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THE FIGURATIVE AND LANDSCAPE PAINTINGS OF DANIEL GARBER

by

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ABSTRACT

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by

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Daniel Garber (1880-1958) was one of the important American Impressionist painters. The basic concepts of Impressionism were well established when Garber began his career and he found them ideal means for communicating his feelings onto canvas. Garber's paintings in the Kresge Art Museum demonstrate his use of Impressionism and served as the inspiration for this study. Other than one study of his career, most of the recent literature concerning Garber is found in studies of American Impressionism with room only for brief overviews for individual artists. Rather than focusing on his career this thesis deals with his paintings.

His landscapes can be divided into four categories and associated, in the case of the "lone tree" style, with his figurative works.

Another aspect of this study notes Garber's seemingly unconscious use of abstraction in conjunctions with Impressionism to create his original and subtle style that so effectively conveyed his strong emotionalism.

This thesis is the first study to focus on his oeuvre as a whole.

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INTRODUCTION

American Impressionism is experiencing a growing wave of popularity and Daniel Garber's paintings are being swept up onto the crest. Garber painted toward the end of the Impressionist movement and yet the quality and emotional force of Garber's work have made the derisive term "academic painter" inappropriate as a criterion for judgment. In the purest sense of the word he was academic in that he spent most of his adult life teaching at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PAFA), in a period when Impressionism was the most established and accepted style for the greatest number of collectors. However,
the literal meaning of academicism has been altered over time to suggest an art based on a formula and an unoriginal artist lacking the talent to create a unique style. The latter definition, if used to describe Garber, does both the artist and critic a disservice, the artist because it ignores the depth and feeling communicated in his works and the critic because it acknowledges the lack of sensitivity to see beyond the most basic aspects of a style and to be blinded to the originality that can grow from it.

In his work Garber was not trying to make a radical statement or shock the viewer with distorted representation,

unconventional colors or compositions like some of his contemporaries. Rather, he created "livable" pictures. As Arthur Miller of the Los Angeles Times wrote, "He is one of the most agreeable of our agreeable painters. A picture by him on one's wall would long retain its charm and never lack dignity".[1] Garber's pictures are not glaring statements where intimate knowledge of the artist and his theories is required for understanding. They are more like friends, as the relationship grows, it becomes richer. The introduction to the surface qualities piques one's interest. As time passes the finer qualities and inner depths that are not immediately apparent begin to emerge, revealing a work that can be understood and enjoyed on various levels. Formalistically Garber was a great technician, rendering his views of nature and home life with a gentle harmony of detail and subtlety. His compositions are well balanced and serene while suggesting an understanding of the contemporary abstract art that he professed to eschew[2]. Emotionally his works seduce the viewer into greater contemplation. The images remain in the mind's eye and allow the viewer to recall personal memories that mingle with Garber's implied meanings. A rich, yet sometimes ungraspable, understanding of both the artist and the viewer is created.

Impressionism was introduced to the United States circa 1880 under the auspices of the painter Mary Cassatt and the gallery owner Durand-Ruel. The artist, being born into the American social elite, had a network of wealthy and

influential friends whom she encouraged to patronize the rising young Impressionistic painters from France. She made slow but steady progress until 1886 when Durand-Ruel staged an exhibition of 300 French Impressionist works in New York. After this Impressionism became the new radical artistic style with centers in Boston and New York. The Boston artists developed a decorative interpretation, as demonstrated by Childe Hassam and John Singer Sargent, which was especially appealing to European aristocrats and the taste makers of the American upper class. In New York the style became broader and more socially conscious as exemplified by members of the Ash Can School such as, Robert Henri, John Sloan and George Bellows.

By the 1900s Impressionism had become the accepted artistic style and had spread to outlying areas, developing regional nuances as it joined other well established styles. In Philadelphia it combined with the reigning realism of Thomas Eakins and the uncompromising eye of Robert Henri, who had taught at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts before moving to New York. The new style captured the lighting effects of a setting and the sense of a captured moment without the loss of physical form or the gloss of prettiness calculated to please the eye.

One of the identifiable groups practicing the Philadelphia regional style was the New Hope Circle. This was a loosely-knit group of landscape artists who lived in geographic proximity to the town of New Hope, Pennsylvania

on the Delaware River, about thirty miles from Philadelphia. The group had no dogmatic style or philosophy to bind the members together but they shared a love of nature which was expressed through Impressionism tempered by an understanding and respect for naturalism. Some of the members of the New Hope included Daniel Garber, John Folinsbee, William Lathrop, Walter Schofield and Edward Redfield. These artists were among the most well-respected painters of their time although later they would be neglected by critics, historians and the public in favor of the more radical abstract art coming out of New York.

American Impressionism needs to be researched further to continue exposing the forgotten talent of that time. While the style was in flower it was constantly being judged and compared negatively with French Impressionism. The major difference between the two is that American Impressionism retained more of its naturalistic heritage while French Impressionism allowed its forms to dissolve more fully in the pursuit of factually recording the reflections of light. The comparison was understandable given the similarity of surface technique, but it was shortsighted and unfair, probably reflecting the insecurities of Americans trained to believe that truly good art could only be created by artists surrounded, from birth, by hundreds of years of artistic tradition. While the Americans captured the essence of light reflected in

landscapes, which was enough to qualify them as second-rate Impressionists, they were faulted for not dissolving their forms as much as the French. This lack of dissolution of form, or rather their insistence on greater naturalism, was seen as a reflection of their lesser talent rather than an expression of a different heritage.[3]

Once it is accepted that French and American Impressionism are two separate entities it opens the field of American Impressionism to additional respectable research. Artists such as Childe Hassam, Maurice Pendergast and John Benson are becoming more widely known, as is evidenced by scholarly publications as well as popular posters and calendars featuring their work. Despite this progress there are many others who deserve attention.

Daniel Garber is one who warrants greater consideration. He painted landscapes and figures during the first half of the 20th century with a warmth and charm that suggests that he was personally involved with his subjects while, at the same time, seeking a profound artistic understanding of them. Even the harshest critics of American Impressionism found him appealing. Royal Cortissoz, a vocal critic of the time, had a general dislike of the American Impressionistic style[4]. He was very willing to denigrate Garber's work and yet he had to admit a charm that overrode Garber's tendency toward repetition of motif[5]. William Gerdts, a recent commentator on American Impressionism, called Garber "the most original of the

[Pennsylvania] group and the most concerned with sunlight and color."[6]. Sunlight and color were certainly high priorities for Garber but he also dealt with a geometric construction that combined subtle modern abstraction with naturalistic compositions to create his unique and compelling style.

