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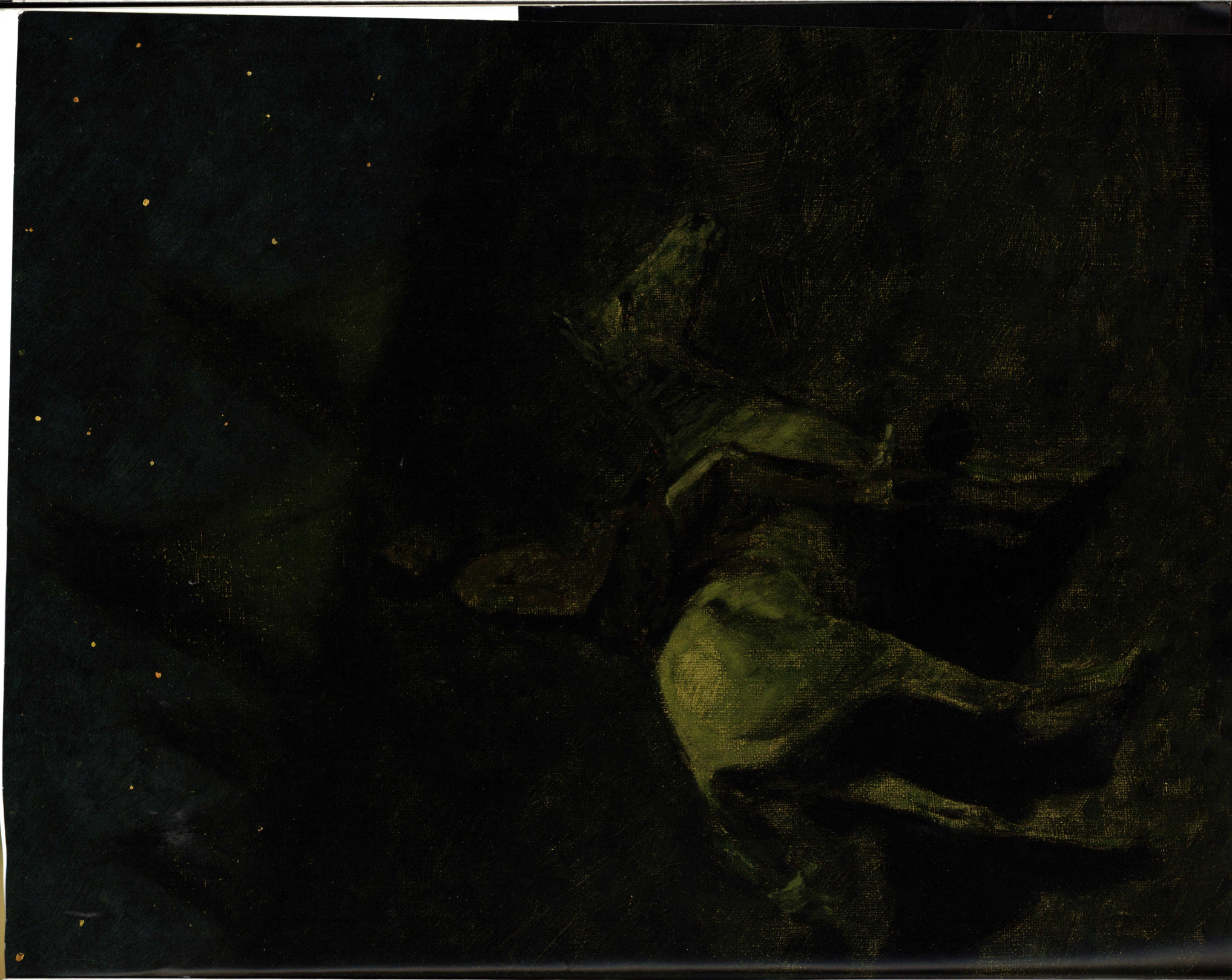


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Right: **Frederic Remington, about 1883.** Courtesy Frederic Remington Art Museum, Ogdensburg, New York.

Page 4: **Frederic Remington, about 1909.** Courtesy Frederic Remington Art Museum, Ogdensburg, New York.

Facing: William R. Leigh, **Moonlight, Keam's Canyon, Arizona.** Detail. Gilcrease, 0137.1105; Frederic Remington, **An Episode of the Buffalo Hunt.** Detail. Gilcrease, 0827.2308.



special Remington

I S S U E



A CAST OF CHARACTERS

5

CAROLE KLEIN
THE SCULPTURE OF
FREDERIC REMINGTON

PAINTING THE NIGHT

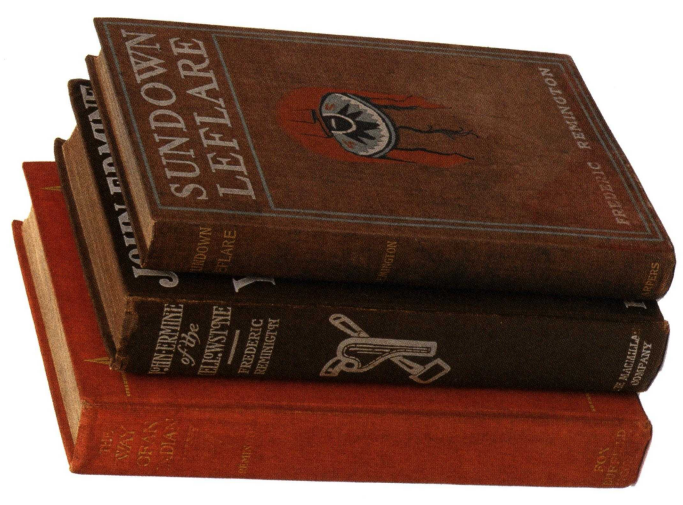
23

ANNE MORAND
REMINGTON'S
EXPERIMENTS WITH
MOONLIGHT PAINTING,
PLUS A PORTFOLIO OF
NOCTURNES BY OTHER
ARTISTS

THE PUBLISHED REMINGTON

48

SARAH ERWIN
AN ACCOUNT OF
REMINGTON THE
JOURNALIST, SHORT
STORY WRITER, AND
NOVELIST



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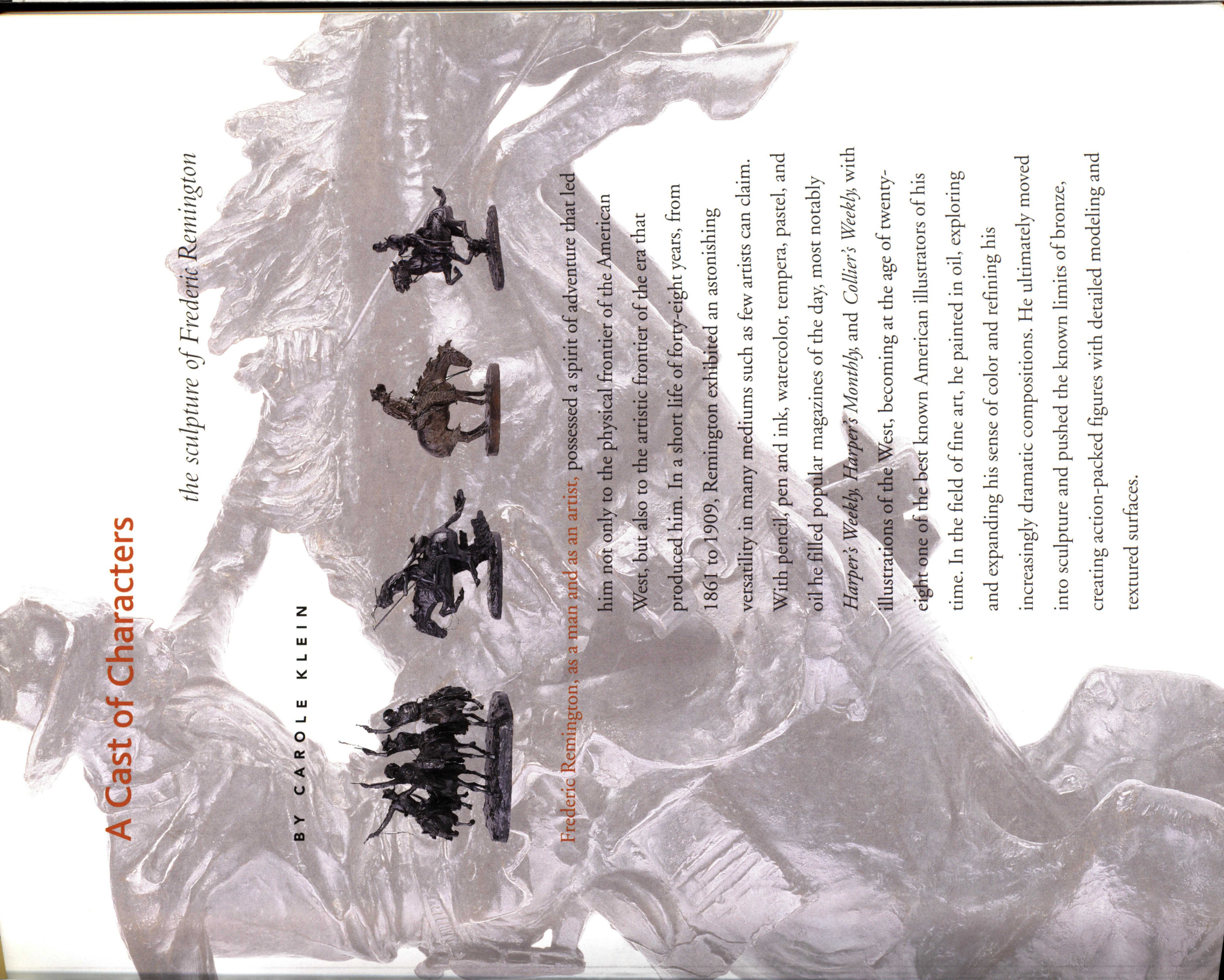
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A Cast of Characters

the sculpture of Frederic Remington

BY CAROLE KLEIN

Frederic Remington, as a man and as an artist, possessed a spirit of adventure that led him not only to the physical frontier of the American West, but also to the artistic frontier of the era that produced him. In a short life of forty-eight years, from 1861 to 1909, Remington exhibited an astonishing versatility in many mediums such as few artists can claim. With pencil, pen and ink, watercolor, tempera, pastel, and oil he filled popular magazines of the day, most notably *Harper's Weekly*, *Harper's Monthly*, and *Collier's Weekly*, with illustrations of the West, becoming at the age of twenty-eight one of the best known American illustrators of his time. In the field of fine art, he painted in oil, exploring and expanding his sense of color and refining his increasingly dramatic compositions. He ultimately moved into sculpture and pushed the known limits of bronze, creating action-packed figures with detailed modeling and textured surfaces.



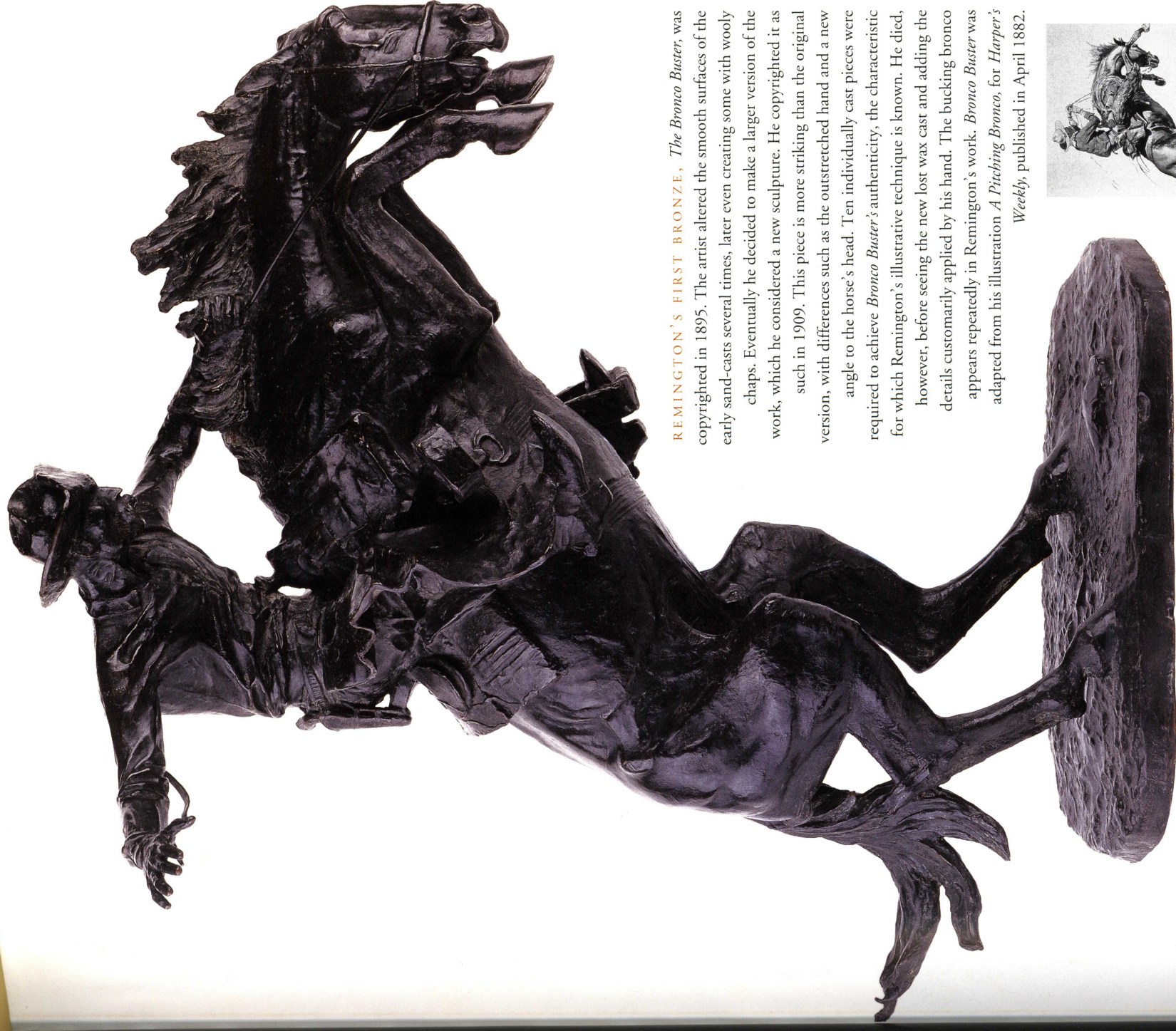
He found yet another artistic voice in the written word, writing first as a reporter riding with the U.S. Cavalry, and later publishing short stories and novels of the American West. The images emerging from Remington's versatility as an artist offer history and art lovers a kaleidoscope of impressions of life on the western frontier.

