Names meant little or nothing to him". Homer was instinctive and practical, so practical, in fact, that he often referred to painting as his "business". On the eve of his fifty-ninth birthday he wrote to his brother Charles: "The Sun will not rise, or set, without my notice, and thanks". This sounds like Thoreau. It is Homer's way of saying that nature is his model. He paints what he thankfully notices in direct observation of nature. Although he found Homer's subjects distasteful, Henry James nevertheless understood his naturalistic method. "Mr. Homer", he wrote, "has the great merit, moreover, that he naturally sees everything at one with its envelope of light and air. . . . Things come already modelled to his eye."

In his own art of literature James had a fine eye for the "storyable". The "storyable" was an air-blown particle; the "storyable incident" was a tiny nugget that had a hard, latent value. "One's subject", James said, "is in the merest grain, the speck of truth, of beauty, of reality, scarce visible to the common eye". Now there is by analogy the "paintable" in nature.. A great deal of life is not "storyable" nor is nature always "paintable". To perceive the "paintable" a painter has to have the "artist's eye". The artist's eye picks out the interesting paintable part or aspect of a scene, and by so doing by seizing the essential and by simplifying, the artist's eye shows its difference

from the copyist's eye or the photographic eye. The common eye of course misses the paintable. Homer understood this perfectly. "You must not paint everything you see", he wrote, "You must wait, and wait patiently, until the exceptional, the wonderful effect or aspect comes. Then, if you have sense enough to see it—well, that is all there is to that."

Of Monet, Cézanne said: "He is an eye—but what an eye!" One can say this with equal truth of Homer, writes Lloyd Goodrich, and he is certainly right. Homer had a fresh and innocent eye. His innocence was never adulterated even by his limited schooling in art or by studio influences in New York or Paris. We now believe that he looked at Japanese prints when he lived in France in 1867, but what he learned from that he made his own; so well did he absorb their lesson that it was not until recently that the case for Japanese influence was presented. Nor did Homer's eye become sophisticated and lose its freshness. "The rare thing", Homer said to John W. Beatty, "is to find a painter who knows a good thing when he sees it. It is a gift to see the beauties of nature."

On the second storey of his Prout's Neck studio, Homer built a covered porch that was like the bridge of a ship; one could stand under shelter and yet be in the open. It was high above the water and afforded a view of the coast and the ocean. Homer used "to wear out the balcony", passing back and forth by the hour, observing the sea. "You must wait, and wait patiently, until the exceptional, the wonderful effect or aspect comes". To get close to the sea in a storm, he even built a tiny studio set on runners so that it could be moved along the shore. This portable studio was fitted with a large plate-glass window that protected the artist from spray. Sometimes he watched and waited for a year or longer; then the paintable effect came, and in fifteen minutes he would be able to complete the painting on which he had suspended work. Even late in his life Homer painted with a fresh, clear eye, and his originality continued to come from his eye for the "paintable" in nature.

In the graceless way of writing that he sometimes fell into, Marsden Hartley said that "in Winslow Homer we have yankeeism of the first order, turned to a creditable artistic account". One would have expected Hartley, a State-of-Maine man, to have claimed Homer for Maine, but he did not localize Homer so closely and said that Homer's pictures "are yankee in their indications, as a work of art could be, flinty and unyielding, resolute as is the yankee nature itself". Although he was born in Boston (in 1836) and developed his craft there and in New York, Homer's artistic gift was inherited

from his Maine-born mother and Maine had been in his blood from the beginning. In July, 1875, he visited York, Maine, and in some of the following summers he was on Prout's Neck near Portland with members of his family. In 1883 he settled permanently at Prout's Neck. He had found where he belonged; in a few years he became a State-of-Mainer in every cell of his body and in his mind as well. Prout's Neck was to be his home for twenty-seven years, the rest of his life.

In 1859 he moved to New York and lived in the neighbourhood of Washington Square, which was even then a quarter for artists. He made his way as a book and magazine illustrator, depending mostly on wood engravings. The new illustrated magazine, *Harper's Weekly* was for that period what *Life* has been for ours—an exciting visual presentation of current events and scenes—and for it Homer covered the Civil War. The years have not lessened the esteem he gained as an "artist-correspondent". As an illustrator, Homer was every bit as good as the best of Currier & Ives; in our day he would have won popular affection as a cover artist for the *Saturday Evening Post.* "He could have been great as a *genre* painter had he chosen", said Frank Jewett Mather nearly fifty years ago.

