Charles Burchfield and the Myth-Making of America

A Thesis Presented

by

Jay Grimm

to

The Graduate School

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of the Arts

in

Art History and Criticism

State University of New York

at Stony Brook

State University of New York

at Stony Brook

The Graduate School

Jay Grimm

We, the thesis committee
for the above candidate for the
Master's degree,
hereby recommend acceptance
of this thesis.

Michele N. Bogart

Dr. Michele Bogart
Associate Professor
Department of Art

Donald Kuspit

Dr. Donald Kuspit
Professor
Department of Art

This thesis is accepted
by the Graduate School

Abstract of the Thesis

Charles Burchfield and the Myth-making of America

by

Jay Grimm

Master of Arts

in

Art History and Criticism

State University of New York

at Stony Brook

1993

Charles Burchfield painted many scenes of American towns, factories and farmlands during his "middle" period. However, recent scholarship virtually ignores this significant aspect of his career and focuses instead on his fantasy-driven landscapes. This paper argues for the importance of these realistic views of everyday life and situates them in the context of nationalism, which was an overriding concern of many Americans during the 1920s and 30s.

Introduction

"Burchfield has been said to be one hundred percent American. He is all that and more, in the best meaning of the term, entirely devoid of the ridicule that it can imply. His art is an art firmly rooted in our land, and will be much imitated by many American painters who, in their intellectual life at least, are most assuredly not so rooted. He seems to be the latest of the line of our painters who have been race-conscious: Inness, Eakins, Homer, Luks, Sloan, Kent and Bellows, to name the most typical examples...[Burchfield's] art fits in no pigeon-hole...It does not strive to be cosmopolitan, or for sophistication that it may not be thought provincial...It follows no fashions...And above all, it reaffirms the sovereignty of natural endowment, emotional and interpretive."

-Edward Hopper
"Charles Burchfield:American"
The Arts July, 1928

"Edward Hopper is an American- nowhere but in America could such an art have come into being. But its underlying classical nature prevents its being merely local or national in its appeal. It is my conviction, anyhow, that the bridge to international appreciation is the national bias, providing, of course, it is subconscious. An artist to gain a world audience must belong to his own peculiar time and place; the self-conscious internationalists, no less than the self-conscious nationalists, generally achieve nothing but sterility."

-Charles Burchfield
"Edward Hopper: Classicist"
Edward Hopper: A Retrospective
Museum of Modern Art, 1933

not been included in these discussions, nor do the writings on the artist focus on the issue of "America".

By examining Burchfield's oeuvre in this light, his stylistic shifts will be explained in terms of an acceptance and a later rejection of the construct "America." Psychoanalytic theory will be used to support this view by demonstrating Burchfield's deep need for community, a need which he satisfied for a time by identifying with his native country.

1. Biographical and Stylistic Background

Many authors have divided Burchfield's career into three distinct periods, Early, Middle and Late. Of course, these labels can be problematic and Burchfield's stylistic shifts are not as abrupt as the divisions indicate. However, broadly speaking, these categories are quite useful and do correspond to changes in Burchfield's life and art and thus will be preserved. The following section will lay out the trajectory of Burchfield's life and career, and pays close attention to the artist's use of his paintings to attain a sense of community with the outside world.

1893-1916

Burchfield grew up in Salem, Ohio, a small manufacturing city (pop 10,000) located on the Pennsylvania Railroad, fifteen miles southwest of Youngstown. Burchfield's family, which had moved to Salem in 1898 upon the sudden death of his father, lived on the outskirts of town. As Burchfield later stated, the home, "..was near enough for me as a boy to have easy access to the fields and woods to which I was naturally drawn...Often I was allowed by my mother to go out in the woods alone, accompanied only by my dog..." [1] Burchfield also mentions baseball and the swimming hole, complete with pollywogs, crystalizing the idyllic American boyhood which countless literary figures such as Huck Finn and Homer Price have made into a myth.

Burchfield's childhood was far from usual however. Later in his life, Burchfield always described his boyhood as "lonely"[2], despite his many siblings. As Burchfield later wrote, "..in my whole

---

[1] John I.H. Baur, The Inlander (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1984), 18.

[2]See Baur, The Inlander, 18. Also J. Benjamin Townsend, editor, Charles Burchfield's Journals (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993), 65 and 182. The book contains portions of the relatively unknown documents. The originals are on loan from the Charles Burchfield Foundation to the Charles Burchfield Art Center (both set up by the artist), located on the campus of the State University College at Buffalo.

In looking at Burchfield's biography, it seems crucial that his father died during the oedipal phase of his development, as this would explain his over-active super-ego. Burchfield was probably five years old when his father died. Burchfield varied in his accounts of the matter.[5] According to outside sources, William Charles Burchfield possibly died in September, 1898.[6] The cause of the death is not known. Burchfield, as far as can be ascertained, never gave a reason for his father's death, which, along with the suddenness of the episode, points to the possibility of suicide.[7] In any case, the loss of the father at such a young age is significant psychologically and is a major reason Burchfield had to look outside of his family for a sense of belonging.

In a psychoanalytic sense, Burchfield's lifelong guilt stemmed from the fulfillment of his early fantasy that his father would die. Because of this disturbance, the boy seems to have never resolved the constellation of intense aggressive and sexual fantasies associated with the oedipal phase.[8] Burchfield, then, because of his father's

---

[5]In the Whitney archives, in addition to the Autobiographical Manuscript are other similar documents prepared by Burchfield where he writes "four" and crosses it out.

[6]From archival material at the Burchfield Art center.

[7]One of Burchfield's daughters committed suicide, which runs in families, further raising this as a possibility. A death certificate has not been found, also suggesting a cover-up. I would like to thank Nancy Weekly at the Burchfield Art Center for sharing what she knew about this.

[8]See Brenner, Textbook of Psychoanalysis, 106.

death, had difficulty accepting unconditional love from his family (both from his mother and later, his wife), because he believed that as a boy, he himself had caused his father to die. Furthermore, given the intensity of his self-doubt and shyness, it seems probable that Burchfield did not receive the necessary support from his family to overcome the loss of his father.

As a result, Burchfield turned to nature, which became for the young boy a place where he could belong. This communion with the natural world was his first move to find community outside of his family, a desire which he later addressed by identifying with America. Psychoanalytic theory supports the notion that a person would cathect his desire for parental love onto an inanimate object or abstract notion. According to W.R.D. Fairbairn (whose thought is in opposition to Freudian drive-theory), "The consequence of... an unnatural separation is that early relations with objects [i.e. Burchfield's father] become 'bad' or depriving. It becomes too painful to long for and depend on an object which is physically...absent.."[9] The result is that Burchfield formed an unnatural, psychopathological internal object to compensate for his lost father.

---

9 Greenberg and Mitchell, Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 159.

The "psychopathological internal object", according to Fairbairn, is simply a mental construct which the mind attempts to use in the absent object's stead. It can consist of a myriad conglomeration of fantasies and projections. In Burchfield's case, nature was inextricably tied up with this attempt to replace his lost father. It is likely that the boy never really mourned his father's death and instead displaced some of his pain onto the woods.

To carry Fairbairn's theory further, the anxiety caused by this loss would become an integral part of the child's internal object. "The emptier the real exchange, the greater his devotion to the promising yet depriving features of his parents which he has internalized and seeks within."[10] In other words, not only did Burchfield fantasize about his father's affection, but that fantasy involved pain and loneliness. Fairbairn argues that these early internal objects are projected out onto the world and experienced again and again throughout one's life. This would explain the extreme panic which, according to his journals and some of his paintings, Burchfield often felt in the face of natural forces. If nature was associated with his father, it follows that the experience would involve suffering as well as pleasure.

Religion also played a large role in Burchfield's development, and must have also played a role in his attempts to replace his lost

---

10 Greenberg and Mitchell, Object Relations, 173.

father. While organized religion often affords people a surrogate family and a sense of belonging, in Burchfield's case the experience was a negative one. Burchfield's family attended a Presbyterian Church and sent the young boy to Sunday School there. Burchfield later termed this school, "one of the nightmares of my childhood"[11] because of the harshness of the curriculum. "He was taught there that playing cards, dancing and the theater were all manifestations about Satan, and that there 'wasn't a Catholic living who wouldn't kill a Protestant, if he thought he would go undetected'"[12] It can be imagined how this milieu regarded masturbation, homosexuality, or even thinking about sex at all. This religious training left an indelible mark on young Burchfield and undoubtedly inhibited the artist in later life and contributed to the guilt he experienced. Burchfield's super-ego, already at risk of being overly harsh, was reinforced in its power by his early experiences with the church.

Yet, religion seems to have played a deeper role than simply making Burchfield fear sin. Rather, the boy began to conflate nature and god, engaging in what Townsend terms "neoprimitive animism."

---

[11]Townsend, Burchfield's Journals, 72. In a 1934 article, it states that Burchfield pasted the following on the verso of his Sunday Morning... "I had a quarrel with my Sunday School teacher, and had run outside. Wishing to avoid the embarrassment of having to explain at home mu premature return...I hung around in the churchyard until class was dismissed", suggesting that Burchfield may have had a teacher who was particularly hard on him as a boy. "Burchfield,Famous Modern.." Buffalo Evening News (February 17, 1934)

[12]Townsend, Burchfield's Journals, 72.

[13] Nature became a living, independent life-force for Burchfield, and he began to worship it. As Baur and other writers have noticed, Burchfield responded more deeply to nature than to the comraderie of his friends.[14] He learned the names of wildflowers, birds, insects, and read many books by naturalist writers. In a very profound sense, Burchfield became familiar with the landscape. On one level, this stems from the boy's fear and rejection of organized religion--his desire to find god in a place other than the church. Yet, the extent of his feelings and the timing suggest that religion was a surrogate father figure for the young boy. God lived in the trees and bushes where He punished the boy for becoming an oedipal winner.

The way out seems to have been art, which Burchfield began creating at an early age. The boy used his imagined supernatural forces as material for his paintings, suggesting that the artist attempted to master his conflicted feelings by recreating them in watercolor. In other words, from an early time, experiencing, recording, and worshiping nature became a surrogate for experiencing the love of his father. Furthermore, this could explain why Burchfield experienced difficulty forming relations with other people. Forming an attachment with another person would involve

---

[13]Townsend, Burchfield's Journals, 243.

[14] Ibid, also Matthew Baigell Charles Burchfield, (New York: Watson-Guptill, 1976), 15.

abandoning the object, imperfect as it was, that he had formed as a child. Burchfield thus had to find means outside of human contact to attain a sense of community.

In 1912, despite his family's limited economic resources, Burchfield began a four year course of study at the Cleveland School of Art. He initially planned to become an illustrator for his own nature writings (Burchfield later wrote that it was rumored illustrators made 'big money' and this was part of his decision to follow this profession.[15]) Burchfield was deeply impressed by the writings of naturalist John Burroughs (another loner-in-nature), especially his journals. Indeed, in his junior year of High School, Burchfield began keeping his own journals, which contained his responses to nature, his notes for future paintings, descriptions of natural phenomena and records of quotidian existence. More than a diary, these journals were initially a place for Burchfield to practice his nature writing, and later, when he became a 'fine' artist, they served as an outlet for his desire to describe the world around him in written fashion.

Art school was a difficult experience for Burchfield. It was his first extended time away from his mother's house, and he became quite homesick. He did make some friends, however, falling in with a clique that called themselves "The Family."[16] This can be taken as

---

[15]Charles Burchfield, "On the Middle Border", Creative Art, (Sept., 1928): xxv.

[16]Townsend, Burchfield's Journals, 142.

further evidence of Burchfield's need of supportive groups of people. Nonetheless, the shy man tended to keep his distance from most of his colleagues.

At the same time, perhaps emboldened by his freedom away from home, Burchfield became openly suspicious of organized religion. For example, he read Why I Am an Agnostic and agreed with the author, and discussed the book with his peers.[17] Nonetheless, he never stopped believing in a higher power. Rather, Burchfield began to assign a spiritual meaning to the landscape, rather than to any formal religion. As Burchfield wrote in his journal, "...If I stopped to admire or sketch a tree, it [is]... more of a prayer than meaningless phrases mumbled in a church."[18] Burchfield, then, transcendentally projected his belief in god onto nature, engaging in what Townsend calls "neoprimitive animism."[19] This belief in a pantheistic god, which was actually later mixed with Lutheranism, became quite important to Burchfield in the mid-40s.[20] As will be argued, this replaced his lost belief in America.

---

[17] Journal entry, Oct. 22, 1914, Townsend, Burchfield's Journals, 644.

[18] Journal entry, Dec. 5, 1915, Townsend, Burchfield's Journals, 646.

[19] Townsend, Burchfield's Journals, 243, 332.

[20] See, for example, The Eye of God in the Woods, in the Vatican's collection. Pantheism is Baur's classification for Burchfield see "The Last Pantheist" In The Inlander, 257-263.