The problem, or opportunity, in studying Garber is that there is very little written on him to date. Kathleen Foster has written an excellent essay entitled Daniel Garber for an exhibition held at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 1980 in celebration of the 100th anniversary of his birth[7]. Donelson F. Hoopes and William H. Gerdts have written histories of American Impressionism which mention Garber as one of the strongest of the late Impressionists and briefly summarize his style[8]. Two exhibition catalogues dealing with the Pennsylvania painters, by Sam Hunter and Tom Folk include some discussion of Garber but add little to the literature[9]. Outside of these the researcher must refer to contemporary writings on the artist. Here researchers are handicapped because Garber rarely talked about his art. When pressed he would give a brief description of a particular canvas or of his philosophy of art but he shunned analysis. He summed up his ideas when he said "I am enthusiastic about my painting; I have few theories about it. In art as in other things you work out your problems as you go along, always trying to make your art better; and as your work grows, you grow, immensely."[10].

The final problem in studying Garber is the lack of access to his art. Much of his work is still held privately, either by the Garber family or those who bought from the artist for their own pleasure, or by museums which, for the most part, are not displaying them. While both groups are very generous in sharing Garber's paintings the viewing conditions in private homes and museum vaults do not give his works the light needed to display all their qualities. Because his style varied so little throughout his career his works warrant careful scrutiny to document the more subtle stylistic shifts. This task will have to be left for later researchers who will have greater access to his work as Garber's star continues to rise and his works are once again properly displayed for public view. Here, Garber's figurative and landscape compositions will be categorized and parallels will be drawn between the two subjects.

Introduction--Notes

1. Miller quoted in anonymous article, "A Garber Estimate", The Art Digest, December 15, 1932, p.9

2. Letter from Daniel Garber to his cousin Charles Garber, March 5, 1935. Garber Scrapbook.

3. It is also interesting to note that the reaction in Europe to the excessive dissolution of Impressionism was to reintroduce solid form into composition, something the Americans never lost.

4. Donelson F. Hoopes, The American Impressionists, Watson-Guptill Publications, N.Y., 1972, p.17

5. Royal Cortissoz, "A Cortissoz Review", unknown newspaper from Garber Scrapbook.

6. Gerdts, p.236-7

7. Kathleen A. Foster, Daniel Garber, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1980.

8. Hoopes, William H. Gerdts, American Impressionism, Abbeville Press, N.Y., 1984.

9. Sam Hunter, American Impressionism: The New Hope Circle, The Museum of Art, Fort Lauderdale, Fla., 1984-1985. and Thomas Folk, The Pennsylvania School of Landscape Painting: An Original American Impressionism, Allentown Art Museum, 1984.

10. Martha Cheney(?), "Portrait of a Happy Man", Bucks County Traveler(?), from Garber Scrapbook II.

CHAPTER 1

DANIEL GARBER'S BACKGROUND

Daniel Garber (1880-1958) was born in North Manchester, Indiana at the time when impressionism was introduced to America. By the early 1900s he had reached his maturity and Impressionism was the accepted academic style in America.

Garber seems to have had an innate need to create art, overcoming his environment and family background to find the beauty in nature. His home was devoid of decoration and Garber describes the town of North Manchester as "hideous rather than merely ugly", a place where farm concerns rather than aesthetic were the main topics of conversation.[1] Garber's family was not culturally oriented nor artistic yet he began drawing on his own at an early age, gaining some small encouragement when his father allowed him to set up a studio in back of their house in North Manchester. He pressed his advantage and persuaded his father to allow him to attend the Art Academy of Cincinnati when he was sixteen. It was here that he proved his dedication to , and his talent for art by winning the "Home Scholarship" in May 1898. This was just the first of an impressively long list of awards and prizes that Garber was to win throughout his life.[2]

From Cincinnati Garber went to the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. While it is not known exactly why he chose Philadelphia over Boston or New York some suggest that it was an "atavistic longing for his Pennsylvania Dutch background."[3] While this has a certain poeticism and serves to imbue him with a sense of history or heritage it is more likely the reputation of the Academy and his admiration for the artist J. Alden Weir, who taught there, that drew him to Philadelphia.[4]

While at the Academy he met and married a fellow student, Mary ("May") Franklin, who abandoned her art studies after the marriage, feeling there was room for only one artist in the family[5]. He respected and relied on her criticism, often stopping work on canvases she felt were complete[6]. Home and family were the stabilizing force in his life and his love and respect for May radiates from the letters he wrote to her when he was forced to be away from home, and from the pictures he painted of her.

His deep caring also encompassed his two children, Tanis and John Franklin. Tanis was their first child, born five years after the Garbers married, in 1906. An Italian maid in their service when they lived in Europe was so concerned about their childless state that she had charms made to remedy the problem[7]. Tanis means "our daughter" in a far eastern language, reflecting the pride the couple felt in their newborn child. The pride is also evident in the sketches Garber made of her as an infant, showing a baby of

such innocence and sweetness that they could only be from a parent's loving hand. She remained a favorite subject through her childhood, appearing in canvases in quiet, introspective moods.

John was born four years later. He didn't have the sensitivity to art that Tanis had inherited and so had less of an aesthetic connection with his father. But Garber's paternal love was demonstrated in the standing offer to try to teach his son to draw, even though they both realized the futility of the exercise[8]. Garber only painted John once, at a time when the lack of aesthetic connection was bridged by pride. John had acquired an engineering degree, and was on the threshold of entering, well equipped, the adult world that the artist knew could be hard.

In 1905, when he was 25, the Academy awarded Garber the prestigious Cresson Fellowship, an annual award which provided two years of study in Europe for promising art students. The Garbers spent their time in London, Italy and France but never lost their love of America. The Academy was pleased with the artist's progress and at the end of the two year fellowship offered Garber a one year extension. At the same time he was offered an assistant faculty position at the Philadelphia School of Design for Women. Garber felt an affinity for the American landscape and did not feel completely at home in Europe. With the added incentive of land purchased at Cuttalossa Glen by his father-in-law, Dr. George P. Franklin, he opted for the teaching position and

home.

The glen was a picturesque, winding throat of a valley close to the Delaware River and approximately thirty miles from Philadelphia. The Garbers had been introduced to the area by the painter William Lathrop, the leader of the New Hope Circle, and had actually looked at the site Dr. Franklin bought. They originally used Cuttalossa only as a summer house, living in Philadelphia during the school year, but it eventually became Garber's permanent retreat. He took great care to make it his personal idealized haven, tearing certain buildings down while allowing others to decay picturesquely until the property became the world he sought, an extension of himself. As he wrote to his cousin George "to know me now you would have to know the place. Everyone knows it's half of me".[9]

As a painter Garber remained steadfastly true to his own Impressionistically derived aesthetic although strong forces in the art world beckoned artists to break from naturalism and create a new and different artistic language--a language that some found to be untranslatable. Even earlier, while in Europe, he opted to study on his own. He would have been exposed to the new styles developing there and he could have entered one of the academies, which was common for American students, but he was satisfied to hone his American training rather than search for new styles. He probably would have agreed with George Grosz's opinion that "experimentation as such is highly overrated today and

probably stems from a lack of ability"[10].