About 1875 he gave up magazine illustrating and followed a new enthusiasm—water colours. He had been working in oil. His earliest success was *Prisoners at the Front,* an oil he painted in 1866 which now hangs in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Homer kept his private life very private and heavily veiled in reticence. We know nothing of his disappointment in love. Was it with the girl sitting on the beach in his 1870 oil, *High Tide?* We know that he went to Tynemouth, England, in the spring of 1881 and returned to America in November, 1882; but we do not know if he broke his Tynemouth stay into two parts and passed the intervening winter of 1881-82 in America. Such paintings as *Eight Bells* would indicate that in 1884 he must have made a voyage with a fishing fleet off the Grand Banks. but there is not a scrap of proof that Homer actually went on such a voyage. "As the most interesting part of my life is of no concern to the public I must decline to give you any particulars in regard to it", Winslow Homer wrote in his latest years to his future biographer, William Howe Downes; there spoke one who might have lived in E. A. Robinson's "Tilbury Town".

As he grew older, Homer looked more and more like an old sea captain out of Searsport. As a young man, neatly groomed, with long, pointed mustaches, he looked like an artist—he is dapper in an 1867 photograph taken

in Paris. But in his last decade, his baldness revealed the strength of his head, his nose and chin were firm, his mustache thick and curled, his eyes searching the distance like a sea captain's—a rugged, furrowed face that would not look out of company in the gallery of old shipmasters at the Penobscot Marine Museum.

In the late 1870s sportsmen and summer visitors began to discover Maine. Young Theodore Roosevelt went there to hunt and climb mountains, but most of the summer people were well named "rusticators". The Homers —"Old Father Homer" and his sons—were the first and for a time the only summer people on Prout's Neck. They soon turned into promoters, and in time came to own about three-fourths of the land. They laid out roads, built bathhouses, and divided the land into lots for sale. In a couple of decades Prout's Neck became a somewhat exclusive summer colony, and by 1910, the year of Homer's death, numbered sixty-seven houses and seven hotels. Winslow Homer participated in this development. He bought land, built a cottage to rent out, worked on roads. But there was a difference between him and the other Homers. They spent only summers at Prout's Neck; Winslow went native. He lived there the year round, doing his own cooking and housework. He simplified his living. "This is the only life in which I am permitted to mind my own business . . . I am perfectly happy and contented. . . . The life that I have chosen gives me my full hours of enjoyment for the balance of my life". Spoken with the accent of Thoreau!

As time went on, Homer kept away from the vacationists his family had encouraged to come to Prout's Neck. He looked on them with a native's eye. "They're coming earlier every year", he remarked sadly. He was glad when they went. "All the people have left here & I am painting & very busy", he wrote to a friend in an early October.

In the end Homer was a New Englander who had become a completely assimilated State-of-Mainer. John W. Beatty, director of the Department of Fine Arts at the Carnegie Institute, visited him in 1903 and wrote that his intimates were "plain, common-sense men who might easily have followed either the sea or the plow. Their conversation was practical, earnest and intelligent. . . . It was a jolly party, but there was no discussion about art. . . ."

Homer found the greater number of his subjects in "Maine" and in Maine. By "Maine" is meant outdoor life, country life, in the northeastern United States that was similar to outdoor, country life of the geographical State of Maine. Homer's wood engravings of boys fishing, of digging out

after a heavy snowstorm, of skating on ponds, could as well have come out of Maine as out of New York State. Homer had a passion for fishing, hunting, and exploring the countryside, a passion that he often went to the Adirondacks to gratify but which he shared with Down Easters who hunted and fished and explored in Maine. Country life was his dominant theme as he matured, and the country life he represented was not very different from that of Maine.

In the 1870s he liked to paint the life of summer resorts—and summer resort life did not spring up in Maine to any great extent until the 1880s and 1890s. Then were seen in Maine gaily dressed young women playing croquet at Poland Springs or riding side-saddle at Bar Harbor or bathing, voluminously clothed, at Old Orchard Beach, or standing on a windy bluff at Prout's Neck, their ribbons flying in the breeze. But Homer had already drawn them or painted them in oil or water colour as they wore their fashionable clothes and played quietly in the White Mountains or the lower Catskills or on the Jersey shore.

He actually portrayed a Homer Girl, typical rather than individual, who was a forerunner of the Gibson Girl drawn by a famous summer resident of Isleboro, Maine. The Homer Girl of the summer resorts was neither sentimentalized nor idealized. She was young and attractive, decorative, fashionable, innocent and independent. She might have stepped out of a novel by William Dean Howells or Henry James, although James did not bow to her but only noticed her country cousin, "the pie-nurtured maiden in the wheat field". Homer's country girls ringing the dinner bell or teaching school seem idyllic figures to us, but James did not see them that way. The women Homer painted changed at Tynemouth in 1882. They became monumental, primitive, elemental—no longer girls who read novels in hammocks or went on picnics, but women who faced the tragic power of the sea. A little later women disappeared altogether from Homer's pictures.