Nature continued to be Burchfield's refuge, a place where he went to be alone and escape the stress of art school. He would often cut class to wander in one of Cleveland's large parks, or take a trolley to the outskirts of town. While out on one of these walks in the woods, Burchfield wrote, "Here, someday, in the midst of nature, I must finally seek my abode, for here it is I am at perfect peace with myself. I care not that I love not the companionship of my fellow men."[21] In his junior year, Burchfield fell in love with one of his classmates, a woman named Alice Bailey. Not incidentally, Burchfield met her through "The Family"--her nickname was "Mother." The pair apparently got engaged, but Burchfield was unable to marry her because of his finances.[22] From his journals it is clear that a sexual tension existed between the two of them. However, given his strong sense of propriety, it seems unlikely Burchfield acted upon his urges. Instead, he repressed them, as evidenced by his journals. He wrote, "...While fired with he lofty

---

21 Journal entry, Jan. 29, 1915. Townsend, Burchfield's Journals, 61. Townsend correctly links this idealizing attitude toward nature with the writings of D.H. Lawrence, William Butler Yeats, and other early modernists. In Townsend's words, "..it is clear that Burchfield's unsatisfied physical appetites found release in...watercolors that glorify nature's primordial energy and supernatural mystery..." (p. 125.) As will be discussed below, many authors have overlooked such links. Yet, it seems clear that Burchfield can be included in some discussions of American studies.

22 Townsend, Burchfield's Journals, 72. Burchfield never refers to this engagement in any of his writings. Interestingly, at a recent symposium (June 10, 1993 at the Drawing Center in New York City) on Burchfield, Alice Bailey's step-daughter claimed that Bailey called off the marriage because Burchfield was dominated by his mother.

enthusiasm of a picture I am painting, all at once I am overcome with violent lustful desires [later erased]. My whole body seems to cry out for the cool embrace of a woman [also erased and written over]."[23]

The conflicts which arose in his life during the last years in art school caused a series of depressions. At times Burchfield thought of suicide and at others he hallucinated.[24] He later went back and erased some of the suicidal entries, but they can still be read. "Were it not for Alice, my mother and my art, surely I would kill myself. These may be enough to encourage me to live, but some can live for themselves whereas if I should live for myself, what would be my excuse ?"[25] Five days later, Burchfield wrote, "It is an Elysian Day- I am feeling boundlessly happy-I can laugh at my suicidal entry of several days ago-yet I feel so inanely joyous that I feel sure I must pay for it later."[26]

---

23 Journal entry April 24, 1915, Townsend, Burchfield's Journals, 128.

24 One entry reads, "I seem to feel some presence which hovers to one side- sometimes it is a man, or a phantom, or a running dog;I look quickly, but there is nothing there" September 22, 1916, Townsend Burchfield's Journals, 83. See especially Townsend pp. 83-86. It seems certain that Burchfield suffered from some psychological disorder at this time (See below)

25 Journal entry, April 24, 1915. Townsend, Burchfield's Journals, 75.

26 Journal entry, April 29, 1915. Townsend, Burchfield's Journals, 76. This sort of rapid mood shift suggests a mood disorder such as Bipolarity or Cyclothemia. See the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders , 219, 223. As mentioned before, it is possible that the Burchfield family had a history of suicide and the artist, then, may have had a hereditary disposition to depression.

These symptoms disappeared when Burchfield returned to his mother's house after graduating from art school in May of 1916. It would seem that Burchfield's "facilitating environment"-the space where he felt secure enough to function properly- was still his boyhood home. From a psychoanalytic perspective, Burchfield took an unusually long time to mature. He was reluctant to give up nature and did not seek community with other people.

Burchfield's happiness was again interrupted by a scholarship he received to study at the National Academy of Design in New York City. In the weeks leading up to this trip, Burchfield again began to suffer hallucinations and depressions. In October of 1916, he went to New York, but spent only one day in class. The entire trip lasted only seven weeks, when Burchfield fled the metropolis. He hated the city, while preferring his beloved woods.

1916-20 The Early Period

Burchfield continued to identify with the landscape, and began painting the surrounding natural scene in earnest. Burchfield later termed 1917 his "golden year", and from 1916-18, he executed well over 500 works, about one-quarter of his entire oeuvre. Even more

startling is the fact that Burchfield was working as an accountant five days a week and a half day on Saturday throughout these years. This prodigious output consisted almost entirely of landscapes, although the artist did record scenes from his hometown as well. Rarely did Burchfield include figures, however, and in most cases, the human presence is muted, overwhelmed by the surrounding natural effects. Significantly, during this period, Burchfield consciously strove to recreate his childhood responses to the landscape.[27] Equally as significantly, Burchfield continued to experience a chronic series of depressions. However, Burchfield was not suicidal, as was the case previously. Instead, these attacks of anxiety were directly associated with the landscapes Burchfield painted, and his art can be seen as a method of controlling his condition.

Stylistically, Burchfield's watercolors from 1915-20 can be characterized as expressionist, with flat, tonal views of the landscape in eastern Ohio. Two works, The Ravine and Afterglow, both of 1916, serve as good examples of this phase. Both watercolors (Burchfield only rarely worked in oil) are devoid of human figures and focus on the forces of nature. Also, in each case, the artist used non-local colors to convey his own reaction to the scene. In The Ravine can be seen the system Burchfield developed, whereby all the variations in hue are reduced to the twelve colors of the color

---

[27]This nostalgia recurred throughout Burchfield's life. See Townsend's section "Nostalgia: Boyhood" in the Journals p.182-193.

wheel.[28] This color scheme, along with the unconventional viewpoint and abrupt cropping of the pictorial elements, clearly demonstrate the influence of Oriental art.[29] The work also highlights Burchfield's powerful designing ability. The arrangement of forms, with the counterbalancing diagonals, and the tonal placement of color values demonstrates the artist's strength in regard to design.

---

[28]Townsend, Burchfield's Journals, 435.

[29] Baigell, Charles Burchfield, 59.

Afterglow, the more expressionistic of the two, illustrates Burchfield's deep response to natural phenomena. The medium, though thickly applied (many critics note his unusual use of watercolors) , nonetheless manages to capture subtle variations in light and color. The house and trees are dwarfed and set into deep shadow by the towering, birdlike pink clouds and purple sky. The surface of this paper entices the viewer to look closely and discover the assurance with which he worked. To a large extent, Burchfield strove to express his personal reaction to the scenes he depicted in this period.

Other pictures illustrate Burchfield's panic in the face of nature. Church Bells Ringing, 1917, for example, contains the darker side of Burchfield's psyche at this time. The watercolor depicts the Baptist Church, which was across the street from the Presbyterian Church he had attended as a youth. The tower has been transformed into a bird-like monster, and the sky is almost tissue - like as it seeps bloody rain. Throughout the scene, Burchfield has included his personal symbolism. These symbols, which he termed Conventions for Abstract Thoughts, were pictographs for human emotions such as "fear", "dangerous brooding", and "fascination of evil."[30] It is significant that such a nightmarish vision would include

---

30 See John I.H. Baur, "Fantasy and Symbolism in Charles Burchfield's Early Watercolors" Art Quarterly Volume 19, Number 1. (Spring, 1956):30-4

the church--the site of many childhood terrors. Furthermore, from a Freudian perspective, Church Bells Ringing might be seen as a castration nightmare, the bloody phallus being the artist's punishment for his oedipal triumph. In other words, Burchfield in this works projects the self-destructive fantasy stemming from his father's death onto the church. This church, moreover, symbolized paternal authority to the artist and his personal problems with this authority can be read into the watercolor's disturbed surface.

What is significant about Burchfield's production in these years is that the artist chose nature as a place to commune, rather than human company. His work contains the joy and the fear that went into this act of relating, and also evidences the unresolved conflicts in the artist's life.

This consideration is all the more significant given that Burchfield did not live off his art at this time. These works were done for his own pleasure, and were not exhibited in a large group until 1930. Although some of his art world contacts were aware of and admired these early works, it was only much later that they were recognized as important.

Recent critical attention has been focused on these early landscapes as well as the late works, which were Burchfield's attempt to recapture the "golden year". For example, the catalog essay for the 1993 Hamilton College show Extending the Golden Year focuses

on the post-1943 work[31], and the show itself consists primarily of landscapes. The theme and organization of the exhibit play up the links between Burchfield's early and late career. The Columbus Museum's 1988 exhibition The Early Work of Charles Burchfield had a more limited focus Similarly, the bulk of the Kennedy Galleries' (who represent the artist's estate) exhibitions have featured his early or late views of nature.[32]

Alfred Barr's 1930 essay for the MoMA catalog of Burchfield's early work is the first real piece of criticism written about his early period. Remarkably, Barr's introduction typifies the view taken of these pieces until the present day. As it seems so seminal, this essay will be quoted at length:

---

[31] Janice Simon, "Glimpses of Eternity:The Mythic Late Paintings of Charles Burchfield" Extending the Golden Year (Clinton: Hamilton College,1993),8-19.

[32]To be fair, this is probably what makes up the bulk of his estate.

To those who are familiar with Charles Burchfield's mature style his early work now exhibited for the first time must appear surprising and even contradictory. In his recent work which has placed him among the most interesting American artists Burchfield has examined critically the mid-western town...Satire in which hate and wit are mingled is combined with the discovery of picturesque ugliness. In these..watercolors [is an]..authentically native movement which might be christened American Sceneism...

In the earlier work we find an astonishingly different spirit. Frequently the same objects appear...but they are not as much satirized as accepted as material for romantic composition...

During this early Romantic Period Burchfield concentrated upon the expression of moods and emotions on the one hand, and on the other specific forces and even sounds and movements of nature...It is impossible to discover any important influences upon Burchfield's art...He had attended the Cleveland School of Art where Henry G. Keller encouraged him to use his imagination...He was almost completely ignorant of what had happened in Europe. He does not remember having seen a Cezanne before 1920. He believes that Japanese prints may have had some influence but cannot remember any conscious admiration for Oriental art before 1918. One can only conclude that we have in this period of Burchfield's development one of the most isolated and original phenomena in American Art.[33]

Several inaccuracies must be noted immediately. Burchfield knew about Hiroshige and Oriental art as early as 1915.[34] In that

---

[33]Alfred Barr,"Introduction" The Early Watercolors of Charles Burchfield, (New York:MoMA, 1930),3.

[34]A book on Hiroshige still exists, inscribed as a gift of Christmas 1915. (Baur p.30)

year, Burchfield served as a guard at the Cleveland Museum for an exhibition of Chinese scroll painting. These works, which depict the passing of time, gave him the idea of painting seasonal and meteorological transitions. Burchfield termed these ideas "All-sketches" and later in his career, he was to pick up this idea and paint many works, such as The Coming of Spring, or The Four Seasons, where the landscape transforms within a single picture. When Burchfield worked with Baur on his 1956 book, Burchfield freely admits the Oriental influence.[35]

Furthermore, Burchfield must have known about European modernism. While in art school, Burchfield was exposed to many different types of art and studied under Henry G. Keller, an artist-educator with decidedly modernist leanings. Keller exhibited in the Armory Show, and was a friend of Walt Kuhn, one of the show's principle organizers. While trying to generate publicity for the event, which occurred while Burchfield was a second year art student, Kuhn sent 50 posters announcing the Armory show to Keller.[36] Keller's style was eclectic and moderately experimental, incorporating a wide range of influences, including Oriental art and Post-Impressionism..

---

[35]Charles Burchfield, Autobiographical MS, 5.

[36]Milton Brown, The Story of the Armory Show, (New York: Abbeville, 1988), 91.

There is evidence, furthermore, that Keller exposed Burchfield to modernism. For instance, in a journal entry on December 10, 1914, Burchfield wrote "Keller showed and explained the different movements from the Old Masters down thru [sic] impressionism, pointillism, futurism, cubism and even beyond-metaphysical sensations..." [37] And on March 17, 1915, Burchfield noted, "Keller...has volunteered to show me the Post-Impressionist method of using the blue outline..."[38] Furthermore, Burchfield's symbolist Conventions for Abstract Thoughts also demonstrate a familiarity with modernism.[39] In 1918, moreover, Burchfield told a superior in the Army that he was an admirer of Cezanne.[40] And, in an autobiographical article in 1928, Burchfield states quite clearly that he was aware of the new art movements, "..but I had no clear idea of what they meant" and when he viewed some "revolutionary art" at a local art club, "I was not much impressed"[41]

In fact, the likelihood that Burchfield graduated from the Cleveland School of Art, where an exhibitor at the Armory Show was his mentor, and where he was taught courses in art history,

---

37 Townsend, Burchfield's Journals, 429.

38 Townsend, Burchfield's Journals, 431.

39 I am grateful to Dr. Donald Kuspit for these insights.

40 Baur, The Inlander, 91.

41 Burchfield, "On the Middle Border",xxvi.

without being exposed to the avant-gardist styles is minute.[42] In fact, I believe this desire to call Burchfield an artist who stood apart from tradition or influence stems from the desire, common in American studies of the past, to deny any connection to Europe and keep the object of the study 'pure'.[43] Thus, the qualities of the artist become 'American' qualities, and the artist becomes a native talent with inherent tendencies (often 'democratic') can be detected. While recent scholarship on American studies have moved away from this attitude, it remains in force as far as Burchfield is concerned.[44] I want to be clear: it is misguided to say that Burchfield knew nothing of modernism. Rather, he *chose* not to paint in a modernist style, a decision which is crucial, in my view, to understanding what his work means.[45]

Barr, however, put into writing a powerful fable, and it proves quite durable. Most writers agree with Matthew Baigell's

---

[42] My undergraduate honors thesis (George Washington University, unpublished) "Charles Burchfield's Modernism" deals with this question in depth, using a watercolor executed in New York City in 1916 to argue that Burchfield briefly experimented with modernism.

