

## Painting the Unites States' Civil War: Or Creating a Brotherly War

*Peindre la guerre civile des États-Unis : ou créer une guerre fraternelle*

01 December 2014.

**Marc S. Smith**

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PREO

# Painting the Unites States' Civil War: Or Creating a Brotherly War

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## **Textes et contextes**

01 December 2014.

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**Le Temps guérit toutes les blessures : la résistance à l'autorité de l'Histoire dans les concepts de nation et de nationalisme**

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1 The Civil War lasted from 1861 to 1865 and cost the lives of over 600,000 soldiers. It was a long and bloody conflict. It opposed twenty-four Union states to eleven southern ones, which had decided to secede from the Union and form the Confederacy. This secession divided the country, the population and in certain cases even families. One of the causes for the war was the fact that the northern states did not accept secession and saw this as an act of rebellion.
- 2 The Union had more soldiers, more guns and more industrial fighting power, but the South had a sense of stubborn independence and held

firm to the notion of national independence. In order to win, the North had to invade the South and bring the Confederates to their knees. This was achieved, perhaps most dramatically, in 1864 with General Sherman's march to the sea, which consisted in the systematic destruction of military, industrial and civilian property on the road from Atlanta to Savannah. The goal of such a tactic was to destroy the South and the southern desire for national independence.

- 3 In his sub-chapter entitled "The Reassurance of Fratricide," Benedict Anderson explains that in the case of the United States' Civil War "a vast pedagogical industry works ceaselessly to oblige young Americans to remember/forget the hostilities of 1861-65 as a great 'civil' war between 'brothers' rather than between—as they briefly were—two sovereign nation-states" (Anderson 1991: 201).
- 4 Even before the war, secession was seen as a family feud in the northern states. Lincoln's "House Divided" speech set the tone from the very start. As he explained in 1858:

This government cannot endure, permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not expect the house to fall—but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing, or all the other (Lincoln 1858).

- 5 From the start, the conflict entered the sphere of domesticity, and in the North the Confederacy was seen as a rebellious member of the same national family.
- 6 The vast pedagogical industry referred to by Anderson helped heal the nation after the war (Anderson 1991: 201) and continued to depict southern alterity as another side of the prism of American identity. Different media played various parts in this national reunion and in the fine arts this period brought about one of the rare moments when the History genre was put forward. The Smithsonian Institution art database has catalogued over 1400 canvases painted between the 1860s and the 1890s which deal with the Civil War.
- 7 How do these paintings depict Anderson's "reassurance of fratricide" or the ideas one would associate with a family feud? How did the fine arts enter this vast pedagogical industry? How did painters help future generations remember/forget the nature of the war?

- 8 The notion of fratricide refers to the idea of brotherhood, which contains simultaneously the image of otherness, for the brother is a separate entity, and the image of sameness, for he is linked through family ties. So how was the otherness of the Southerner reintegrated inside the national persona after his defeat? How was his sameness depicted in a context of bloody rivalry and how did it help reunite the Southerner with his northern brother?
- 9 This paper will explore how the images of sameness and otherness were depicted from the beginning of the war until the 1890s. The goal here will be to use the fine arts during this period to understand how the former Confederate states were re-assimilated through Anderson's concepts of "remembering-forgetting" and the "reassurance of fratricide," without denying Southerners their cultural specificities.
- 10 This will be done by showing how national symbols such as flags were depicted during and after the war, but also by seeing the values attached to Confederates and the southern character, and finally by explaining how artists brought the Civil War inside contexts of family and/or domesticity which reinforced the image of fratricide. The horrors of the war, the hatred and the betrayals could not be forgotten, but like all family feuds they could be forgiven.

## 2. "Special Artists"

- 11 Before the Civil War began, only one American artist had taken military themes as his specialty. James Walker had served during the Mexican War and kept to this genre afterwards. During the Civil War, twenty-eight professional "Special Artists" were paid by the media to document the war. They worked for example for *Harper's Weekly*, for *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Weekly* and for the *New York Illustrated News*. The media also bought illustrations from hundreds of amateur artists to illustrate their articles, as well as photographs (Sears 1992: 16). The most famous amongst these "Special Artists" were Winslow Homer, Thomas Nast and Edwin Forbes. These artists helped make the Civil War the first media event in American history. The population demanded illustrations and photographs and "simple texts without images were shunted aside in favor of lively accounts invigorated by graphic scenes" (Jacobson 1996: 15).