His fidelity to his personal style continued after the 1913 Armory show introduced the newer and more radical European artistic styles to America, starting the avant-garde art world on a new tangent. When questioned on his lack of interest in experimenting with the new styles, Garber told a reporter

> "Of course, I want to follow along in art: I don't want to hark back, and I think that my work is modern, in the true sense of that word. But we work out our own problems in nature, and my paths do not lie in the so called modern art. I have too much respect for the trees that I paint, and their true forms, to make something out of them that I do not feel exists in them."[11]

Outside of Garber's obvious technical talent there is an underlying strength that comes from his personal involvement with his subjects. While any artist could claim to have a personal involvement in his art, Garber was unique in that he never used professional models nor did he, with the exception of one canvas, paint from sketches and notes. He needed to be in the presence of his subject to be able to communicate his feeling toward his subject onto the canvas. The intensity of his feeling for his subjects was suggested when he said "it is our duty to try to render back to the world the blessings that we receive from it; and an artist must try to make his fellow creatures share in the pleasure which he has received from Nature"[12]. He clearly received tremendous pleasure from nature, gleaning a sort of religious inspiration from it. He was born a Mennonite but had been disillusioned early when the church incorrectly

predicted the end of the world[13]. Nature, rather than words became his proof of a greater spiritual force. He told his daughter, Tanis, "You only have to look at a flower to know there's a God!"[14]. His love of nature is clearly rendered in his landscapes as his love of his family and home is rendered in his paintings of them.

CHAPTER 1--NOTES

1. Anonymous, "Garber Exhibit to be Hung Jan. 2", Scrapbook.

2. Kathleen A. Foster, Daniel Garber, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1980, pp. 17-18.

3. Foster, p.19

4. Garber's admiration for the artist is well known. As a youth he added the initial "J" to his first name in tribute to the artist. (Foster, p.19)

5. Foster, p.20

6. Conversation with Tanis Garber Page.

7. Ibid.

8. Conversation with John Garber.

9. Foster, p.24

10. R.H. Ives Gammell, Twilight of Painting, An Analysis of Recent Trends to Serve in the Period of Reconstruction, New York, G.P. Putmans Sons, 1946, Reviewed by Paul Zucker, Journal of Aesthetic and Art Criticism,6 March 1948, pp.289-290

11. Anonymous, "Field for American Art Wonderful, Says Garber", Unidentified newspaper article from Garber scrapbook II.

12. "Garber Exhibit to be Hung Jan. 2"

13. Foster, p.17 14. Ibid.

CHAPTER 2

LANDSCAPE STYLES

Landscapes comprise the majority of Daniel Garber's work and are the main focus of criticism now, as they were during the artist's life. These canvases best justify his claim to being a modern painter. He presents his views with a geometric clarity that Henry McBride suggested could "almost be thought cubistic"[1] and Elizabeth Cary classified as being a "congregation of parts" rather than a naturalistic whole[2]. He formed strong, angular compositions and used technically correct trees, shrubs and hills to soften and conceal the geometric patterning, disguising the angular order behind naturalism. He was so adept at capturing tree forms that critics often referred to them as portraits[3]. Whether in full foliage or stripped, he captured a liveliness in the twisting limbs that has seldom been matched.

The colors used for the landscapes also contribute to their modernity. He used an even tonality that helped to flatten the scene. His strong technical skill and naturalistic portrayal of individual elements create an understandable perspective. Yet the eye interchanges the pleasant, pastoral, traditional scenes with the underlying abstract patterning at will.

Garber saw more than idealized beauty in his landscapes. He was concerned with man's existence within nature and tried to incorporate that into his landscapes. Whether a farm, group of houses or industrial quarry huts, man, even if not depicted as such, was a part of Daniel Garber's nature and contributed to the geometric underpinnings of his style.

Since the beginning of time trees have been symbols for life and and humanity, the conduit between heaven and earth. Paul Klee took this a step further and related the artist to a tree. He said:

> "The artist, you might say, is like a tree. He has managed to cope with this bewildering world pretty well, we shall assume, in his own quiet way. He has found his bearings well enough to set order into the swirl of his impressions and experiences. This orientation among the things of nature and life, this order with all its many ramifications, I liken to the roots of the tree. From these roots comes the sap that streams through the artist and through his eye, for he is the trunk of the tree. Under the pressure of this mighty flow, he infuses what he sees into his work. And just as the foliage spreads out in time and space, visible from all sides, so grows the artist's work."[4]

The temptation is strong to relate Garber's "lone trees" to the artist himself, especially given their portrait-like quality and his own rapport with nature. Garber would most likely have scoffed at this idea as he scoffed at most attempts to analyze his work.[5] But he was attuned to nature and injected a sense of humanity and understanding into his paintings that makes them stand above pure representation of scenery. This was his personal touch, choosing trees carefully and selectively rendering them to

translate his intensity of feeling for his surroundings. It perhaps was not a conscious effort and yet it is clear that the relationship of man and nature concerned him. When he was in the mountains at Equinox, painting a commissioned work, he wrote to his wife

> "The mountains about here seem quite formidable near Equinox--looks pretty large. But of course I know they don't amount to much. How the people ever dig up a living gets me. I actually only saw one farm where corn or grain was raised. It is nothing but small patches of hay here and there--Main business seems to be maple butter sweet candy."[6]

A man with the sensitivity to associate the landscape so closely with the plight of mankind would surely translate that concern to his work.

While Garber's landscapes certainly are a representation of the Delaware Valley he loved to paint, they are more than factual representations. He chose his views and light effects carefully to communicate the beauty he saw and felt in the area and, in a sense, transformed the Pennsylvania landscapes into a personal earthly paradise. When teaching, he admonished his students to form "habits of observation" and "not to imitate a thing seen, but to train the eye to the eventual expression of that which the mind will choose to see"[7].

Critics have classified Garber's landscapes into two categories; one being a meticulously decorative style that was likened to French tapestry and the other, a broader, more relaxed approach. Further discussion of his stylistic development would be helpful but, as suggested earlier, this is difficult given the current viewing conditions. A more

fruitful and interesting avenue of study concerns Garber's compositions. It has been noted that he repeated his landscape motifs yet the distinctions within those motifs have been ignored. Garber taught his students to view landscapes as though they were a series of curtains, running parallel to the picture plane. Foreground, middleground and background each encompass a separate "curtain". He held closely to his own teaching and his landscapes can be divided into four styles, distinguished by the use of the different planes.