It has been justly observed that up to his middle years Homer painted the pleasant side of American life. *Breezing Up* is exhilarating and refreshing. Heeled over to her gunwale before a fresh westerly wind, the catboat *Gloucester* is about to make a turn to larboard. The wind—has anyone ever painted wind better than Homer?—bellies taut the sail as the *Gloucester* rushes through the greenish water, throwing spray from the bow and causing foam to boil about the rudder. The boys—one lying on the foredeck, one seated amidships on the starboard gunwale, the third barefooted, seated on the stern deck and grasping the tiller-rope—harmonize in their browns with the mahogany planking of the boat. Deep in the cockpit, handling the sail, is a

bearded man in red shirt and oilskin hat. Yellow-green cloud masses are being driven across the sky with blue patches showing through. In the distance, its sails swelling with the wind, is a two-masted schooner. A picture of waves, clouds, and the buoyant motion of the boat.

Look with attention at the boys and the man in the catboat, and you will gain insight into the "Maine" that Homer was painting. The boys could have come from or entered into a Mark Twain fiction of the order of *Tom Sawyer*. "Homer's boys", Lloyd Goodrich has well said, "were . . . healthy children full of energy and adventurousness" to whom Homer never condescended, any more than the bearded man in the catboat is condescending to his young crew. Indeed, the man is having as good a time as the boys, and in that fact we have a key to the understanding of Winslow Homer: "He was himself a boy who had continued into manhood the tastes of his own country boyhood". In that sentence Goodrich defines the quality of "Maine-ness", and he goes on to say: "There was no sickly nostalgia in this; he was not mourning his lost childhood but picturing with gusto the things that made childhood memorable—the child's love of nature, his joy in freedom and adventure. *It was life as a boy saw and felt it, painted with a man's grasp of actuality*". (Emphasis added.) Goodrich's illuminating description of Homer's work in his thirties continues: "The world had an early morning freshness; work and play, a day's fishing a delight, being snowbound pure joy. Not that these feelings were openly expressed, for his method remained objective. But this very matter-of-factness, this concern with things rather than emotions, kept him close to the boy's viewpoint. Rarely has such sympathy with childhood been united with such utter unsentimentality. Yet with all their homely naturalism these works were deeply lyrical. They expressed the grave poetry of childhood with a tenderness all the more moving for being so well concealed."

Winslow Homer was forty when he painted, in 1876, *The Two Guides*. They were Adirondack guides but can fairly be called "Maine" guides. *Camp Fire* in 1880, an Adirondack scene, can also be called a "Maine" scene. Then came the important stay at Tynemouth and the deepening of Homer's conception of his work, and in 1883 began his true Maine period when he took permanent residence at Prout's Neck. But he continued to paint "Maine" as well as Maine. He would take what Thoreau would have called "excursions" to the Adirondacks and Canada; and between fishing and camping he made water colours, and some of the water colours fathered oils. He combined sport and art, and had plenty of each. "He usually caught the biggest fish",

his brother said. As to the pictures he "caught", they were of guides and trappers, of trout leaping and deer drinking, of men fishing at sunrise and canoeists fighting rapids, of huntsmen and dogs and great trees. These were mature work, beyond the "Maine" period in depth of understanding of the problem of composition, but in subjects they still belonged to "Maine". Among the most interesting works for character and action are two oils, *Huntsmen and Dogs,* 1891, and *Hound and Hunter,* 1892. The same sullen boy appears in each and seems to have come from an early Hemingway story of the North Woods in Michigan—another instance of the "modern" feeling Homer gives.

It is usual to point out that Winslow Homer matured slowly but grew all his life. As one writer has put it, Homer showed signs of maturity at forty, discovered the path he wanted to follow at fifty, and reached his full growth at sixty. This steady and sustained growth of Homer may be expressed in a metaphor by saying that his work spans an octave of naturalism.* Of course, the metaphor is too neat and schematic; some of the "notes" of it were sounded concurrently and not sequentially; the reader may rightly suspect a somewhat arbitrary application. Yet there is, I think, a good deal of truth in it as a description of Homer's growth, and it does bring out that illustration was the starting-point of Homer's naturalism but that he carried naturalism beyond illustration and in the end almost reached an octave of art beyond nauralism and higher than it.