- 12 These illustrations and photographs were productions made during the war and as such are part of the sphere of news correspondence. The wide readership and the enthusiasm of the public were tremendous. These images had a major influence on the perception of the war, as did for example the lithographs produced by Currier and Ives (Jacobson 1996: 48-49). They were wartime productions, and as such they sometimes served as war propaganda and revealed popular sentiment.<sup>1</sup> The media were as a consequence biased, as for example *Harper's Weekly*, which was strongly in favor of the Union (Simpson 1988: 30), even if the artists themselves were remarkably neutral in their depictions of the war (Jacobson 1996: 16).
- 13 These "Special Artists" are important to mention for the media helped bring about a new generation of painters, yet the goal of this paper is to analyze how the visual arts helped disseminate the notion of a brotherly conflict. As a consequence, this study will focus on paintings and not on illustrations and photographs, and this for two reasons. First, oils or watercolors could not be executed on the battlefield or in campsites for reasons of logistics. Artists could not prepare their paintings until they were back in their studios. Few paintings were finished during the war; most were done after and were based on sketches or, for those who had not seen the war, were based on fantasy (Jacobson 1996: 29). Consequently, most paintings made after the war entered the process of national healing (Jacobson 1996: 99), unlike news illustrations. Second, commissions for Civil War-themed paintings mainly came after the war from members of particular regiments, from governments for public buildings or from veterans' associations (Jacobson 1996: 107-108). Such commissions also enter the official pedagogical industry referred to by Benedict Anderson and had a certain distance from the subject that news illustrations did not.

### 3. Painting national emblems during the war: flags and leaders

- 14 The Smithsonian art database has catalogued 1494 paintings depicting the Civil War that were produced between the 1860s and 1890s, with a vast majority being painted after 1865.<sup>2</sup> Only a few paintings

were finished during the war, most famously those done by Winslow Homer between 1863 and 1866 (Simpson 1988: 68).

- 15 In trying to see how the Civil War was depicted as a brotherly conflict and not a war opposing two nation-states, it is relevant to look first at how national emblems such as flags and leaders were depicted. Interestingly, very few actually show national symbols such as the Stars and Stripes. One of the rare painters to have used the Union flag as a central theme was the renowned landscape artist Frederic Church. In 1861, right after the shelling of Fort Sumter, which opened the conflict, Church painted *Our Banner in the Sky*. He intended this piece to be a rallying cry to save the Union and help with the recruitment process (Miller). In this painting, the nation is placed in the firmament and becomes an idea which spans the continent. It was a cry for patriotism following “the flag’s ignominious treatment by southern forces after the surrender of Fort Sumter” (Simpson 1988: 73). Church renewed his statement in 1864 when he painted *Our Flag*, which is more obviously present and firmly planted on the summit of a rocky mountain. Church’s call to national sentiment is obvious in these two pieces.
- 16 Yet, such nationalist paintings were very rare during the war, and none appeared afterwards. The northern national emblem is otherwise very much absent. This shows that painting was a medium different from other ones. Its temporal endurance, its long thought-out studio production and its public visibility are explanations for this fact. The presence of national symbols during and after the war would have brought the conflict onto a nationalistic scene, displacing it from the official view of reunion in the North which began as early as December 8, 1863 with Lincoln’s Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction and thus making reunion more difficult.
- 17 Most often, the flags put forward and fought over in paintings are regimental standards; they “symbolized the unity and valor of their units [and] were highly coveted trophies” (Jacobson 1996: 16). As mentioned previously, many regiments commissioned paintings, which can help explain this phenomenon.
- 18 On the contrary, the Confederate flag appeared frequently in productions of southern artists, like for example in *The Flag of Fort Sumter* by Conrad Wise Chapman. Chapman is one of the very rare Confed-

erate painters to have been able to produce canvases during the war. In 1863, he was sent from the front to Charleston, where General Beauregard ordered him to document the fortifications of the Charleston Bay by making sketches for the Ordinance Bureau in Richmond. In March 1864, he left the army and returned to Rome where his father worked as an artist. There he was able to produce over twenty-five oil paintings based on his sketches, and this helped in the diffusion of southern national emblems in the fine arts before the end of the war (Bassham 1998: 155). If the official discourse in the North was of a “house divided,” in the South national sovereignty was put forward and depictions of the Confederate flag served this process.