[43] For an extreme example, see Peyton Boswell, Modern American Painting, (New York: Dodd, Meade and Co., 1940), 11-16, 112.

[44] See especially the brief discussions of Burchfield's influences in Baur and Baigell.

[45] Townsend does note that Burchfield's ignorance of Parisian modernism was 'unlikely' (p. 435), but as he is an editor rather than a critic, he does not explore this issue.

assessment that Burchfield was "innocent" of "contemporary European trends."[46]

Burchfield's "golden year", when the works which have dominated the writing on the artist were created, was ended by World War One. In June of 1918, he was called up to serve in the U.S. Army. As a result of his art school contacts and his talent for painting, Burchfield obtained an easy assignment to the Camouflage Corps, and avoided foreign service. After six months, Burchfield managed to receive a discharge, and went back to Ohio. Unlike previous homecomings, however, Burchfield did not experience a renewed capacity to paint and be happy. Home and nature no longer appealed to him in the way they once had. From January to October, 1919, Burchfield was in a deep depression. It is difficult to know what caused this dark mood. Baur, notes that "quite without warning and for no obvious reason...the dark mood lifted"[47], but is not clear about the cause of the depression.

Burchfield also had trouble explaining his misery. It seems that he tried too hard to regain his previous sensations in nature. "I had just returned from the army...and I was trying desperately to get back into the intimate view of nature and her 'secrets'...I was obsessed with the notion of expressing the feelings of birds.."[48] In

---

[46] Baigell Burchfield, 51, see also Baur The Inlander, 27.

[47] Baur, The Inlander, 96.

[48] Baur, The Inlander, 92.

other words, Burchfield was demanding too much of the landscape. He desired a more intimate contact, one that nature seemed unable to provide. In a psychoanalytic sense, Burchfield was giving up his infantile identification with the landscape, and moving toward more mature forms of relating which ultimately led to his identifying with America.

Not incidentally, many authors note that in the spring of 1919, Burchfield read Sherwood Anderson's Winesburg,Ohio , and had begun reading Willa Cather, Sinclair Lewis, and Zona Gale by 1920.[49] These authors shared a focus on the experiences of Americans living on farms and small towns in the mid-western United States. Baigell overtly links Burchfield's work at this time with the "Revolt from the Village" literary movement.[50] This movement, which included the above authors, sought to come to terms with the mid-west and to integrate this region into the realm of American culture, which had traditionally been almost exclusively concerned with New England and the east coast. Burchfield's interest in this genre also supports the view that human, rather than natural themes brought the artist out of his rut, themes which spoke to his

---

[49]Ibid p 105. Interestingly, Townsend considers Burchfield an American Gothick artist based on the grotesque quality of his houses,p 23.

[50]Baigell, Burchfield, 92.

growing desire to be with other people. It is at this point that America became important to the artist.

1920-43 The Middle Period

In October, 1920, somewhat suddenly, Burchfield began to paint scenes of human activity; his small town, the surrounding farmlands and industrial scenes came to dominate the subject matter of his paintings. It is the middle style which I will examine in terms of nationalism. Although Burchfield continued to wander the woods around his home, he no longer ignored humanity. His watercolor February Thaw of 1920 (acquired the next year by the Brooklyn Museum) illustrates the new sensibility. The sky no longer dominates the composition, as is the case in Afterglow. Instead the houses loom up, blocking out much of the sun's light. The smoke from a distant factory replaces the clouds. Reflections from the rain exist on a man-made surface and telegraph poles frame the composition. The focus has shifted away from nature worship to a record of the human presence. While people do not dominate many of these works, man's mark upon the landscape is almost always visible. These human scenes were recognizable views of the small town where Burchfield lived.

In some aspects, however, this style is not an abrupt occurrence. The spooky mood of 1917 and 1918 seems to be present in February Thaw as well. The distortions and attention to architectural detail also can be found in earlier work. The construct

February Thaw, 1920, watercolor over pencil,
17 7/8 x 27 7/8 inches. Collection of The Brooklyn Museum.

of "early, middle and late", then, obscures the fact that seeds of this new style occur in the time period set aside for expressionism. Yet, the construct is useful nonetheless since the great bulk of Burchfield's work, as well as his mental state, demonstrates a real shift.

The early twenties saw radical changes in Burchfield's personal life as well as in his style. In early 1921, he lost his job due to layoffs during the economic downturn. While helping out on a neighbor's farm, the 28-year old Burchfield fell in love with the 36-year old daughter of the owner. In order to get married, Burchfield needed a job, and again, his art school contacts provided assistance. The dean of his art school arranged an interview with H. Birge & Sons, an important wallpaper manufacturer located in Buffalo. On the strength of his early watercolors, Burchfield was hired and in late 1921, he moved to that city.[51] In six years, the newlyweds had five children, and Burchfield commuted to his job from a large house in a suburb about ten miles east of Buffalo.

However, his new family did not completely satisfy Burchfield's desire for belonging. The artist was extremely uneasy being a father figure. Although as an actual father, Burchfield was warm and loving, he seems to also have been, at times, a reluctant one. He refers to "uninteresting problems at home" and at another

---

[51] Baur, The Inlander, 123.

point felt guilty for speaking "harsh unsympathetic words to my wife, when she was crying in the agony of boredom."[52] It is difficult to quantify this feeling of unease. It not immediately apparent in Townsend's book which is edited and not chronological, but in reading the journals in their long form and in order, this impression is distinctly noticeable.[53] Furthermore, his portraits of his family members are among the most ambiguous family views in art history. For example, Portrait Study in A Spring Landscape[54] which depicts Burchfield's seven year-old daughter Mary Alice sitting on tree stump contains none of the cheer usually associated with childhood. Rather, the girl sits unanimated and expressionless, staring blankly out at the viewer.

This reluctance to be a father figure is seen in other aspects of his life as well: he disliked the Army because he was promoted to sergeant, and quit his job at Birge when he was give the head designer job. Furthermore, Burchfield found parallels between himself and Sibelius when he read the musician's biography.[55] Sibelius, according to one album's liner notes, when composing his

---

52 Journal entry, Aug 23, 1929. Townsend, Burchfield's Journals, 135.

53 I would like to acknowledge Tony Bannon for his input here.

54 See John Trovato, Charles Burchfield (Utica:Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute),142.

55 See Journal entry Nov 23, 1938, Townsend, Burchfield's Journals, 606.

Second Symphony (one of Burchfield's favorites) "installed his wife and children in a boarding-house, and rented himself a small hilltop villa...in order to be able to work in peace."[56] As a professional painter, moreover, Burchfield was extremely dependent on his dealers. The artist always allowed Frank Rehn, and later John Clancey, to select which works would be hung in his shows and sent to museum exhibitions. Although Burchfield would refer to his paintings as his "children", he was remarkably passive about their handling.

Sexually, as well, it seems that family life did not fulfill Burchfield's needs. Undoubtedly, his harsh super-ego coupled with his religious upbringing made sexuality, even within marriage, quite difficult. This lack of satisfaction can be seen in a 1930 journal entry about a nighttime walk in the woods. "A tall dark pine tree stands by-I raise my eyes to the sky, fling wide my arms and pray to God to forgive me my sins, my lusts, my hideous thoughts, my cheapness...I fall on my knees-it is not enough-I fall on my face-press my forehead to the snow-at last the tears come-the wind roars past-I grow cold and I rejoice in being cold-I come away in peace."[57] Being a married man, its hard to imagine what would be wrong with his lusts. It may have been that either his own religious

---

56 Hannu-Ilari Lampila "Sibelius: Symphony No. 2" Sibelius.., EMI Records, 1988.

57 Journal entry, Feb. 14, 1930, Townsend,Burchfield's Journals, 87.

upbringing or his wife's precluded sex for anything but procreation, and any sort of desires would have been unwanted.[58] And again, perhaps Burchfield had some other lusts or masturbated or any other entirely normal sexual event (mental or physical) occurred that caused him guilt.

Burchfield, then, had to look outside his family in the 20s and 30s for a community that would afford him a sense of belonging. Burchfield's reputation as a painter of American scenes grew steadily during these years. By 1929, he was established enough to quit his job and paint full time. From the popularity of these realistic works, it would seem that Burchfield's acceptance of theme of America corresponded to a wider enthusiasm for the concept in the United States. During the 1930s, Burchfield's style became more solid and straightforward, as the artist's identification with America became more overt. A typical example of these fully developed middle period paintings is Black Iron of 1935. Gone is Burchfield's propensity for giving structures human characteristics. Instead, a great sense of stability and power pervades this piece.

Burchfield continued to paint landscapes in the middle period. Yet, again, most of these pieces contained man-made objects and signals of the human presence. Arching Trees, 1940, is typical of

---

58 I would like to acknowledge Dr. Kuspit's input on this point.

Black Iron, 1935, watercolor, 29 x 41 inches. Courtesy Kennedy Galleries

Arching Trees, 1940, watercolor, 24 1/4 x 20 3/4 inches. Courtesy Kennedy Galleries.

this period. The solid diagonal of the receding road gives a sense of order to the composition, around which the arch and the rectangular houses are grouped. The tidy fields surrounding the houses are reduced to flat fields of color, adding to the gentle mood of the work, a mood largely unknown to the early period.

In my opinion, Black Iron, and Arching Trees exemplify Burchfield's most positive statement about America. More than matter-of-fact views of the local scene, the works of the middle period embraced the idea of a collective national identity. In other words, Burchfield, in his middle period, was executing works which were readily identifiable as "American." By that I mean his realistic works were not simply straightforward records of his surroundings, but rather Burchfield included enough details to signal the larger idea of nationality. The attitudes about industry and landscape tied up in the production and reception of these pieces will be examined later. What is important to note at this point is the extreme importance of these works in terms of Burchfield's reputation and patronage. The painter depended on his scenes of America to support himself and his family. While his fantasy-driven landscapes are the primary reason for Burchfield's present-day fame, this was not the case in the 20s and 30s.

Indeed, few people saw the works of Burchfield's "golden year" until 1930, when the Museum of Modern Art held an exhibition of the artist's early period. Furthermore, Burchfield's

middle paintings sold for significantly more than his early works during his lifetime; only recently has the opposite been true. Burchfield moreover was a frequent exhibitor at the Rehn Galleries, which was the leading showcase of American realism between the wars and beyond. In other words, Burchfield's audience expected him to produce scenes which were easily recognized as "American." Thus, a major reason for the artist's considerable reputation was the identification with and admiration of America on the part of his viewers as well as in his own mind. While Burchfield later repudiated this nationalistic mode, its importance must not be discounted. I will return later to the issue of Burchfield's move away from "America" and argue that the artist became dissatisfied with the notion. This move again demonstrates how central nationality is to understanding Burchfield's career.

My emphasis on the middle period runs counter to the more recent literature on Burchfield. As mentioned above, his expressionistic landscapes claim the lion's share of critical attention. Baur, for example, devotes five full chapters to his nature painting, as opposed to two dealing exclusively with his middle years. Similarly, Baigell has six chapters on the landscapes as opposed to two on the middle period. Townsend, in a recently published text, also upholds this view. He states, "Undue stress has been placed on

Burchfield's American local realism."[59] In Townsend's view, Burchfield is more of a romantic than a realist, and the editor takes great pains to disassociate Burchfield from the Regionalists.[60]

The three are not alone in this emphasis. In fact, it seems that since Burchfield's death, any show of his middle work is an exception.[61] In terms of art criticism which privileges the avant-garde, this view can be defended. The modernist taste which informs many current viewpoints would naturally gravitate towards the expressionistic and away from the descriptive. But in writing art history, this view obscures the fact that without the acknowledgement Burchfield received for his scenes of American town life and industry, he would never have been able to survive as a full-time fine artist.