Depicting the varied cast of characters who play out the story of the West (Cowboy, Indian, Soldier, as well as the animals on which they depended for work, sustenance, travel, and protection) Remington drew, painted, wrote, and sculpted his way into American art and history.

Although a virtual "Renaissance man" of western art, Remington considered his bronzes to be among his greatest accomplishments. Gilcrease Museum holds within its treasures nearly all of the bronze images that represent this artist's triumph as an American sculptor. Remington drew from plaster casts of Hellenistic sculpture at Yale, but he never took formal sculpture classes. He moved, however, so successfully into the third dimension of art-in-the-round that he created in his first bronze a masterpiece. This first sculpture, *Bronco Buster*, took time and struggle, but in the Remington way, he applied himself energetically to a new medium, not only learning its characteristics well, but pushing the edge, inventing new possibilities.

Remington's early sculptures were sand-cast. He worked with Henry-Bonnaard Bronze Company in New York, the finest foundry in America in the late 19th century. At the turn of the century the lost-wax method of casting came into use in America. It was this process that Remington manipulated to accomplish his vision. Working in tandem with Riccardo Bertelli of Roman Bronze Works, Remington achieved complex compositions with twisting, energetic forms, creatively incorporating the sculpture bases into the story he told, the likes of which had not been seen before in bronze sculpture. It was the dynamics of this teamwork – Remington's desire to stay true to his conceptual design and Bertelli's engineering and willingness to build sculpture in a new way – that created a benchmark in American sculpture. The lost wax method of casting also allowed Remington to hand work the wax models with tools and brushes, adding authentic detail and texture to the surface of the figures, rendering subsequent bronzes much more tactile than the smooth sand-cast works. It is interesting to note that as Remington's later oil paintings became more painterly, presenting greater surface interest, his later bronzes reflected equally this lively attention to texture.

Remington's love of adventure and the West, and his desire for new experiences weave a coherent thread throughout his life and his art. His themes were visited again and again, expressed in new modes and simultaneously, in multiple mediums. He took his well-known conceptual and artistic vocabularies to new expression in bronze, leaving a lasting impact on the history of three-dimensional art.



REMYNGTON'S FIRST BRONZE, *The Bronco Buster*, was copyrighted in 1895. The artist altered the smooth surfaces of the early sand-casts several times, later even creating some with woolly chaps. Eventually he decided to make a larger version of the work, which he considered a new sculpture. He copyrighted it as such in 1909. This piece is more striking than the original version, with differences such as the outstretched hand and a new angle to the horse's head. Ten individually cast pieces were required to achieve *Bronco Buster's* authenticity, the characteristic for which Remington's illustrative technique is known. He died, however, before seeing the new lost wax cast and adding the details customarily applied by his hand. The bucking bronco appears repeatedly in Remington's work. *Bronco Buster* was adapted from his illustration *A Pitching Bronco*, for *Harper's Weekly*, published in April 1882.



The Bronco Buster, bronze, 1909. Gilcrease 0827.34.
Right: *A Pitching Bronco*.

THE WOUNDED BUNKIE

ALTHOUGH not as popular a subject as the horsemanship of *Bronco Buster*, the military life was a favorite theme with Remington, and he was well known for his portrayal of American cavalry. *The Wounded Bunkie*, 1896, demonstrates the tensile strength of bronze. Two horses' legs are the sole anchors of the sculpture, demonstrating Remington's intent to keep to his narrative and avoid incompatible supports. It is sand-cast, which is evident in the smooth surfaces. Small parts such as the reins, canteens, stirrups, etc. were cast separately and then attached to the sculpture. *The Wounded Bunkie* depicts defeat, which perhaps contributed to its lack of popularity. It was inspired by his oil painting *Dash for the Timber*, 1889. Remington lifted two figures from the illustrated group and memorialized the moment in bronze.



The Wounded Bunkie, bronze, 1896.
Gilcrease 0826.35 (with detail).

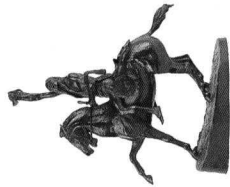
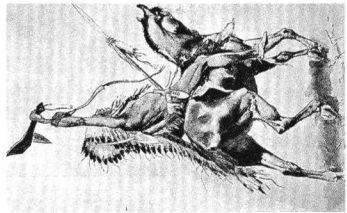


THE WICKED PONY



The Docile Old Brute. The Wicked Pony, bronze, 1898. Gilcrease 0827.36.

THE MAKING OF *The Wicked Pony* was prompted by an incident Remington witnessed while on an excursion to the West. A cowboy, thrown from his horse, attempted to pull the animal to the ground. The horse reacted violently, kicking the man and killing him. In *The Wicked Pony*, 1898, the viewer doesn't witness this ultimate demise, but a sense of danger and the energy of the man's struggle are brought to life. Using the legs and the nose of the horse for support, Remington accomplished another creative structural solution in a narrative composition, never compromising the story. In his illustration *The Docile Old Brute Turned and Kicked Me*, published in *Outing Magazine*, May 1888, an equally dangerous pony can be seen.

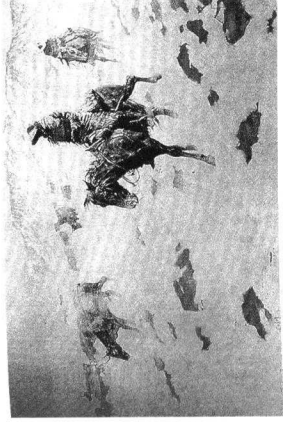


Top, *The War Song*. Immediately above, *The Scalp*, sand-cast bronze, 1898. Gilcrease 0826.38.
The Scalp, lost-wax bronze, 1901. Gilcrease 0827.37.

WITH *The Scalp*, 1898, Remington introduces a new character into his repertoire of bronzes, a Sioux warrior, reveling in exaltation as he triumphs over an enemy. His pride is evident, and the pinnacle of the composition – the scalp – is the climax of an unseen struggle. Upon examining both a sand-cast and a lost-wax cast, the characteristics of each type become clear. The smooth surfaces of the sand-cast lack the textural interest of the other, evident in the horse's coat, mane, and especially the rocky earth. The artist redesigned the rear legs in the lost-wax version, moving the horse into a more dynamic pose, discarding the static stance of the earlier work. He changed many other details, as well, including the scalp and the feather on the head of the figure, and he added three-dimensional elements to the shield. He altered the horse's tail, put a club in place of rifle and sheath, and added a bow and quiver. A greater upward tilt to the base expands the sense of the warrior's pride, with horse and rider ascending a rockier terrain, exhibiting more poise and strength. A prototype for *The Scalp* is recognizable in an illustration called *The War Song*, published in 1892 in *The Oregon Trail*.