- 19 Yet, Chapman was almost an exception, and very few pieces were painted in the South. There was not a lack of talent, but a lack of time and supplies during the war. At the beginning of the conflict, most of the country's printing presses were in the North, and until 1862, mid-Atlantic states, like New York, actually continued supplying the South with such materials. For example, the first Confederate bank notes were printed by New Yorkers. The same problem touched artists. Very quickly all men of fighting age were needed on the front, and when they did have time to dedicate themselves to the arts, supplies were lacking. By the beginning of 1863 in the state of Virginia, painters such as W. B. Cox and Benjamin Reinhardt were unable to paint, and those not on the front had to survive by selling what little painting supplies they had left (Davis 2007: 110). As a consequence, there was little circulation during the war of southern national emblems such as flags.
- 20 The same phenomenon touched the depiction of leaders. Before these shortages occurred in the South, there were a few portraits made. For example, the six heroic canvases painted by the French-born artist Louis Mathieu Didier Guillaume. Among the six, there are portraits of President Jefferson Davis, General Robert E. Lee and General Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson. As in the case of Chapman, Guillaume's paintings appear as exceptions.
- 21 Most artists who were able to paint during the war were from the North, and they sometimes followed the southern army (Jacobson 1996: 16), but they did not have the same approach as Confederate painters would have had. As a consequence, there is a great absence

of nationalistic emblems such as flags and heroic leaders in paintings done during the war both in the North and in the South. This would have enhanced a nationalistic discourse and impeded the diffusion of the notion of a brotherly war in a future interpretation of these events.

## 4. Painting and mythicizing the southern brother

- 22 Most paintings representing the Confederates were made by Northerners after the Civil War, and they are much less flamboyant than those painted by Guillaume. In the case of this study, they enter the official postwar discourse of reconciliation, and they are much more telling for they show how the victors depicted their vanquished brothers.
- 23 One northern artist who often represented the Confederate emblems was Gilbert Gaul. Gaul was only ten years old at the end of the war. During the first fifteen years of his career, he almost exclusively painted scenes from the Civil War, and, even if he was from a Unionist family from the state of New Jersey, he most often chose to depict southern soldiers. In two of his paintings from the 1880s, *Holding the Line at all Hazards* and *Glorious Fighting*, Gaul painted an ode to the courage of the southern soldier.
- 24 In *Glorious Fighting*, the viewer is put in the position of a Union soldier looking at part of a Confederate line from a distance. What we see are resolute faces, filled with a sense of duty and bravado. Even wounded soldiers hold their positions, ready to fire upon the enemy. The Confederate flag is held firmly while all await either their death or the enemy.
- 25 When painting *The Skirmish Line*, Gaul took the same view point, showing this time the Union Army. The courage appears at first glance to be the same, but it has a more realistic quality. This is an intense moment, but the darker hue and darker tones give the scene less of a Homeric quality and more of a dramatic one, and the Stars and Stripes is absent from the scene, whereas in the first one the Confederate flag is clearly present.



- 26 In Gaul's painting *Holding the Line at All Hazards*, we have once more the same vivid colors and among the dead and dying, we can again see the courage of the Southerners and the presence of their flag. None flee their position and the general, standing straight, his pistol in his hand next to his heart, stands fast and is ready to hold the line with his life. The Confederate flag is here directly associated, not with the will of rebellion, but with the courage and the value of the Confederate soldier.
- 27 After the Civil War, the bravery, independence and tenacity of the Confederate soldier were developed and glorified. Throughout the war, the South was grossly outnumbered in men, guns, ammunitions and artillery. What the South had were men willing to fight to the death for their independence, and this courage and this spirit became symbolic of the Confederate soldier. This gave to the Confederate flag multiple levels of meaning. It came to represent treason, rebellion, slavery, but also the courage and independent spirit of a dissident southern brother. In these paintings, the southern flag is then not a nationalistic symbol, but one of valued otherness.
- 28 The same process of magnifying southern courage can be found in depictions of southern generals by Northerners. None came to represent better the southern spirit than General Robert E. Lee. According to the Smithsonian database, eighty-eight canvasses of him were painted between 1860 and 1900, representing ten percent of all portraits painted during that period.
- 29 Lee is always depicted with the utmost respect. In Howard Pyle's illustration, *Robert E. Lee on his Famous Charger, Traveler*, the viewer sees a general inspiring awe in his men. He has a simple demeanor, but the eyes of his troops below and behind are what confer on the general all his power. He is grave, solemn, awaiting his inevitable destiny. This illustration was published in *Harper's Weekly* in 1911, but it shows part of the myth created around Lee. By the turn of the century, his image had been used to such an extent that he had become a metonymy for the South, and he came to represent the last generation of gentlemen before the beginning of the second industrial revolution (Davis 2007: 110-115).
- 30 The creation of this myth becomes even more apparent when comparing two paintings of the same event. In 1870 Alonso Chapel painted