---

[59] Townsend, Burchfield's Journals, 452. only two works from the middle period are reproduced in color.

[60] Townsend does address Burchfield's realism sympathetically and somewhat thoroughly, but his attempt to place Burchfield as a romantic is not accompanied by a discussion of what such romanticism might have meant to those who admired it. It seems to me to be another side of the Regionalist coin. At any rate, Townsend, too, tends to play up the landscapes, and Burchfield as a romantic/realist makes this an easier task.

[61] To be sure, the various curators and critics who have dealt with Burchfield have presented views more nuanced than I might imply here. However, I still maintain that the overriding, pervasive account of Burchfield's career privileges landscape.

1943-67 The Late Period

Burchfield moved away from his realist style in the last twenty-four years of his career. In my opinion, this move demonstrates Burchfield's growing dissatisfaction with America. The artist replaced this lost sense of belonging to America with religion, both formal and pantheistic. Again, the shift had no teleology, but as time progressed, Burchfield became more and more involved with landscapes devoid of the human presence which contained spiritual overtones.

In 1943, he 'reconstructed' a 1917 watercolor to create The Coming of Spring, dated 1917-43. In this work, Burchfield attached an old watercolor to a large piece of cardboard, and then added additional pieces of paper around the original and expanded the image in "the 1917 manner" as he put it. In this reconstruction and the many others he executed over the next ten years, Burchfield again attempted to access the reactions and emotions he had experienced as a boy wandering in the woods. He renewed his effort to capture seasonal change and movement in nature and discarded, gradually, his middle style.[62]

---

[62]See Baur, The Inlander, 194, and Baigell, Burchfield, 169.

In psychoanalytic terms, this late period is a regression--a return to primary thinking and away from the more mature scenes of other people. This shift away from human themes, not incidentally, roughly corresponds to Burchfield's religious conversion. In early 1944, Burchfield became a Lutheran, his wife's religion. Both nature and religion, then, can be seen as a replacement, as having outcompeted Burchfield's lost sense of belonging to America.

The "America" seen in Black Iron disappeared from Burchfield's paintings. His landscapes, which were previously marked by the intrusions of man, no longer contain, in the late works, a human presence. All that exists is the artist's internal reverie and spiritual response to the scene. Burchfield, in his late work, again attaches a religious, rather than a cultural meaning to the land he portrays. In some cases, such as in Sun and Rocks, Christian iconography makes the supernatural reference clear. Yet in most of the late work the spiritual imagery is more generally an inherent part of the natural surroundings, taking the form of pulsating energy, such as in The Four Seasons.

By the mid-1950s, Burchfield no longer had to rely on the early works to paint expressionistic landscapes, but could start from scratch. Until his death in 1967, Burchfield painted in this fantasy-driven mode, where the actual landscape mattered less and less and his inner vision took over. Dandelion Seed Heads and the Moon is a

prime example of the late works. Here, in a large format (4 feet by 3 feet) oversized insects and plant life inhabit a space made otherworldly by the huge moon's pale light. Gone is any sort of anecdotal detail or whimsical element. Instead, Burchfield evokes a timeless non-specificificity with the absolute stillness in the piece.

As mentioned above, it is these late works, along with the early ones that are literally connected to them, which generate most of the recent interest in Burchfield. The next section will seek to modify this view by demonstrating the importance of the issue of nationality to those who initially received Burchfield's painting. The final section then examines Burchfield's work and motivations and concludes that America was indelibly stamped on the artists' consciousness as well.

2. The Construction of "America"

Background

By the mid-1920s, Burchfield was seen by many critics as distinctly "American": that is to say, a more or less straightforward recorder of the local scene, as opposed to being, for example, a modernist or a social realist. What they meant by this is difficult to ascertain. In Burchfield's case, critics seemed to hold the paradoxical view that one could be American by using universal themes. This served to make less obvious the underlying assumptions about what it meant to be an American. Many writers identified Burchfield as native, but they would rarely spell out precisely what this meant before quickly moving on to the issue of universality. Nonetheless, a close reading of this criticism makes clear that an ideology did exist. Firstly, this America was decidedly free of any European influence. Secondly, this America focused on white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants. And lastly, Burchfield's audience between the wars enjoyed his work because of its dignity and lack of harsh criticism, a view which prized the Protestant work ethic and showed America in a warm light. In this way, critics of that period demonstrated their unease about urbanization and their hope for a reconciliation between wilderness and industry. In other words, an

agrarian Arcadia is a major theme in the initial reception of these paintings. The final section will examine how Burchfield himself felt about his work, but first, the critical climate of the 20s and 30s will be discussed, and the writing on Burchfield then will be placed within this context.

Given that Burchfield became known during the 20s and 30s, through exhibitions in New York City galleries and by winning prizes in museum annuals, it is hardly surprising that many writers would be concerned with the concept "America". The desire to see American history as uniquely able to provide solutions to contemporary problems was widespread during these decades.

Many factors contributed to this heightened awareness of nationality. World War One's aftermath, for example, caused more than a few Americans to see Europe as corrupt, and to thus focus on how America was different. As Milton Brown states, "As part of the post-war isolationalist revulsion against Wilsonian internationalism, [the American realists]...sought a native tradition, a center of life typical of America and innocent of sophistication."[63] Social historians support this view, noting the failure of President Wilson's campaign for the ratification of the Versailles Treaty.[64]

---

[63]Milton Brown, "The Early Realism of Hopper and Burchfield", College Art Journal, (Fall,1947): 4.

[64]American Social History Project, Who Built America ? (Pantheon: New York, 1992),258.

The Crash of 1929 exacerbated these tendencies. Peyton Boswell, the editor of The Art Digest, wrote in 1937 that by the Crash of '29, "The people already had begun vaguely to feel that America should become as self-sufficient as possible; when adversity had the nation in its cruelest talons, and Europe seemed to be getting along fairly well--but still retaining payment of its war debts-the feeling that began with mere resentment almost reached the point of hostility."[65]

The Depression, moreover, caused Americans to further reexamine the problems and inequities within the country at the expense of concern for international problems. Furthermore, government patronage of the arts, as part of the New Deal response to the Depression, became a central part of culture in the 30s. Inevitably, these commissions tended to bring out questions about what was "American" and what wasn't. Indeed, according to Boswell, the "American Scene", government patronage, and the "amalgamation of Modernism and Conservativism" were the three most important artistic themes in 1930s America.[66]

Much recent scholarship has explained that the effort to construct a cohesive idea of "America" was pervasive at this time, both inside and outside of the realm of 'fine art'. Cultural historian

---

[65]Peyton Boswell, "American Art as it is Today", The Studio, (January, 1937): 5.

[66]Boswell,"American Art...",4-5.

Karal Ann Marling, for example, demonstrates that one major reason for Warren Harding's election to the presidency was his handlers' skillful manipulation of American colonial imagery.[67] Harding was successfully cast as a modern day George Washington, complete with Puritan bloodlines and morality (which was not actually the case), and thus won the election of 1920. Marling also explains that Herbert Hoover in the late 20s also managed to insert himself into this long line of George Washingtons, which contributed to Hoover's rise in popularity.[68] Marling further shows that the attempt to formulate the present in terms of America's colonial past occurred outside of presidential campaigns. During the late 20s and 30s, diverse figures such as Will Rogers, William Carlos Williams and the publicist for the George Washington Bicentennial Commission all took part in the revival of America's New England colonial heritage. The construction of America was not simply a highbrow undertaking, but rather was a widespread concern of many Americans between the wars.

Folklorist Simon Bronner has shown that folk art was also used in "the struggle for a visual definition of an American tradition

---

[67]Karal Ann Marling, George Washington Slept Here. (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1988), 223-233, 238-241.

[68]Marling, George Washington Slept Here, 291-304. Again, this necessitated some revisions. Hoover had to play up what Marling calls "the ideal boyhood of the American hero" by returning to his boyhood home and posing in front of the old swimming hole for 15,000 tourists and reporters. The event was later distributed nationally in newsreel form.

with unifying symbols."[69] According to Bronner, Holger Cahill used folk art to "emphasize the importance of America's republican roots" and assert the primacy of individualism to American art in an exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art in 1932.[70] Cahill's America evolved directly from New England, and the British colonial experience received top billing. Bronner goes on to explain that Cahill's view was widely accepted by many American modernist artists, as well as by several other art world figures.[71]

Turning to "fine" art, it is again clear that many American between the wars were also quite concerned with the visual construction of the abstract notion of nationality. Art historian Wanda Corn has demonstrated that Waldo Frank and Paul Rosenfeld, two widely read American critics of modern art in the 20s, followed Van Wyck Brooks in their emphasis on the Puritan heritage of the United States. In Frank and Rosenfeld's view, America's visual arts had suffered at the hands of the materialistic, unimaginative mindset passed down from the pilgrims. The critics saw hope, however, in the form of Alfred Steiglitz, who, they felt, was cultivating a form

---

[69]Simon Bronner, "Exhibition Review-Folk Art on Display: America's Conflict of Traditions." American Quarterly, Volume 45, Number 1 (March, 1993): 130.

[70]Bronner, "Folk Art on Display..", 131.

[71]Bronner, "Folk Art on Display.."138. It should be noted that Abby Rockefeller, a major patron of MoMA, was one of those who shared Cahill's enthusiasm for what was distinctly American. Mrs. Rockefeller purchased six Burchfield's in 1930, providing a concrete example of how the pro-America bias benefitted Burchfield.

of modernism that did not depend on Europe, but rather drew on American subject matter and themes.[72]

Corn explains that the avant-garde artists of Steiglitz's group, such as Charles Demuth, shared in this desire to construct visual images which would convey the essence of America. To this end, Demuth incorporated stylistic elements of billboard art into his work. Demuth hoped to thus capitalize on the " inventions of an enterprising and ultramodern culture."[73]

Yet, Corn shows that Demuth's use of advertising as art was fraught with ambivalence. The artist was torn between the dynamism of billboards and the beauty of the American natural landscape. This debate was carried out on a wider scale as well. The modernist artists in America, according to Corn, were split between those who valued the "soil spirit" and others who were "new vulgarians".[74] In short, Corn explains that the intersection of industry and the landscape is crucial to understanding American modernism between the wars.

Historians have also examined artists closer in style to Burchfield and found a preoccupation with "America", specifically

---

[72]Wanda Corn, "Apostles of the New American Art: Waldo Frank and Paul Rosenfeld." Arts Volume 54, Number 6. (February, 1980): 160, 162.

[73]Wanda Corn, In The American Grain:The Billboard Poetics of Charles Demuth. (Poughkeepsie: Vassar College, 1991),18.

[74]Corn, In The American Grain, 25.

in its agrarian manifestations. M. Sue Kendall, an historian of American art showed that John Stuart Curry sought to portray his native Kansas in a series of murals for the state capital as "nature benificent."[75] Curry's vision of an ideal Kansas, then, rested squarely on cultivating the soil, rather than on industry. Furthermore, Kendall has demonstrated that Curry's Kansan audience was acutely aware of the myth-making which the artist was engaging in, and in fact, rejected some of his murals as too dependant on Eastern stereotypes of Kansas. In short, the issue of what was "useable" in Kansan history was hotly contested, illustrating how widespread the concern over what constituted heritage was between the wars.

The work of Edward Hopper has also been examined in terms of the construction of America. As Andrew Hemingway points out, Hopper's "individuality, honesty and direct engagement with reality" earned him the rubric "American."[76] Furthermore, Hemingway shows that this manner of being American necessitated being male and white, although his admirers professed that ideology was absent from Hopper's work.[77] Hemingway concludes that "...in the context

---

[75]M. Sue Kendall, Rethinking Regionalism (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1986), 121.

[76]Andrew Hemingway, "The Critical Mythology of Edward Hopper." Prospects 17 (1992): 383.

[77]Hemingway, "Critical Mythology of Hopper", 384,399.

of the 1930s, his art represented a rather nostalgic vision, which appealed to a particular bourgeois liberal faction; and that...it was an 'unproblematic' image of a 'changeless' America."[78] In other words, those Americans who felt content about the social order favored viewing their country in terms of its romanticized past.

Since Hopper can be seen in this manner, it seems reasonable to apply these findings to Burchfield. The two artists occupied virtually the same niche in American art of the 20s and 30s. They both exhibited at the Rehn Gallery, were grouped together by critics such as Edward A. Jewell, and admired each other's works. Furthermore, the pervasiveness of the concern with defining "America" between the wars in so many differing areas of cultural production dictates that Burchfield's middle period be looked at in the context of nationality. At this point, the use of Burchfield's art in the construction of "America" will be examined.

---

[78]Hemingway, " Critical Mythology of Hopper" , 399.