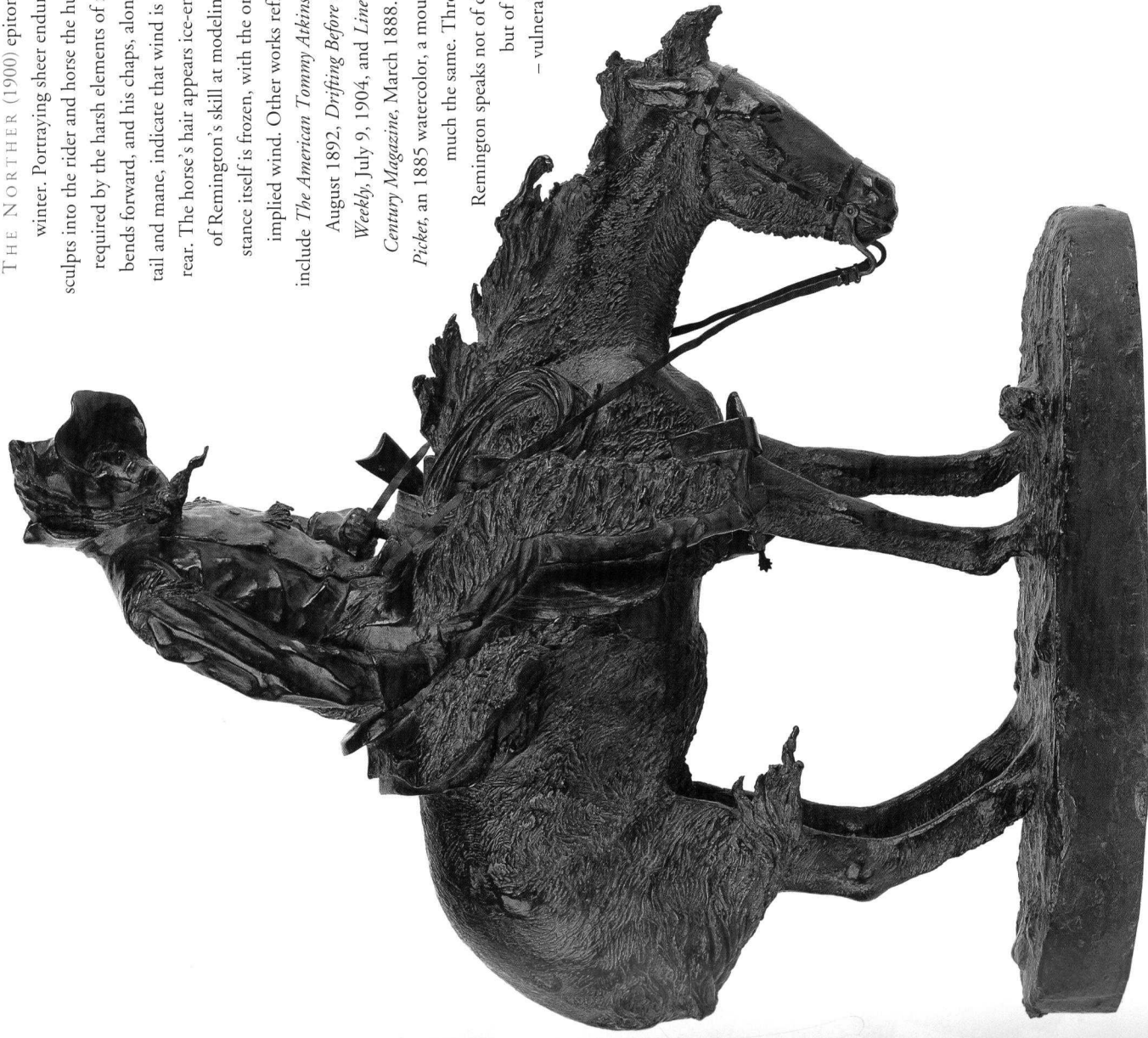


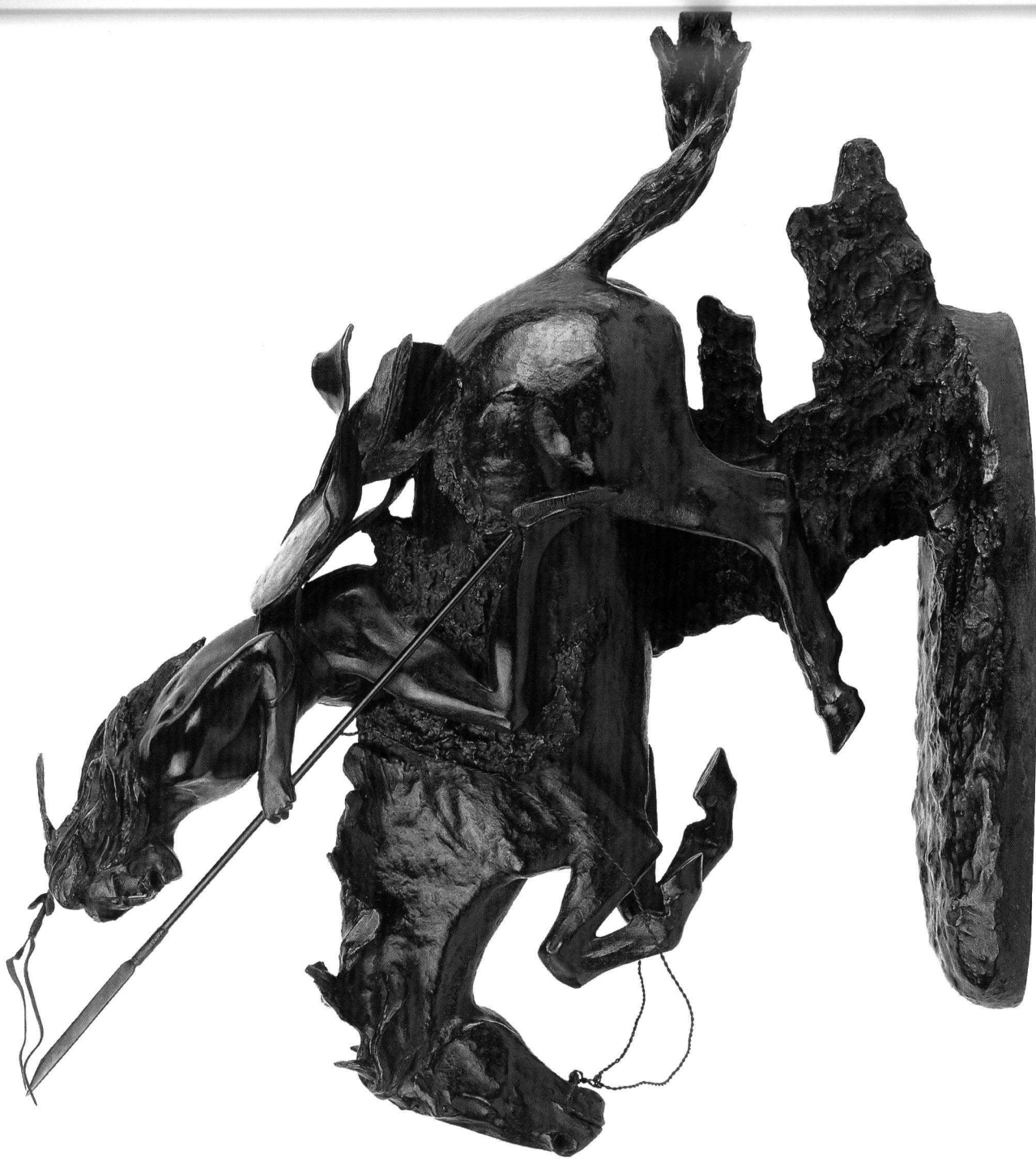
THE SCALP



Left to right: *Drifting Before the Storm*, *Line Riding in Winter*, *The American Tommy Atkins in a Montana Blizzard*. *The Northern*, bronze, 1900. Gilcrease 0827.39.

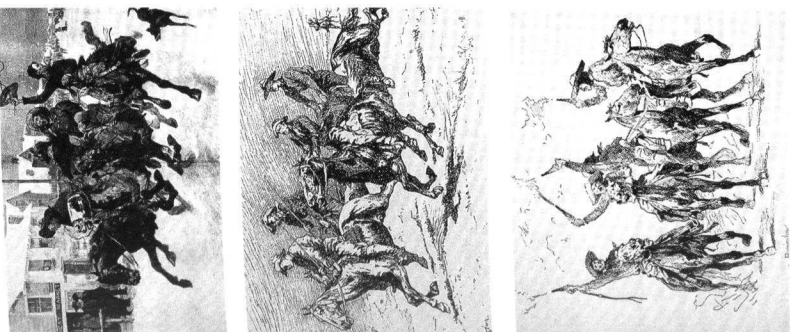
THE NORTHER (1900) epitomizes a cold, cruel winter. Portraying sheer endurance, Remington sculpts into the rider and horse the humble submission required by the harsh elements of nature. The rider bends forward, and his chaps, along with the horse's tail and mane, indicate that wind is blowing from the rear. The horse's hair appears ice-encrusted, evidence of Remington's skill at modeling detail. Even the stance itself is frozen, with the only movement the implied wind. Other works reflecting this theme include *The American Tommy Atkins*, *Harper's Weekly*, August 1892, *Drifting Before the Storm*, *Colliers Weekly*, July 9, 1904, and *Line Riding in Winter*, *Century Magazine*, March 1888. In *Cold Day on a Picket*, an 1885 watercolor, a mounted soldier looks much the same. Through *The Northern* Remington speaks not of defeat or triumph, but of life in the balance – vulnerable, yet tenacious.



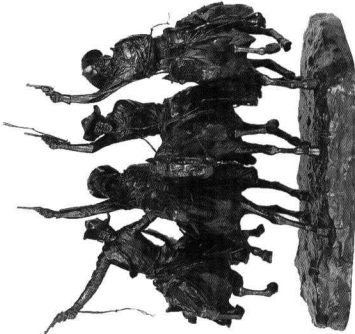


The Cheyenne, bronze, 1901. Gilcrease 0827.41.

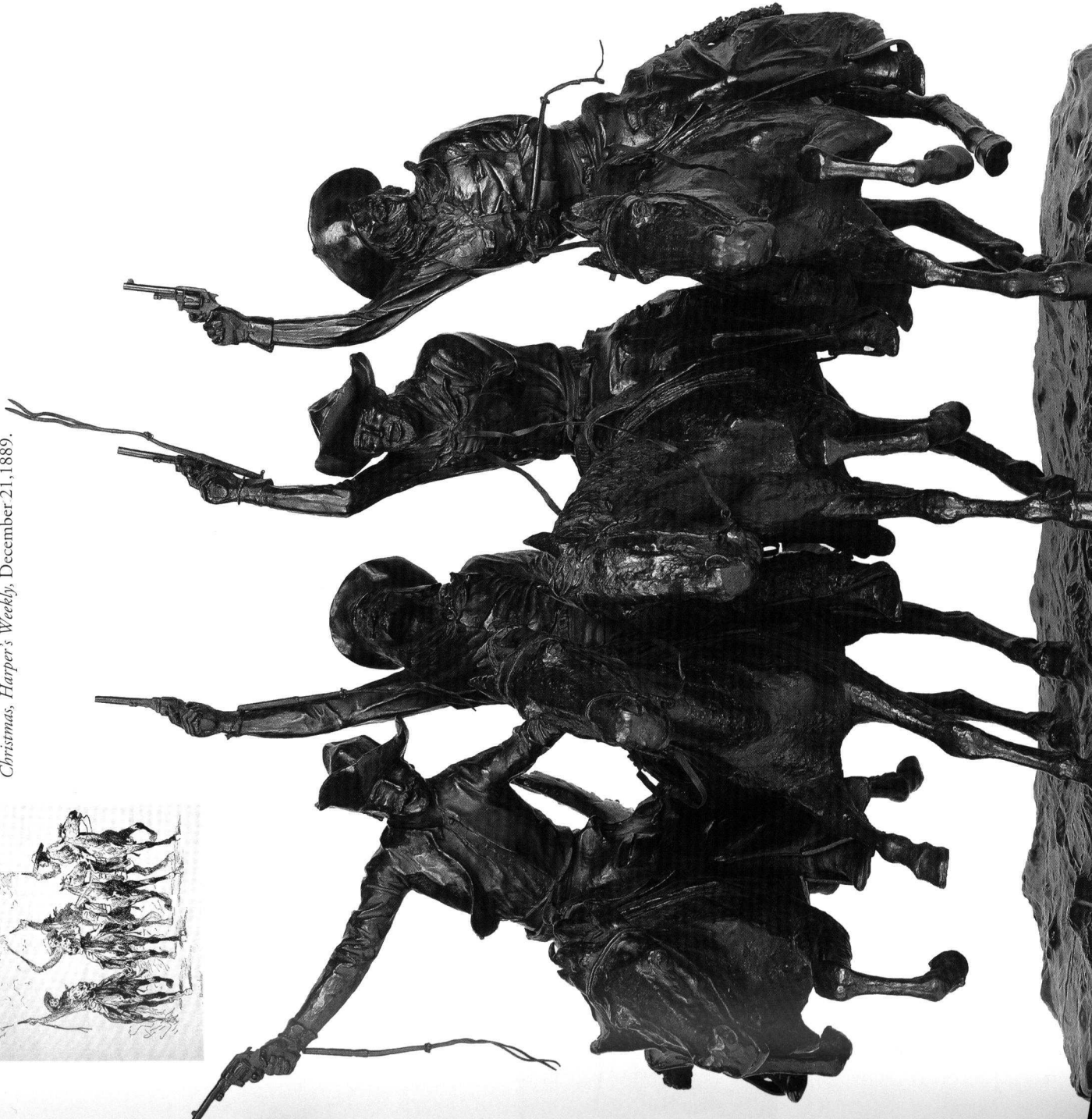
WITH *The Cheyenne*, 1901, Remington became even more enterprising in creatively incorporating the support structures so that they did not interfere with his conceptual design. Held in the air by a buffalo robe, the horse becomes airborne, reflecting intense speed and the energetic action for which Remington became so noted. In cooperation with Bertelli, Remington changed the way equestrian sculpture had historically been fashioned, adding dynamic movement to previously static forms. Remington was to employ other exceptional techniques to free the horses in two subsequent bronzes, *The Horse Thief* and *Trooper of the Plains*.



REMYNGTON KNEW from first-hand observation the hard life of a cowboy – months spent out on cattle drives, enduring the elements, performing physically demanding labor. One can imagine that a trip into town generated great exuberance. *Coming Through the Rye*, 1902, captures just such a moment of raucous liberation in Remington's most complex of compositions. At a full gallop, riders and horses express exhilaration, the cowboys with pistols drawn and bullets surely flying. Remington spent months working out possibilities and problems concerning the horses' feet, determining finally that only six hooves should rest on the base. Again the merger of Remington's vision with Bertelli's capable engineering is evident. One can trace the evolution of this group through Remington's early illustrations, *And On Over the Range* in *Outing*, May 1887, *Dissolute Cow Punchers*, *Century Magazine*, October 1888, and particularly *Cowboys Coming to Town for Christmas*, *Harper's Weekly*, December 21, 1889.



Left, top to bottom: *Cowboys Coming to Town for Christmas*, *And On Over the Range*, *Dissolute Cow Punchers*. *Coming Through the Rye*, bronze, 1902. Gilcrease 0827.42 (detail below, full sculpture above).





The Mountain Man, 1903, exhibits one of the most creative bases Remington ever incorporated into a bronze narrative, the mountain path itself. Not only is the mountain present physically, but it is also implied psychologically. The toughness of this character emerges as he traverses the challenging terrain. The artist changed earlier versions, moving the right hind leg of the horse that originally extended backwards to a forward position. He connected it to the base, giving the animal a more natural poise. He also flared the horse's tail and moved the trapper's right arm forward. These improvements in composition resulted in a greater sense of the pull of gravity that accompanies such a descent. This rugged character type can also be seen in *The Old Trapper*, a *Century Magazine* illustration, October 1888. A *Century Magazine* illustration a year later, *A Scout with the Buffalo Soldiers*, depicts a rider and horse descending a hill. Among Remington's possessions were photographs of a mounted Prussian coming down a steep rise, which no doubt contributed to the inspiration for this sculpture.

Inset top, *A Scout With the Buffalo Soldiers*, above, *Old Trapper*. *Mountain Man*, bronze, 1903. Gilcrease 0827.44.

THE POPULAR

IMAGE *The*

Rattlesnake, 1905, went through perhaps more changes than any other sculpture Remington created. He improved on the earlier version, moving the rear and front legs of the horse into a more natural position. The horse and rider are thrust forward, in a twisting posture, as the animal recoils. This later version was three inches taller and is represented in the Gilcrease collection. Evidence that Remington loved to paint his sculpture models with molten wax is quite apparent in the bearskin chaps. This realistic tactile component contrasts strikingly with the smooth surface of the horse. Taking advantage of the malleable characteristics of the wax, Remington created the snake from a thin thread of the material, then bent and curved it.

The Rattlesnake, bronze, 1905. Gilcrease 0827.46.



The Horse Thief, 1907. Remington's only bronze sculpted in relief, was intended to be viewed from one direction, with the figure looking out. It is, however, coherent from all angles and just as remarkable from the other side, with the figure partially concealed by the buffalo robe. The robe and the rocky ground beneath yield another innovative solution to narration. Support is provided for the horse and rider with the backdrop of environment, and a feast of textures acts as a foil for the smooth figures. The work proves yet another testament to Remington's imagination and sense of drama. Though difficult to create in bronze, this colorful character successfully joins Remington's cast of Western characters. The thief was conceived in *Change of Ownership*, an oil illustration appearing in *Collier's Weekly* September 10, 1904.



Below, *Change of Ownership*. *The Horse Thief*, bronze, 1907. Gilcrease 0827.50.

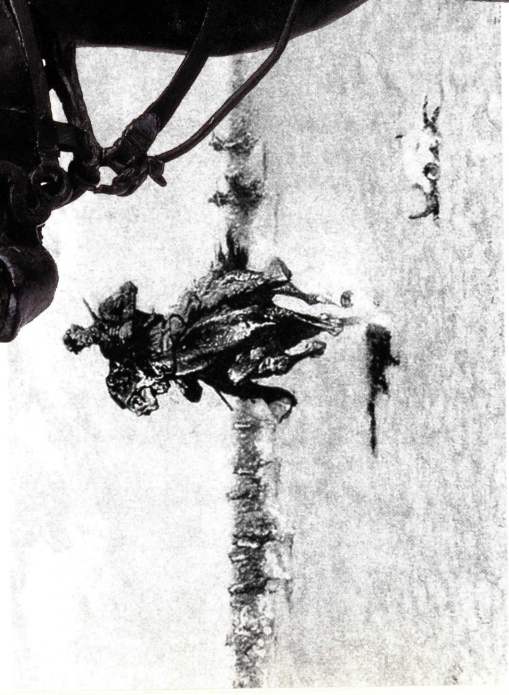


The Buffalo Horse, 1907, illustrates a risk inherent in buffalo hunting and day-to-day Plains life. Remington cleverly utilized the hunter's lance for balance, with the two hind feet of the buffalo serving as the connection to the base, engaging the viewer with the same collision of forces represented in Remington's painting *Episode of a Buffalo Hunt*, 1908. Related acrobatics are seen in an untitled illustration published in *The Youth's Companion*, October 18, 1888, in which Remington depicts an Indian flying over the head of his horse. The Gilcrease cast of *Buffalo Horse* is the only one known to exist.