*Lee Surrendering to Grant at Appomattox* and in 1920 Jean Ferris painted *Let Us Have Peace*. In Chapel's vision, Grant is leaning on the table, while Lee is slightly hunched forward to sign the surrender. In the same way, Grant is slightly more in the forefront and more centered than Lee and thus appears taller. There is no doubt who is the victor and who is the vanquished.

- 31 But fifty years later, Lee has been magnified, and in Ferris' portrayal of the event, Grant looks almost awed by the presence of his foe. This time it is Lee who is slightly more centered and in the foreground. And while he proudly stands up straight, it is Grant who leans forward, making himself seem smaller in the presence of a Lee who now appears to be a foot taller and a myth. It is the number of Union soldiers in the background and Lee's upturned sword that indicate who is surrendering to whom.
- 32 Lee was an awe inspiring general who had always commanded the greatest respect of Union soldiers and officers. Colonel Theodore Lyman, for example, often showed Lee the greatest admiration when referring to him in his letters (Lyman 1922: 100).
- 33 All these examples of the bravado, independent spirit and courage of Confederate soldiers and their leaders testify to how the otherness of the Confederate soldier is valued and put forward. It is difficult to find any painting depicting Confederate soldiers negatively. And by the turn of the century, the southern officer nostalgically represented a dying breed of gentlemen which was being pushed to the side by industrialism.
- 34 One last example of this southern pride can be seen in Winslow Homer's *Prisoners from the Front* painted in 1866. It was a huge success at the time and helped build his reputation. The painting shows an imaginary scene from the war of Union Brigadier General Francis Channing Barlow in front of several captured confederates. The background shows the battlefield at Petersburg, Virginia, but the regimental insignias show a discrepancy with real events (Simpson 88: 71).
- 35 There is no exciting action, but a real tension is created between the officers. The two Southerners on the left are humbly surrendering themselves to uncertainty and fate, while the third officer proudly stands in uniform in front of the Union general. There is tension, but

no threat. The pride of the Confederate officer shows an enemy defeated in battle but not in spirit. His courage and pride remain intact. When Homer painted this canvas, the war had just ended, and Homer emphasized the sense of unity and spirit of a nation acknowledging southern identity, where the defeated brother could keep his pride nonetheless. Here, the two American brothers were once more reunited, the cavalier southern aristocrat and the puritan capitalist Yankee (Colbert 1998: 66-67).

- 36 Critics at the time brought these characteristics forward: "The central figure of the group is a young South Carolinian of gentle breeding and graceful aspect [...] who stands, in his rusty gray uniform, erect and defiant, without insolence, a truly chivalric and manly figure" (*Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 1866: 118). It is the southern officer who is centered in the painting, not Barlow the Union officer. The victor is clear, but it is the defeated brother who is the central figure. Years later, critics saw in this painting "judicial impartiality," and they believed "the influence of this picture was strong on the side of brotherly feeling, and of a broad humanity in the way of regarding the great struggle" (Cook 1888: 257).
- 37 This view of southern soldiers began during the war. Union soldiers and officers always respected and were astonished by the courage of their southern brothers. As Colonel Lyman wrote in a letter dated May 18, 1864: "These rebels are not [...] ready to give up—a more [...] formidable-looking set of men could not be. Their great characteristic is their stoical manliness; they never beg, or whimper or complain; but look you straight in the face" (Lyman 1922: 100). Just as the young aristocrat does in Homer's painting.
- 38 One can argue that after a war it is always better to picture the enemy as someone filled with courage—the stronger the foe, the greater the victory. Yet, here the Confederate soldiers are depicted using values that had been linked to the country's national identity since the revolutionary era: a respectable stubbornness, an independent spirit and the will to continue the fight even against insurmountable odds. The same values were used by John Trumbull in his famous Independence piece called *The Death of General Warren at the Battle of Bunker Hill*. In this scene, the courage of the colonists remains as the British troops break through their defenses. The ut-

most respect is given by the British to General Warren, who, mortally wounded, is kept from the bayonet. The lesson of Warren's death at Bunker Hill was that there was honor in defeat. For even if the British had won, the heavy death toll was a song of American independence, bravery and stubbornness, the very same qualities attributed later on to the Confederates and mythicized in Lee.

