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Touching Nether-Regionalisms: Paul Cadmus as Exemplary Foil to a Homegrown American Art

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**TOUCHING NETHER-REGIONALISMS:
PAUL CADMUS AS EXEMPLARY FOIL TO A
HOMEGROWN AMERICAN ART**

by

MAXINE ROUSH MARKS

**B.A.F.A. ART HISTORY
THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO 2006**

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts in Art History

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Dedication

For Dad

— In memory of your curious, adventurous and kind life.

Acknowledgments

In gratitude and with love for my husband, my mother, my brother, my deceased father, all of whom have always been daring in their adventures and generous with their love. I see the world and love, because of your vision and love.

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ABSTRACT

The struggle over who writes our histories and who is included in those histories resonates within the broader scope of my project where I examine such productions and deliberations of American identity through U.S. visual language and artistic production. I challenge exclusive ideas of “Americanness” and counter such exclusions within Regionalism via the artistic production of Paul Cadmus. I specifically explore issues of gender, race and class in the artworks of U.S. artist Paul Cadmus, his resulting impact on the Regionalist movement and the heteronormative masculine identity that emerges from within Regionalism.

I illuminate Cadmus’s contributions to Regionalism, rebuild connections between other reassigned Regionalists, and challenge the accepted heteronormative masculine identity of Regionalism. My project adds to the recent body of work regarding U.S. homosexual artists within Regionalism and the overall greater categories of U.S. art. I push against art history’s tendency to shut the book on Regionalism in standard

unwavering notions of “Americanness” via investigations of the ideologies that exclude artists carrying burdens of race, class, or gender.

Table of Contents

List of Figures	ix
Prologue	1
Relationship Status: It's Complicated	1
Introduction.....	6
Problematizing Regionalism	6
The Accepted Regionalists and Their Inconsistencies	9
Chapter 1	18
Marking Gender Difference in the Masculine and Regionalism's Gender Inclusion via the Art of Visible Exclusion.....	18
Chapter 2.....	47
Conversation Pieces not Quite Rural	47
Ever Censored, Ever About Censorship.....	55
Chapter 3.....	58
How the Gay Grinch Almost Stole Christmas	58
Cadmus's Humanism	62
Conclusion	76
Figures.....	79
References.....	89

List of Figures

Figure 1. Paul Cadmus, <i>The Fleet's In</i> , 1934, oil on canvas.....	79
Figure 2. Paul Cadmus, <i>Shore Leave</i> , 1933, oil on canvas.....	79
Figure 3. Grant Wood, <i>Daughters of the American Revolution</i> , 1932, oil on masonite..	80
Figure 4. Illustration for “Famous American Painters,” 1941, Encyclopedia Britannica.	80
Figure 5. Paul Cadmus, <i>Gilding the Acrobats</i> , 1935, oil and tempera on wood panel....	81
Figure 6. Grant Wood, <i>Sultry Night</i> , 1935, lithograph.....	82
Figure 7. Grant Wood, <i>Fall Plowing</i> , 1931, oil on canvas.	82
Figure 8. Grant Wood, <i>Arnold Comes of Age</i> , 1930, oil on board.....	83
Figure 9. Norman Rockwell, <i>The Tattooist</i> , 1944, oil on canvas.	84
Figure 10. Grant Wood, <i>American Gothic</i> , 1930, oil on board.	84
Figure 12. John Steuart Curry, <i>Tornado Over Kansas</i> , 1929, oil on canvas.	85
Figure 11. Paul Cadmus, <i>Lloyd and Barbara Wescott</i> , 1942, tempera on board.....	85
Figure 13. Charles Willson Peale, <i>Belfield Farm</i> , 1816, oil on canvas.	86
Figure 14. Paul Cadmus, <i>Conversation Piece</i> , 1939, tempera and oil on board.	86
Figure 15. Paul Cadmus, <i>Herrin Massacre</i> , 1940, oil and tempera on canvas.....	87
Figure 16. Paul Cadmus, <i>What I Believe</i> , 1947, oil and tempera on board.	87
Figure 17. Paul Cadmus, <i>To E.M. Forster</i> , 1943, tempera on panel.	88

Prologue

Relationship Status: It's Complicated

It is no easy task to decipher the conflicted readings on Paul Cadmus's artwork, though it is breathlessly easy to read that which one seeks to prove from the visual language of his canvases, as most scholars have done thus far. Scholars have named Paul Cadmus everything from *enfant-terrible* to America's greatest gay artist to satirist to magic realist. Cadmus's most enduring reputation as *enfant-terrible* was a moniker eagerly imposed on him early in his career by a sensational newspaper headline, but his temperament was a lifelong testament to tolerance, in both artistic production and stated philosophy. Despite the rich literary narratives he executed in egg tempera and oil, or in etchings, drawings, and even in photography, Cadmus comfortably deferred meaning and interpretation to his critics and viewers. As he explained to a biographer, "A poet is not expected to give an exegesis on a poem. I don't think that a painter should do one of a painting. (Aims differ with each work.) I have made statements in the past, now I know better. Let art majors, art historians, etc., say their says."¹ His tolerant philosophy served his career well from the outset and allowed, as Cadmus put it, for everybody to "say their says."²

In a 1992 newspaper article titled "The Charge? Depraved. The Verdict? Out of the Show," author William Grimes presents two important ideas surrounding Paul Cadmus's placement in both art history and popular culture. First, he inadvertently illustrates the ease with which critics and scholars place artists and decide their historical

¹ Philip I. Eliasoph, *Paul Cadmus: Life and Work* (University of New York at Binghamton, 1979). P. iii, frontmatter.

² *Ibid.*

fates. He does this when he quotes Dore Ashton's assessment that Cadmus is "not a historical figure at all, he's an also-ran."³ Dore Ashton is cruel in her assessment of Cadmus's work, characterizing it as "skewed Saturday Evening Post."⁴ Yet, consideration of her assessment brings to the fore a curious connection to the Saturday Evening Post's most prominent illustrator, Norman Rockwell, and the revival of interest in his work. Allan Wallach insists that an exploration of Rockwell requires first the exploration of ideology because "what is ultimately at stake in any consideration of Rockwell's art is our conception of American history and society."⁵ Wallach further contends that Rockwell's "defenders" bury one layer of ideology over another, much like a Christian church built over a pagan temple, to assert a truth that was never necessarily so. I contend that the same is happening with Cadmus and that the scholarship applied to his work diminishes his status into a deferential role that is overshadowed by his very placement in history as simply a gay artist or a lively example of censorship in American art.

More recent scholarship pushes and pulls at Cadmus's placement in Art History, forcing him into even more desolate terrain where his impact as a cultural contributor is diminished. Examination of a curious juxtaposition in Cadmus scholarship allows us to consider dissimilar perspectives from doctoral dissertations and their potential impacts. From 1978, Philip Eliasoph's tome (at nearly 600 pages) is a lovingly devoted treatise on the artist and covers every inch of not only Cadmus's professional career, but much

³ William Grimes, "The Charge? Depraved. The Verdict? Out of the Show.," *The New York Times*, March 8, 1992 1992.