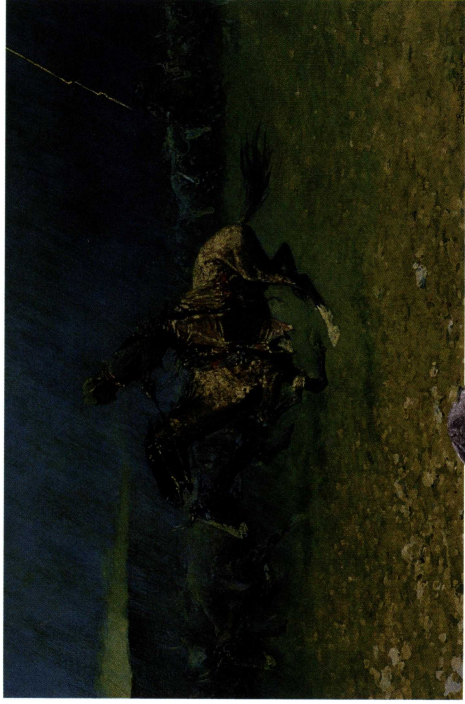
Upper left, *An Episode of the Buffalo Hunt*, Gilcrease 0827.2308. Top, After Frederick Remington, from *The Youth's Companion*. *The Buffalo Horse*, bronze, 1907. Gilcrease 0827.51.



REMINGTON explored a favorite subject in *Trooper of the Plains*, 1909. Reinterpreting a familiar character from his 1908 oil *Cutting Out the Pony Herds* (later reproduced in *Colliers Weekly*), he stays true to his pattern of translating former concepts into new works of art. Allowing all four feet of the galloping horse to be in the air, Remington repeated the naturally occurring sagebrush motif seen in *The Outlaw* to anchor this sculpture to the base. He upheld visual authenticity, so important to him in telling the tale, and again refused to compromise the story to traditional methods of support. In keeping with cavalry procedures for fighting Indians, this trooper is attempting to stampede the pony herd away from the Indian camp by riding close and shooting his pistol into the air.



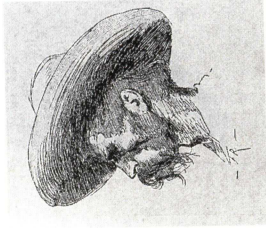
Cutting Out the Pony Herds.
Trooper of the Plains, bronze, 1909.
Gilcrease 0827.53 (with detail).



IN *The Stampede*, 1910, Remington personified a very physical and violent moment in the life of a cowboy. The composition portrays forward energy from the high point of the leading steer to the rear animal with feet off the ground. The cowboy is precariously swept up. In his earlier oil by the same name, another cowhand appears in this dilemma, with the added peril of a storm. Again, Remington explores a theme in several mediums, two-dimensional as well as three-dimensional. Remington died before completing this sculpture. It was finished by Sally Farnham, a family friend who was also a sculptor. She saw to the assembly of the group and the detailing in a style somewhat looser than Remington's. She most likely executed the signature also, misspelling Remington's first name as she had done in correspondence.

Above: *The Stampede*, oil on canvas, 1908.
Gilcrease 0127.2329. *The Stampede*, bronze, 1910.
Gilcrease 0827.54.

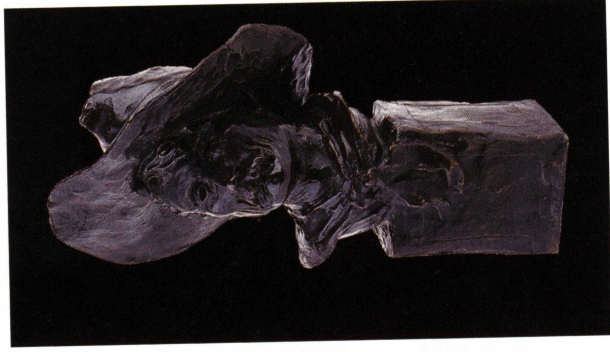
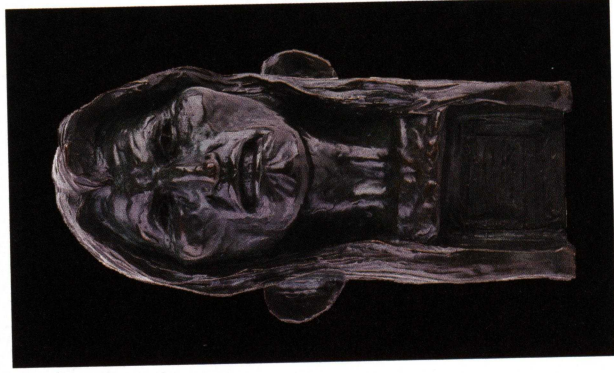
The Sergeant and The Savage



REMYNTOX REMAINED CONSTANT in universalizing his characters and did not venture into portraiture. His only two bronze busts reflect this objective. *The Sergeant*, 1904, portrays a veteran soldier's countenance, with well-worn hat and face. He exemplifies the rugged physical and psychological qualities demanded by his profession, and his character can be seen often in the faces of Remington's cavalymen. This similarity of facial structure can readily be seen in the illustration *Missouri Volunteer* published in *The Oregon Trail*, 1892.

The Savage, 1908, depicts the proud defiance of an Indian whose chiseled features and strong expression exhibit the intensity and determination seen again and again in Remington's representations of Native Americans. In *The Cheyenne Type*, *Harper's Weekly* 1892, comparable features and characteristics are present, and the seed for the sculpture becomes apparent. Both *The Savage* and *The Sergeant* crystallize the personas of two of the central characters that inhabited Remington's world and his art.

Above: *The Cheyenne Type*, *Missouri Volunteer*.
The Savage, bronze, 1908. Gilcrease 0827.52. *The Sergeant*, bronze, 1904. Gilcrease 0827.34.



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painting the night



PAINTINGS in which artists endeavor to capture the effects of night – called nocturnes, moonlights, or night scenes – are exceedingly challenging, and few attempt them. Those who do are rarely successful in capturing the feeling or mood of night. Yet those who are successful create extraordinary images that range from hauntingly beautiful to mysterious to dramatic. One of the most critically acclaimed was Frederic Remington (1861-1909), who from about 1900 until his death in 1909 carried on a successful struggle to paint the night and created memorable works he called “Moonlights.”

Artists like Remington who were interested in depicting the transitory effects of moonlight, starlight, and firelight began by turning away from the revolutionary artistic consequence of French Impressionism, whose artists gained notoriety in the 1870s by examining the effects of sunlight and its interpretation of color, using the rather radical practice of painting out of doors. In rejecting this, perhaps the most important technical question concerning artists involved with nocturnal painting was, what is the color of night? If it is sunlight that determines the color of objects, what happens to perception when the direct light of the sun no longer illuminates those objects?

Painting the night presents a paradox. What the Impressionists did by day in directly observing nature from their easels out of doors cannot be done by night, since painters need light to see the pigments and canvases they are using to paint the lack of light. Remington recorded in his journal his great effort with this paradox on January 19, 1908, “Wonderful moonlight nights – tried to distinguish color in some sketches I took out of doors but it is too subtle a light and does not differentiate.”

Remington had built a lucrative career in illustration, but at the turn of the century was endeavoring to be considered a fine artist. This transition included not only mastering color but also absorbing aspects of modernism. A critical point came in 1899 when he saw an exhibition of silvery moonlight scenes by the American tonalist painter, Charles Rollo Peters (1862-1928). Although Remington himself had been painting night scenes as illustrations for years, they were really just dark paintings. The encounter with Peters’ work encouraged Remington to experiment with making the night itself the subject of his paintings. Peters’ tonalism, while not a movement that Remington followed explicitly, did have a certain appeal for him. Particular aspects of it – rejection of high-keyed color, generalized or ambiguous background settings – were things that Remington saw might help him move beyond the illustrator-phase of his career. His work to date had been criticized as too narrative, his colors as too bright and garish, and these were things he struggled to eliminate from his nocturnes.

Remington worked toward a realistic depiction of night through observation, recollection, and experimentation. Even though he had significant success with his moonlights as early as 1902, when he exhibited them for the first time, he never stopped studying the night. Notes in his journals attest to his many nighttime observations, such as this one recorded on June 25, 1907, “first moon now! Clear nights and I studied until near 11 o’c last night.” In the next day’s journal entry he reveals that he “worked on moonlight from my observations of last night.”



FREDERIC REMINGTON

The Hungry Moon

Oil on canvas, 1906

Gilcrease, 0127.2331

His observations manifested in paintings illuminated by varying degrees of moonlight. The stark light of the full winter moon in *Hungry Moon* reveals women whose desperate need forces them to work late into the night butchering a buffalo in the snow. Remington's nocturnal observations showed him that objects seen against a lighter field in low light appear muted. Therefore, he painted the dark figures of women, buffalo, and horses with faint and little detail, due to the snowfield against which they are set that glows in the moonlight. Contrary to this, his *Bell Mare* is set in a darker, perhaps cloudy night that decreases the available moonlight. Although the white coat of the lead mare stands out, it is less reflective than the crystalline snow of *Hungry Moon*. Further, Remington sets the action against a dark background and therefore, while still dark, more visual information about the horses is available.

FREDERIC REMINGTON

(FACING) *The Bell Mare*

Oil on canvas

Gilcrease, 0127.2327





FREDERIC REMINGTON
In From the Night Herd, 1907
 Oil on canvas
 National Cowboy and Western Heritage
 Museum, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Earthly sources of nocturnal light such as campfires offered Remington a different range of visual experience. A small campfire has the ability to softly illuminate a fairly broad field, as does lantern light from a window or torchlight from a distance. Remington understood that observation was the key to portraying this, recording on October 11, 1907: "I worked on my *In From the Night Herd* and am going to study a fire light outdoors to night." *In From the Night Herd* shows a cowboy coming into camp, brightly illuminated by the campfire outside the picture plane. Its colors are much warmer than those of other Moonlights since firelight allows the use of yellow and orange, which are missing from a strictly moonlit view.

Blazing conflagrations, such as grassfires or bonfires, are also warm, and offer another visual experience. In one amazing Remington painting, a grassfire rages just out of sight. The immediate area glows brilliantly, but just beyond the edge of the flame and the figures lit by its glow, all

light is gone and a fathomless, velvety blackness is the backdrop. Even though Remington is clearly successful with *Grassfire* and *In From the Night Herd*, notations reveal his struggle: "Worked on my fire light pictures. They are more difficult than I expected. Low tone in the darks are fugitive."

If it is so challenging, why do artists choose to paint the night, especially when the range of color and activities afforded by day are so much greater? Perhaps it is because it is a challenge, not only to the artist's ability but also to the status quo. In Remington's case, it offered him a departure in style that the critics appreciated, while allowing him to remain true to his subject, the American West. He responded to the lack of detail in night scenes by moving away from the tight brushwork of his illustrations, and he seemed to revel in the opportunity to explore psychological aspects of his subjects in new ways. These subjects, from the mundane to the dramatic, somehow became more thoughtful.

If it so challenging, why do artists choose to paint the night . . . ? In Remington's case, it offered him a departure in style that the critics appreciated, while allowing him to remain true to his subject, the American West.



FREDERIC REMINGTON
 (FACING) *The Grass Fire*, 1908
 Oil on canvas
 Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, Texas,
 1961.228



Remington capitalized on the sense of mystery that is intrinsic in the night. In the West, night was even more perilous than day, with veritable hidden dangers. In images such as *Moonlight Scouting Party*, Remington could impart a feeling of suspense and impending menace without showing the violence of some of his earlier subjects. He could describe loneliness and isolation of a group of scouts who have stopped in their trek, trying to discern what threat lies ahead. Remington's figures are in a precarious situation, lit by moonlight that reflects off the sand and the coat of a white horse, and which makes them all too visible. By leaving much to the viewer's imagination – What is going to happen? Who is who? – Remington imbues these paintings with a sense of mystery.

While most of Remington's nocturnes are lit by moon or fire, one unusual experiment stands out. The artist worked and reworked a painting that he described in his journal as lit by a "light that is

FREDERIC REMINGTON
Moonlight Scouting Party
Oil on canvas
Gilcrease, 0127.2330

FREDERIC REMINGTON
(FACING) *The Stampede*, 1908
Oil on canvas
Gilcrease, 0127.2329

Remington capitalized on the sense of mystery that is intrinsic in the night. In the West, night was even more perilous than day, with veritable hidden dangers.

unearthly – the curious yellow glow of a rain storm, seen only at long intervals but not forgettable." *The Stampede* depicts a cowboy's "desperate deed ... running in the night with long horns." One of the few night paintings of high action, *The Stampede* is dynamic not only because of the madly racing men and animals, but because Remington created "an expression of light" that would "glow and quiver until it seems to exude the palpitating quality which light holds."