39 So, in all the paintings, the otherness of the Southerner is seen as fundamentally American. The Confederates are portrayed as obviously different from the Northerners, but this difference is glorified and seen as profoundly American, and, as such, they remain true brothers. The otherness of the southern brother becomes a value positively added to the national persona, and in this way the war becomes an American family feud. The lack of nationalistic symbols and emblems in these paintings helps ground the war in a "house divided" point of view, and the opposition between two nation-states remains absent. The Southerner is other, but always a member of the American family.

40 These paintings then enter a discourse of cultural nationalism. The nation is perceived as a "differentiated community," where Northerners and Southerners are linked together like a family, through "natural solidarity" (Hutchinson 1994: 44). The Confederates' identity is not erased; it is assimilated to make the nation stronger.

## **5. Painting national unity through the image of domesticity**

41 The idea that the Civil War opposed two sides of the same "house" and not two nation-states, thus reinforcing the notion of fratricide, was also brought about through images of domesticity in paintings. The Civil War took place on battlefields, but also in homes across the nation. Interestingly, most paintings by Eastman Johnson on the Civil War take place in this sphere away from the front, even if Johnson had witnessed the slaughter of the battlefield.

42 With the onset of the Civil War in the spring of 1861, activity in the New York art world declined because of the enlistment of artists. Painters such as Sanford Gifford and Jervis McEntee joined the Union Army at an early point. Others like Albert Bierstadt and Eastman

Johnson declined enlistment, but was encouraged by New York critics to document the events of the war. Johnson followed the Union troops on three campaigns. He was near Bull Run in March 1862, at Antietam in September of the same year and marched with the Union Army through Maryland after the battle of Gettysburg in 1863 (Hills 1977: 79-83).

- 43 Yet, many of his paintings show how the war touched families. A good example of this can be found in *An Earnest Pupil*. The scene shows a grandson listening intently to his grandfather playing the flute. The grandfather is a veteran. The color of his coat might position him as a Confederate, yet the distinctive blue tones of his cap place him as a Union veteran. The artist is playing with this ambiguous aspect. The veteran's former army becomes irrelevant, and, apart from the uniform, the conflict itself is absent from the picture. It is the transmission of knowledge after surviving the war and the importance of family that is the main focus here.
- 44 In another of his paintings called *The Little Soldier*, the viewer is presented with a child whose age is emphasized by a uniform, weapons and a backpack that appear too large for him. His canteen and pack are of standard Federal issue; he carries a German-made musket and an old French pistol. He wears a distinctive low-crowned officer's kepi. The viewer is not sure if he is wearing his father's uniform, and if the war is finished, but there is a deep sense of yearning that is present. The youth's gaze puts him both in the realm of domesticity, family and longing for a departed one (Carbone 1999: 105). The intensity of this painting resides in Johnson's ability to illustrate the effect of the brutal reality of the Civil War upon the entire American nation. The irony of a little boy dressed and ready for battle, still within the confines of a protective and homely setting, stresses the atrocious nature of war without referring to its causes. The same can be said of Johnson's *The Girl I Left Behind*.
- 45 As explained in the introduction, the image of the brother is based on the principle of otherness, but also on that of sameness for he is part of an entity, the family. In many cases, the Civil War is depicted as a family affair. Gilbert Gaul, in his painting *Leaving Home*, shows a Confederate household complete with three generations of masters and two generations of slaves. Hundreds of thousands of young men left

their homes to go to battle. The young man depicted here by Gaul is probably saying goodbye to his grandfather; his father has probably already left for war. A true American home is what links all soldiers together, as well as the fear these families have of seeing them die. The Civil War left casualties amidst many American families, and the story of each soldier began at home, whether in the North or the South.