The Construction of "America": Its Importance to Burchfield

Charles Burchfield's paintings were almost universally accepted as American during the 20s, 30s and beyond. It will be argued that an ideology can be seen at work in the criticism of Burchfield's art, an ideology which was anti-European, and declined to indict too harshly the effects of commercial expansion. Yet, the America Burchfield's art was used to validate rested on the agrarian ideal-the belief that the most valuable part of the country was the landscape rather than the cities or the suburbs. This is not to say that industry was ultimately condemned but rather that the praise of American commercial expansion conflicted with a more basic desire to valorize the land. This manner of treating Burchfield's art runs counter to much recent writing on Burchfield, which views the artist as an isolated mystic who painted only for himself.

It must be noted that these types of ideas were not new or unique to Burchfield's critics, nor are they foreign to current scholarship in American studies. As was shown above, the preoccupation with nationality and the tension between industry and landscape have been recognized in many aspects of American culture between the wars. In fact, the American art historian Milton Brown has even written directly on Burchfield, "Behind it all...in

Burchfield ..., there is a deep attachment for the past and for the provincial, an attachment which is based not simply on the sentimental regard for that which is their own, but on a romantic longing for an agrarian past."[79] However, since Burchfield's death in 1967, Brown's analysis has been the minority opinion. Rather, Burchfield is now often seen as disengaged from his time period, as being a visionary of sorts. As Matthew Baigell has written, Burchfield's paintings "...seem to have been little affected by world events. Changes in his attitude coincide rather than devolve from particular public or political conditions or from those necessities relating...to the world of art."[80] While this may be a useful way to look at Burchfield's early period, it certainly is not applicable to a majority of his works.

It must be emphatically noted that critics of the 20s and 30s and beyond identified Burchfield's painting as integrally American, in part due to its subject matter, but the appellation implied a deeper resonance with "America". Certainly, Burchfield was consistently identified as a recorder of things unmistakably from the United States. Typical is the 1920 notice, which begins, "This street with the red telephone poles, these strips of back-yards are unqualifiedly

---

[79]Milton Brown, American Painting from the Armory Show to the Depression, 173,4.

[80]Baigell, Burchfield, 11.

American."[81] But Henry Lyle's speech to the Charaka Club in 1930 is also typical: Burchfield's "..art is firmly rooted in our land. He seems to belong to the line of artistic ancestry and to posses the race consciousness of such men as Inness, Ryder, Eakins, Homer and Bellows."[82] By "race conscious", Lyle seems to mean, "painters who deliberately work in an American idiom", yet Lyle is not clear. Indeed, this desire to term certain disparate artists (i.e. Eakins and Ryder) "American" illustrates the allure which nationality held for many critics. Another critic, Nathanial Pousette-Dart, writing in Studio News stated that Burchfield ..."could fly to France tomorrow and paint the peasants plowing their fields, and his work would still be wholly American and wholly his own."[83] And Edward Root, one of Burchfield's most steadfast collectors, began an essay on the artist in a deluxe book on American art published by the Museum of Modern Art: "It is of little importance if any particular American artist sometimes depicts objects of unmistakably American appearance; it is of much greater importance if his interpretation of

---

[81]"Two Watercolors By Charles Burchfield" The Survey (April 3, 1920): 3.

[82]Henry H.M. Lyle, "Charles Burchfield, American" Charaka Club Proceedings, (April, 1934): 138. On this same page, Lyle, an early collector of Burchfield uses the exact same words as Barr does to describe the early work. This isn't technically plagiarism, as Lyle had delivered this as a speech, but it is the earliest example of the universality his view has assumed regarding Burchfield's early watercolors.

[83]N. Pousette-Dart, "Charles Burchfield , A Creative Modern Realist" Studio News 5 (April 1934): 6.

these objects endows them with some sort of general significance."[84] Root's insistence upon the "unimportance" of subject matter and emphasis on "general significance" masks the fact that "Americaness" was a primary reason that Burchfield (and many other painters) were successful. In fact, as will be argued later, much of the audience for American art held a set of assumptions about "America" was. In short, the concept of "America" provided an important context within which Burchfield's work of the middle period was understood. This context, moreover, extended outside of Burchfield's subject matter, but remained within nationalism--despite many who made a claim for his "general significance."

It must further be noticed that this quality of being "American" which critics often pointed to, is what enabled Burchfield to succeed as an artist and to paint full-time during the Depression. His dealers, his patrons, and those who purchased art for museums shared a taste for that which was undoubtedly "American". The late landscapes, which are so valued today, would have never existed if Burchfield hadn't supported himself for at least twenty years by painting scenes which many viewers could quickly identify as "American."

---

[84]Edward W. Root, "Charles Burchfield" American Art Portfolios (New York: Raymond & Raymond, 1936), 65.

The Construction of America: Ideology

This section will seek to uncover the actual meaning of "America" by documenting instances of anti-European sentiments in Burchfield's critical reception, and will also discuss a white Anglo-Saxon orientation as well as a yearning for the agrarian past. It is argued that these ideas colored much of the enthusiasm for the artist in the 20s, 30s, and beyond. It will later be proposed that the artist himself participated in this process. Whether or not this last point is accepted, the current section aims to prove that the issue of Americanism, so integral to understanding the popularity of Burchfield during his lifetime, contained a set of preconceptions about what America was.

One overriding concern for critics was that America art not be dependant on European art. The reasons for this were complex and plentiful, as was shown above. This unEuropean concern can be seen in much of the criticism written on Burchfield. For example, Ferenc Molnar, wrote in 1923, "We have wondered at the attitude of Cleveland painters who spend most of their time in France...we have doubted if they can understand France as Frenchmen understand it, or as these American painters [i.e. those like Burchfield] might understand America."[85] Another writer stated that Burchfield "has

---

85 Ferenc Molnar "Charles Birchfield's [sic] Paintings of Ohio Town Win Fame..." The Cleveland Press (March 31, 1923): page not know.

never been abroad...chiefly because he doesn't see any reason why American artists should have to go out of their own country for subjects to paint or even for study."[86] And Henry McBride, the colorful critic at the New York Sun declared with no small relish that Burchfield's art "owes nothing to Europe-and we can thank heaven for that..."[87] Edward Hopper wrote, in a similar vein, that "Good painting (so-called), that degenerate legacy to us from the late Renaissance, has no place in ..[Burchfield's] writing down of life..."[88] An anti-European attitude, therefore, was present in some of the criticism written on Burchfield; it was an attitude prevalent in America between the wars. This calls into question the objectivity of many other authors who called Burchfield an original. In a sense, the attempt to say Burchfield was "influence free" can be seen as another way of saying that Burchfield was unEuropean.

Anti-Europeanism, it must be noted was not a simple, unequivocal negation of Europe and a concurrent desire to promote "America first." While Thomas Craven, perhaps the best known opponent of European influence on American art, in that period, could state that "In the present economic crisis, America, more

---

86 "Artist Wins Place in Metropolitan Museum While Working In Buffalo Factory" Buffalo Evening News (April 16, 1927): page not known.

87Henry McBride, "Lively and Personal Quality Marks His Dramatic Paintings." New York Sun. (March 29, 1930): page not known.

88Edward Hopper, "Charles Burchfield: American." The Arts 14 (July, 1928): 9.

conspicuously than ever before, stands out as a separate part of the world"[89] and that "We have in America a number of painters who are not fooled by European conventions,"[90] most critics were more subtle in their desire to avoid Europe.

In other words, critics did not necessarily have a patriotic axe to grind. Edward Alden Jewell, the New York Times critic who reviewed several Burchfield shows, wrote that "it isn't the..subject that comes first and...honestly, we [those who can discern an American tradition in art] aren't hell-bent for jingo nationalism."[91] Rather, they felt that, paradoxically, the road to good art was universal themes, and that nationalism would spring forth naturally. In covering a panel discussion at the Whitney Museum on the topic "Should Art Be National ?", Jewell wrote, "An artist who strives to make his art either national or international is on lamentably the wrong track."[92] Still, "..the artist who, all humbly and sincerely, with knowledge, strives to release the song that is in his own heart...will be, in the highest sense..'national.'"[93] In short, many

---

[89]Thomas Craven Modern Art (New York: Simon & Shuster), 320.

[90]Craven, Modern Art, 324.

[91]E.A. Jewell, "American Painting" Creative Art (November, 1931): 361.

[92]Edward Alden Jewell, "Should Art Be National", New York Times (Feb. 28, 1932): 10. Jewell here is quoting Maurice Stern, an 'Internationalist' to prove the point.

[93]Jewell, "Should Art Be National ?", 10.

critics who sought to term certain artists as "American" did so in the belief that quality, rather than nationalism, was being promoted.

Nonetheless, I believe that this paradoxical attitude whereby "America" is an effortless, inevitable outcome of the good artist simply begs the question of bias. What mattered was that, in the end, Burchfield's work was, to many, "American" and that involved being not European. In other words, many of Burchfield's critics, while not cultural chauvinists, desired to see their own nation as possessing a native style-one that did not lean on any other cultures for inspiration.

Another assumption embedded into the idea "America" held by Burchfield's critics was that America was a white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant society, the multi-cultural make-up of the immigrants to the U.S. notwithstanding. One reviewer described Burchfield's Souvenir of South Carolina, a scene of black men sitting outside, as "..loungers...and a rural oracle settling affairs...[which]...reflect the pervasive indolence of a summer afternoon in a community where time is the last thing that counts,"[94] thus reinforcing the stereotype of the 'natural', lazy black.

These scenes of the South are rare in Burchfield's oeuvre; most of them were executed during his Army service in South Carolina. But he did exhibit some of them and it is fair to say that

---

[94]"Painter Links Life and Art in Work" New York World, (March 23, 1930):page not known.

these images formed part of peoples perception of the artist.[95] That they fit so easily into the concept of America illustrates the pervasiveness of this bias.

Furthermore, writers on Burchfield often highlighted his ancestry . "Charles Burchfield was born of pure American stock"[96] begins one piece, and the Encyclopedia Britannica pointed out his "Scotch-Irish" background.[97] Many other writers noted that Salem, Ohio was founded by Quakers. None of these authors expand on this issue, at least not overtly. Most probably, they felt it important to give some background on the artist before engaging his art directly. In other words, there was not really much meant by this sort of racial awareness. However, it is important that these authors cared where Burchfield came from, given the highly public debate in America during the 30s on the issue of nationalism in art.

The awareness of industry and its effect on the landscape, however, was the most important subtext of criticism written on Burchfield during the 20s and 30s. Many authors had a love-hate relationship with industrialization, and harbored a longing, at least metaphorically, to return the agrarian Arcadia America was supposed to have been. This attitude is seen in the first reception of

---

[95]To my knowledge, a rigorous examination of Burchfield's oeuvre on the issue of race has yet to be done.

[96]Henry H.M. Lyle "Charles Burchfield, American', 135.

[97]Encyclopedia Britannica "Contemporary American Painting", 1945.

Burchfield's painting. Many felt that his straightforward views of his hometown constituted an indictment of industry. This indicates that many urban art world types felt that commercial expansion was a blight on the heartland. Mary Mowbray-Clarke's catalog essay of 1920 set the tone of writing on Burchfield for the next several years. Mowbray-Clarke, the artist's first major patron, stated that in Burchfield, "we get sight of a gentle soul in whom the love of beauty is blocked and violence results...[Only] occasionally [does] Burchfield dare to be at peace with the life in his village on the edge of Industrial America." Her short essay concludes that his work exposes the "insincerities and sentimentalities" of the modern age.[98]

If Mowbray-Clarke felt these works "violent" outbursts of a "gentle" soul, the influential New York Sun critic Henry McBride dubbed Burchfield a "hater", a "young hyena....[who] yawped like a lusty infant" at the ugliness of Salem, Ohio.[99] McBride illustrated Miner's Huts, 1920, a drab view of low quality housing, to prove his point. The Survey noted that the 1920 Kevorkian show also contained work "conceived in bitterness and executed in glowering exactness".[100]

---

[98]A Catalogue of the Drawings in Watercolor by Charles Burchfield (New York: Kevorkian Gallery, 1920):unpaginated.

[99]Henry McBride, "Lively and Personal Quality Marks His Dramatic Paintings" New York Sun (Feb 19, 1920): page unknown.

[100]"Two Watercolors by Charles Burchfield" The Survey, (April 3, 1920): 42.

Other critics echo McBride's opinion that Burchfield was a satirist, further indicating the general unease about the effects of industry on a formerly agrarian part of the country. A Cleveland writer noted "Birchfield's [sic] small town pictures represent the most ugly and shoddy aspect of a small town."[101] An anonymous American Art News reviewer wrote that his works, "...could have been painted only by one who knew the Middle Western small town in its worst form.."[102] And, in the first long article on the painter, a third author stated, "The disintegrating spiritual effect of unsuccess in life's business is nowhere more completely summed up than in these two pictures [False Front and Noonday Heat], particularly in those store-fronts with the rotted clapboards, the blistered corrugated iron, the warped frames, the weathered paint."[103]

McBride notwithstanding, most 1920s critics were less sure that Burchfield's work was completely satirical. Even those quoted above who identified ugliness in Burchfield hastened to add, "Even in so drab a place as Salem, evening comes in all its tender melancholy beauty and winter spreads its white coat over road and farm. Burchfield can see these things and paint them..."[104]

---

[101]F. Molnar "Charles Birchfield's Paintings ..", page not known.