Almost all who write on Remington's work remark upon the great tragedy of his early death, which came just as he was achieving his highest praise from the art community and critics. The acclaim was due primarily to changes in his work during the ten years he was learning to effectively portray the night.



William R. Leigh (1866-1955), who began painting the night a few years after Remington's death, also created extraordinary nocturnes but they are virtually unknown by the art world. In small oils made in the field, Leigh painted the night for his own study and pleasure rather than for exhibition. Lengthy summer sketching trips to the Southwest and the Dakotas yielded hundreds of oil studies of every conceivable aspect of landscape and atmosphere. Many became references for future work, as Leigh gathered as much visual information as he could about any place he visited. Most of the studies, like those at night, were done as continual practice with new challenges.

Like Remington, Leigh worked from his recollections and observations. However, in some cases, he worked out of doors at night. While at the Hopi Mesas in 1912, he noted in his unpublished autobiography the means by which he accomplished this. "I went up on

WILLIAM R. LEIGH
*Moonlight, First Mesa,
Hopi Reservation*
Oil on canvasboard
Gilcrease, 0137.679



WILLIAM R. LEIGH
Moonlight, First Mesa, Arizona
Oil on canvasboard
Gilcrease, 0137.680

the Mesa sometimes between two and four o'clock at night to paint moonlight effects. I had a tripod, and a lantern, and arranged the light to shine, from back of me, over my shoulder; it worked very well." With this method Leigh made *Moonlight, First Mesa, Hopi Reservation*, the dusty red rocks transformed by the moonlight into blues and purples, the shadows into inestimable black. A view of the desert floor, *Moonlight, First Mesa, Arizona* is softly dreamlike, the sagebrush wispy puffs anchored to the earth by hard-edged black shadows. A mesa rises, wraithlike in the distance.

Starlight is sunlight, just so far away that its power is diminished. But in a very clean, clear atmosphere, without the intrusion of other light sources, accumulated starlight offers minimal vision. Leigh was one of the few who attempted to paint such a minimal light . . .



WILLIAM R. LEIGH
*Moonlight at Midnight,
 Walpi, Arizona*
 Oil on canvasboard
 Gilcrease, 0137.944



WILLIAM R. LEIGH
 (BELOW, LEFT)
*Moonlight, First
 Mesa, Arizona*
 Oil on canvasboard
 Gilcrease, 0137.111



WILLIAM R. LEIGH
Moonlight, Keams Cañon, Arizona
 Oil on canvasboard
 Gilcrease, 0137.105

Another night, he turned away from the rocks as clouds crossed the moon, capturing the transitory effect in silver and deep blue, *Moonlight at Midnight, Walpi*. The moon is the subject of another sketch that Leigh also titled *Moonlight, First Mesa, Arizona*. Brilliantly shining, it glimmers as though through a haze, but illuminates nothing below.

If there is a complete absence of sunlight, or any illuminating source, humans cannot see. But at night a modest amount of celestial light, even from a distant star, allows vague forms and outlines to appear in muted, indistinct grays. In effect, celestial illumination is still related to the sun or other stars. Starlight is sunlight, just so far away that its power is diminished. But in a very clean, clear atmosphere, without the intrusion of other light sources, accumulated starlight offers minimal vision. Leigh was one of the few who attempted to paint such a minimal light, as seen in his subtle *Moonlight, Keams Cañon, Arizona*. Barely discernible forms in deep charcoal and soft dove grays evolve if the painting is examined long enough, almost as if the viewer's eyes are adjusting to the dark.

Leigh remarked on the changes he observed in the landscape as he watched the sunset, describing "delicate orange and pearl-lilac; a crazy quilt of form and color – a fabulous mosaic – a grand kaleidoscopic array of tints of infinite charm. Now the orange light was changing into rose,

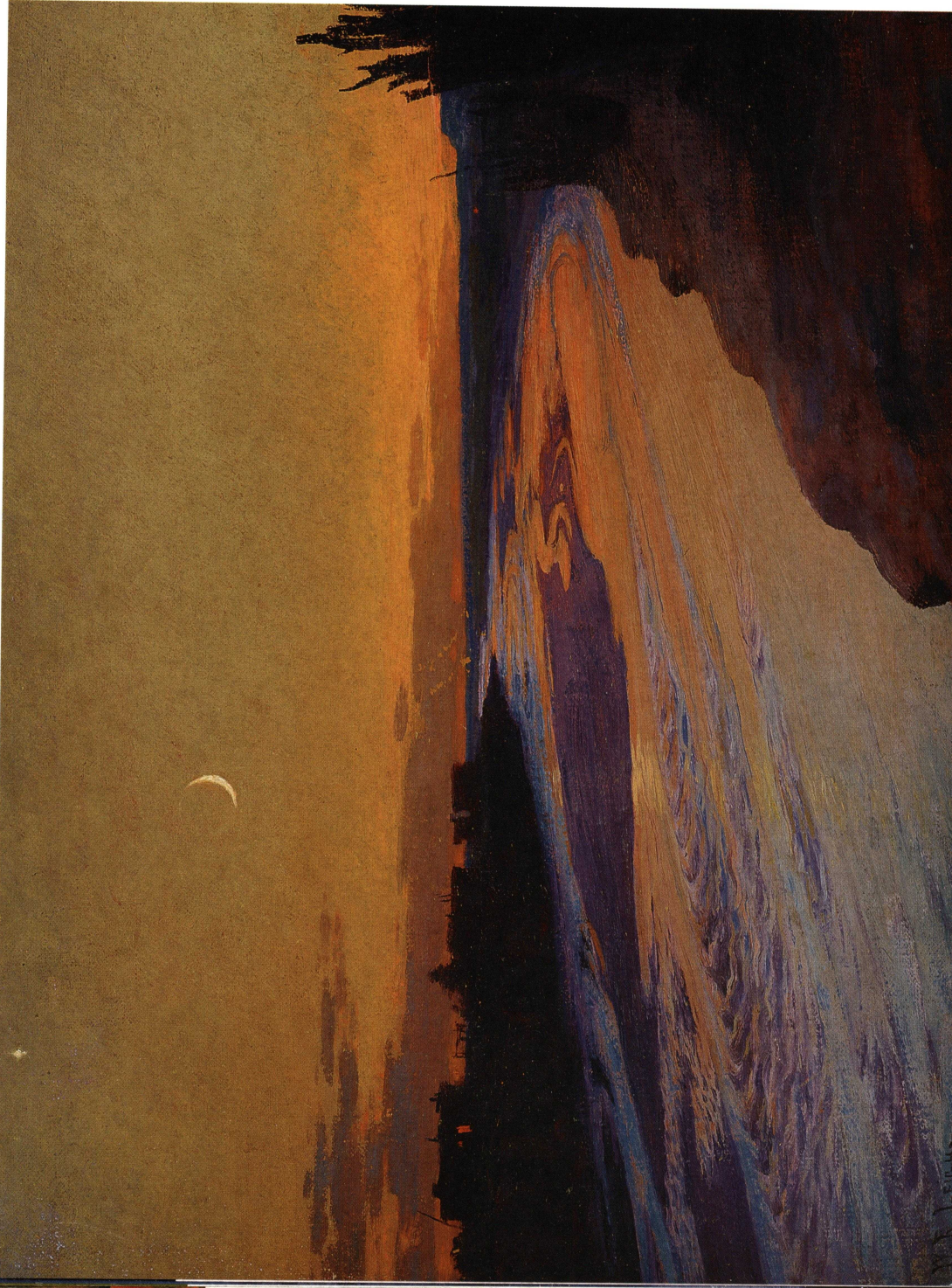
to vermilion; the shadows to lavender, to purple.” He could have been describing his *Moonlight, Canyon de Chelly*.

Some of Leigh’s most dramatic studies were painted at dusk, when moon and sun temper one another, both affecting color and reflections. *Afterglow Over Zuni River* captures the transition, with subdued sunlight still strong enough to light the horizon and turn the river into a mirror that also reflects the light of the crescent moon. Leigh felt humbled by these apparitions of nature, saying, “No language, no pigment could be more than a clumsy makeshift; beyond all human power to describe – the sublime drama of light and shade – of color and form – in stately magnificence drew to a close.”

Frederic Remington and William R. Leigh understood there are many factors that can influence what one sees at night. The time of year, the phase of the moon, weather, humidity, the amount of ambient light, latitude, can all affect the appearance of things in the night. Paintings of the night can engender curiosity about a part of human experience that most people dismiss. While artists still paint the night, not many have spent so much time in observation and study as Remington and Leigh. Looking at a nocturne gives clues to the myriad facets of the night and prompts personal investigation of its many moods.

WILLIAM R. LEIGH
Moonlight, Canyon de Chelly
Oil on canvasboard
Gilcrease, 0137.121

WILLIAM R. LEIGH
Afterglow Over Zuni River
Oil on canvasboard
Gilcrease, 0137.629



Sunlight, Vision, and Color

Sunlight is composed of a large spectrum of radiant electromagnetic energy, of which the human eye can detect a small portion – the visible white light.

When Sir Isaac Newton, in his experiments with prisms, broke down white light into its constituent parts, he saw light as bands of **violet, blue, green, yellow, orange, and red**. Each of these colors radiates at a different frequency, higher on the violet end and lower on the red.



Objects that humans

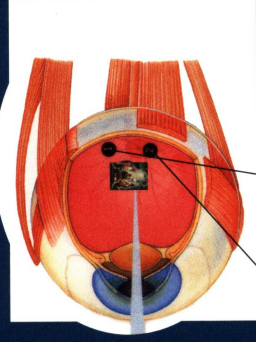
observe actually have no color of their own. The color we perceive depends upon how much of each frequency is reflected back to our eyes and how much is

absorbed by the object. **A banana (and the printed word banana here) appear yellow because the yellow frequency is reflected and all others are absorbed.** Selective absorption determines colors of organic matter.

If color is a perception, how do humans see color? There must be 1. an object (the banana),

2. a light source to illuminate the object (the sun),
3. something to receive the image of the object (human eye),
4. something to interpret that image (human brain), and create a response to it (human nervous system).

For example, as you look at the Charles Banks Wilson painting on page



1 the retina is like a screen at the back of the eye
2 the optic nerve transmits the image to the brain

46, light rays pass through your cornea (the curved front part of the eye visible from the outside), then through the pupil of the iris (which regulates how much light comes in), then through the lens to focus the light and form an image (upside down) on the retina, which is like a screen at the back of the eye.

The retina contains photoreceptors made up of millions of photosensitive pigments. **One type of photoreceptor, the cone, allows true color vision in normal daylight.** The human eye has about six million cones that contain pigments sensitive either to blue, green or red light. The amount and variety of frequencies to which the three different cones respond determine the color seen. When all three react to light equally, the perceiver sees white.

Humans rely on color perception not only to gain information about the world but also to experience its richness, although most humans have no difficulty discerning the subject or action in black and white photography or film.

However, when sunlight is not present to color the world, perception changes in a way different from the way it changes when we look at black and white photography.

Fortunately, human vision occurs in a wide range of light, from bright sun to dim starlight, because of another type of photoreceptor in the retina – the rod. Rods occur in greater numbers (160 million) and are about 1000 times more sensitive to light than cones. Often referred to as twilight vision, images produced by rods are softly focused shades of gray.

Rods, which function only in weak light and are in fact inactivated by bright light, give us the ability to distinguish relative brightness and shape rather than the color and fine detail that the cones impart. This is why humans see color indistinctly at night. The shift between bright and weak light, between cone and rod vision takes a moment of adjustment.

These are the basic perceptual phenomena encountered by the artists in the following portfolio as they set out to paint their night scenes.

JAMES MCNEILL WHISTLER
Nocturne, the Solent
Oil on canvas
Gilcrease 0176.1185

THOMAS MORAN
Moonlight on Napeague Beach,
Montauk Point
Oil on canvas
Gilcrease 0127.2334

CHARLES M. RUSSELL
When Guns Speak Death
Settles Dispute
Oil on canvas
Gilcrease 0137.911

FRANK TENNEY JOHNSON
The Pony Express
Oil on canvas
Gilcrease 0127.1088

CHARLES BANKS WILSON
Oklahoma Melody
Oil on canvas
Gilcrease 0127.1466

BERT PHILLIPS
Burial Procession – Penitente
Ceremonial – Near Taos
Oil on canvas
Gilcrease 0137.2083

J A M E S M C N E I L L W H I S T L E R
Nocturne, the Solent

Whistler, who became notorious for the paintings he called “nocturnes,” was at first experimenting with the abstracting quality of night, but then went on to enjoy the controversy that his work brought forth in pre-Impressionist Europe. One of his earliest paintings of night, *Nocturne, the Solent* (1866) is a sophisticated, tranquil image, its details reduced to the merest hint of ships, ocean and land. Always declaring that paintings are made of paint, Whistler created work that was in opposition to the richly detailed and colored paintings of his contemporaries.

Very much ahead of his time, Whistler influenced the work of the tonalist painters in Europe and America. One in particular to follow Whistler’s example was Charles Rollo Peters, whose exhibition of night paintings at the Union League in New York in 1899 had a profound effect on Frederic Remington.