The first could be called the "keyhole style" in which trees and shrubbery are placed close to, or on the picture plane and balanced to form a "frame" for the distant background. This frame is painted in deeper tones with greater detail, often involving draping vines which create a decorative, lacy effect. The closeness of this dark "frame" evokes a sense of a secluded, rather private spot from which the viewer looks out onto a calm and restful landscape.

An example of the style is Wilderness, (Figure 1). The foreground "frame" is created by the heavily massed vertical grouping of trees on the right and the single tree on the left. They are connected by intertwining branches above and a dark, slightly overgrown stretch of land below. The trees are dead and spindly, choked by the encasing vines that drip from their branches. The dark browns and russets are highlighted to an orange glow by a bright sun over the viewer's right shoulder. The middleground is a blue,

shallow pond pierced by horizontal jetties of land. On these stand dead white trees that echo those in the foreground. Rising from the pond is a smoky purple hillside with a small community picked out in white dabs. The hill reaches up to meet the cloudy, light blue sky in the middle of the canvas, cutting it exactly in half. The composition as a whole is an overlapping grid of horizontals and verticals. The sky, hill, water and foreground create the horizontals which are crossed by the vertical elements of the trees and clouds. It is an abstraction of planes except for the carefully observed foreground which anchors it in naturalism.

Two other examples of the keyhole style are Vine Clad Trees (Detroit Institute of Art, Merrill Fund, acquired 1918) and Hawk's Nest (Figure 2). Both paintings have the same foreground laciness of Wilderness but there is a misty, dreamy atmosphere created by less tonal variation.

The second style could be called the "lone tree" style. In it Garber represents one large tree in the near foreground, placed slightly off-center. Whether the tree is relatively bare or in full foliage, Garber pays special attention to the formation of the branches, picking trees carefully for their interesting bough configuration. Like the keyhole effect, the foreground plane is usually more detailed and in darker tones than the background. Sweeping landscapes with human elements of houses, farms or factories form a backdrop for his trees.

Solebury Valley(Figure 3) is a fine example of this, the most easily identifiable of his styles. A virtually bare tree is perched on a small hill slightly to the right of center. It is a clear example of the care Garber took in choosing his trees to reflect the complexities of nature. The smaller branches are expertly rendered in their twisting forms to add, through their very complexity, a touch of movement in an otherwise still picture. They are the ever-present undercurrents of activity in the quiet moments of life. The late afternoon sun rakes across the twisted limbs and casts complex shadows on the tree itself and throws a pattern on the ground behind to lead the eye into the pictorial space. The landscape then sweeps dramatically though a valley, broken by cottages, villages and groves, to a distant mounding of pale hills.

The geometry is especially noticeable in this canvas. Again, the tree forms the major vertical element with one limb branching off to divide the canvas exactly in half. The horizontal striations of the rolling hills are further broken into color blocks formed by the tree groves. The overall tonality is so uniformly soft that the naturalism and geometry vie equally for the viewer's attention.

Several other examples of the "lone tree" motif are Springtime: Tohickon (Figure 4), Crab Apple (Figure 5), and Our Country Neighbors(Figure 6). All share varying degrees of flat patterning in the background and the sense of intimacy created by the close proximity and of the trees

and their detailed handling.

The third style deals with the "middle distance" and is the least distinct. Some have the feel of a distant "lone tree" motif while others are less focused. It is as though he was searching for a "lone tree" composition but was unable to find the proper tree or vista to give the scene his characteristic focus.

Mill Creek(Figure 7) is an example of the style. This is an autumnal landscape in greens and russets with touches of purple. In the middle distance and virtually springing from the center of the canvas is a pair of trees that spread their limbs to form a "V" topped by golden leaves clustered in pom-pon-like shapes that echo the small tree at the bottom right which is the entry point into the picture. This grouping of large trees casts purple shadows on a ruined brick mill building directly behind it. The delineation of the orange bricks echoes the "V" of the trees and balances the horizontal and vertical linearity of the foreground and building. The mill is seen head-on with little sense of perspective which effectively closes the spatial extension. The closure here is closer and more emphatic than that created by the backing "curtain" of the flattened distance in the "lone tree" style. Around the edges of the canvas is softly mounded foliage that create the suggestion of a frame. It is less specific than the keyhole style but lends some of the same intimacy. The central grouping of trees could also suggest a lone tree

classification yet it lacks the monumental force of the trees Garber chooses for that motif.

Haunted (Figure 8) also exhibits this style. A tree is again set back from the front plane with the buildings in the background effectively closing off the distance. This canvas might be considered of the "lone tree" motif, with the careful attention to the personality of the tree, except for the tight confinement of space.

The fourth and final classification is the "far distance" style. This includes quarries and hillsides viewed from a relatively high vantage point with little in the foreground or middleground to disturb the monumental sweep of the land.

This style is seen in The Quarry: Evening (Figure 9). Inviting the viewer into the canvas is a firey orange bush in the bottom left corner of the front plane. The eye is then lead across a flat pasture, peopled by barely discernible farmers. The pasture terminates in an awe inspiring cliff formed by the quarry excavations. Topping this is a band of trees that cleanly meets a matching band of sky. Garber again uses russets and purples to create a warm and restful vista. The rhythmic horizontal banding formed by the arrangement of his "curtains" and a hallmark of his work, is only disturbed by the gentle curve of the rock stratification and two small trees in the lower half of the canvas. The trees seem to serve the same purpose as the twisting branches in Solebury Valley, providing points of

contrast and life in an otherwise quietly ordered setting. Here too the perspective is understood but not absolute. In fact, the far distant landscapes are the easiest style in which to understand Garber's modernist tendencies. With few naturalistically rendered forms in the front plane it is easier to dissociate the composition from the subject matter and view the canvas an a arrangement of shapes and colors.

Other examples of the style are seen in Lowry's Hill (Figure 10), Stockton (Figure 11) and April Landscape (Figure 12). All have the sweeping vistas which are held to a subtle sense of intimacy by the directness with which the far side of the pictorial space is confronted. The eye has a great distance to travel but there is never the danger of becoming lost. Garber set limits on even his most far reaching landscapes, controlling them as he tried to control all of his surroundings.

There is in many of Garber's landscapes a compelling mix of the past and present. It is in his subjects and in his style, combining traditional compositions with a subtle wash of the modern. He did not seek to deny the past for a shocking modernity, but was sensitive to it. This unique blend hints at the rich associations that people have felt from the far distant past to the present in a lone tree or a glimpse of the distant open land from the edge of a dark forest.