⁴ Ibid, Grimes.

⁵ Allan Wallach, "The Norman Rockwell Museum and the Representation of Social Conflict," p288. In Patricia A. Johnston, *Seeing High & Low : Representing Social Conflict in American Visual Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

biographical information as well, serving as both biography and monograph. Cadmus is easily likeable, even more so, for those looking for homosexual role models to reclaim and celebrate. Oddly, more than thirty years later, Anthony Morris's 2010 dissertation serves as a Cadmus micro-text, reducing Cadmus's contribution to American art as an entertaining exposé on censorship. Like Eliasoph before him, Morris diminishes the effect Cadmus's homoerotic imagery may have had on his reception and placement in Art History. The comparison between the two texts elicits a gleaming similarity in their parallel framing of Cadmus's career trajectory throughout the 20th century: at the height of Cadmus's most public censorship he held his greatest fame, only to be later eclipsed by louder goings-on around him. It is baffling then that, during the height of the gay movement, and now, in the era of "don't ask, don't tell," these scholars manage such sweeping omissions.

It was Cadmus's 1934 painting, *The Fleet's In*, that first brought him national public attention. The painting's subject matter includes a rollicking cast of characters consisting of sailors on shore leave. The sailors socially and physically interact with local floozies and effeminate male civilians in rather bawdy manners. Paul Cadmus recalled that he was simply painting a scene very familiar to him, yet it still caused a stir. A Works Progress Administration funded painting to be displayed in a show at the Corcoran Gallery, Cadmus was both surprised by, and grateful for, the negative and very public reaction of one navy officer that launched his professional career in terms of affording him instant recognition across the country in newspapers and magazines.

Though humorous and charming the history of *The Fleet's In* may be, the focus of this investigation is not that of the censorship surrounding the painting, nor is it a means to further establish Cadmus as “America’s greatest gay artist,” or even to deny him that status, but instead to consider the forces that move Cadmus away from Regionalism and the function such a reassignment accomplishes. Otherwise, to continue to consider such a narrow dialogue would diminish the accomplishments of such a complex artist and his complex body of work, subtracting a nearly seventy-five year career into a compact and tidy summary that belies the breadth and depth of his oeuvre and his agency as a cultural contributor. Rather, the focus here is on the changing fashions of ideology as constructions that can take hostage one artist for the greater cause. In this case, it is Paul Cadmus detained for the sake of Regionalism. Instead of reestablishing Cadmus as Regionalist, or attempting to reclassify him, I will show that Cadmus contributed greatly to the Regionalist paradigm. Further, through the acknowledgment that Regionalism is ideology instead of fact, we will see that the visual representation of American ideologies is, in part, defined through exclusions, as exemplified in the case of Paul Cadmus: the exemplary foil to a homegrown American art.

To map the convoluted history and unstable terrains of Regionalism I begin in my prologue to illustrate the 80-year historiography of the ever-changing roster of Regionalists through my focus on Paul Cadmus. In Chapter One, I look at the ways in which marking gender difference is attempted through languages of American masculinity. Regionalism creates a paradigm of gender inclusion via the perceptibility of visible exclusion: Paul Cadmus, Grant Wood, and Norman Rockwell all contribute to the orchestrations of these exclusions. In Chapter Two, I explore how Cadmus’s

“conversation pieces” trouble the idyllic rural and belie the agrarian myth for a sophisticated modern age that is more accurate and threatening to the myths of Regionalism. In Chapter Three, I reveal Paul Cadmus’s personal ideology of humanism as the articulation of his homosexuality in its most socially acceptable realm, finally transformed into a normalized homosexuality in 2009’s Hide/Seek exhibit. In these discussions, I hope to reveal a more nuanced exploration of the analyses of Paul Cadmus’s artworks and his contributions to U.S. art, within and beyond Regionalism.

Introduction

Problematizing Regionalism

An irony about the scholarship on Paul Cadmus is that all of the attention bestowed upon *The Fleet's In* is well deserved, even if the attention it receives is misguided or too narrowly placed in issues of censorship and queer studies. And in a twenty-first century mode of directness, the recent scholarship fast-forwards through key relational placements that are quickly being erased. Once customary to discuss Cadmus whenever considering the Regionalists, now it is moot. Cadmus has become so far removed from Regionalism that his exclusion expressly emphasizes the sanctity of an American triumvirate that included Thomas Hart Benton, John Steuart Curry and Grant Wood.

The stock of that Regionalist trinity includes notions of wholesomeness. The hearty, American born Midwesterner was never tainted by the excesses of European art, or the big city for that matter, as many scholars characterize Regionalists. Yet, despite the myths of this condition, and the occasional satire also evident in the works of Benton, Wood, and Curry, it is Cadmus's satirical oeuvre that is often used as reason enough, difference enough in its worldly cynicism that it could not possibly be wholesome enough and preclude him from sharing the condition of other Regionalists. Thus, some scholars leave Cadmus there on the outskirts, close but not in the circle of Regionalism, insignificant as a representation of American modernism, and without agency, during the important American artistic pushback against Europe that permeated the Regionalist movement.

In its heyday and at its height of popularity, Regionalism never was. In fact, it was a designation that came after the fervor of American artists eager to paint the

American scenes from all over the country. Now, inherent in the triumvirate discussion is an accepted visual language that specifically celebrates the Midwestern United States as a cultural norm. Likewise, in current memory, both academic and popular, the dialogue is ever more focused on the green pastures and farms of Kansas, Missouri, and Iowa, and the heroically simple people that occupy the landscapes the triumvirate painters are best remembered for. However, in nearly every discussion of Regionalism, the less rural yet contemporaneous artist, Paul Cadmus, is almost always mentioned.

Despite the constant side-note inclusions of Paul Cadmus in these dialogues about Regionalism, scholarship fails to pursue the purpose of his mention or his contribution to the genre. The implication of his slight inclusion in dialogues about Regionalism and, at the same time, the persistently overt exclusion of Cadmus from the category is far-reaching and complicated. The most obvious complication is his homosexuality and the bold representations of homoerotic imagery he derived from his urbane New York City existence. Cadmus was gay and hailed from the city, two circumstances that can be used to rigidly dismiss him from Regionalism, especially if the circumstances of Regionalism itself remain unscrutinized. Yet, it is not as though it was the Regionalists themselves that excluded Cadmus then, so it would appear that the ultimate exclusion occurs now, well into the post-Stonewall 21st century, because it works and serves a purpose.

The focus of this investigation considers the complications of Cadmus's homosexuality as a prominent barrier to his inclusion within Regionalism, then, and even more so, now. The pose of Cadmus's homosexuality within Regionalism, and the resulting predicament, begs an investigation of the social and political forces that separate heterosexual Anglo-Saxon Midwestern America from artists such as Cadmus. Not only

has he been refused recognition as a Regionalist precisely because his homosexuality and homoerotic imagery seemingly fall outside of the accepted national identity of what it means to be an American, but his exclusion escalated throughout the decades of the twentieth century when the visual dialogue of American nationalism shifted from Regionalism to Abstract Expressionism. Artists such as Cadmus, and other American Scene painters, were passed over in favor of artists like Jackson Pollack, and their non-figurative, masculinist, and highly expressive images.