T H O M A S M O R A N
 Moonlight on Napeague Beach, Montauk Point

Moran's

exploration of night began in the early 1890s, preceding Remington's by a few years, and his last night paintings coincided with Remington's death in 1909. However, these two artists took very different approaches. Some artists chose to paint night not as a backdrop for action as did Remington, but as a subject itself, for its peculiar beauty. Moran, who generally did not paint nocturnes, created some exquisite moonlit scenes of the beaches on Long Island and the canals of Venice. Even the mid Atlantic Ocean he bathed in moonlight in a series of paintings. Years living on Long Island, months spent visiting Venice, and weeks crossing the Atlantic provided Moran with many opportunities to observe the various complexions of moonlight and its effect on color.

Moonlight on Napeague Beach, Montauk Point (1901) is lit by a full moon just rising over the horizon and still reflecting the warmer light of sunset from Earth.

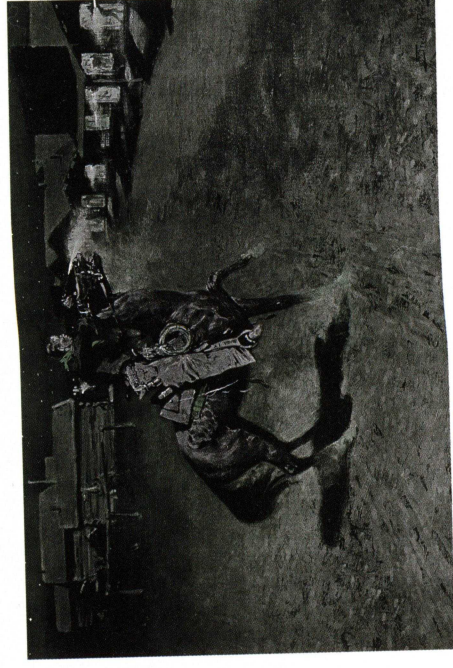
Lingering sunlight also reflects pink on buildings and sand, which the moon, from its position, could not color. This kind of light reveals all the details, though subdued, that one would see by day. The sparkling sand, the variety of vegetation, even a crane at the water's edge – all are discernible in a kind of magical light.



Russell's

strength was his ability to paint beautiful sunrise and sunset backdrops for his western subjects. Only on a few occasions, in the last years of his life, did he use full night as a setting. Two of these nighttime works are Gilcrease Museum's *When Guns Speak, Death Settles Dispute* (1924) and the Montana Historical Society's *Laugh Kills Lonesome* (1925). Brian Dippie notes in his study on Russell's influences, *Looking at Russell*, that in both cases, the artist based his paintings on Frederic Remington's night scenes. Specifically, Russell patterned *When Guns Speak, Death Settles Dispute* on Remington's *An Argument with the Town Marshall*, which had been painted twenty years earlier and published in *Collier's Weekly* (February 11, 1905). *Laugh Kills Lonesome* can be seen as a composite of figures and settings from Remington's *In From the Night Herd*, painted in 1907 and also published in *Collier's Weekly* (March 12, 1912) and *Hunter's Supper* from 1909, seen in *Scribner's Monthly* (February 1910).

In neither case does Russell copy Remington; rather he adapts the basic elements, then adds figures and changes the color and light. To the single horseback figure in the composition of *An Argument with the Town Marshall*, Russell adds additional men and horses, heightening the drama with one of the riders shot and falling from his mount. In this treatment is the single most significant difference between the two artists. As Remington strove in the last part of his life to limit and finally remove narrative from his work, Russell always saw it as integral to his paintings.



An Argument With the Town Marshall, halftone reproduction after Frederic Remington, in *Colliers Weekly*, Gilcrease 1627252.



CHARLES M. RUSSELL When Guns Speak, Death Settles Dispute



Johnson's

nocturnes are considered to be his best work, and some of the best American painting created in the 20th century. Dating from the earliest years of his career, their inception resulted from his lengthy western trip in 1904. In his letters home to his wife in New York, he recounted the affect of his nighttime observations, the first he would make for years to come, in passages such as: "There is a fine old picturesque trading post here, where the Navajos are constantly coming and going, particularly at night. . . . seeing these people in the moonlight or even the magic light of just the stars has impressed me very deeply. What paintings I can make of some of the scenes around the trading post."

Two decades after his auspicious experience, during which he painted hundreds of nocturnes, Johnson made *The Pony Express* (1924). Instead of Navajos at a trading post, this time he portrays a typical moment when the pony express rider has changed horses and is just about to ride the twenty-mile stretch to the next pony express station. Although light from the windows of the station in the background casts a golden glow on the ground, the illumination of the scene comes from bright, silvery moonlight.

Although no direct relation to Frederic Remington's night works really exists, it would be impossible to believe that Johnson, who was active in the New York art community, would not have known or seen exhibitions of the older artist's works. Similarities, perhaps coincidental, can be seen in the main figure of the pony express rider and Remington's outlaw in his 1905 *An Argument with the Town Marshall*.

From the beginning, Johnson received accolades from the art community, typified by this excerpt from an article by art critic Everett Carroll Maxwell in the March 1931 *Progressive Arizona*: "An outstanding characteristic of Johnson's work is his ability to paint moonlight, and in this field he stands preeminently alone."

F R A N K T E N N E Y J O H N S O N
The Pony Express



Oklahoma Melody (1943) is a modern night painting by virtue of its illumination by electricity. Electricity has changed the way humans contend with the night, taking away some of the menace of the dark by a click of a switch. Wilson painted these drummers at a pow wow, their immediate area brightly lit by a single bare bulb hanging above them. While intense – the light bulb casts sharp shadows on the ground beneath the figures – it lacks the broader, if less powerful radiance of the moon. But the electric light does not alter the colors of the figures, their clothing, and the tree leaves above them the way the moon would. Instead, it acts like a miniature sun giving off a pure white light. It has a small range though, and beyond the close circle of figures, the dark night encroaches.

C H A R L E S B A N K S W I L S O N
Oklahoma Melody



Some night scenes are lit not by real world fire, moon, or stars, but by an inner radiance. Phillips's *Burial Procession, Penitente Ceremonial* (1946) reveals a sinuous line of mourners, the leaders of which bear crosses and a casket with the body of a brother. The figures move in and out of an indeterminate light source, which also appears to cast a glowing cross onto the hill over which the mourners travel. Perhaps an unseen moon illuminates the low adobe buildings and ghostly trees in the distance, as well as the angelic form of the clouds that hover over the procession.

Very modern in design, the painting has an abstract quality in line and color. Although Phillips was not often given to works of a spiritual nature – he was usually more traditionally realistic – perhaps he was so moved by the experience of witnessing this outpouring of community that he felt a more mystic approach was needed.

B E R T G . P H I L L I P S
Burial Procession, Penitente Ceremonial

FROM BEHIND the breastworks of his big desk the editor is banging at me to write about myself. I find the thought very chilly out here in the garish light, but his last shot says, "If you don't, I will send a person to interview you, and he will probably misquote you." Quite so — one doesn't need that character of help when about to play the fool; so if you find the going heavy, gentle reader, camp here.

I had brought more than ordinary schoolboy enthusiasm to Catlin, Irving, Gregg, Lewis and Clark, and others on their shelf, and youth found me sweating along their tracks. I was in the grand silent country following my own inclinations, but there was a heavy feel in the atmosphere. I did not immediately see what it portended, but it gradual-

ly obtruded itself. The times had changed.

Evening overtook me one night in Montana, and I by good luck made the campfire of an old wagon freighter who shared his bacon and coffee with me. I was nineteen years of age and he was a very old man. Over the pipes he developed that he was born in Western New York and had gone West at an early age. His West was Iowa. Thence during his long life he had followed the receding frontiers, always further and further West. "And now," said he, "there is no more West. In a few years the railroad will come along the Yellowstone and a poor man can not make a living at all."

There he was, my friend of the open, sleeping in a blanket on the ground (it snowed that night), eating his own villainies out of his frying-pan, wearing a cotton shirt open at the throat, and hunting his horses through the bleak hills before daylight; and all for enough money to mend harness and buy wagon grease. He had his point of view and he made a new one for me. The old man had closed my very entrancing book almost at the first chapter. I knew the railroad was coming — I saw men already swarming into the land. I knew the derby hat, the smoking chimneys, the cord-binder, and the thirty-day note were upon us in a resistless surge. I knew the wild riders and the vacant land were about to vanish

forever, and the more I considered the subject the bigger the Forever loomed.

Without knowing exactly how to do it, I began to try to record some facts around me, and the more I looked the more the panorama unfolded. Youth is never appalled by the insistent demands of a great profession, because it is mostly unconscious of their existence. Time unfolds these abruptly enough. Art is a she-devil of a mistress, and, if at times in earlier days, she would not even stoop to my way of thinking. I have persevered and will so continue. Some day, who knows, she may let me tell you some of my secrets. Meanwhile be patient, and if the recording of a day which is past infringes on the increasing interest of the present, be assured there are those who will set this down in turn and everything will be right in the end. Besides, artists must follow their own inclinations unservedly. It's more a matter of heart than head, with nothing perfunctory about it. I saw the living, breathing end of three American centuries of smoke and dust and sweat and I now see quite another thing where it all took place, but it does not appeal to me.



In the summer of 1888 Remington

traveled west for *Century Magazine*. The following year the magazine published four articles written by Remington. The April issue included "A Scout with the Buffalo-Soldiers." Remington's description of their march into the Sierra Bonitas was vivid: "The lieutenant shouts the command to dismount, and we obey. The bridle-reins are tossed over the horses' heads, the carbines thrown butt upwards over the backs of the troopers. . . . Up the ascent of the mountain we toiled, now winding among trees and brush, scrambling up precipitous slopes, picking a way across a field of shattered rocks. . . ."

During his lifetime Remington's writing received notable praise. In a December 1897 letter to Remington, Assistant Secretary of the Navy Theodore Roosevelt asked, "Are you aware, O sea-going plainsman, that aside from what you do with the pencil, you come closer to the real thing with the pen than any other man in the western business. And I include Hough, Grinnell and Wister. Your articles have been a growing surprise. I don't know how you do it, any more than I know how Kipling does it. . . . Without stopping your work with the pencil, I do hope you will devote more and more time to the pen." Ten years later, President Roosevelt wrote in *Pearson's Magazine*, "Nor must we forget the excellent literary work he has done in such pieces as 'Masai's Crooked Trail,' with its peculiar insight into the character of the wildest Indians." Emerson Hough, author and often a harsh critic of Remington's writing, credited him with the best story of the Spanish-American War, "With the Fifth Corps," which was published in *Harper's Monthly* in November 1898. Yet today, Remington's paintings and sculpture draw so much attention from his written material that he is regarded as an exceptional artist who dabbled with prose. In his essay "Remington the Writer" in *Frederic Remington: The Masterworks*, John Seelye proposes that Remington's reputation as a writer may have been greater if he had developed that talent at the expense of the other artistic gifts.

The extent of Remington's writing is remarkable. He contributed over one hundred articles and stories to *Outing Magazine*, *Harper's Weekly*, *Century Magazine*, *Harper's Monthly*, *Collier's Weekly*, *McClure's Magazine*, and *The Cosmopolitan*. Six volumes were compiled to reprint somewhat less than half of his magazine articles. He wrote two novels, *The Way of an Indian*, written in 1900, although not published until 1906, and *John Ermine of the Yellowstone*, published in 1902. During these years he also assembled and published two volumes of drawings.

Remington's beginnings as an author were the result of a simple motivation — he was working to expand the market for his illustrations. He had decided to pursue an artistic career in 1885 and by May 1887 *Outing Magazine* had published an article naming Remington as author. For this first article, "Coursing Rabbits on the Plains," Remington drew on the events of an October day in 1883 when he was still a sheep rancher in Kansas. The payment Remington received was for writing the article and for the four illustrations it contained.

Remington's writing was straightforward and without flowery pretension. Atypical of the romantic and ornate prose of his day, it has been compared to the work of Jack London and Andy Adams. Remington's journalism primarily focused upon everyday happenings, emphasizing the daily life of cavalymen, cowboys, and native peoples of the West. Many of his stories use passages taken directly from the journals he maintained during his travels.

vided between the Comanches and the Kiowas. They are paid, rationed, and armed by the Government, and are used to hunt up stray Government horses, carry messages, make arrests among their own people, and follow the predatory Texas cowboy who comes into the Territory to build up his fortunes by driving off horses and selling corn-juice to the Indians.

The Comanches are beginning to submit to arrests without the regulation exchange of furs and silver; but they have got the worst of Texas law so long that one cannot blame them for being suspicious of the magistracy. The first question a Comanche asks of a white stranger is, "Maybe so you Texas cowboy?" to which I always assure them that I am a Kansas man, which makes our relations easy. To a Co-

for the race, and the throng move level plain near, where a large ring by the Indians on horseback.

An elderly Indian of great dignity once steps into the ring, and with a graceful movement throws his long red blanket over his shoulders, and then, kneeling, receives the wagers of such as desire to throw in silver dollars. Men walk up and throw in silver dollars every sort of personal property images, Winchester rifle and a large nickel-plated revolver are laid on the grass near the cowboy and an Indian, and then away. It was a wager, and I thought might well have confidence in their statement, "mother earth. Two ponies, tied head, were led aside and left, horse



IN THE BETTING-RING.