Homer's octave begins with his Civil War reporting for *Harper's Weekly,* including such wood engravings as *Thanksgiving in Camp* and *The Army of the Potomac* and such oils as *Home, Sweet Home* and the famous *Prisoners from the Front.* This work strikes the note "do" of Homer's progress from illustration to a highly refined, selective naturalism. After the Civil War, still as a frequent contributor to *Harper's Weekly,* he extended his range and developed his skill as an illustrator in such wood engravings as *Winter—A Skating Scene,* and *A Winter Morning—Shovelling Out.* This is the note

*There is an ancient tradition in the East to the effect that the widely-known diatonic scale (the series of musical notes which we call do-re-mi-fa-sol-la-si, and the next repetitive do) was originally not associated with music at all; but was a mathematical formulation, in respect of sound, of that series of phases through which all action, physical, psychological, or of any other category, must pass upwards or downwards in the phenomenal changes of nature.—Robert Courtney in *Beyond Behaviorism,* New York, 1927.

"re" of his development; let us call it the *Harper's Weekly Period*. Next—the note "mi"—comes the period of country-life art that has already been discussed as the *"Maine" Period*.

Now a turning-point appears in the work done at Tynemouth, England, in the early 1880s. Many an artist, having reached the "Maine" period, would have begun to repeat himself; the rest of his work would have been only a refinement of his "mi". But somehow, we do not know how, Homer bridged the semitone, the different interval, between "mi" and "sol". He pushed himself through "fa"—represented by such watercolours as *A Voice from the Cliffs* and oils such as *The Gale*—and rose to a new plateau of creation. The first note of this phase of creation—"sol"—we may call the *Maine Period*. In the Maine period Homer settled down to two great epical subjects: the sea eternally assaulting the rocky coast, and the age-old struggle of seafaring men with the sea.

In *Coast in Winter*, oil, 1892, *Northeaster*, oil, 1895, *Cannon Rock*, oil, 1895, *On a Lee Shore*, oil, 1900, *West Point, Prout's Neck*, oil, 1900, *Early Morning after a Storm at Sea*, oil, 1902, and *Driftwood*, oil, 1909, Winslow Homer showed himself to be, as Kenyon Cox observed, a master of weight and movement. In these great pictures there is a world of energy, of ceaseless struggle and motion, as the sea ever beats and batters and explodes in columns of spray against the massive, resistant, granitic masses of the shore. These pictures are great expressions of force, and they give the beholder physical sensations—the artistic equivalent of the physical sensations he experiences when exalted by the actual might of the ceaseless waves assaulting the stubborn, enduring defences of the real land. Cox must have had in mind Homer's power to give the viewer physical sensations of nature's battle of sea and land when he wrote that Homer painted "in direct competition with nature."

Homer's great pictures of State of Maine men contending with the sea are *The Herring Net*, oil, 1886, *Eight Bells*, oil, 1886, *Lost on the Grand Banks*, oil, 1885-86, and *The Lookout—"All's Well"*, oil, 1896. *Lost on the Grand Banks* shows two fishermen in a dory enveloped by a thick fog. The white-capped waves are running wildly, something like a gale is blowing, and the two helpless men are peering desperately into the fog for a sight of their lost schooner. This is man terribly weak in the face of the elements. In *Eight Bells*, however, the men, fittingly monumental, are symbols of man's courage, knowledge, and skill matched against the sea. The picture has simplicity, strength, and largeness of style. The scene has an immemorial, heroic quality.

Of *The Lookout,* Lloyd Goodrich says that "more than almost any other figure piece, *The Lookout* shows [Homer's] bigness of vision."

In describing *The Lookout* Goodrich discriminates between naturalistic and plastic movement. This is much better than saying with Hartley and Mumford that Homer "was concerned with illustration first and last, as he was illustrator and nothing else" (Hartley). No, no; Homer carried naturalism close to aesthetic form, close to the forms of art. As Goodrich writes most discerningly, *The Lookout* "is full of action—the man throwing up his hand and crying out, the ship rolling, the swift-rolling waves—all contrasted with the calm fixity of sky and stars. These movements have the quality of Homer, energetic and full of vitality, but short, abrupt, confined to individual figures and objects, rather than rhythms that run through the whole design. They show a sense of naturalistic movement that has not achieved plastic movement. The design is carefully thought out, and though not the work of a man highly sensitive to form, it is an original, effective composition. The general tone is the deep blue-gray of a moonlight night, and all the separate hues—the sailor's coppery face, the bronzed bell, the silver foam, the translucent sky—are unified by this prevailing moonlight tone. *Of all his paintings it has the closest relation of color and form".* (Emphasis added.)