Recent scholarship during the past few decades has admittedly proclaimed a “gradual renaissance” of interest in Cadmus, but the scholarship has mostly ignored the implications of the artist’s relationship to Regionalism, and instead focused on his role as a reclaimed artist for the gay community’s “unwritten history.”⁶ Scholar Richard Meyer calls the Regionalism of Paul Cadmus “a different American Scene” because it is clear that Cadmus painted the American scene at the same time the triumvirate painted the American Scene.⁷ In fact, in a 1941 *Encyclopedia Britannica* entry titled “Famous Paintings by Modern American Painters,” Cadmus is featured with Benton, Curry, and Wood, along with reproductions of paintings by each of them.⁸ Cadmus was an important American artist painting the American scene during the height of Regionalism and he was poised to “someday inherit the togas of Benton, Wood, and Curry.”⁹

However, a glaring inconsistency highlights the complexity and problems in imagining a community as a singular entity: imagined communities, either broadly

⁶ Meyer, Richard Meyer., *Outlaw Representations: Censorship & Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century American Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.* Other American artists including Edward Hopper are also included in this encyclopedic entry.

⁹ *Ibid.*

American with “a deep, horizontal comradeship,” or their more narrowly defined subcultures, are nearly symbiotic and both rely on the other’s existence to sustain their own.¹⁰ Meyer points out that Cadmus’s career faltered even more than that of the Regionalists in a post World War II era where modern art criticism rallied for the rise of abstract expressionism.¹¹ Not only did Cadmus fall into the shadow of the Regionalists, as Meyer points out, Cadmus was “marginalized to the point of eclipse by the rise of abstract expressionism.”¹² One critic closed the book on the relevance of Regionalism in a 1942 review of a Grant Wood exhibit, at the Chicago Institute of Art, when he claimed that Wood’s show was a “culmination of a trend of escapism and isolationist thought and action, which was popular with some groups yesterday, but which is definitely obsolete today.”¹³ So, Cadmus becomes twice removed from discussions of American art, once from Regionalism, and then further with the disfavor of Regionalism. Despite Meyer’s thorough investigation of Cadmus, he fails to consider the artist’s role with Regionalism and what the implications of the rise of abstract expressionism posed against Regionalism’s decline actually says about his role as a non-regionalist during the twentieth century, a highly nationalistic phase of American cultural identity.

The Accepted Regionalists and Their Inconsistencies

Around 1931, Benton, the so-called leader of Regionalism, entered a new phase of his artistic development where he dedicated himself to representing the “scenes,

¹⁰ Benedict R. O’G Anderson, *Imagined Communities : Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Rev. ed. (London ; New York ;: Verso, 2006).

¹¹ *Ibid*, 34.

¹² *Ibid*, 34.

¹³ "Knocking Wood." *Art Digest* 1 Dec 1942: 12-13, in

behaviors, and mythologies of American life.”¹⁴ Though Benton claims he was unaware of other American artists pursuing what he calls a “strong American viewpoint,” by the spring of 1934 he acknowledges that the designation “Regionalist” was already accepted in popular culture and throughout the American art world.¹⁵ (And in an essay about John Steurat Curry, Benton expresses doubt about this claim with his recollection that he first met Curry in 1926 and immediately forged a friendship with him.¹⁶) It is later in Benton’s recollections, as late as 1969, that he subscribes to the triumvirate notoriety of himself, Curry, and Wood whereas decades earlier he acknowledges that there were more artists in the movement. He denigrates those that fled the designation when popular artistic modes shifted:

When we were left to the mercies of the art journals, the professors and the museum boys, we began immediately to lose influence among the newly budding artists and the young students. The band wagon practitioners, and most artists are unhappily such, left our regionalist banner like rats from a sinking ship and allied themselves with the now dominant internationalisms of the high-brow aesthetes. The fact that these internationalisms were for the most part emanations from cultural events occurring in the bohemias of Paris and thus as local as the forms they deserted never once occurred to any of our band wagon fugitives.¹⁷

While Benton and some others claim that the term was placed upon them and created without their input or any desire to be part of a new school, Grant Wood had written a manifesto in 1935 titled “Revolt Against the City” in which he describes the basic ideas

¹⁴ Thomas Hart Benton, *An American in Art: A Professional and Technical Autobiography* (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1969).

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 70.

¹⁶ Patricia Junker, ed. *John Steuart Curry: Inventing the Middle West* (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1998).

¹⁷ Thomas Hart Benton, *An Artist in America*, 4th rev. ed. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1983).

of Regionalism and calls for American artists to pursue them.¹⁸ Matthew Baigell asks us to picture in our mind's eye the 1930's, anticipating that the result will be a "dust-bowl landscape, a dour Middle Western couple, or perhaps some Bowery derelicts."¹⁹ As Baigell rightly acknowledges:

Rarely had painters recorded so directly the great and immediate social issues and cultural problems of the day. In their search for a key to the perplexities facing virtually everyone, artists of the 1930's charted and documented the body of America as never before. They explored cities, small towns, rural hamlets, and they painted, it would seem, every street and farm between Maine and California. In their search for clues, they scrutinized hay wagons and modern automobiles, revival meetings and urban political gatherings, dirt farms and enormous industrial complexes, quiet side streets and roaring midways.²⁰

The prevalence of the American subject matter, for the American artist, extended beyond the sometimes seemingly narrow mode of Regionalism and the mind's eye expectation of rolling farmlands. Benton ambivalently credits the press for their application of the term in context to the art world. Otherwise, it had simply been a literary term referring to a group of Southern writers.²¹ Thomas Hart Benton and some others claim that the term Regionalism was placed upon them and created without their input or any desire to be part of a new school. Still, Grant Wood had written a manifesto in 1935 titled *Revolt Against the City* in which he describes the basic rural tenets of Regionalism. Further, he makes a call for American artists to pursue those rural tenets. In the manifesto, Wood helped to create the myth, suggesting that Regionalism emerged

¹⁸ Grant Wood, "Revolt against the City," *Whirling World* no. 1 (1935).

¹⁹ Matthew Baigell, *The American Scene: American Painting of the 1930's*, American Art & Artists (New York: Praeger, 1974).

²⁰ *Ibid*, 13.

²¹ Benton, *An Artist in America*.

“rather gradually and without much blowing of trumpets, so that many observers are scarcely aware of its existence,” as though it were much like an organic crop of corns, growing slowly and unnoticed in the Midwestern soil.²² Though Wood, and others, hint at mysterious origins for Regionalism, what is more perplexing is that the mythic middle west solely becomes over time the expected and accepted subject matter of Regionalism. The result is that artists such as Cadmus’s clearly legible urbanism ultimately, for a time, extricates him from the countrified version of Regionalism that was especially popular in the 1970’s during our nation’s bicentennial-induced patriotic fervor.