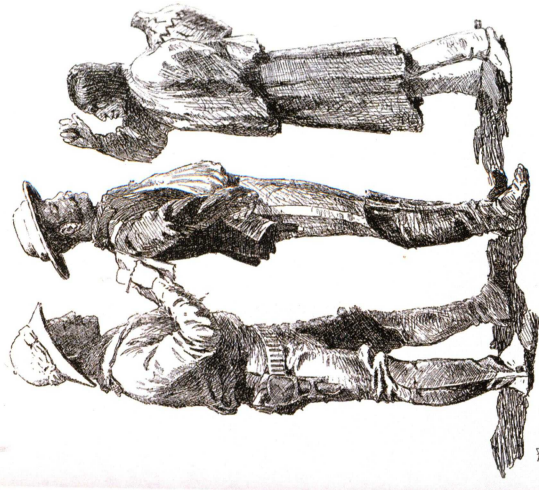
manche all bad men are "Texas cowboys," and all good people are "Kansas men."

At the scout camp I was allowed to sketch to my heart's content, and the people displayed great interest in the proceedings.

The morning of the Fourth of July found Mr. Jones and me in the saddle and on the way to the regulation celebration at the agency below the post. The Fourth of July and Christmas are the "white man's big Sundays" to the Indians, and they always expect the regular horse-race appropriations. The cavalrymen contribute purses and the Indians run their ponies. Extra beeves are killed, and the red men have always a great regard for the "big Sundays."

As we approach the agency it is the hour

horse. No excitement seemed to prevail among the men a little half-Mexican Comanche began to disrobe until he stood clad only in breech-cloth. His father addressed the throng, whispered admonition and then led up a pony, prancing with impatience and fully conscious of the work cut out for him that day. With a bound the little fellow landed on the neck of the pony only half way up his toes caught on the upper muscles of the pony's leg, and like a monkey he clung up and was in his seat. The pony was as a wild horse except for a bridle, and away with his graceful little rider sitting on a rock. No, not like a rock, but limp and cerned, and as full of the motion of the horse's tail or any other part of



Method of drawing at San Carlos was

one of Remington's illustrations for his article "On the Indian Reservations"

published in July 1889. Of this area of southern Arizona, Remington wrote,

"The San Carlos is a hotter place than I ever intend to visit again. A man who is used to breathing the fresh air of New York Bay is in no condition to enjoy at one and the same time the dinner and the Turkish bath which accompanies it."

By 1887 Remington had become an illustrator of note. His drawings were in numerous magazines and from *Century Magazine* he had attained the important assignment of illustrating Theodore Roosevelt's serialized article "Ranch Life and the Far West." In the summer of 1888 Remington was traveling for *Century* to illustrate articles on tribes of the Southern Plains. In planning for the trip, the magazine editor had inquired of Remington whether he had any experience writing. A positive response would thereby eliminate the need for the magazine to send a second man west. From this conversation and journey Remington wrote and illustrated four articles, which appeared in *Century Magazine* in 1889.

"On the Reservations" was the third of these articles, published in the July issue, and in it Remington's voice provides a vivid description of his travels:

After coming from the burning sands of Arizona the green stretches of grass and the cloud-flecked sky of northern Texas were very agreeable. At a little town called Henrietta I had

entered into negotiations with a Texas cowboy to drive me over certain parts of Indian Territory. . . . We came at last to the Red River, and I then appreciated why it was called the red, for its water is absolutely the reddest thing I ever saw in nature. The soil thereabouts is red, and the water is colored by it. We forded the river, and the little horses came so near sticking fast in the middle that my cowboy jumped out up to his waist and calmly requested me to do the same. I did, but to the ruin of a pair of white corduroys. We got through, however, and were in the Territory. Great quantities of plums, which the Indians gather, grow near the river.

In due course of time we came in sight of Fort Sill, which is built of stone, in a square around a parade of grass, and perched on the rising ground. The plains about were dotted with the skulls of cattle killed for ration day. Sheds of poles covered with branches dotted the plains, and on our right the 'big timber' of Catch Creek looked invitingly cool....

As we approached the agency it is the hour for the race, and the throng moves to some level plain near, where a large ring is formed by the Indians on horseback.

An elderly Indian of great dignity of presence steps into the ring, and with a graceful movement throws his long red blanket to the ground and drops on his knees before it to receive the wagers of such as desire to make them. Men walk up and throw in silver dollars and every sort of personal property imaginable. A Winchester rifle and a large nickel-plated Colt's revolver are laid on the grass near me by a cowboy and Indian, and then each goes away. It was a wager, and I thought they might well have confidence in their stakeholder — mother earth.



DRAWINGS
By
FREDERIC REMINGTON



TWO VOLUMES of Remington's drawings were published during his career as a writer. *Drawings* was issued by R.H. Russell in 1897 and *Done in the Open: Drawings by Frederic Remington* by P.F. Collier & Son, 1902. Each was popular and added to Remington's fame as an authority on the West.

Remington created sixty-two images for *Drawings* and Owen Wister contributed the preface for the book. As Wister acknowledged, the images are enthralling – conveying the solitude and distance of the West. Many also depict the wartime cavalry in the West. One magazine review declared, “One instinctively hides behind the cover of the book in the hope of escaping bullet and scalping iron.” Remington's images may have illustrated an earlier time, but his interests reflected the contemporary American attitude of imperialistic tendencies. The Post Office Department honored Remington by using two paintings from *Drawings* in a series of stamps commemorating the 1898 Omaha

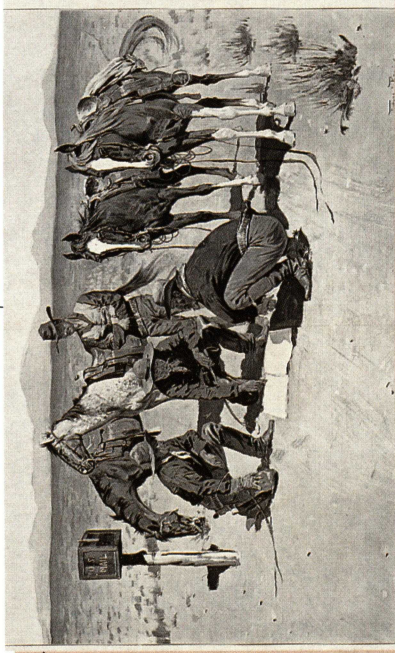
Exposition. Although each was retitled, *Protecting the Wagon Train* became an eight-cent stamp and *The Gold Bug* a fifty-cent stamp. *Done in the Open* successfully combined images by Remington with verses by Owen Wister in one of the last projects on which the two collaborated. The portfolio contains seventy-seven drawings, of which more than sixty were new works. There are portraits and vignettes, as well as full-page and double-page illustrations. Wister wrote poetic descriptions of the works and was even given the freedom to alter titles. Received as an art book, *Done in the Open* quickly ran through several editions.

DONE IN THE OPEN

DRAWINGS BY
FREDERIC REMINGTON
WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY OWEN WISTER



NEW YORK
P. F. COLLIER & SON, PUBLISHERS
(1902)



The Werner Company produced an unauthorized book of Remington illustrations soon after *Drawings* was published by R.H. Russell. In 1896 Werner had issued *Personal Recollections of General Nelson A. Miles*, which was illustrated by several artists, including Remington. Following its publication the company found a loophole in the contract and simply reprinted Remington's fifteen works as Remington's *Frontier Sketches*. The book's page margins were expanded to make the plates appear larger and the cover included a replication of the artist's signature. Remington received no income from the publication.

In the late 1880s, Remington was earning between ten dollars and twelve and a half dollars per thousand words (for early illustrations he was paid ten dollars each). In the 1890s Remington decisively established himself as one of the most acclaimed illustrators during a time that can be labeled the golden age of illustration. His compositions, both written and drawn, were appearing in numerous magazines. Capitalizing on Remington's increasing recognition and the good business of reprinting material that was already produced, Harper & Brother (later Harper & Brothers, then Harper and Row, and now HarperCollins) published several anthologies of Remington's writings. In a five-year period, five anthologies of Remington's writing were published – *Pony Tracks*, *A Rogers Ranger in the French and Indian War 1757-1759*, *Crooked Trails*, *Stories of Peace and War*, and *Men With the Bark On*. The first was *Pony Tracks*; it appeared in 1895 and contains reprints of fifteen short stories. The stories were not in the order of their original publication, and many of the illustrations were omitted or moved away from relevant sections of text. Nevertheless, *Pony Tracks* was a success that remained in print for many years and marked the beginning of Remington's recognition as a writer. Remington dedicated the book to “the fellows who rode the ponies that made the tracks.”

Each story was based on an event the author had witnessed, and each expressed the compelling impression it had left upon him. *Pony Tracks* received numerous favorable reviews. The *Boston Journal* proclaimed,

“This is a spicy account of real experiences among Indians and cowboys. No better illustrated book of frontier adventure has been published.” *Pony Tracks*, published at the price of three dollars, was also a financial success. Remington's agreement with Harper & Brothers was for the generous royalty of ten percent of retail price, with an increase to fifteen percent when sales exceeded 3,000 copies.

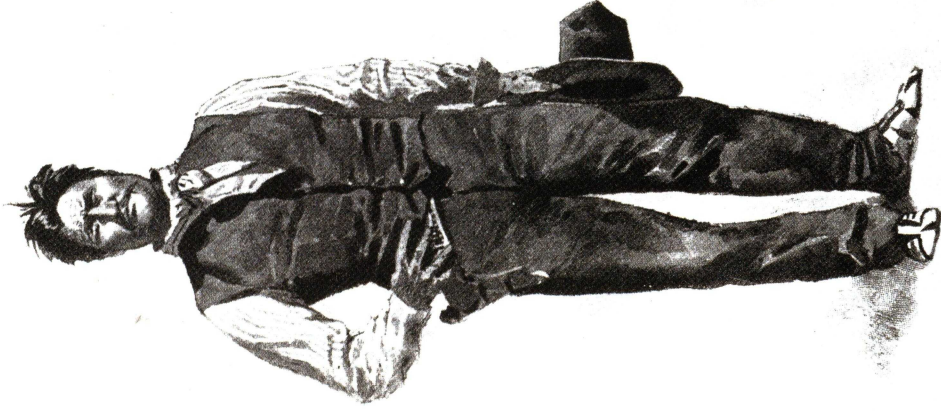


In 1897 *A Rogers Ranger in the French and Indian War 1757-1759* was published, reprinting the article “Joshua Goodenough’s Old Letter” from the November 1897 issue of *Harper’s Monthly*. The story, which reflects considerable research, was based upon experiences of the Rogers Rangers in the 1750s (Robert Rogers was a commander of a corps of six hundred frontiersmen fighting for the British during the French and Indian War). The story, introduced in a single paragraph, is a historic letter, important because of “those humble beings who builded [sic] so well for us the institutions which we now enjoy in this country.” The remainder of the text was written in dialect, Remington’s third attempt at working with this technique. Apparently the result was one of his personal favorites. At Remington’s directive it was included in two other of his anthologies, becoming the article most often reprinted during his lifetime.

Crooked Trails was published in 1898, well after the conclusion of the warfare on the western Plains, and contains ten tales. Half of the stories have a historical theme, two highlight outdoor life, two are accounts of travel, and “The Essentials at Fort Adobe” is about the cavalry in peacetime. Harper & Brothers published the book at the price of two dollars, and its publicity included the comment, “There are one or two departures in the present volume from Mr. Remington’s accustomed haunts — departures which led him into the storied past; but in them he remains as virile and as convincing as we have been accustomed to finding him in more familiar scenes.” *Crooked Trails* was favorably received, with the review in the *Chicago Dial* noting, “The volume is a comely one, and will make a tempting gift-book when the Holiday season comes.”

The following year the unusual volume, *Stories of Peace and War*, was printed. This small volume (measuring only about six inches by three and one-half inches) was apparently part of a series published by Harper & Brothers, entitled Little Books by Famous Writers, that sold for fifty cents each. The series also included a work by Richard Harding Davis and an excerpt from *Ben-Hur* by Lew Wallace. *Stories of Peace and War* reprints three Remington articles. The book is distinguished by the misspelling of the author’s given name — as Frederick — on the cover. This misspelling occurred throughout Remington’s life, and although he preferred Frederic, it apparently was never of great importance.

Reflecting a more pessimistic tone is Remington’s dedication, “Men with the bark on die like the wild animals, unnaturally — unmourned, and even unthought of mostly.” Following his experiences during the Spanish-American War, Remington’s outlook had changed.

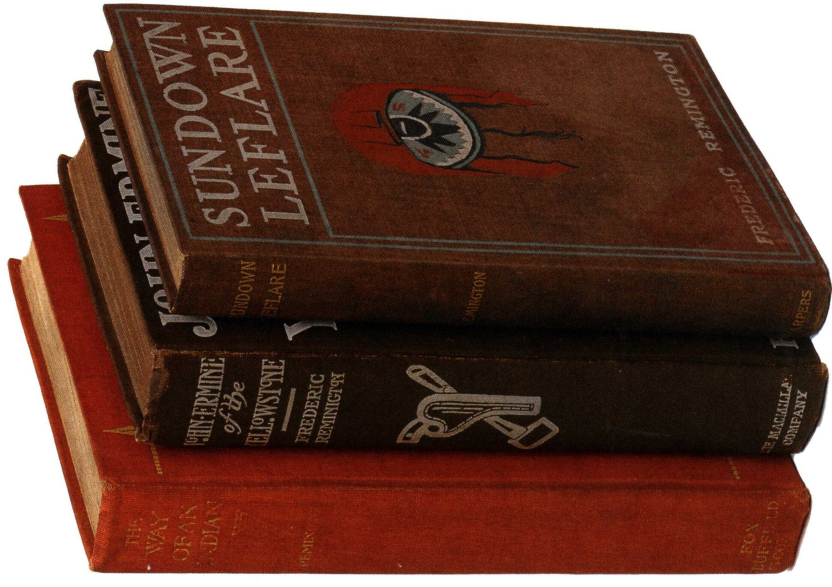


Sundown Leflare was physically modeled after a man noted in Remington’s diary as “Ol’ Laraeux.” Leflare, of French and Indian descent, is described as knowing “about half as much concerning Indians as they did about themselves, while his knowledge of white men was in the same proportion.”