Homer's excellence as a water colourist of the tropical West Indies—Nassau, Cuba, Bermuda—and of Florida—is very much in keeping with his Down-East Yankee character. It is a surprising experience to pass from his Maine Coast world of harsh energy to the tropical world of light and colour. We are unprepared for the sensuousness and brilliancy of his colour; we are unprepared for the intensely white sand and the pink houses, the scarlet flowers and the mahogany bodies, and the rich, varied hues of tropical water. And yet we should not be surprised. Have not the men of Maine always been attracted to the tropics? They used to sail there. Now, to escape the rigours of their winters, those who can afford the cost go south for the winter months. Early in his career, Homer was interested in painting the Negro in Virginia. His love of southern climes and of magnificent Negro models increased with his maturing as an artist. Finally, he was to say: "You will see, in the future I will live by my water colors"—and there are connoisseurs who agree unreservedly that he will. Of some of his water colours, Frank Jewett Mather was to declare that "I cannot imagine that work so individual and invigorating will ever be forgotten."

To Homer's *West Indies water colours* may be assigned the note "la"

in his octave of development I am tracing. This rich, brilliant, delightful phase of his works is not a contradiction of his predominant Maine Yankee character, but a complement to it.

To follow the metaphor to the end, in three paintings Homer reached a height of *decorative naturalism* that could well be called achieving the note of "si". The three paintings are *The Fox Hunt,* oil, 1893, the largest canvas he ever painted, *Kissing the Moon,* oil, 1904, and *Right and Left,* oil, 1909, and in each of them critics have found a kinship with Oriental art. There has been in recent years only one new theory of Homer's development. Advanced by Albert Ten Eyck Gardner, it holds that Homer came in contast with the work of Manet (who had been affected by Japanese art) and with Japanese prints when he was in Paris in 1867, and that they made a profound impression on him. Gardner declares that it is easy to visualize *The Fox Hunt* as a design for a Japanese screen; he thinks that Homer took his idea for the startling *Kissing the Moon* from Hokusai's *Great Wave;* he considers it obvious that the composition and colour of *Right and Left* are very Japanese. This is quite plausible but we do not have to account for how Homer reached his results. The fact is that in these three paintings he fused the two main strains of his genius—naturalism and decoration—and reached the limit of naturalism. Beyond lay the deepest kind of three-dimensional design, the design of round forms in deep space, the art of plastic composition which we associate with such a painter as Cézanne. But that would have been to start a new octave of growth. Homer's marine paintings may be compared to the marines of Courbet without suffering shrinkage, but his gift was more for two-dimensional design than for the wonderful visual music of the forms of art that were realized by Cézanne.

What a startling picture is *Kissing the Moon!* The patient observer, Homer, has once again seized an unexpected dramatic moment direct from nature. Three State-of-Mainers, clad in oilskins, appear to be seated in the trough of a wave. The nearer wave-crest hides most of the body of one, two-thirds of the body of the second, and half the body of the third, and hides all but a fragment of the bow and a fragment of the stern of the boat in which they rest. Beyond the men buoyantly at rest in the trough, rise huge waves, the tip of one seeming to touch—to kiss—the round, white moon on the eastern horizon. The time is late afternoon and the water is dark and cold. But the men are bathed in the ruddy light of the descending sun, and this unusual effect—the contrast between the cold, impersonal waves and the warm figures —is the making of "quite an affair", Homer's own words for this bold picture.

Kissing the Moon gives us the essential vision of Winslow Homer of Prout's Neck, Maine, great-grandson of a Maine wilderness pioneer, who was born with an artist's eye and instinctive taste, who was largely self-taught and always independent, who painted "Maine" before he settled on the Maine coast, and who afterwards painted Maine with breadth, simplicity, strength, and vitality until he had made a complete statement of Down East pictorial experience. He is Maine's greatest painter and one of America's greatest painters.

SO MANY TRAITS TO CHOOSE FROM

Gerald N. White

Depending upon the direction
Fate and the individual chooses to swing
The pendulum-heart of resolution
Man can let his strength slip into weakness,
Or, conversely, turn his weakness into strength.

Thus I absolve my antecedents
From stigmas attached to each inherent frailty,
Dismissing heredity as nothing more
Than a frantic swirl of multifarious genes
Engaged forever in ancestral contradiction.

HE WHO WAS THERE

David A. Giffin

He who was there and who witnessed the slaughter
Has left us this record: nothing of glory;
The desperate struggle lies stripped of its history.
He who was there saw not victors and vanquished
But men who were dead, who were dying,
And men who would live through this battle
Fought, just as they all are, in beautiful country,
In weather that wouldn't take sides.