[102]American Art News (March 29, 1924): 3.

[103]William McCormick,"A Small Town in Paint",International Studio (March,1925): 469.

[104]McCormick, "A Small Town", 470.

A tension was thus set up between his realistic critiques in some works and romantic longings in others. As another author put it, ""Recent subjects...show him as hateful as ever. But Burchfield can also love. He recently painted a series of cloud pictures and among them are some as delicate and beautiful as his other things are heavy and brutal."[105] As McBride correctly pointed out ,"Satire is not all venom. To be good, satire must be compounded of dissatisfaction and satisfaction..."[106]

A category for Burchfield in the twenties, then, was satire. But by 1932, when Burchfield held his second one-man show at the Rehn Galleries, critics began to fit him into another category, that of "romantic realist."[107] A catch-all term to be sure, "romantic-realist" meant that Burchfield worked within a mode which was then termed the "American scene" or "the American Wave".[108] The term "American scene" in its more neutral, original manifestation referred to the realists of all stripes who depicted life in America,

---

[105]Carl Bredemeier, "The Art of Charles Burchfield" Buffalo Saturday Night News (Jan. 27, 1923): 4.

[106]Henry McBride, "Lively and Personal Quality ..", page not known.

[107]See especially M. Breuning, "Charles Burchfield" New York Evening Post (Oct. 31, 1932):page not known, but also McBride New York Sun (Oct 31, 1932.):page not known.

[108]See especially E.M. Benson, "The American Scene", American Magazine of Art 27 (February, 1934):61,64-65, and Peyton Boswell,"American Art as it is Today", The Studio 113 (January, 1937): 4-28.

choosing subjects that were readily recognizable as indigenous to the United States.

That Burchfield was sub-grouped with the "Romantics"[109] in the 1930s reveals that his art signaled the past to his viewers. Often this had to do with subject matter. Critics enjoyed Burchfield's choice of buildings that were about to be torn down as in Grain Elevators and his juxtaposition of objects from the recent, yet irrevocably past, such as the horse and buggy with the more modern, such as an automobile, seen in such works as August Afternoon. In several other works, Burchfield painted a dilapidated old house with a rusty outdoor pump (as in Evening and Lace Gables,) again signaling a bygone era. His works seemed to his 30s audience to exude the charm inherent in things which have survived beyond their usefulness. Also, Burchfield's depiction of scenes at sunset, or during a dramatic weather transition (devices inherited from the original Romantics) signaled the passing of a simpler world to the viewer. In short, "romantic" meant "looking back with nostalgia at the past"; Burchfield was seen as a painter of the remains of America's bygone days, remains which would soon be destroyed in the name of progress.

---

[109]See Holger Cahill "Introduction"American Art Portfolios,Volume 1, 1936, p.24 and "Encyclopedia Brittannica Unveils Its Collection of American Art", The Art Digest (April 1, 1945): 33.

richness...of the American scene."[113] Creative Art wrote, "[Burchfield] is of the America soil, inalienably. The clap-board hideous houses, the bleak main-street, the station-yards, the prairie greyness--these he invests with a power and bitterness and even a pity that makes them important and beautiful."[114] Edward Root wrote, "Perhaps in a brave new world to come humanity will be left to the psychiatrists and nature to the owners of mechanized farms. If so, Burchfield's art will cease to be valid."[115] In other words, humanity is better paired with nature than with mechanization. Even as late as 1944, E.P. Richardson noted that "Most people have the idea that the region where Burchfield... paints is ugly...let us simply say.....it is a land of beautiful, wide earth and sky and horizon, but one in which men have not yet quite come into harmony with the earth."[116]

In short, a major preoccupation of many of Burchfield's critics during the first twenty-five years of his career was the effect of industry on the Ohio and western New York landscape. Their willingness to see Burchfield's paintings as either gentle satire or

---

[113]E.A. Jewell, "Charles Burchfield" New York Times (April 1, 1928): page not known.

[114]"News of the Month" Creative Art, (May, 1928): xvii.

[115]E.Root, "Charles E. Burchfield" American Art Portfolios, 66.

[116]E.P. Richardson, "Charles Burchfield." Magazine of Art 37 (October, 1944): 209.

dignified honesty demonstrates the conflicted attitudes those writers held about the value of industrialization. And perhaps, as Richardson wrote, if man and nature had "not yet" become harmonious, the hope was that one day, the agrarian Arcadia and industrial power might be reconciled.

The Construction of America: Burchfield's "realism"

The issues of an unEuropean, a white, Anglo-Saxon, and an agrarian America will now be examined in relation to Burchfield's paintings. A hard look at Burchfield's "realism" demonstrates that these qualities that critics saw in the works are in fact manifested in the paintings. Burchfield's own intentions will be explored in the next section, where it will be argued that he shared, for a time, many of these "American" concerns.

In terms of being not European, it will be remembered that Burchfield chose a style which, at least overtly, could not be linked with previous movements in Europe. Although tantalized by Europe in his early years, the artist later moved away, at least overtly, from these influences, rejecting them for a more hardboiled realism. Indeed, it could be argued that Burchfield associated "America" with individualism. The artist invites such a reading in his 1933 essay on Edward Hopper for the catalog of the latter's retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art. In the piece, Burchfield wrote, "In [Hopper]...we have regained that sturdy American independence which Thomas Eakins gave us, but which for a time was lost."[117] In

---

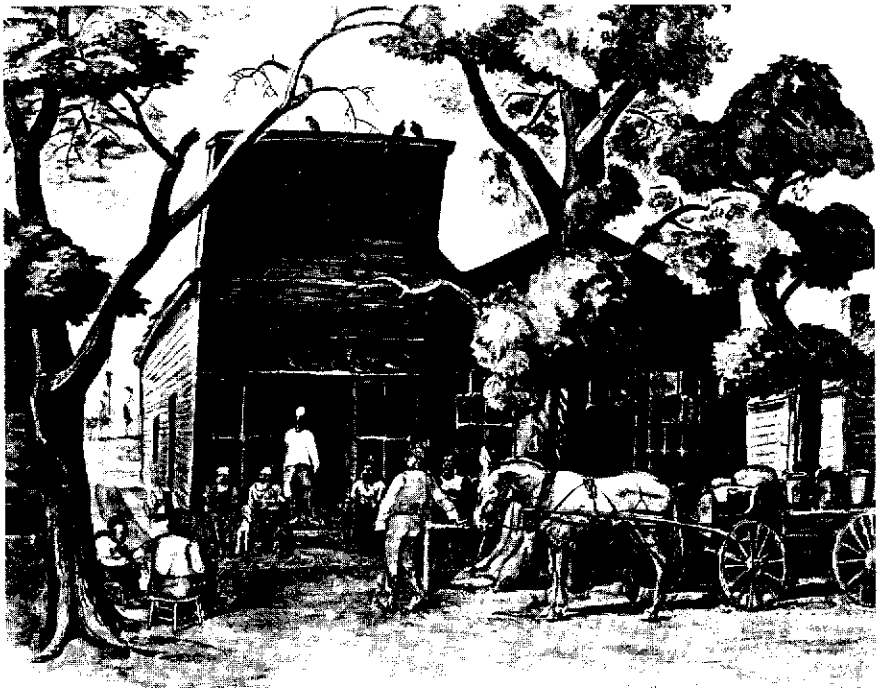
[117]Charles Burchfield, "Edward Hopper-Classicist." Edward Hopper Retrospective (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1933), 8.

other words, the period between Eakins and Hopper, when American artists consciously experimented with European styles was un-American, while the two independents, Eakins and Hopper, according to Burchfield, possessed "Americaness" because of their individuality. Furthermore, Burchfield chose never to go abroad, although by the mid-1950s, he certainly could afford it. Moreover, while he routinely drove for an hour to find a painting site, Burchfield never painted in Canada, less than thirty-five miles from his home. As with his critics, I am not arguing that the artist was a rabid nationalist. Nonetheless, Burchfield's statements, written and painted, demonstrate that on a very basic level, the artist identified with the construct "America." This identification, moreover, did not allow for the influence of Europe.

Burchfield's "realism" also presupposes a white, Anglo-Saxon "America." When Burchfield painted African Americans, for example, he reinforced the usual stereotypes of the 'natural', lazy black.[118] In Souvenir of South Carolina, for instance, the people are caricatured Burchfield usually shied from including many figures in his works as he had difficulty drawing them. In works such as August Afternoon, for example, the people are relegated to the

---

[118]In his Journals, Burchfield notes seeing a Native American youth, "Though clothed exactly the same as white boys, he yet retained a natural primitive human life..." Townsend, Burchfield's Journals, 382.



745. SOUVENIR OF SOUTH CAROLINA. 1927–29. 27 x 33½.
From the Permanent Collection of The Hackley Art Gallery

Little Italy in Spring, 1927-28. 26 1/2 x 39 5/8 inches.
From John Trovato, Charles Burchfield, P. 131.

Promenande, 1927-28. 32 x 42 inches. Collection of the Albright-Knox Museum, Buffalo.

background where their facial features are difficult to see. But, in Souvenir of South Carolina, Burchfield has moved the figures closer to the viewer, where their overly large heads, big lips and bare feet are easily read. Furthermore, the blacks here are shown at leisure--as are the whites in August Afternoon. Yet, Burchfield in many other works shows white laborers, but he never did the same for their black counterparts. The title also reinforces the viewer's awareness of race by identifying the picture as a scene of the South. And furthermore, that this is a "souvenir" rather than simply a painting connotes, to some extent, condescension. This southern scenes must therefore be read as exclusive--as denying that these people fit into "America".

A similar conclusion may be drawn of Burchfield's paintings of the immigrant sections of Buffalo. In Little Italy in Spring, for example, the black shrouds worn by the women and the organ grinder confronted by a pair of squat children give this work a cartoonish otherness which is absent even in some of Burchfield's most humorous works such as Promenade. Little Italy, furthermore, contains a surprisingly drab rendering of architecture without any attention to ornament or oddity. Usually, Burchfield delighted in discovering the quirky peculiarities of the hodge-podge American town. In this sense, Little Italy does not belong to the same America Promenade does. And again, the title Promenade, while clearly mocking, is neutral in terms of location. It could be in

any small town in America--in fact, Burchfield was a master at making his corner of America seem like a metaphor for the nation as a whole. But Little Italy implies a specific location: a separate enclave of not-quite-American immigrants. I do not wish to imply that Burchfield consciously or deliberately wished to exclude Italians or Africans from his "America." But the paintings he created nonetheless demonstrate that what was really "American"--Promenade, or August Afternoon, for example, was Caucasian and Protestant.

In looking at Burchfield's work, a praise for hard physical labor and industry also becomes apparent. The source of the beauty and dignity, which critics noticed seems to reside in the works' inherent admiration of industriousness. Six O'Clock, End Of the Day and The Parade, to name some of Burchfield 's most significant paintings of the 30s all depict laborers in dismal settings. Yet, in all three paintings, the humans continue to endure. The dignity, then does not derive from their drab surroundings, but rather from the fact that these people, poor as they are, continue to live their lives.

In many other paintings as well, Burchfield seems to celebrate America's capacity for industrial achievement. Even as early as 1921 with Safety Valve, a painting of a powerful locomotive, Burchfield was casting industry in a positive light. The same is true for Black Iron, where the infrastructure towers above the edge of the paper. The strong bridge enables the roaring steam engine to

pass over the river--to overcome the forces of nature. The bridge itself, though rusted, exudes solidity. If capitalism was to blame for the Great Depression and for the blights on the landscape, this sentiment does not find expression in Burchfield 's work. America, then, was a place where workers and machines coexisted peacefully.

In my opinion, this peacefulness in Burchfield's "realism" smooths over a deeper concern about the damage to the landscape caused by industrialization. Burchfield's oeuvre can be said to contain a hope for a return to the agrarian past. The views of industry and towns are outnumbered in Burchfield's middle period by gentle landscapes of the farmlands surrounding Buffalo.

To be specific in terms of subject matter, Burchfield often includes traces of man in his landscapes of the middle period. Almost always, the viewer can find a tree sawed off clean at the stump, a barbed-wire fence, a road, a house or a plowed field in these depictions of nature.[119] This signals the hope that man and nature could peacefully coexist. In Arching Trees, for example, an entirely typical work of the middle period, the wispy branches form an almost architectural frame for the asphalt road. Burchfield here plays on the blurred distinctions between man-made and natural. In the background can be seen a small cluster of tidy white farm houses which all but melt into the surrounding vegetation. The middle

---

[119]See especially the illustrations in Charles Burchfield: The Middle Years (New York:Kennedy Galleries, 1978).

ground contains luscious fields which the road seemingly does not interfere with. The mood of the work is one of harmony; man and landscape do not clash.