The final anthology of Remington’s work, *Men With the Bark On*, published in 1900, was successful, selling out of two editions in two months. The title was apparently suggested by Remington and then forgotten, but months later appeared on proofs sent from Harper & Brothers. The phrase is included in a 1893 letter from Remington to Poultney Bigelow (a Yale classmate, editor of *Outing Magazine*, author, and longtime friend): “To-morrow — to morrow I start for ‘my people’ — I go to the simple men — men with the bark on — the big mountains — the great deserts & the scrawny ponies.” From the early days of the mountain men, the definition of “bark” was hair. Men with the bark on were those fortunate enough to remain unscalped. The book was promoted by its publisher as “Stories of the West and of Cuban Experiences.” Reflecting a more pessimistic tone is Remington’s dedication, “Men with the bark on die like the wild animals, unnaturally — unmourned, and even unthought of mostly.” Following his experiences during the Spanish-American War, Remington’s outlook had changed.

Frederic Remington’s fiction included three longer publications. All three were dissimilar from what was being written at the turn of the century and all three varied from each other. They did share some common themes. Each was inspired by Remington’s own experiences with the landscape and people of the American West. And each provided a perspective on native peoples, with details of the cultural conflict and often-violent encounters. The three publications received varied critical reviews and public response.

Copyrighted as a volume in 1899, *Sundown Leflare* presents five loosely related tales about the narrator and hero. The central character was based on an interpreter Remington met among the Blackfeet in 1890 and the stories are written in dialect. The accounts had appeared in *Harper’s Monthly* between September 1897 and November 1898. The first story featuring Leflare was Remington’s initial venture into



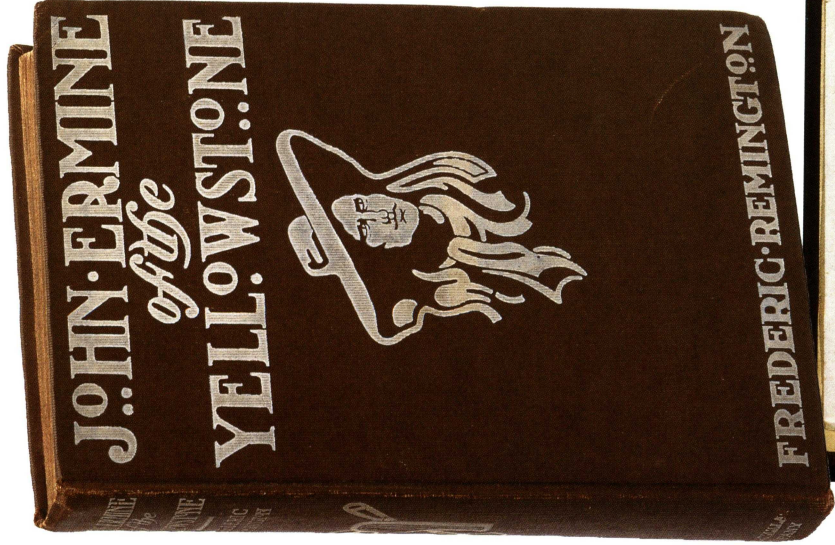
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58
GILCREASE

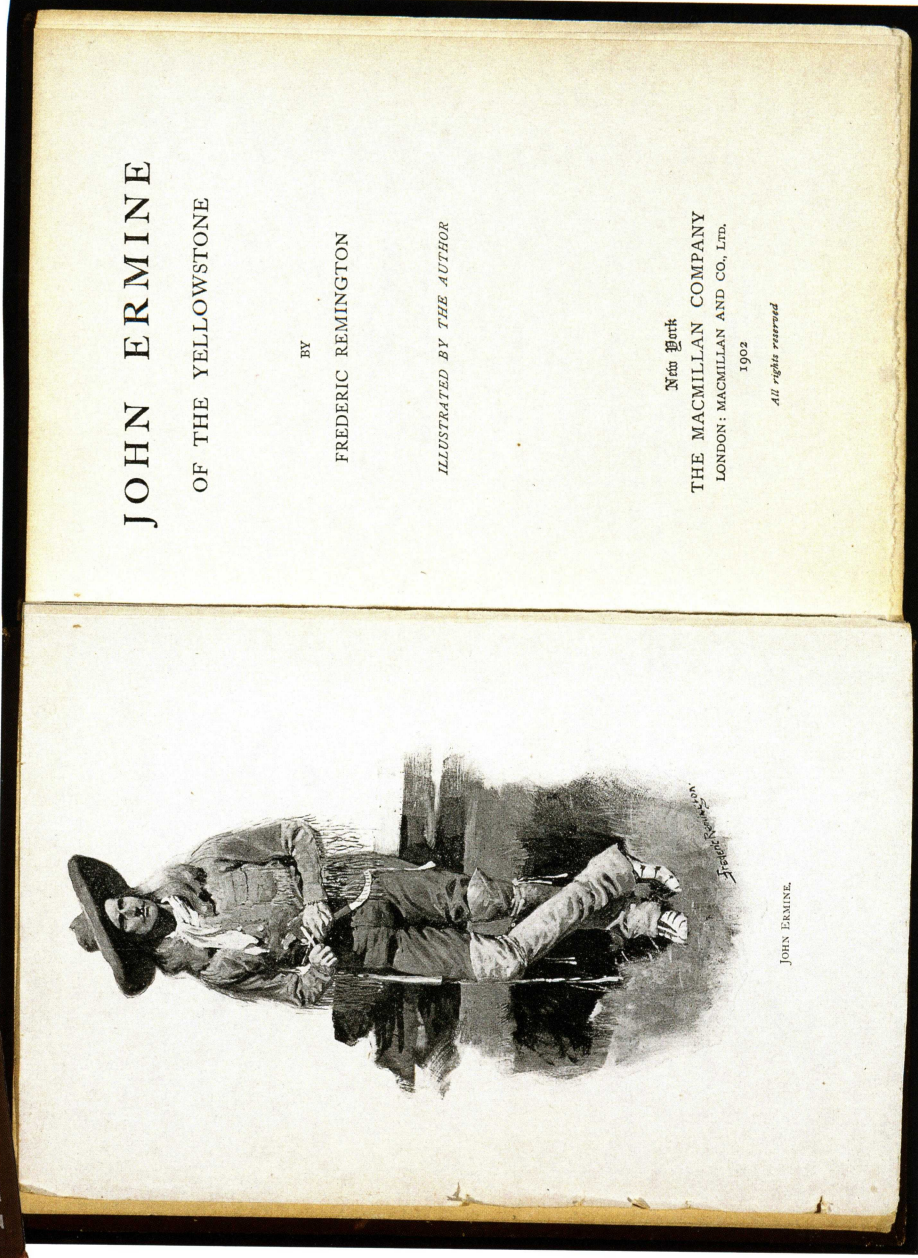
Remington was the first American author to attempt to get inside the Indian character. *The Way of an Indian* is written entirely from the viewpoint of White Otter. It is an account of a man whose lifetime coincides with his tribe's initial encounters with frontiersmen, the arrival of the military, and the destruction of the tribe. The narrative is chronological – White Otter moves from childhood into manhood and

"*Pretty Mother of the Night—White Otter is no longer a boy.*"



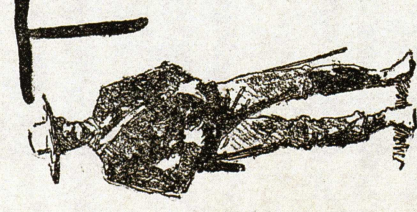
then into old age. His triumphs in battle, growth into leadership, eventual defeat, and death are recounted. Remington, while including a harsh depiction of Plains life, remains also a sympathetic voice. Questions soon developed, and have continued, as to the sources of information that Remington used for the details of native life and beliefs. Nevertheless, *The Way of an Indian* shows Remington's commitment to realism as well as a writing style that is straightforward and effective.

John Ermine of the Yellowstone was written as a specific response to Owen Wister's *The Virginian*. Remington viewed *The Virginian*, an immediate bestseller when it was published in 1902, as all formula with no realism. His response was so immediate and his writing so quick that *John Ermine* was published later that same year. The plot is intricate, containing several sources of conflict. Raised as Little Weasel by adoptive Indian parents, the central character of the story becomes John Ermine as he attempts to become a part of Anglo society. Influenced and



CHAPTER XI

THE TRUTH OF THE EYES



HE soldiers who had been in the wagon-train fight carried John Ermine's fame into cantonments, and Major Searles never grew tired of the pæan : —

"I do not go to war for fifty dollars,
You can bet your boots that isn't not me lay.
When I fight, it's only glory which I collars,
Also to get me little beans and hay."

But his more ardent admirers frowned on this doggerel, and reminded the songsters that no one of them would have made that courier's ride for a thousand acres of Monongahela rye in bottles. As for Wolf-Voice, they appreciated his attitude. "Business is business, and it takes money to buy marbles," said one to another.

But on the completion of the rude huts at the mouth of the Tongue, and when the last wagon train had come through, there was an ominous preparation for more serious things. It was in the air. Every white soldier went loping about, doing everything from greasing a wagon to making his will.

taught by an aged and crippled prospector, John Ermine becomes a cavalry scout and becomes a hero fighting the Sioux. Ermine falls in love with the flirtatious daughter (Katherine Searles) of an officer, but is eventually rejected. Returning to the teaching of his youth, he decides upon a method of revenge. Intending to kill a young soldier who is a perceived rival, Ermine slips back into the army camp. Hesitating at Katherine's lighted window, he is shot by an Indian. Earlier, while escorting Katherine through the camp, Ermine had insulted the man by pushing him away. Overcome by his infatuation, he had disregarded cultural courtesies and in so doing had determined his own destiny.



"HE BORE THE LIMP FORM TO THE SANDS."

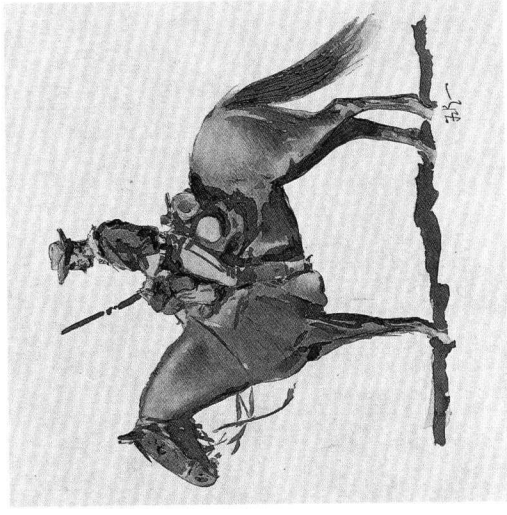
"[John Ermine] slowly gathered her in his arms, gained his feet, and made his way toward the river. A gopher-hole had planned what Ermine never could; it had brought her body to him, but it might be a useless gift unless the water gave him back her life. He bore the limp form to the sands beside the flowing river and laid it down while he ran to fill his hat with water. He made fast work of his restoration, rubbing her wrists and sprinkling her forehead with water; but it was long before a reward came in the way of breath and a sigh."

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1972.

John Ermine was a successful novel in 1902, but soon it went out of print. It did not meet the requirements of a society looking for entertainment and escape. Professor of American Literature John Seelye asserts that Remington's tragic story of John Ermine continues the tradition of James Fenimore Cooper's Leatherstocking Tales, and that in affirming what he saw as the tragic reality of the West Remington was also being true to a great American tradition in literature. These three novel-length works – *Sundown Leflare*, *The Way of an Indian*, and *John Ermine of the Yellowstone* – create a trilogy. Each addresses the clash between cultures in the West and each explores a different aspect of the resulting conflict and its usually disastrous consequences.

Frederic Remington envisioned his own purpose as memorializing the American West of his youth. He then did so in a grand manner, both in image and in text. His writings created a market for his drawings, and together the two delineated an era and locale. However, after Remington's death his status as an artist has greatly escalated, while his writings have been consistently overlooked. Had he chosen, Remington might have established a broader reputation as a writer. If he had been willing to follow what was becoming the accepted formula – an uncomplicated hero and a happy ending – and sacrificed his interest in realism, Remington's writings might have become part of the mainstream of western literature. Instead he chose to concentrate on his more impressionistic paintings and his work in bronze. In 1907 Perriton Maxwell related in *Pearson's Magazine* that Remington told him, "I shall never write another word. I only wrote those books of mine to introduce people to the subjects I was trying to draw. *Pony Tracks*, *Crooked Trails*, *The Way of an Indian* were done with the deliberate view of educating men and women, who knew not the West, up to a certain standard of appreciation for its beauties, fascinations, and intrinsic worth."



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Remington

Front: *An Episode of the Buffalo Hunt*,

Frederic Remington, oil on canvas,

Gilcrease 0827.2308

Back: *Buffalo Horse*, Frederic Remington,

bronze, Gilcrease 0827.51