- 46 In Johnson's painting *The Field Hospital*, dated 1867, the artist once more places the story in the sphere of domesticity, but transposes it outside of the house. The painting shows a wounded soldier dictating a letter to a woman. The uniforms are not central, even if the soldier on the right hand side wears the distinctive Union blue. Here, the sense of longing for home is once more the central focus. Such a theme was unifying after the war, for all families had felt the same when the fighting was still taking place. Such paintings brought the war inside the sphere of the family and reunited the country through emotions all could relate to.
- 47 Whether Unionist or Confederate, these scenes show soldiers as members of families or families longing for those on the front. All these paintings bring about a sense of brotherhood or shared feeling. Even if these paintings come overwhelmingly from northern painters, the story told is one understood by all. There is no blaming the Confederates, and the origins of the war remain absent.
- 48 Winslow Homer develops another aspect of this sense of longing for home. In his painting *Home Sweet Home*, he shows us a Union camp with two men in the foreground outside of their pitched tent. The sense of duty and belonging is present, as are those of emptiness and idleness. It shows the moments of the day, when one's home seems further away than usual. With this ironic title, Homer presents the soldier of the front as a displaced member of a family.
- 49 *Home Sweet Home* was also the title of a song that moved both armies. During the winter of 1862-1863, after the battle of Fredericksburg, the two armies were encamped on opposite sides of the Rappahannock. One evening, the Union band first played songs for the Union Army and then played songs for the Confederate Army. It finished by playing *Home Sweet Home*, and the soldiers of both sides

sang in unison and 150,000 voices joined together (Simpson 1988: 144-145). Such events of camaraderie were not all that rare.

- 50 In the fine arts, the Civil War was deeply linked to family and home, and painters such as George Caleb Bingham did not hesitate to show all the sides of the conflict. In his painting *Martial Law* (General Order Number 11), painted in 1865-1868 shortly after the end of the conflict, the author decided to show how the war broke families apart.
- 51 General Order No. 11 is the title of a Union Army directive issued on the 25<sup>th</sup> of August 1863. It forced the evacuation of rural areas in four counties in western Missouri. The order was issued by Union General Thomas Ewing and affected all rural residents regardless of their allegiance. Those who could prove their loyalty to the Union were allowed to stay in the affected area, but had to leave their farms and move to communities near military outposts. Those who could not do so had to vacate the area altogether (Miller 1898: 101).
- 52 The order intended to deprive pro-Confederate guerrillas of material support from the rural countryside, but the severity of its provisions and the sometimes savage nature of its enforcement alienated vast numbers of civilians and displaced over twenty thousand individuals. It ultimately led to conditions in which the Rebels actually found themselves with even greater access to supplies than before. It was repealed in January 1864, when a new general took command of Union forces in the region (Kirkman 2011: 63).
- 53 The painting shows a family who has just suffered a death at the hands of the Union Army. A man has just been shot dead in front of his family and lies on the ground in front of his home. Bingham was denouncing General Ewing's execution of the order and the way families were torn from their homes. The violence of such an act could be understood by all Americans, whether from the North or the South. All understood the grief and all felt the injustice.
- 54 In most paintings, the politics of the war and forms of propaganda remain mostly outside of the frames, and this creates an even greater sense of national union in grief and longing. Most painters depict an American story, a national tragedy touching families, brothers and fathers. By portraying the war so often inside the realm of domesticity, secession becomes a rebellion grounded in the family sphere

and the home, where Northerner and Southerner remain two sides of the same national identity.

## 6. Painting reunion inside the domestic sphere

- 55 This trend is even more apparent in Thomas Hovenden's *In the Hands of the Enemy*. The painting won immediate acclaim when exhibited at the National Academy of Design in 1889. It was hung in the place of honor as the star picture of an exhibition including over five hundred paintings and was sold for 5,500 dollars, the highest price ever paid for a picture at the National Academy (Terhune 2006: 142).
- 56 The picture shows an imagined scene following the battle of Gettysburg. A Union family solicitously cares for a wounded Confederate soldier who finds himself captured by the Union, a situation that could have happened to everyday people near the path of war. The setting of the painting is in an ordinary, comfortable Pennsylvania home. A Union soldier attends to the prisoner's bandages, while the mother offers him a cup of tea and touches his left arm. Two other Union soldiers are present and serve as jailers, but one is clearly wounded with his arm in a sling.
- 57 The theme of the painting is clearly one of reconciliation between unknown opponents. The Confederate soldier is captured by the Union and held inside a Pennsylvania house. He is literally in the hands of both the Union soldier tending his wounds and the household mother. The Confederate soldier, beaten by the war, is brought back to a symbolic home, inside a family who, differences put aside, is tending his wounds. For both the soldier and the nation, the healing process had begun.
- 58 The vague presence of Lincoln's portrait on the wall behind the central figures confirms the household's wartime allegiance as well as Thomas Hovenden's intention to evoke the spirit of the President's words in his second inaugural speech: "With malice toward none; with charity for all [...] let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds" (Lincoln 1865).