It is too easy to discount Garber's landscapes because of their superficial similarity. A Frenchman noticed the

subtleties and commented "It can hardly be the work of a man following a formula. The detail is painted with too much love. Whenever one follows a formula the details are slurred over."[8] There is a warmth and sparkling light that passes over his work creating the sense that he was truly striving to share the pleasure he received from nature, and succeeding.

CHAPTER 2--NOTES

1. Henry McBride, "New Garber Works Show Style Change", New York Sun, March 12, 1919, Garber Scrapbook.

2. Elizabeth Cary, "Pictures by Daniel Garber", New York Times, not dated, Garber Scrapbook, PAFA

3. Although critics wrote of his talent with trees the fact that it was a generally accepted talent comes from the walls of the PAFA where it was noted that "Barns are painted by fools like me, but only Garber can paint a tree". [Foster, p.40]

4. Nello Ponente, translated from Italian by James Emmons, Klee, Skira, 1960, p.82.

5. Foster, p.27

6. Letter to May Franklin Garber, August 1, 1931(?), Garber Scrapbook.

7. Anonymous, Recent Paintings by Daniel Garber, The Macbeth Gallery, New York, March 9-29, The Archives of American Art, Roll N55.

8. Mr. Dauchez quoted in an anonymous and untitled article, The Brooklyn Daily Eagle, April 11, 1920, Garber Scrapbook.

CHAPTER 3

FIGURATIVE REPRESENTATION

Garber's figurative works are only a small portion of his oeuvre, painted mainly between 1908 and 1924, but they possess an emotional strength that rivals his best landscapes. The strength lies in his subject choice. He never used professional models or photographs for his compositions, prefering to render close friends and family, mainly his wife and daughter, in quiet contemplation. He did accept portrait commissions but he viewed them as business ventures, accepting the majority during the Depression. They are mostly solid, competent renderings but lack the intensity seen in his chosen subjects and will not be dealt with here.

Garber's need to manipulate his surroundings to reflect his idealized vision of life was demonstrated in his careful tending of Cuttalossa. He also manipulated the compositions of his figurative works to reflect his models and their place in his life. Men are depicted with harsher, stronger, more masculine characteristics, showing a tenseness that suggests a directedness and sense of purpose. Women are softer, more delicate and are depicted around the home where they can, by rights, be protected by their men. His women are not chained to their environment yet they are carefully placed in their compositions to reflect the closed nature of their world[1]. They exist in

beautiful settings where they are safe from the perils of the world and which they enhance by their own grace and beauty. Men also exist in his idealized world but they maintain their contact with the world beyond their immediate surroundings.

Garber's women occupy only the front plane of his pictures, held in place either through their body position or architectural elements. Their features and outlines are softened by backlighting, allowing them, in some cases, to blend with the natural backgrounds. They echo his quest for an ideal life, personifying the peaceful gentleness he tried to incorporate in his landscapes and surroundings.

His male subjects are handled quite differently. Where the women are back-lit, light shines on the men's faces, accentuating their strong features. Where the women are confined to the front plane, the men are allowed access to other planes. Uncluttered floor space between the men and the viewer or doors and windows through which they could move give the illusion that the men have greater control and freedom in their movements.

One of the clearest examples of Garber's handling of women is The Orchard Window (Figure 13). His daughter, Tanis, sits in the lower left corner of the canvas on a window seat, reading a book. One leg is tucked beneath her and the other is extended creating an "L" of her body that echoes the regularity and flatness of the canvas and window panes. Sun streaming through the window creates a glare on

the top of her head and on the book in her lap which reflects up into her solemn young face. Her right hand has an amazingly life-like translucent glow, or as Gardner Teall described the play of light on the figure, "the original gives the sense, not of heavy opacity, but of living tissue in deep shadow, well molded and vital."[2] She is held secure in the foreground by the hanging curtains and the foursquare grid of the window panes. Seen through the window is a steep flowered hill suffused in sunlight. There are clearly rendered trees, shrubs and flowers but the impression is that of an idyllic summer backdrop unfolded to compliment the beautiful little girl sitting inside, engrossed in her book. The canvas is predominantly soft blues, awash in light, again displaying an even tonality that serves to flatten the distance into a series of color blocks.

Another picture featuring his daughter in a garden setting is is simply called Tanis (Figure 14)[3]. Again Tanis is placed in the immediate foreground, backed by a sparkling garden. She stands the full height of the canvas, facing the viewer, leaning with her right hand against the doorsill, her left hand in her pocket. She wears a translucent dress that glows with the sun and seems to evaporate and meld with the garden background. Standing with her weight on her right leg she stares dreamily at her right hand. Again the sun reflects off her golden hair creating a glare that dissolves the solid form or, more

poetically, forms a halo around her head. As in The Orchard Window the garden is brilliantly lit and inviting yet has a peculiar sense of flatness. The confinement of the figure is less obvious here, but present nevertheless. Tanis is framed in the studio doorway and is blocked from entering the background by her own positioning. It is as though she could pivot on her right foot and go into the garden, but her own arm bars the way. She studies the barrier but does nothing to remove it.

In the White Porch (Figure 15) Garber's wife, May, sits in a rocking chair in the lower right hand corner of the canvas, her head leaning restfully back, lost in her own thoughts. She is backed by vines draped randomly on the house. To the viewer's left is a small jungle of house plants set outside to catch the summer sun that peeks onto the porch. Geraniums, sheffalera and poinsetta greens balance the solitary figure of May, sitting as far as possible from the sunlight, both formally and philisophically--they are both vital forces that are protected from the world by the home. They also serve to enclose the porch, keeping her safely within its confines. Standing like a fulcrum in the center of the canvas is the large front door. It is opened invitingly but the front plane remains unbroken, spanned by the Victorian gingerbread of the screen door. Garber manages to capture the brightness of the summer afternoon that is evident in Tanis's garden landscapes, but in more muted tones. It is

as though the light reflects the buoancy of youth for Tanis and is calmed to reflect her mother's quiet maturity. The dominant bluish-gray and beige tonality is broken only by the small touches of red in the geraniums and May's dress creating a restful yet lively scene. A critic from the New York Times was similarly impressed and said "there is a life here, too, but a life subdued," and defined it as the "measured movement of convention amid the spontaneities of nature."[4] This painting, in my opinion, is one of Garber's finest; incorporating his love for his wife and home in a perfect blending of understated and sophisticated tones.

These women in quiet poses may, in part, be the result of achieving a position that would be comfortable for the duration of the sitting. Yet comfort was not Garber's only concern, he wanted to capture the essence, as he saw it, of the person. His daughter recalls with distaste a pose wherein she was surrounded by, and held onto weeping willow boughs as bugs climbed up and down her arms[5]. The painting, now destroyed, captured the childish travels of a girl strolling aimlessly through the trees. The poses of his women capture their basic movements, but the colors and hazy, even tonality remove the real settings to a dream world which fit the artist's idealized vision. Other examples of women placed in an enclosed, safe dream world are Portrait of Tanis (Figure 16), The Studio Wall (Figure 17), and The Oriole (Figure 18).