In her 2009 book, *After Many Springs: Regionalism, Modernism, and the Midwest*, Debra Bricker Balken importantly explores what she characterizes as the “artistic battles that waged simultaneously in New York and the Midwest during the 1930’s and 1940’s.”²³ In her argument, she rightly attempts to bridge the often confused relationship between Regionalism and Modernism by illuminating the state of the arts post-Depression era as “polarizing and alienating communities of artists who would be variously labeled either modernists or Regionalists, without a full assessment of the interconnections that at times unified their work.”²⁴ Yet, she too finds herself relying on the exclusive and inaccurate Regionalist triumvirate of Benton, Wood, and Curry to argue her case that Regionalism’s origins were actually in the modernist movement, and at the expense of failing to mention Paul Cadmus at all.

²² Wood, "Revolt against the City."

²³ Debra Bricker Balken, *After Many Springs : Regionalism, Modernism, & the Midwest* (Des Moines, IA New Haven: Des Moines Art Center ; distributed by Yale University Press, 2009).preface page 1

²⁴ *Ibid.* page 37.

Luckily, Cadmus has received mention in other investigations, including Jonathan Weinberg's *Speaking for Vice*, where *Shore Leave* and *The Fleet's In* are used as examples to illustrate encoded homosexual content.²⁵ Similarly, works on Regionalism mention him, as once requisite, for instance, in James Dennis' *Renegade Regionalists*, and in Erika Doss' *Benton, Pollock, and the Politics of Modernism: From Regionalism to Abstract Expressionism*. However, it is Wanda Corn in her important American art survey, *The Great American Thing*, who first brings to our attention the original (and enduring) problem with Regionalism: even in its origins, Regionalism has always been a contested category.²⁶ Corn discusses this issue in a simplified binary consisting of two battling groups of artists, American Scene painters and modernists, and their concerted efforts to each stake claim and *differentiate* 'American' art from *less* American art. Country mouse and city mouse were officially at odds, even then, and have been at odds ever since. Perhaps Regionalism will continue to be rewritten and revised to suit dominant ideologies that construct and maintain what it means to be an American artist, or even an American. These categories, much like the category of nation itself, are ever in flux and mired in negotiations. Paul Cadmus's consideration in these negotiations is a necessary complication that will help to sort out such differentiations and show that his exclusion actually helps maintain Regionalism's status as a homegrown American art.

To illuminate the ever elusive, and ever changing, boundaries of the category of Regionalism, one can consult the 1976 text by Nancy Heller and Julia Williams, *The*

²⁵ Jonathan Weinberg, Charles Demuth, and Marsden Hartley, *Speaking for Vice : Homosexuality in the Art of Charles Demuth, Marsden Hartley, and the First American Avant-Garde*, Yale Publications in the History of Art (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

²⁶ Wanda M. Corn, *The Great American Thing : Modern Art and National Identity, 1915-1935* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). P 288

Regionalists. Curiously, this was published during the nations Bicentennial and in the heat of the gay movement. The authors maintain that Regionalism is a wide-ranging term that encompasses art by American artists with the focus on American scenes, yet they remind us that this is not simply either urban or rural.²⁷ Indeed, they maintain that Regionalism cannot be held to any one particular formal style, comparing Grant Wood's flatness to Thomas Hart Benton's curves to Reginald Marsh's sketchiness, and proclaiming all three as archetypal Regionalists.²⁸ Marsh's emphatic inclusion in Regionalist identity is powerful in that he, like Cadmus, focused on urban American scenes. To further their broad characterization of Regionalism, Heller and Williams emphasize that this type of art was produced in all regions of the United States, despite its enduring designation as a "Midwestern phenomenon."²⁹ Heller and Williams had hoped to reveal Regionalism as perhaps the broadest American art movement of the twentieth century, only for us to find that it is constantly diminished to the purview of Thomas Hart Benton, John Steuart Curry, and Grant Wood, the ever acknowledged "triumvirate."³⁰ Sadly, during the thirty-plus years since their efforts, the mythic three have even more forcefully continue to hold title to Regionalism.

In order to understand why this happens, one must ask how this is accomplished, and to the detriment of whom. Barbara Jean Fields convincingly teaches us that we live our freedoms at the expense of others and, so too, are our successes rewarded accordingly. According to Fields:

²⁷ Nancy Heller and Julia Williams, *The Regionalists* (New York: Watson-Guption Publications, 1976). P 13.

²⁸ *Ibid.* P 13.

²⁹ *Ibid.* p 13.

³⁰ *Ibid.* p 17.

Ideology is best understood as the descriptive vocabulary of day-to-day existence, through which people make rough sense of the social reality that they live and create from day to day. It is the language of consciousness that suits the particular way in which people deal with their fellows. It is the interpretation in thought of the social relations through which they constantly create and re-create their collective being, in all the varied forms their collective being may assume: family, clan, tribe, nation, class, party, business enterprise, church, army, club, and so on. As such, ideologies are not delusions but real, as real as the social relations for which they stand.³¹

So, this investigation will explore why Paul Cadmus is rearranged as he is in the history of art and how his exception contributes to the construction of a normative heterosexual male American identity, not only in Regionalism, but in popular U.S. culture. However, in doing so, one must conscientiously remember that biases construct that which is Regionalist and that which is not.

Philip Eliasoph innocently illustrates this often unidentified tendency of bias in the analysis of artworks when he compares two critical reviews of Cadmus's first solo show at the Midtown Galleries in 1937. The show included Cadmus's murals from *Aspects of Suburban Life*. Though Eliasoph insightfully understands that the reception of Cadmus's work relies on the reviewer's respective modus operandi, he stops short of making any assertions about the impact of their reviews. Instead, he merely illuminates the idea that juxtaposing the starkly contrasting critiques as matters of opinion that "summarize the aesthetic debates of New York's artists and critics of the late 1930's."³²

That debate, also investigated by Debra Bricker Balkan in *After Many Springs: Regionalism, Modernism, and the Midwest*, centered on the now familiar rivalry of urban

³¹ Fields, "Slavery, Race and Ideology in the USA," *New Left Review* 181 (1990): 95-118

³² Eliasoph, *Paul Cadmus: Life and Work*. P. 95.

versus rural and modernism versus the conservative tradition, a debate that Corn earlier alerted us to. However, Eliasoph offers these two critical receptions of Cadmus's first ever solo show in 1936 at the Midtown Galleries as merely an illumination of an "historical perspective" as a matter of circumstance instead of forces of ideology. Abstractionist-proponent Lewis Mumford and the more conservative Edward Alden Jewell offer dissimilar examples of the reception of Cadmus's work. Mumford's assessment states:

By interest and conscious intention, Cadmus is a satirist who wishes to touch off the vulgarities and weaknesses of the American Scene; by actual achievement, he is a caricaturist who utilizes the technique of academic painting to deface the nobilities and the ideal forms that academic painters delight in...Instead of hating the subject the painter holds up to scorn, one comes pretty close to hating the artist himself for giving one such an unpalatable mouthful. Aesthetically, Cadmus's compositions are still extremely conventional, even academic; his figures are usually arranged within the old triangular field...None of the paintings in the present show seem to me fully to live up to Cadmus's declared intentions; but he is young enough to overcome his academic bondage and his ambivalent attitude towards his subjects.³³