- 59 The painting offered a message of healing and alluded to the turning point of the Civil War at Gettysburg. Hovenden gave to the country a national image to remind the American population that even a bitter and divisive struggle could be overcome.
- 60 These ideas of reunion through family and domesticity were also present outside of the fine arts. In the 1880s, many novels appeared following Reconstruction, and they often used the same reconciliatory tone which was most of the time symbolized by a wedding between former Unionists and Confederates. For example, Joel Chandler Harris rewrote one of his stories to have the southern belle marry a Yankee she had nursed. The existence of a romance, always between a southern belle and a Union officer, became quite a popular theme and promoted the family ties linking the North to the South (Gaston 2002: 180-181).
- 61 On stage, the first important play on the theme was William Hooker Gillette's *Held by the Enemy*, produced in mid-August 1886 at the Madison Square Theater, in New York City. A number of other Civil War dramas followed the success of this play, which had over 70 performances (Hart 1995: 314). At the time of the exhibit at the National Academy of Design of Hovenden's painting, at least two journalists made the parallel with Gillette's play (Terhune 2006: 247).
- 62 Some descriptive comments were published in a small pamphlet to accompany Hovenden's painting and reveal how Hovenden involved his public in narrative, interpretive responses. The mother and the daughter became "ministering angels," the mother's "sympathy was as deep as the ocean," the Confederate soldier was "manly and courageous." "His resolute face was damp and haggard with pain," and the awakening romance between the Confederate officer and the radiant daughter of a Yankee household seemed patriotic. The *New York Herald* reviewer in March 1889 called the painting "Picture of Peace in War," and praised it as "finest genre of a scene of the Civil War that has yet been painted" (*New York Herald* 1889). A contemporary Boston critic thoughtfully described it as "admirable and elevated [...] emblematic and prophetic [...] a picture of wonderful penetration, honesty and suggestiveness, truly worthy of being called historical." Thomas Hovenden is "a great enough artist to paint a historical pic-

ture, [...] and make the past real to us [...] and stir the American heart" (*Boston Evening Transcript* 1890).

- 63 From the beginning of the war, the official view in the Union was of a national house divided against itself. The war was the result of a family feud; it is not surprising that it is so often placed inside the domestic sphere, and it then seems natural that the process of national healing should also begin inside a household, this time reunited around the wounds inflicted outside.

## 7. Conclusion

- 64 From the start, the North never acknowledged any form of southern independence. Secession was simply out of the question. As a consequence, the goal of the war was ultimately to reunite the South with the Union. This made it impossible to deeply antagonize and reject the eleven southern Confederate states. At times, the press fueled a national and patriotic fervor among the population in order to help enlistments. But in the fine arts, themes of domesticity, family and longing illustrated the war as touching all families, while themes of courage and independence depicted Confederate soldiers as demonstrating resolutely American values.
- 65 The 1494 canvases present in the Smithsonian Art database which depict the Civil War represent in various forms a family feud opposing two different brothers who share a national identity filled with converging values. In certain cases, like Robert E. Lee's, the southern officer came to represent a disappearing breed of gentlemen, which, by the turn of the century, led to a wave of nostalgia. In other cases, southern soldiers came to represent a kind of American stubbornness, independence and courage, traits Unionists were all too proud to associate with their brothers and indirectly with themselves. As such, all southern claims to national sovereignty were forgotten, and the Civil War became a fratricide. To use Benedict Anderson's words, this was reassuring for it meant that the country's national coherence was no longer to be questioned, and American identity and values became plural. So, after the war, the Southerner kept his regional alterity while simultaneously being an integral part of the national family.