Among his figurative paintings, those dealing with men

are in the minority and are painted later in his career. He did numerous charcoal drawings of his artist friends and his son John but rarely did he render them in oil. A notable exception is his portrait of William Langson Lathrop (Figure 19). Lathrop was the spiritual head of the New Hope Circle of artists. Garber had long wanted to paint him and took the opportunity when the older artist's wife was in the hospital.

The 3/4 length portrait has Lathrop standing slightly to the left of center in an old brown corduroy jacket and bow tie. His right hand digs into the soft corduroy pocket which rumples comfortably around it. His left hand holds a pipe and he gazes out an unseen window with the low sun bathing him in warm light. The somber face with the pince-nez glasses suggests an intelligence and wisdom befitting his years. On the table in front of him are several books, a paint palette, and a jar of paint brushes. The painting conveys an intense personality which Garber either could not, or was not interested in conveying in most of his commissioned portraits. While it is an impressive and moving portrait in a black and white reproduction the emotional strength of the canvas when standing before it is jolting. Garber captured the essence of the man and the artist with uncommon accuracy. In a letter to his cousin Charles he said "its much the strongest portrait I've ever done, it is new and very personal." After further discussion he wrote "Don't blame me--I've never heard such

comments-- the family are just awed."[6]

There is a symbolism in the canvas that Garber would surely have denied and yet is too strong to ignore. The indications of Lathrop's art are placed in front of him: paint brushes, palette and books. The sun streams across these and washes over his face. Gone is the soft modeling of features caused by gentle lighting that he used for female subjects. Rather, the light strongly illuminates Lathrop's forceful features. Interestingly though, the sun is low in the sky suggesting that while he is still active in his career, his life is advanced--as is the day. Taken individually these observations could, as Garber's son suggests, simply be cases of coincidental placement of figures and light. However, in Mother and Son (Figure 20) the elements combine too convincingly to be mere coincidence. In it May and John Garber play chess by the open French windows of the studio at Cuttalossa. May sits quietly on the left contemplating her next move. She is locked into her space by the window and chess table. John stands across from her, relaxed, with his hands in his pockets, leaning against the door jamb. The high summer sun cuts sharply into the studio, casting bright, glaring light on John and touching May only in reflection. John stands in the only exit into the background. As in other paintings the garden beyond the window appears rather flat with only implied depth. however the open French doors pull the eye, and by suggestion John, into the distance.

This is the only canvas in which John appears. He had just graduated from college and was passing the time at home before leaving to start his first job as an engineer.

As in Lathrop's portrait the lighting is an important element. Where the artist was portrayed late in his career with the sun low in the sky, John Garber was just starting out and has the sun high and strong on his face. Likewise, the tools of his established occupation stand between Lathrop and the sunlight while John, whose career was an open book, has nothing impeding the light or his passage into the garden.

Garber successfully merged his perceptions of his models' personas with his idealized concept of his world, and their place with it. He created an idyllic atmosphere where the human element makes Garber's sensitivity to man and nature more accessible to viewers. It is far easier to feel rapport with figurative paintings that to relate to the personality of a landscape because our own experiences are predominated by human interconnections. Garber's choice of models, whom he knew well and for whom he had empathy, made it possible for him to communicate stronger feelings than if he had chosen to portray professional models. In some paintings, particularly those of May, he would try to distance his emotional attachment to the subject by turning the model's face from the viewer (See Figures 17 and 18). In his effort to depersonalize the subject the face was often awkwardly rendered. However,

the force of feeling remains strong and combines with the solid composition and technical skill to create singularly moving works.

CHAPTER 3--NOTES

1. It must be stressed that while a feminist sensibility was used to note the different handling of male and female subjects, it is important to view his work with the attitudes of Garber's time in assessing his work to avoid derogatory labels that would have had no meaning to him.

2. Gardner Teall, "In True American Spirit: The Art of Daniel Garber", Hearst International, 39, June 1921, pp.28, 77.

3. The sale of this picture at auction was the first indication of Garbers's growing popularity with the newly attuned collectors. The value was assessed at $10,000 but sold for $50,000. The art world finally started to notice Garber and he has since become a drawing card for auction houses (source: conversations with John F. Garber and Kathleen Foster)

4. Foster, p.32

5. Conversation with Tanis Garber Page, March 24, 1986.

6. Letter to Charles Garber, March 5, 1935, Garber Scrapbook, PAFA

CONCLUSION

Garber was a man of strong but controlled emotions. Given cursory study the control is more evident than the emotion. With his landscapes neatly ordered like theater curtains and his figures placed firmly in their compositions, the art could seem rather sterile, especially when compared with a young avant-garde artist like Jackson Pollock, whose career overlapped Garber's. But he was able to communicate intense emotions and empathy for his subjects in his more subtle and tradition-based painting style. A suggestion of the intensity with which he approached his art is seen when he was forced to paint less because of a heart condition. The artist who created calm, reflective compositions was threatened by his art because it affected him so deeply. A clear example of the magnitude of his emotions, outside of his art, was demonstrated by his reaction to seeing the actor Paul Robeson play Othello. After attending the show in Trenton, N.J., not far from Cuttalossa, he was so moved by the performance he was forced to stop and rest half-way home[1].

His strength of feeling becomes most evident in his figurative works. Garber only painted figures when he felt drawn to them. They are not mere objects possessing intriguing surfaces for light reflection. They have a presence in the composition, an integrity that issues from

an understood and appreciated personality. This explains why he never used models; there was no emotional attachment. He did not know their inner virtues so he was unable or disinterested in communicating them. His landscapes, which comprise the majority of his oeuvre are, in one sense, his stock-in-trade. They possess an immediate, pleasant appeal which hints at their personality and richness, but can just as easily be ignored in favor of the simple pleasure of the colors and composition. It is the association between Garber's landscapes and figurative works that make the former more compelling. The similarities make the inherent human quality of his landscapes more accessible.

Compositionally Garber's figurative works are most similar to his "lone tree" landscapes. In the Arbor, a work destroyed by the artist, is the only figurative work related to the "key hole" style. Figures seen at a distance are scarce and have little more distinction in the compositions than the far-off trees and shrubs. But the similarity between the figurative works and the "lone tree" landscapes is acute. They both have solitary elements in the foreground, close to the picture plane and often dominating the space. Garber rendered both the trees and the figures with great detail and more naturalism than would be seemly for an artist hewing rigidly to the traditional Impressionistic style. He concentrated on the elements that made each unique, a subtle glance or a

twisting twig that distinguished the subject and made it a personal entity. But they remain things unto themselves. The non-confrontive, meditative figures allow the viewer to enter the same quiet state of contemplation which the landscapes invite. He placed the carefully rendered figure or tree against a background that vacillated between sweeping distance and flat curtain. This similarity strengthens the theory that Garber's trees possess human-like attributes.