Conversely, Edward Alden Jewell, of the New York Times, writes much differently about Cadmus's first solo show, even favorably comparing some canvases to Watteau. He writes:

The series of mural panels...is worked out in rather soft, though firm and pleasing decorative tones in harmony with the pleasant texture of the brushwork itself...his draftsmanship, so lusty and firm yet so full of unforced subtlety, and his quite splendid sense of design...seems constructed with flawless skill...in which a dozen figures are fitted into the sovereign pattern with an unblemished effect of spontaneity and pictorial rightness. For the final test, consult Mr. Cadmus's drawings and prints...unhampered by color, these frequently articulate the artist's thought, relate his visual experience with swift, sure beauty of line. Face to face

³³ Lewis Mumford, "The Art Galleries: Academicians and Others," *The New Yorker*, April 10, 1937 1937. A portion of this quote is found in Eliasoph, *Paul Cadmus: Life and Work*. P 93-94.

with such tokens, we can have no reasonable doubt as the genuineness of this young man's maturing talent.³⁴

These representative critical reviews specific to Cadmus's work show us that the artist, even in his contemporary setting, is already a prime candidate to use in establishing the demarcations and the boundaries of both Regionalism and modernism, and ultimately who can and cannot represent what it means to be American. As Kirsten Buick argues in *Child of the Fire*, Art History utilizes ideologies that maintain an "uninflected, normalized notion of "Americanness" which requires the...artist to affirm and replicate their absolute difference...in their artwork."³⁵ In concert with Buick's critique of Art History, the juxtaposed show reviews remind us that it is important to remember seeing does not begin with looking, but rather with the ideology that informs our seeing. If we are to accept Barbara Jean Fields account of ideology, we will explore the ways in which Paul Cadmus's work assists in negotiating the supposed collective identity of Regionalism as an imagined community and as an art movement as it relates to ideas of nation and Americanness.

³⁴ Edward Alden Jewell, "Cadmus Canvases Hung at Midtown: One-Man Show of American Artist Is Commended for Subtle Draftsmanship," *The New York Times*, March 27, 1937. A portion of this quote is found in Eliasoph, *Paul Cadmus: Life and Work*. P 94.

³⁵ Kirsten Pai Buick, *Child of the Fire : Mary Edmonia Lewis and the Problem of Art History's Black and Indian Subject* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010). Buick's claim is directed at the difference of blackness in the works of Edmonia Lewis. However, I argue that additional modes of difference apply to Cadmus, in this case, homosexuality posed against normative American heterosexuality.

Chapter 1

Marking Gender Difference in the Masculine and Regionalism's Gender Inclusion via the Art of Visible Exclusion

I explore Paul Cadmus's placements in art history through his visual language and subject matter, and encounter more than a few natural connections with other U.S. artists painting the American scene. In addition to the broad subject matter of American scenes, Cadmus seems to have notably contributed much to the construction of a Regionalist masculine paradigm, navigating nudes and sailors to great effect, ultimately allowing especially Grant Wood to remain under the gaydar. Secondly, Cadmus's depictions of sailors lead us to Norman Rockwell and his depictions of the sailor in popular American visual culture. Within the works of Cadmus, when juxtaposed to Wood and Rockwell, gender issues illuminate the construction of male masculinity. "Male masculinity" is a falsely secure heteronormative state embodied by the artists of Regionalism. Regionalism was the art movement of the early and mid-twentieth century focusing on the scenes of America, mostly now remembered as Midwestern, but certainly a heteronormative masculine art of American scenes.

In the *Masculine Masquerade*, Harry Brod explores ideas surrounding gender role theory in visual culture. He admonishes us to reject the oft-proposed notion of gender as a practice carried out via a performance that has been pre-scripted by society. Brod exposes this gender model as a shortsighted explanation and elaborates on the topic in a refreshingly de-essentialist mode. His more realistic proposition clarifies how gender works:

Gender is here understood not as something we are, but rather as something we do. Gender is fundamentally a codified form of activity, a social practice, attaching itself to individuals as they internalize social structures, rather than an attribute or trait of individuals externalized to be writ large in society. As such, gender is a social relation practiced in social interactions, and therefore not reducible to “roles” inculcated by society and learned either on one’s own or in the “separate spheres” of female and male “cultures,” nor reducible to the unfolding of instinctive psychosexual “drives.”³⁶

Brod’s characterization of gender as a social structure and social relation is especially helpful in considering the artist Paul Cadmus in comparison to the artist Grant Wood, both of whom were homosexual, and who occupied different roles within and around Regionalism. Cadmus and his art help to demarcate the lines of masculinity in Regionalism, resulting in his own exclusion, exposing the terms upon which Grant Wood could remain an unquestioned member of Regionalism.

Paul Cadmus is often presented near Regionalists, but his satirical oeuvre renders him suspect and establishes some parameters for inclusion and exclusion amongst Regionalists. Cadmus is there on the outskirts of Regionalism, insignificant as a representation of American modernism and its multiplicity of competing styles and ideologies that included both realism and abstraction—all in the search of American artistic identity between the World Wars.³⁷ As Wanda Corn heeds us to do, I refer to “modernisms, not a monolithic modernism,” plural because it is inaccurate to base an

³⁶ Harry Brod, “Masculinity as Masquerade,” in Andrew Perchuk, Helaine Posner, and MIT List Visual Arts Center., *The Masculine Masquerade : Masculinity and Representation* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT List Visual Arts Center : MIT Press, 1995).p16.

³⁷ Corn, *The Great American Thing : Modern Art and National Identity, 1915-1935*. Corn discusses the overarching theme amongst American modernists as a quest for American identity. P. 286 Also, Patricia Hills in *Modern Art in the U.S.A* and Erika Doss in *Erika Lee Doss, Twentieth-Century American Art*, Oxford History of Art (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). P. 11

investigation on modernism as though it were a singular style.³⁸ Indeed, a conundrum emerges here because definitions for both “modernism” and “American” are always subjective.

During a time of important American artistic pushback against Europe, Cadmus’s career is retrospectively cast as nearly impotent, but certainly outside of American modernist movements and Regionalism. It is as though Cadmus is meant to live in the history books as an anomaly, unrepresentative of his time and place or his relationship to Regionalism.

Despite the constant side-note references to Paul Cadmus in various dialogues about Regionalism, scholarship fails to pursue the purpose of his mention or his impact on the genre. The condition of his status in dialogues about Regionalism centers on the visibility of gender in his artworks. Though his subject matter fit within the overarching traits of Regionalism—the scenes of America—the gender he revealed on his canvases did not. On the surface, one could note both his mention and, at the same time, his ultimately overt exclusion from the category as a linear result that is constantly balanced to maintain holding him at arm’s length, nearby but not actually inside Regionalism. This persistent state of balancing his exclusion is, for Cadmus, the condition of the exemplary foil. He is held up near the Regionalists as a means to differentiate a heteronormative masculine gender where the most obvious complication is his homosexuality and the bold representations of homoerotic imagery he derived from his urbane New York City existence. Cadmus was homosexual and hailed from the city, a combination that on its surface could dismiss him from Regionalism. However, it did not

³⁸ Corn, *The Great American Thing : Modern Art and National Identity, 1915-1935*. P. 6.

remove him. It only placed him as the exemplary foil that helped define and maintain the heteronormative circumstances of Regionalism's painters and subject matter.