- 66 This idea then of plurality can be linked to the notion cultural nationalism. In these paintings one witnesses the rejection of cultural uniformity; the Southerner is other, but remains a brother. In this notion “cultural nationalists perceive the nations as a differentiated community, united not by reason or law, but by passionate sentiments rooted in nature and history,” and in the case of the United States a history deeply rooted in sectionalism, economic, political and cultural differences. “Nations are primordial expressions of this spirit; like families, they are natural solidarities” (Hutchinson 1994: 44).
- 67 Benedict Anderson’s theory of remembering/forgetting then needs to be nuanced, for by bringing together the examples of the Civil War and of the St. Bartholomew’s Day massacre, Anderson omits certain dynamics. In the example of the St. Bartholomew’s Day massacre, the national identity of the nineteenth century is simply projected onto history and the past. The differences between the nationalist discourse of the nineteenth century and the historic facts of the sixteenth century are mostly unintentional and thus are easily carried out and carried on in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.
- 68 In the US, there was no such time lag. Forms of national identity were already very present by the beginning of the Civil War, and rejection of secession went back as far as the Nullification Crisis of 1832 during Andrew Jackson’s presidency. Here the difference between national discourse and historic fact existed straight from the beginning; the American house would not be divided and this was from the start expressed in a multitude of ways.
- 69 In the case studied here, the fine arts played an important role in this process and helped displace the conflict from a nationalist into a domestic sphere, while protecting and enhancing, in a cultural nationalist process, the otherness of the Southerner. By comparing the Civil War to the St. Bartholomew’s Day massacre, the act of remembering/forgetting then reveals several properties that Anderson does not put forward. It is both an ongoing and perpetually active process which possesses different degrees of awareness and intentionality, which bases an interpretation of the present on a cultural and political understanding of the past.

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1 Many examples can be found on this website, sponsored by the TERRA foundation, <http://www.civilwarinart.org/>. Accessed March 7, 2014.

2 The Smithsonian Art Database can be viewed at: <http://collections.si.edu/search/results.htm?q=&view=>. The specific criteria used for this study and be found at this page: [http://collections.si.edu/search/results.htm?q=Civil+War&fq=object\\_type%3A%22Paintings%22&view=&dsort=&date.slider=1860s%2C1890s](http://collections.si.edu/search/results.htm?q=Civil+War&fq=object_type%3A%22Paintings%22&view=&dsort=&date.slider=1860s%2C1890s). These pages were accessed March 7, 2014. Not all the works mentioned in this article are referenced in this data base; when Smithsonian control numbers are provided they are given in the bibliography.

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## English

This article seeks to illustrate Benedict Anderson's theory of the "Reassurance of Fratricide" and "the act of remembering/forgetting" through depictions of the Civil War in US fine arts. This is mostly done through the Smithsonian art data base and the paintings referenced under the label Civil War, spanning from the 1860s to the 1890s. This paper first analyzes how these paintings were used to depict the Confederate soldier's otherness as typically American and thus helped with the post-war reintegration of the Confederacy. This study then examines how in certain paintings the war was brought inside the realm of domesticity and family, which reinforced the idea of a fratricide and a family feud, pushing away further the notion that the war opposed two sovereign nation-states.

## Français

Cet article tente d'illustrer les théories de la « Réassurance du Fratricide » et « l'acte de se rappeler/oublier » de Benedict Anderson à travers des représentations de la guerre de Sécession dans les beaux-arts aux États-Unis. Cette étude utilise pour cela la base de données du Smithsonian et les tableaux qui sont référencés sous l'entrée guerre de Sécession, sur une période allant des années 1860 aux années 1890. Dans un premier temps, cet article analyse la manière dont les beaux-arts dépeignent l'altérité des soldats confédérés comme étant typiquement étatsunien, devenant ainsi une manière d'aider à la réintégration de la Confédération après la guerre. Dans un second temps, cette étude aborde la manière dont la guerre est amenée dans la sphère familiale et domestique, ce qui renforce l'idée d'un fratricide et d'une querelle familiale, ce qui va contre l'idée d'une guerre opposant deux états-nations souverains.

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**Marc S. Smith**

Maître de conférences, Centre Inter Langues Texte, Image, Langage (EA 4182),  
Université de Bourgogne, UFR Langue et Communication, 4, Bd Gabriel, 21000  
Dijon