He was not a demonstrative man, being remembered by students as gruff and non-verbal in his dealings, yet helpful if they showed promise and determination[2]. A man possessing that sort of personal reserve would not be comfortable advertising his emotions publicly. He would search for a universal vehicle, one that is understandable to the majority, and to which they would attach their own meaning, yet still retains a strong personal meaning for himself. Garber found his vehicle in landscapes. In light of the parallels between the "lone tree" compositions and his figurative works, it seems the closer his landscape subjects came to the front plane of the canvas, the closer the relationship between the subject and the artist.

There is, of course, some inconsistency in Daniel Garber's work. When a subject interested him he could internalize the essence of the scene and create a vividly personalized canvas, combining the scene's inherent beauty and strength and his own reaction to it. There were times,

though, when the vistas did not interest him and he felt uninspired. At times like that many artists would simply pack away their supplies and wait for the muse to return. But Garber was made of sterner stuff, being raised on the Protestant work ethic. As Foster wrote "his hardworking style expected nothing to come easily so he bore down on his objectives with uncommon persistence"[3]. Regardless of inspiration he would try to create something. Garber recognized, and agonized over, the lesser quality of some of the paintings[4] but was also concerned about making a living[5]. The two motivators were at odds but the desire for quality usually won. He often scraped out paintings that did not suit his exacting eye[6]. We have lost almost all of his early works this way. However, some works were beyond his control. In an effort to acquire a work by Garber patrons would often buy paintings out of the studio before they were finished. He would then be obligated to finish and deliver them, sometimes perhaps lacking the all-important inspiration.

Garber knew art and knew when he had done it well. He was proud of his work and understood the machinery of the art world well enough to use it to promote his name. He entered virtually every show and exhibition east of the Mississippi River, winning numerous awards along the way, until he became an accepted and prestigious artist[7]. In the end this may have proved to be his undoing. Because he was so appealing a painter and so sought after, at the end

of his career he did not need to enter as many shows and was not dependent on art galleries. At the end of each season he would invite a select group of patrons to an "at home" where he would show and sell his work[8]. His clients wanted his work for their personal enjoyment, not as investment pieces or status displays. As a result they have remained in private collections and out of circulation. As more estates begin to change hands, and there is economic reason for galleries and auction houses to promote his name, his works will begin to resurface and Daniel Garber will once again be recognized for the richly personal style he perfected.

CONCLUSION--NOTES

1. Conversation with John F. Garber, March 24, 1986.

2. Foster, p.39

3. Ibid

4. His letters to his wife and Macbeth Galleries often chronicaled his dissatisfaction with his work. See, for example, letter to Macbeth, March 9, 1910. Archives of American Art, Roll #NMc 6.

5. Economic concerns were a frequent topic in his letters to Macbeth Galleries. He also mentioned his concern to his cousin Charles in a letter dated March 15, 1935. Also his willingness to accept commissioned portraits which he disliked doing (conversation with John F. Garber).

6. Conversation with John F. Garber.

7. Once Garber arrived in Philadelphia his list of awards reached impressive numbers. A brief sample includes: First Place Toppan Prize of $500 in the PAFA competition in 1903, First Hallgarten Prize at the National Academy of Design in 1909, Potter Palmer Gold Medal (and $1000) at the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Walter Lippincott Prize ($3000) for the best oil by an American painter, both 1911, Shaw Prize, Salamagundi Club (N.Y.C.) in 1916, First William A. Clark Prize ($2000) at the Corcoran Exhibition in 1921. The list continues through 1942 when he won the Pennell Medal from the PAFA and the John Gribbel Memorial Prize.

8. Conversation with John F. Garber.

Figure 1
Wilderness, 1912, 50" x 60", Private Collection

Figure 2
The Hawk's Nest, not dated, 52" x 56", Cincinnati Art Museum, Mary Dexter Fund

Figure 3
Solebury Valley, c.1928, 51" x 56", Kresge Art Museum,
Michigan State University

Figure 4
Springtime: Tohikon, 1936, 52" x 56", Private Collection

Figure 5
Crab Apple, not dated, 46" x 42", Kresge Art Museum,
Michigan State University

Figure 6
Our Country Neighbors, 50 1/4" x 60", Private Collection

Figure 7
Mill Creek, not dated, 50" x 42", Private Collection

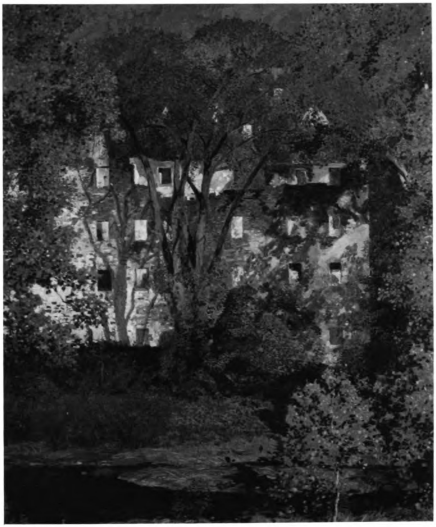


Figure 8
Haunted, 1925, 28" x 30", New Jersey State Museum, Trenton

Figure 9
The Quarry: Evening, 1913, 50" x 60", Philadelphia Museum of Art, W.P. Wilstach Collection

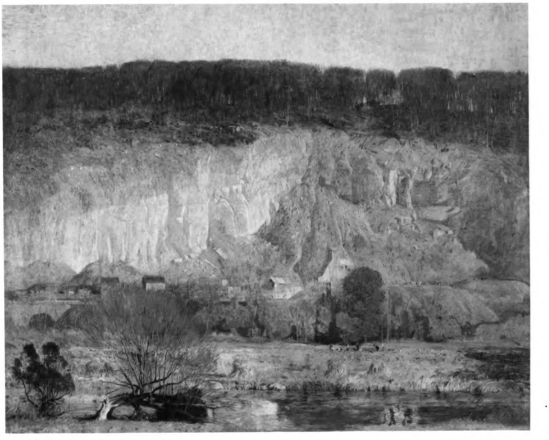


Figure 10
Lowry's Hill, 1922, 50" x 61", Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts

Figure 11
Stockton, 1922, 28" x 36", formerly in the collection of Richard Stuart Gallery