The suburb was also one of Burchfield 's favored subject matter. Burchfield painted many scenes of the backyards in his neighborhood, neatly demarcated by low fences. In Blackbirds in the Snow, for example, Burchfield depicts his own studio not as part of a developed neighborhood, which it was. Instead, one is made aware of the garden and the birds which surround the structure. In other words, the "countrified" aspects of suburban life are played up while the urban aspects are somewhat ignored. As Townsend writes, "Like many poets and artists before him...as he approached middle age Burchfield retreated into the most readily available version of the pastoral life."[120] In short, the suburb was the place, for Burchfield, where man and nature "peacefully" intersected.

In other works as well, Burchfield highlights the importance of nature as opposed to the town. In three different versions of The Edge of Town, Burchfield shows the last group of houses before a town gives way to the countryside. The artist deliberately highlights the impermanence of the buildings by juxtaposing them with the landscape. In several other works, such as False Front, Burchfield delights in exposing the flimsiness of the supposedly grand

---

[120]Townsend, Burchfield's Journals, 47.

structures. These works argue that the town is insignificant when viewed from the standpoint of nature.

To conclude, I would contend that Burchfield 's iconic paintings demonstrate the conflicting sentiments many Americans felt about industry and urbanization. At times celebratory, at times appalled by the changes that factories and towns caused, and at other times nostalgic about the past and about farm life in particular, Burchfield's art evoked a concern for a common heritage based on an agrarian ideal, a concern shared by many of his contemporaries.

3. Burchfield's Personal Relationship to America

Burchfield's own idea of his native country corresponds in many ways to the agrarian ideal held by many of his contemporaries. Significantly, this fact enables one to see his late landscapes as an escape from the reality of what America had become in the later 40s and 50s. In other words, Burchfield rejected the construct "America" because the dream of a more simple life-a hope centered around America's farming heritage-seemed increasingly remote after World War Two. What he replaced "America" with, moreover, was a religion. Not exactly Lutheran, not exactly "neoprimitive animism", this reborn religious response to the landscape fulfilled his need for community. In short, Burchfield no longer could bear to paint the proliferating signs of man's intrusions upon the land. He left his "America" for another means of organizing reality, that of nature worship.

Burchfield's own America: Acceptance and Rejection

The idea of nationality was quite important to Burchfield. As was discussed above, Burchfield, from an early age, needed to search outside of his family for a feeling of community. Until 1920, nature was his surrogate for familial belonging, but a long depression seemed to preclude this retreat into the woods. The fantasy-driven landscapes no longer satisfied the artist. At that point, significantly, Burchfield began to be interested in human themes, themes, moreover, explicitly linked to America. He read Winesburg, Ohio, for example, and, as he wrote in 1928 of that time, "...began to feel the epic poetry of midwest America."[121]

In fact, Burchfield's journals contain many instances when he explicitly embraces the concept of America. For example, he wrote "An aching desire to turn about-face and go back and re-embrace all this epic poetry of America fills my heart-I feel as though I had betrayed my native country."[122] And, upon listening to one of his favorite pieces of music, Finlandia by Sibelius, "What a great thing it is for an artist to create something that is the epitome of the spirit of a whole nation, and is accepted by the mass of the people as such. Would that I could paint something that would bear the same relation

---

[121]Charles Burchfield, "On The Middle Border." Creative Art (September, 1928): xxx.

[122]Journal entry for 11/30/31. Townsend, Burchfield's Journals, 463.

1959, Burchfield recalled that in the early 20s, "Everybody else was repeating [New York Sun critic Henry] McBride that I hated my hometown, which I love very much."[126]

Some 1920s critics allowed Burchfield's distaste for industrialization to overshadow all of his work of that decade. Burchfield's satirical views were indeed criticisms, but were not outright rejections of his native country. As he wrote, "Much...I hated justly and would like to go on hating to my last breath-modern industrialism, the deplorable conditions in certain industrial fields such as steel works and mining sections, American smugness and intolerance and conceited provincialism, to mention only a few of our major evils."[127] Elsewhere Burchfield echoed these sentiments. "I did paint two or three [an understatement] what I would call indictments of certain industrial conditions. I painted a steel mill with its huddle of little red houses around it, which did seem to me a horrible place for anybody to live, and also some miner's huts."[128] In other words, it was industrial America, rather than all of America which Burchfield attacked.

Furthermore, Burchfield, although a foe of industrialism, sought to dignify the worker. Burchfield's America, then, involved

---

[126]John D. Morse, "Interview with Charles Burchfield, August 19, 1959." Journal of the Archives of American Art Volume 7, Number 3 (July-October, 1967): 8.

[127]Charles Burchfield "On the Middle Border" , xxviii.

[128]Morse, "Interview with Burchfield" , 4. See also the Journals page 459.

the same tension between industry and hard work that his critics had also expressed. Indeed Burchfield completed the above thought about the steel mills with, "..Even though I was trying to show that this was not quite fit a place, [I tried to show] the dignity of life even in its humble form."[129] Burchfield valorized hard physical labor elsewhere as well. Burchfield 's comment about End Of the Day provides an example. "At the end of a day of hard labor, the workmen plod wearily uphill in the eerie twilight of winter, and it seems to the superficial eye that they have little to come home to in those stark, unpainted houses; But like the houses, they persist and will not give in, and so they attain a rugged dignity that compels our admiration."[130] And after reading Moby Dick, Burchfield wrote, "Must a man after all be a hard, physical worker to enjoy the world ? It would seem so."[131]

Paradoxically, Burchfield himself was never really a blue-collar laborer. His first job was as an accountant. Later, in his capacity as designer at the wallpaper factory, he was management. As a painter, he was even further removed from physical labor. It must have seemed odd for Burchfield to sit in his suburban home and see everyone leave for work while he went to his studio. This

---

[129]Morse, "Interview with Burchfield" , 4.

[130]Whitney Archives, Burchfield file marked "Notes on Paintings."

[131]Journal entry 12/27/24. Townsend, Burchfield's Journals, 660.

inability to access what he saw as a fundamental part of being an American might explain his later rejection of this form of belonging. Furthermore, World War Two undoubtedly estranged Burchfield from dominant perceptions of America. He found the war "depressing"[132] because he felt more than a little useless. Burchfield did not fully believe that art-making would have much impact during this global conflict. It might have been that Burchfield felt it was impossible to continue producing scenes of America without referring to World War Two. Whatever the exact cause, the artist began to move away from his realistic views of his native country. That this shift occurred during the second World War is more than coincidental.

Another reason that Burchfield might have rejected America is also tied up in the issue of industrialization. Hard work and industry conflicted with his love of nature. Burchfield was an agrarian dreamer and the commercial expansion of the 40s and 50s might have caused the artist to turn away from his native country.

Burchfield's love of nature has been amply demonstrated in Baur and Baigell' monographs, and it is clear that Burchfield was wary of urbanization. Indeed, Burchfield's journals are peppered with a "longing for the odd little events for a carefree country life."[133] Furthermore, Burchfield was always looking to America's

---

[132]Journal entry 1/10/42, Townsend, Burchfield's Journals, 636.

[133]Journal entry 2/15/22, Townsend, burchfield's Journals, 456.

past in his art. As time went by, however, Burchfield seems to have been unable to balance his desire to dignify modern life with his admiration of the landscape. Perhaps the conflicts between the two became too great. A comment Burchfield made about his painting August Evening, a painting of an old house in Salem, seems to indicate that Burchfield was fed up with modernization:

> The dirt street running between the house is now asphalt; the telephone pole is now gone because all the wires have been put underground; and I hardly need point out that people no longer sit in the evening on porches-in fact there are no porches. And it would be impossible to hear insects singing for the din of the auto traffic, T.V. and radio sets going full blast...I'm not against modern improvements- I use them all- but I wonder just what the score would be if we balance the gains against the losses.[134]

In conclusion, the conflict between hard work and industrialization on one hand and nature on the other ultimately drove Burchfield away from identifying with the construct "America". This view allows for a different interpretation of his late works.

---

[134] Catalog of the Illinois Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting and Sculpture,(University of Illinois, 1957). Also quoted elsewhere.

Burchfield's rejection of America: The Late Paintings

Burchfield's late works occupy a sacred place in the writing on the artist. Baur, for example, views Burchfield as a pantheist, noting that Burchfield "started by humanizing nature" and "ended with a hymn to nature."[135] Of the late paintings Baigell wrote, "It is as if he...wanted to enter ever deeper into the world of spiritual forces"[136] Yet, neither author motivates this switch. The implicit explanation seems to be that Burchfield was really a nature painter all along, and that his middle period was a sort of temporary diversion. Burchfield, himself contributed to this reading. In 1944, after his return to pure nature painting, Burchfield wrote to Frank Rehn, "To me now, the 1920-1940 period (roughly speaking) has been a digression...During that middle period I was searching for an appreciation of form and solidity, and a painting quality that the 1917 things lacked."[137] This has been taken quite literally by many authors who privilege the early and late work. Yet, what is not noted is Burchfield rejection of "America." In fact, the early works, which came to inspire the late paintings, meant very little to the

---

[135]Baur, The Inlander, 262.

[136]Baigell, Charles Burchfield, 201.

[137]Baur, The Inlander, 196.

artist during the middle period. In 1939, when Rehn Gallery showed the early pieces, Burchfield stated that they seemed like "the work of another man"[138]

It may have been that Burchfield regarded the early, flat works as "decorative"-too much like the flat wallpapers he had designed-an activity he termed "hack work."[139] It can be argued that "America", for Burchfield, was associated with "solidity and form" and that he deliberately avoided his early style during the middle years. Furthermore, his attempts to paint in oil during the middle period could also be explained in these terms. Watercolor, the medium of his childhood, may have been too unimportant in his eyes for his ideas about America. In October of 1930, for example, Burchfield wrote to Rehn "I'm going to turn out some good oils or die in the attempt" and later wrote in his journals that "I intend to dedicate my larger themes to oil"[140] And indeed, some of his most realistic and most straightforwardly American works such as November Evening and Grain Elevators are oils.

Thus, while the early style came to have an enormous importance to Burchfield after 1943, the middle period was largely devoid of this influence. Rather than being a sort of latent concern

---

[138]Rehn "Early Works" exhibition checklist, November, 1939, unpaginated.

[139]Charles Burchfield, Autobiographical Manuscript., p. 11.

[140]Baur, The Inlander, 157.

of his (which is what Baur and Baigell imply), the early landscapes were rejected in favor of America, and then reaccepted as an alternative to nationalism.

As both Baur and Baigell note, religion was tied up with the late landscapes. Although he resisted formal religion for many years, Burchfield converted to Lutheranism in March, 1944. This conversion is further evidence of Burchfield' lost sense of being American, and a concurrent need to find something to replace it. However, the journals make clear that it was an uneasy alliance, and that Burchfield attached a religious significance to the natural surroundings, instead of to the Church. What is crucial to note is that religion played a small role in the middle period. Indeed, when asked if pantheism "appear[ed] in [the].. scenes of city streets and railroad yards.." Burchfield replied "Well, I don't think it would enter into that."[141] In other words, he didn't need religion when he had "America."

In psychoanalytic terms, Burchfield, in his later life regressed back to an earlier manner of relating to the outside world. Works such as Autumnal Fantasy, where time and motion are depicted as visible, concrete substances are evidence of a return to primary thinking. In other words, Burchfield in these late works tries to deny the existence of a past and a future--he only acknowledges the

---

[141]Julian Park and W.H. Glover, "Charles Burchfield on Art-An Interview." Niagara Frontier Volume 7, Number 4. (Winter, 1961): 117.

present. According to Brenner, "Primary process thinking...is the mode of thinking which is characteristic of those years of childhood when the ego is still immature."[142] The late works were a move away from maturity, in psychoanalytic terms.

Furthermore, instead of thinking of community in terms of other people, his childhood became the model upon which his art was based. Indeed, Burchfield actually used his 1917 works to create larger pieces, attaching paper to the older watercolors and then painting on them "in the 1917 manner." These conscious attempts to access his earliest impressions of nature also involved a supernatural presence. This again is evidence of a regression. Burchfield reverted to an earlier mode of organizing reality. Significantly, the ability to relate to other people was lost. No longer did figures or houses occur in Burchfield's late works. Rather, the artist tried to escape from reality through idealized fantasies of nature.

Psychoanalytic theory holds that regressions are attempts at a self-cure.[143] In other words, Burchfield in his late period (and his early period as well) probed his childhood memories for the feeling of merger and completeness he had once felt. In the middle period, the artist was able to relate to his country, which provided him with a feeling of community. But, World War Two, increased

---

[142]Brenner, Textbook of Psychoanalysis,. 48.