The ironic but well-deserved attention regarding such a famous canvas, *The Fleet's In*, reveals further misguided intentions. Much of the scholarship that too narrowly focuses on issues of censorship and Queer Theory as a marker of Cadmus's own homosexuality is persistent, but uneven. Queer Theory, and the term *queer*, has been an all-gender inclusive philosophy originating during the early activism surrounding AIDS. At its core, queerness and Queer Theory envision gender as identity performance through a model identified by Judith Butler: the performance of drag.³⁹ The overarching connection amongst the self-identified performers of queerness—non-heterosexual and LGBTQ—is an emphasis on the individual's performance conflated with an overall antagonism towards and consequent complication of gender normativity. To be sure, *queer* as used in contemporary scholarship is ahistorical to the world Cadmus lived and painted. Scholar Christopher Reed reminds us that the *queer* of Cadmus's day referred to the strange or peculiar, but not always necessarily to gender.⁴⁰ Reed explains that today the term, after having been “exploited as a badge of honor by the loose-knit political coalition Queer Nation...popularized the term *queer* with a younger generation of activists trying to embrace a wide range of sex/gender nonconformists in an identity that was both oppositional and freely chosen.”⁴¹ Reed's assertion is valuable, even though he miscalculates the notion that queer is only one identity instead of multiple identities in

³⁹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble : Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Thinking Gender (New York: Routledge, 1990).

⁴⁰ Christopher Reed, *Art and Homosexuality : A History of Ideas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). P. 231.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

combination with multiple social interactions. He therefore sets it up as an unwavering category that transcends time and perpetuates gender as a fixed identity. Thus, in twentieth and twenty-first century modes of directness, recent Cadmus scholarship fast-forwards through key relational placements only to erase historicity and place Cadmus in the ahistorically positioned categories of *gay* and *queer* as “America’s Greatest Gay artist.”⁴² The result is a superficial category of exclusion for Cadmus: his homoerotic visual language does not fit within the expected scenes of Regionalism.

Once customary to discuss Cadmus whenever considering the Regionalists, now it seems that even to mention Cadmus’s name is moot. For example, R. Tripp Evans’s recent biography of Grant Wood makes not one mention of Cadmus.⁴³ It would have been a valuable connection for Evans to explore because it may have illuminated how Wood was able to navigate the vigorous heterosexual persona of Regionalism despite being homosexual. Perhaps Evans would have noticed that Cadmus is so far removed from Regionalism his exclusion expressly emphasizes the sanctity of Regionalism’s Benton-Curry-Wood trinity and that such emphasis reinforces the heteronormative conditions of its recognized leader-participants. After all, a 1934 *Time* Magazine article focusing on the U.S. art scene, named Thomas Hart Benton “the most virile of U.S. painters.”⁴⁴

When held up next to the Regionalists, as in the 1941 *Encyclopedia Britannica* entry labeled “Famous Paintings by Modern American Artists,” Cadmus’s inclusion was easily a marker of difference that reinforced the heteronormativity of American

⁴² *The Advocate*

⁴³ R. Tripp Evans, *Grant Wood : A Life*, 1st ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010).

⁴⁴ “Art: U.S. Scene,” *Time*, December 24, 1934.

Regionalists.⁴⁵ The encyclopedic entry implied that modern American art *was* Regionalism by its dominant inclusion of Benton, Curry, and Wood. In fact, the entry neatly honored the notorious Time Magazine article of 1934 that previously asserted the idea of Regionalism as *the* modern American art when it featured Thomas Hart Benton on the cover. At that time, the breadth of Regionalism was far-reaching, with artistic production illuminating American Scene subject matter from nearly every part of the nation.

The full-page encyclopedic entry included Wood's *Daughters of the American Revolution*, Benton's *The Jealous Lover of Lone Green Valley*, all on the left of the illustration. The right side of the illustration included a small reproduction of Edward Hopper's *Lighthouse at Two Lights*.⁴⁶ Cadmus's *Gilding the Acrobats* dominates the right side of the page and nearly half of the entire illustration. Each of the paintings by the four different artists represents common themes in Regionalism, mostly small town American life, including the idyllic rural and the circus.

The size of the reproduction of *Gilding the Acrobat's* serves almost a spotlight for the viewer to identify difference. The oil and tempera canvas emphasizes the verticality of both the overall scene and the figures presented. The bodies of four men fill the picture plane with limited foreground or background: a nude male circus performer centrally featured with two other performers neither completely dressed, and a clothed male circus hand. The nude male acrobat stands between two sitting men. With left arm

⁴⁵ Meyer., *Outlaw Representations: Censorship & Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century American Art*. The encyclopedic entry is widely used amongst Cadmus scholars, including both Eliasoph and Morris, but I first encountered it in Meyer's work.

⁴⁶ A rural-like lighthouse scene is atypical of his usual urban settings, yet Hopper was considered Regionalist by some.

reaching up towards his extended right arm, he applies gold paint to his own forearm. Two figures surround him. A black circus hand, fully clothed, is in front of him with his back towards the viewer, but his face visible in profile view. Another performer sits behind the main figure, also nearly nude save for the bulky leotard covering his groin, and he shares in the communal task of applying the gilding. His legs are spread wide to facilitate a stretchy reach towards the paint can that all three men share.

The limited palette exudes an overall gold tone that emphasizes the task at hand and the actual application of gold paint onto the acrobat's nude figure. Like many of Cadmus's compositions, the figural orchestration is complicated, interactive, and beholden to Renaissance pyramidal compositions and Mannerist overcrowding of the scene. (*Aphrodite and Her Attendants* or the *Bathing Venus*) Their bodies reflect the actions of their task and suggest a physicality of interest between one another in gestures (actions) of reciprocation. The main figure's stance projects his left leg extended behind him where the black circus hand bends and leans towards the acrobat's leg to apply the paint.

Thinking about what it means to cover white skin with gold paint, by the hands of a young black man, elicits recognition of racial dynamics in the painting. As Richard Meyer asserts, painting skin combined with the presence of a black figure produces racial issues.⁴⁷ Especially since Cadmus's choice to gild the acrobats is unusual when acrobats did not typically paint their bodies, but rather wore tights and decorated leotards.⁴⁸ Cadmus's choice to utilize the act of painting skin served as a device to obscure potentially negative reasons for his focus on the male nude by providing a purpose to

⁴⁷ Meyer. P. 81.

⁴⁸ Meyer., *Outlaw Representations: Censorship & Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century American Art*. P. 76

paint the nude. Behind cover of an illustrated racial hierarchy fitting within the context of its day, Cadmus's male nude is as respectably distanced from sex as Aphrodite and Her Attendants, despite the attention on the figure.