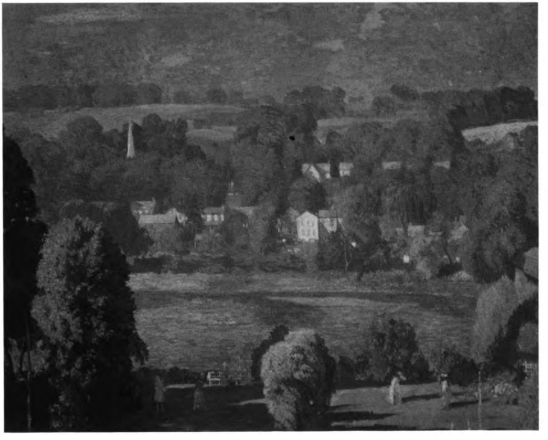


Figure 12
April Landscape, 1910, 42 1/4" x 46", The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Museum purchase, 1911

Figure 13
The Orchard Window, 1918, Philadelphia Museum of Art

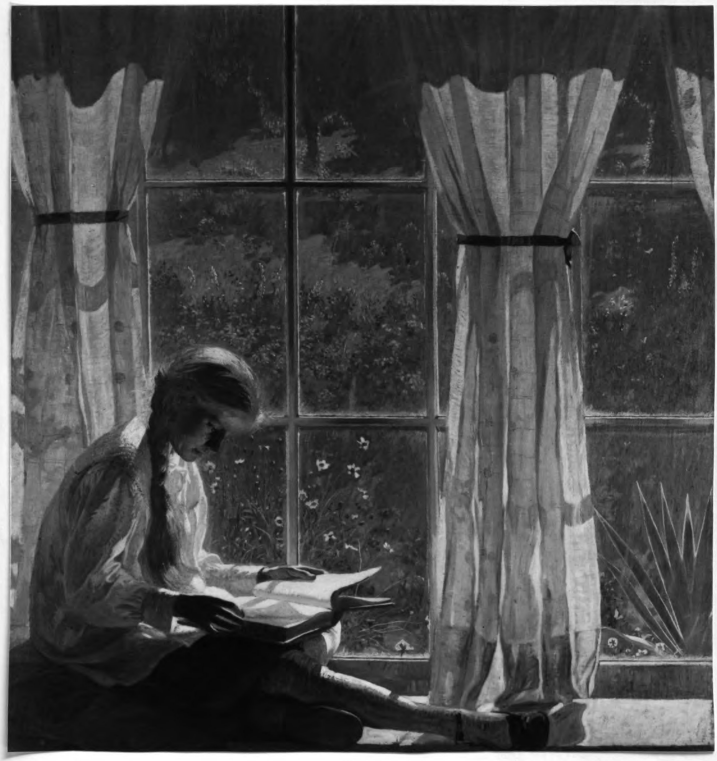


Figure 14
Tanis, 1915, 60" x 46 1/2", Warner Collection of Gulf State Paper Corporation

Figure 15
White Porch, 1909, 36 1/8" x 44 1/8", Private Collection

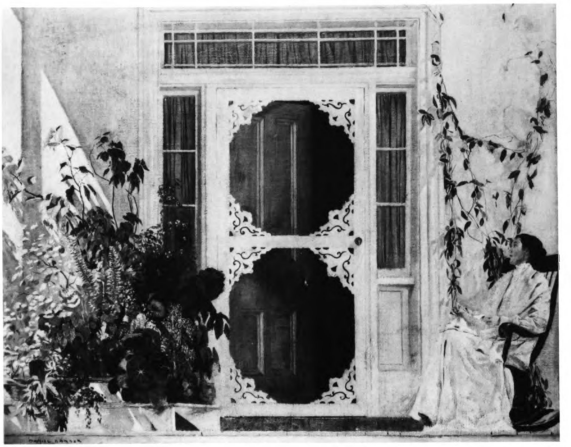


Figure 16
Portrait of Tanis, 1914, 30 1/4" x 24 1/2", Private Collection

Figure 17
The Studio Wall, 1914, 50 1/4" x 52", Private Collection

Figure 18
The Oriole, not dated, 30" x 28", Newman Gallery, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

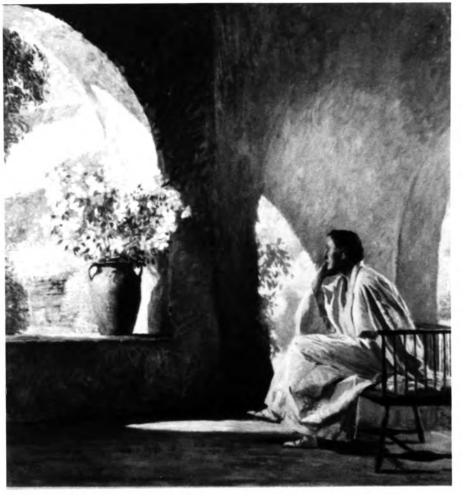


Figure 19
William Langson Lathrop, 1935, 50" x 41 7/8",
Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts

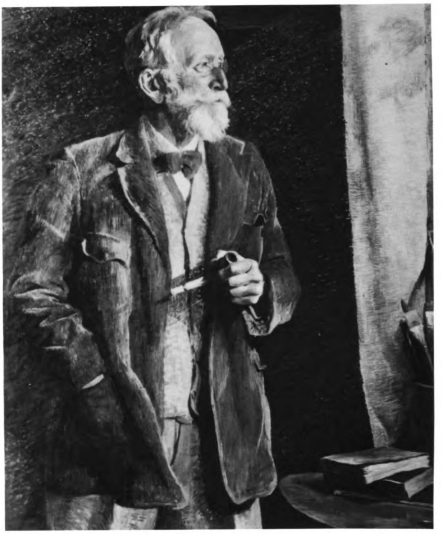
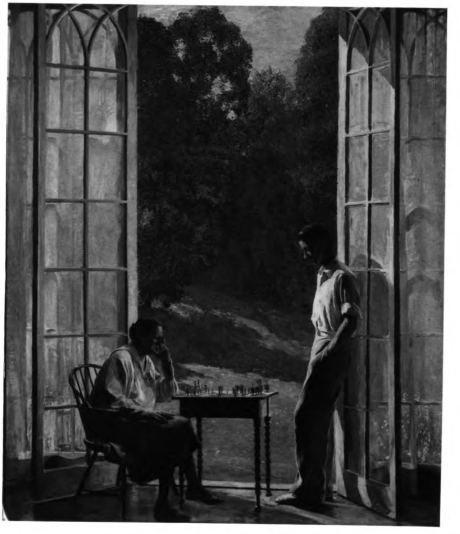


Figure 20
Mother and Son, 1933, 80 1/4" x 70 1/2", Pennsylvania Acedemy of the Fine Arts



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