[143]See D.W. Winnicott, "Character Disorders." The Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment. (Madison: International Universities Press.), 207.

industrialization and dissatisfaction with family life, to name a few possible factors, drove Burchfield back to his childhood.

In conclusion, Burchfield was not destined to be a landscapist, as Baur and Baigell imply. He did not alter his style in the mid-40s because of some innate knowledge that landscapes were his strongest suit. Rather, he no longer could identify with America and thus reverted back to an earlier mode of creating a feeling of relatedness, a mode he had formed as a young boy.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, I have tried to argue for the importance a concept of "America" to Burchfield's art. Unlike many writers who have looked most closely at Burchfield's landscapes and have interpreted them as the sole concern of his life's work, I have devoted most of my attention to his views of towns and industry. I contend that Burchfield began life without the sense of community all humans desire, and thus sought it throughout his career. While at first nature was his community, America came to replace this early attachment to the landscape. At the end of his life, however, Burchfield became disillusioned with America and thus turned back to his early nature worship.

As an "American" painter, critics used Burchfield to uphold a vision of the country as non-European, and hardworking. Their deeper concern, however, was maintaining the sanctity of the land. In other words, while American were building suburbs, they dreamed of the forests that had just been chopped down. These critical biases also affected Burchfield's own intentions. He too was an agrarian dreamer.

I do not dispute the beauty or importance of the early and late works. Rather, I think that art history and art criticism have gotten confused in the writing on Burchfield. Critically, if modernist movements are privileged, one could make a case for ignoring the

middle works. Historically, however, it is impossible to understand Burchfield without concentrating on his middle works and their references to America.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Writing by Burchfield:

"On the Middle Border." Creative Art 3 (September, 1928): xxv-xxxii.

"Edward Hopper: Classicist." Edward Hopper Retrospective Exhibition. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1933, 16.

"Henry G. Keller." American Magazine of Art. 29 (September,1936):586-93.

"Burchfield Explains." Art Digest 19 (April 1, 1945): 56.

Autobiographical Manuscript. Unpublished, 1955. In the library of the Whitney Museum.

Notes on Paintings. Unpublished, 1955. In the library of the Whitney Museum, Baur uses portions in his catalog for the 1956 Whitney show.

"Fifty Years as a Painter." Charles Burchfield: His Golden Year, A Retrospective Exhibition. Tucson: University of Arizona Art Gallery, 1965,15-88.

"The Place of Drawings in an Artist's Work." The Drawings of Charles Burchfield, Edith Jones, ed. New York: Praeger, 1968, 7-8.

Books on Burchfield:

Baigell, Matthew, Charles Burchfield. New York: Watson-Guptill, 1976.

Baur, John I.H., The Inlander. Newark:University of Delaware, 1984.

Townsend, J. Benjamin , ed., Charles Burchfield's Journals. Albany: State University of New York, 1993

Trovato, Joseph, Charles Burchfield: Catalogue of Paintings in Public and Private Collections Utica: Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, 1970.

Articles on Burchfield:

"Art." Time Magazine 67 (January 23, 1956): 72.

"Art." Time Magazine 74 (January 18, 1960): 75.

"The Art Galleries" New Yorker 31 (January 28, 1956):63-65.

Barker, Virgil, "Notes on Exhibitions." Arts 5 (April,1924):219.

Baur, John I.H., "Burchfield's Intimate Diaries." Art News 54 (January, 1956): 26,27,65.

_____. "Fantasy and Symbolism in Charles Burchfiled's Early Watercolors."19 (Spring, 1956):30-40.

_____. "Charles Burchfield: Last Pantheist ?" Arts 54 (February 1980): 174-176.

Bredemeier, Carl L., "The Art of Charles Burchfield." Buffalo Saturday Night 2 (January 27, 1923): 4-5.

_____. "Charles Burchfield 'The Honest'." Buffalo Arts Journal 8 (Summer, 1926): 15-16.

Breuning, Margaret, "Charles Burchfield." New York Evening Post. (October 31, 1932): page not known, found in "Wrappers" file at the Burchfield Art Center.

_____. "Charles Burchfield at Rehn." New York Evening Post. (February 12, 1934):page not known, found in "Wrappers" file at the Burchfield Art Center.

_____. "Current Exhibitions." Parnassus 8 (December,1936):31.

_____."Burchfield's Recent Work at Rehn." Arts 35 (January 1961): 50.

Burchfield's America." Life 1 (December 28, 1936):24-29.

"Burchfield Holds One-Man Show." Brooklyn Eagle. (March 23, 1930):page not known, found in "Wrappers" file at the Burchfield Art Center.

"Burchfield's Watercolors." American Art News 22 (March 29, 1924): 4.

"Burchfield's Work Shown." New York Times. (October 27, 1932): page number not known, found in "Wrappers" file at the Burchfield Art Center.

"Charles Burchfield." New York Evening Post. (March 22, 1930): page number not known, found in "Wrappers" file at the Burchfield Art Center.

"Charles Burchfield at Montross." American Art News 26

(March 31, 1928): 11.

"Charles Burchfield at Montross." New York Times. (February 28, 1926): page number not known, found in "Wrappers" file at the Burchfield Art Center.

"Charles Burchfield at Rehn." New York Times. (March 26, 1930): page number not known, found in "Wrappers" file at the Burchfield Art Center.

Cummings, Paul, "Charles Burchfield: The Early Years." Exhibition of Charles Burchfield's Watercolors. New York, Carl Battaglia Galleries, 1971, unpaginated.

"Current Exhibitions of Interest." Parnassus 2 (April, 1930):3,6,7.

Czestochowski, Joseph S., "The Published Prints of Charles Burchfield." American Art Journal 8 (November, 1976): 99-110.

DeVree, Howard, "Around New York." Magazine of Art 32 (February, 1939): 100-101.

George, Laverne, "Charles Burchfield." Arts 30 (January, 1956): 26-31.

Hopper, Edward, "Charles Burchfield: American." The Arts 14 (July, 1928): 5-12.

Jewell, Edward A., "Art of Burchfield Glorifies the Drab." New York Times. (February 8, 1934): page number not known, found in Wrappers" file at the Burchfield Art Center.

_____. "Art by Burchfield Put On Exhibition." New York Times (December 28, 1938): page number not known, found in "Wrappers" file at the Burchfield Art Center.

_____. "Burchfield at Rehn." New York Times (February 11, 1934): page number not known, found in "Wrappers" file at the Burchfield Art Center.

_____. "Burchfield Shows Watercolor Art." New York Times (November 21, 1939): page number not known, found in "Wrappers" file at the Burchfield Art Center.

K., F.L., "Burchfield, Painter of Familiar Scenes." Survey Graphic (November, 1928): page number not known, found in "Wrappers" file at the Burchfield Art Center.

Kramer, Hilton, "A Nativist Who Painted Light." New York Times (October 23, 1977):D27.

Lyle, Henry H.M., "Charles Burchfield, American." Charaka Club Procedings. (April, 1934):135-139.

Mannes, Marya, "News of the Month-April." Creative Art 2 (May, 1928): xlvii.

McBride, Henry, "Charles Burchfield at Rehn." New York Sun (October 31, 1932): page number not known, found in "Wrappers" file at the Burchfield Art Center.

_____."Lively and Personal Quality Marks His Dramatic Paintings." New York Sun. (March 29, 1930): page number not known, found in"Wrappers" file at the Burchfield Art Center.

_____."Modern Art." The Dial 72 (April, 1922):436-438.

_____. "Modern Art." The Dial 76 (May, 1924): 476-478.

McCormick, William B., "A Small Town in Paint." International Studio 80 (March, 1925): 466-70.

Molnar, Ferenc, "Charles Birchfield's [sic] Paintings of Ohio Town Win Fame in London and New York." The Cleveland Press (March 31, 1923): page number not known, found in"Wrappers" file at the Burchfield Art Center.

Morse, John D., "Charles Burchfield: Some Documentary Notes." Journal of the Archives of American Art 7 (July, 1967): 1-10.

Mowbray-Clarke, Mary. "Introduction" Catalogue of the Drawings in Watercolor by Charles Burchfield. New York: Kevorkian Gallery, February 16-28, 1920, Unpaginated.

"New York Season." The Art Digest. (April 1, 1930):16.

Park, Julian and W.H. Glover, eds., "Charles Burchfield on Art-An Interview." Niagara Frontier 7 (Winter, 1961): 115-131.

Pousette-Dart, Nathanial, "Charles Burchfield: A Creative Modern Realist." Studio News. (April, 1934): 6-7.

Prasse, Leona E., "The Drawings of Charles Burchfield." The Drawings of Charles Burchfield. Cleveland:Cleveland Museum, 5-11.

"Reviews and Previews" Art News 46 (November, 1947): 42-43.

Ritchie, A.C., "Introduction." Charles Burchfield: A Retrospective. Buffalo: Albright Art Gallery, 1944, 6-8.

Root, Edward W., "Charles E. Burchfield." American Art Portfolios. New York: Raymond & Raymond, 1936.

Stretch, Bonnie, "The Last Pantheist." ARTnews 85 (May,1984): 119-123.

"Two Watercolors by Charles Burchfield." The Survey (April 3,1920): 42.

"Vanishing Backyards." Fortune. (May, 1930): 77-81.

Watson, Ernest W., "Charles Burchfield." American Artist 6 (May, 1942): 5-11.

Whiting, F.A., "A Note on Burchfield." American Magazine of Art 30 (June, 1937):352.

Exhibition Catalogs:

Burchfield Art Center, Wallpapers by Charles Burchfield. Buffalo: Burchfield Art Center, 1973.

_____. Works by Charles Burchfield: A Tribute from Tony Sisti. Buffalo: Burchfield Art Center, 1979.

Columbus Museum of Art, The Early Works of Charles Burchfield. Columbus: Columbus Museum of Art,1987.

Emerson Gallery, Hamilton College, Extending the Golden Year:Charles E. Burchfield Centennial. Clinton: Hamilton College,1993.

Kennedy Galleries, Burchfield's Seasons. New York: Kennedy Galleries, April 28-May 28, 1982.

_____. Charles Burchfield. New York: Kennedy Galleries, March 27-April, 1974.

_____. Charles Burchfield.New York: Kennedy Galleries, April 17-May 15, 1993.

_____. Charles Burchfield:The Early Years, 1915-1920. New York: Kennedy Galleries, October 13-November 12, 1977.

_____. Charles Burchfield:The Late Years and Selected Earlier Works. New York: Kennedy Galleries, October 10-November 3, 1979.

_____. Charles Burchfield Watercolors 1915-20. New York: Kennedy Galleries, October 30-November 17, 1990

_____. Thirty-Eight Rare Drawings by Charles Burchfield. New York: Kennedy Galleries, September 12-October 3, 1992.

_____. Watercolors by Charles Burchfield and John Marin. New York: Kennedy Galleries, March 27- April 20, 1985.

Lindemann, Edna, The Art Triangle. Buffalo: Burchfield Art Center,1989.

Museum of Modern Art, Charles Burchfield: Early Watercolors. New York, Museum of Modern Art, 1930.

Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, Charles Burchfield: The Charles Rand Penney Collection. Washington, D.C.:Smithsonian Institution Press,1978.

State University College at Buffalo, Charles Burchfield: Recent Paintings. Buffalo: State University College, 1963.

Secondary Sources:

American Psychiatric Association, Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. Washington, D.C., American Psychiatric Association, 1987.

Baigell, Matthew, The American Scene. New York: Praeger, 1974.

Bronner, Simon J., "Folk Art on Display: America's Conflict of Traditions." American Quarterly. (March, 1993): 128-50.

Brown, Milton W., American Painting From the Armory Show to the Depression. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972.

Corn, Wanda M., "Apostles of the New American Art: Waldo Frank and Paul Rosenfeld." Arts 54(February, 1980):159-63.

_____, In The American Grain: The Billboard Poetics of Charles Demuth. Poughkeepsie: Vassar College, 1991.

Craven, Thomas, Modern Art. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1934.

Delaware Art Museum, Avant-Garde Painting and Sculpture in America, 1910-25. Wilmington: Delaware Art Museum, 1975.

Greenberg, Jay, R. and Stephen A. Mitchell, Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988.

Hemingway, Andrew, "'To Personalize the Rainpipe':The Critical Mythology of Edward Hopper." Prospects17 (1992): 379-403.

Kendall, M. Sue, Rethinking Regionalism. Washington, D.C.:Smithsonian Institution Press, 1986.

Marling, Karal Ann, George Washington Slept Here. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988

Petruch, Peninah R.H., American Art Criticism 1910-39 New York: Garland, 1981.

Roeder, George, Jr. Forum of Uncertainty Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1980.