Cadmus was fascinated by the gilded people and said that he was interested in contrasting them with "real flesh and with the dark flesh of the little negro boy."⁴⁹ The language he used is painful to our ears today because instead of referring to "unpainted flesh," he likens white flesh to "real" flesh while "dark" flesh must be something other than "real."⁵⁰ I look at his language to underscore the fact that the circus racial hierarchy of the day functioned in very specific ways, within an accepted cultural protocol that Cadmus adhered to and captured in *Gilding the Acrobats*. While Cadmus was probably discussing the aesthetic beauty of such contrasts in color, when in reference to *skin*, historically the contrast had often been utilized as a means of conveying that the "black existed merely to reflect upon the superiority of the white."⁵¹ Scholar David Dabydeen alerts us to this tactic as interrupted by William Hogarth's use of blacks in his compositions. In a juxtaposition of "natural" and "civilized," as analyzed in Anthony van Dyck's *Henrietta of Lorraine*, the black servant represents the pejorative natural and the princess represents the civilized.⁵² Instead of the black servant as a "mere aesthetic foil," Hogarth sometimes reversed the trope in his satire where black figures became part of the narrative, especially in the role of servants.⁵³ For example, in *A Harlot's Progress*,

⁴⁹ Meyer, p. 81 originally in Grace Pagano, *The Encyclopedia Britannica Collection of Contemporary American Painting*

⁵⁰ Meyer., *Outlaw Representations: Censorship & Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century American Art*.

⁵¹ David Dabydeen, *Hogarth's Blacks : Images of Blacks in Eighteenth Century English Art* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987). P. 30.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

Hogarth utilizes the figure of a young black servant who expresses visible surprise at the chaos he encounters upon entering a room.⁵⁴ Then, in *Marriage A La Mode*, Hogarth utilizes black figures to mock the moral fraud of the upper classes.⁵⁵ It is a reversal that Cadmus plays with.

In Cadmus's preliminary sketches of the composition, the boy applying the paint is white, not black.⁵⁶ The subject matter of acrobats and the circus as the site of the male nude makes it less peculiar that Cadmus chose the artistic device of gilding the acrobats in an environment where "bodily spectacles" were already expected.⁵⁷ In addition to the expected "bodily spectacle" of circus acrobats, the other expected representation of racial hierarchy assists as another device to substantiate the reasons his focus is on the male nude. The servitude of the black circus hand matched culturally racist expectations of the day. The black circus hand further references the expectation of black servitude, an accepted expectation and recognized role as Meyer thinks to link the circus hand to the black delivery boy. His black body is on the one hand, the overt sexuality on display in the scene, and on the other hand, the reassurance that same-sex activity will not occur.

Further, circus scholar Janet M. Davis uses the phrase "bodily difference" to refer to both normative and subversive circus expressions of race, as well as gender and class. Even before Cadmus's canvas, circus performances, according to Davis, "were encoded with racism and racial desire."⁵⁸ The circus was already a compromised moral site where

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 74

⁵⁶ Meyer., *Outlaw Representations: Censorship & Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century American Art*. P. 84

⁵⁷ Janet M. Davis, "Instruct the Minds of All Classes: The Circus and American Culture at the Turn of the Century" (University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1998). "Bodily spectacles" is Davis's term for the body as the site of performance and difference, including race, class, and gender. P. 13.

⁵⁸ Ibid. P. 13.

Cadmus could seemingly freely focus on the male nude without drawing too much attention by it. He could even further distance the homoeroticism with the inclusion of a young black man as the recognizable stereotype conflating servitude with contentment.⁵⁹ The black figure superficially serves as an inconceivable sexual partner for whites. The black youth's presence diminished the opportunity for perceived eroticism based on the cultural racial hierarchy of the day. Interracial sexual relationships were often the unsubstantiated and ghastly excuses for the lynchings of African-American men; the very fact that the youth is black is an attempt to remove sexual connotations from the scene, heterosexual or homosexual.

As Meyer notes, gilding of the body in the circus was reserved for "living statues."⁶⁰ Mostly women, the people that performed as living statues appeared to be entirely nude, but wore small leotard bottoms.⁶¹ Still, they were topless and the intended presentation meant to exhibit a nude female body posing in a still stance that mimicked neo-classical sculptures, a traditionally acceptable mode of titillation. At the same time, Cadmus links his acrobats to an activity mostly reserved for women, blurring gender lines between masculine and feminine.

Though an American subject matter, Cadmus's circus scene undeniably focuses on the nude male form. Nearest to the viewer are parts of bodies: feet, arms, legs and buttocks. It is a significant fact that the other artists' featured artworks on the page did not include any nudity. Scholar Richard Meyer claims that Cadmus was unlike most

⁵⁹ Meyer., *Outlaw Representations: Censorship & Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century American Art*. P. 82.

⁶⁰ Meyer, p. 76.

⁶¹ Janet M. Davis, *The Circus Age : Culture & Society under the American Big Top* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002). P. 83.

other U.S. artists of the 1930's in that he "focuses quite insistently on the male nude."⁶² Yet, it was later in Cadmus's career that his focus really shifted to the male nude without apology or perceptible excuses rooted in classical traditions or American scenes as validation for subject matter. Even so, when compared to Wood's concurrent interest in male nudes, Meyers' overemphasis on Cadmus's interest in the male nude is valuable. It shows that Cadmus and his artworks produced a discernible and selective category of gender difference that could have benefited Wood at the time.

Wood, like Cadmus, also suffered potential scandal with his 1937 lithograph, *Sultry Night*. Wanda Corn, responsible for renewed interest in both Wood and Regionalism after they suffered by the popularity of Abstract Expressionism, claimed that *Sultry Night* was his "only 'regionalist' nude."⁶³ This is inaccurate, though such a claim minimizes any scrutiny his posthumous reputation might encounter. Perhaps Corn is honoring Wood's sister, Nan, and her self-proclaimed "automatic fury" in protecting her brother's reputation.⁶⁴ However, acknowledging any homoeroticism in Wood's work would certainly confound the accepted interpretations of his landscapes as female forms laid bare in the earth, as well as the virile masculinity associated with such imagery and Regionalism itself.

Even though Corn acknowledges the print's rejection for distribution through the mail because it was too indecent, she does not clarify if it was only the nudity, or

⁶² Meyer., *Outlaw Representations: Censorship & Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century American Art*. P. 33.

⁶³ Wanda M. Corn et al., *Grant Wood, the Regionalist Vision* (New Haven: Published for the Minneapolis Institute of Arts by Yale University Press, 1983). P.50. INDICASTE NUMBER OF HIS NUDES

⁶⁴ Evans, *Grant Wood : A Life*. P. 300 Wood's sister, Nan, was notoriously protective of her brother's reputation especially after his death.

something more, that garnered it such a status.⁶⁵ Further, her reading of the image differs greatly from R. Tripp Evans's. She describes the print's subject matter as "a naked farmer at the end of the day bathing himself [sic] with sun-warmed water from a horse trough."⁶⁶ Her innocently lighthearted description greatly contrasts Evans's, who interprets the scene as sensual and voyeuristic:

Wood presents a frontal male nude in an empty, moonlit landscape. Standing before a long watering trough, the figure raises a full bucket over his head and pours its water in a slow cascade over his body. In contrast to his tanned limbs, the figure's pale torso appears to glow in the moonlight—an effect that, along with the falling water, draws the eye to the figure's thatch of pubic hair and clearly articulated penis.⁶⁷

A critique of Evans's analysis of Wood's artworks is that the scholar finds the homoerotic everywhere he looks, perhaps revealing more about himself than Wood's artworks. However, my reading of *Sultry Night* is nearer to Evans's than Corn's. The nude figure was considered undeniably indecent and sold "under the counter" instead of through the standard subscription service.⁶⁸ Furthermore, Corn's analysis communicates a polite innocence in interpretation that belies the overt sensuality of the print and minimizes the reasons for its quietly controlled distribution.

The monochromatic print features the frontal view of a solitary unclothed farmer bathing in a dusky outdoor night setting. The varying shades of grays and blacks in the landscape contrast the farmer's untanned torso, emitting a glow from the dark composition. He stands tall, in contrast to the long horizon line that passes behind his back and the long watering trough to his left. Softly expressive mark making lends a

⁶⁵ Corn et al., *Grant Wood, the Regionalist Vision*. P. 50

⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 50.

⁶⁷ Evans, *Grant Wood : A Life*. P. 244.

⁶⁸ Corn et al., *Grant Wood, the Regionalist Vision*. P. 50

sense of physicality to the print through visual textures. Above his head, the farmer's dark arms hold a bucket from which he pours a stream of water onto his chin and down the length of his torso to his exposed groin. His body is not idealized like a classical nude, but rather more healthily average in its unassuming frontal pose. The sun has marked his chest revealing a glaringly white torso where he once wore his shirt. He appears strong, but without emphasized musculature in the chest. The naturalistic rendering combined with the unapologetic frontal pose, according to Evans, caused an "extraordinary reaction" against the indecency displayed.⁶⁹ Evans even asserts that the "minor work reveals a visible (and dangerous) faultline in the artist's previously unassailable public image."⁷⁰ He concludes that silence surrounding a painted version of the lithograph proves the point that by this time the male nude could no longer be perceived without suspicion.⁷¹ Though I agree that Wood suffered his first instance of such controversy coupled with a tame censoring, the reaction against it was barely extraordinary when compared to the controversy Cadmus's work of the same era suffered. Wood's homosexuality and panache for visual subterfuge would not be exposed until many years after his 1942 death.⁷²

Sultry Night was produced by the New York firm Associated American Artists, and though the post office would not allow it to be distributed through the mail because of its indecency, it was still made available for purchase in person. In addition, though the normal run of two-hundred-fifty was reduced to only one hundred prints, Associated

⁶⁹ Evans, *Grant Wood : A Life*. P. 244

⁷⁰ Evan, p. 244.

⁷¹ Evans, *Grant Wood : A Life*. P. 259

⁷² Evans reveals a potential pun in the title of the print wherein "night" refers to his close friend and summer roommate Vincent Knight. Complex insider puns inherent in Wood's artworks continue to be revealed, some contain homoerotic or homosexual content while others are political.

American Artists must have been relatively comfortable that the subject matter would not compromise their patriotic patrons' interest in American Scene artists. Their specialty was a focus on encouraging support of American artists through the mass distribution of low-cost prints to all of America, not just the usual elite collectors.⁷³ Despite the perceived eroticism or indecency in *Sultry Night*, the masculinity presented through the embodiment of a simple farmer washing up after a hard day's work in the fields still fit within the accepted range of heteronormativity important to patriotic Regionalist norms. However, the fact that the farmer was so unabashedly nude without canonical reasons, the AAA clearly noticed its potential indecency.

Wood's artistic gender expressions fell within the demarcated lines of Regionalist masculinity. On the other hand, Cadmus's gender expression in his art actually contributed to the construction of those demarcated lines of masculinity, resulting in his own eventual extrication from Regionalism while ultimately allowing an unquestioned inclusion for homosexual Wood. Sadly, Wood's secrecy was doubly precarious in that he had to suffer the position of standing amongst the leaders of Regionalism, despite the profound homophobia espoused, for example through thinly veiled references to "the professors and the museum boys," suggesting an undesirable gender with a less masculine inferiority.⁷⁴ Wood was one of the top three artists in a school that clearly rejected his kind. Benton held an especially vitriolic view of homosexuals and, according to his sister, was obsessed with the idea of "fairies taking over the art world."⁷⁵

⁷³ Erika Doss, "Catering to Consumerism: Associated American Artists and the Marketing of Modern Art, 1934-1958," *Winterthur Portfolio* 26 (Summer-Autumn), no. 2/3 (1991).

⁷⁴ Thomas Hart Benton, "What's Holding Back American Art?," *Saturday Review* 1951. P. 11

⁷⁵ Henry Adams, *Thomas Hart Benton: An American Original* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989). p. 61 and Evans, *Grant Wood : A Life*. P. 179

Cadmus's connection to Regionalism as a symbolic marker of gender difference is peripherally illuminated by R. Tripp Evans's recent book focusing on Grant Wood's homosexuality. On the one hand, *Grant Wood: A Life* candidly explores Wood's homosexuality and suggests new homoeroticisms that virtually nobody had ever conceived of attributing to Wood's work. For example, in *Fall Plowing*, Evans perceives a highly erotic and masculine farm landscape that visually describes anal sex. He references the plow that cuts under the surface of the ground as the site of penetration. Conversely, though Wanda Corn refers to Wood's landscapes as sensuous, she characterizes them as a "relationship between the farmer and mother earth" and, romantically, a "Wagnerian love duet."⁷⁶ According to Corn, the point of the plow is enveloped in an embrace from the earthy soil, not penetrating it.

Though most previous scholars ignored Wood's homosexuality, including Corn, Evans shows that not only were there suspicions surrounding the artist, but also that the artist felt some insecurity about appearing too effeminate.⁷⁷ Cadmus's noisy controversies would surely have helped divert negative attention away from Wood. Were it not for such a marker of difference in Cadmus, and a body of artworks unapologetic in their homoeroticism, Wood's homosexuality may have been more readily available to the public and fellow Regionalists. Further, the legibility of his homosexuality could have compromised the heteronormativity of Regionalist ideology.

It is in the 21st century with the Smithsonian's HIDE/Seek exhibit that Wood's homoerotic visual language can be openly discussed. Both Cadmus and Wood were

⁷⁶ Corn et al., *Grant Wood, the Regionalist Vision*. p. 90

⁷⁷ Evans presents multiple examples of Wood's precarious situation including a blackmail attempt and critic Thomas Craven's assessment that his work was too effeminate. (Evans, p. 107, 243,)

included in the exhibit. If only one of Wood's paintings could embody the ahistorical notion of a closeted homosexual life, *Arnold Comes of Age* can be read like a code only decipherable now. The portrait shows a young man prominently facing the viewer. He is clean cut and wears a tidy sweater. Multiple codes present in *Arnold Comes of Age* reveal Wood's cleverly concealed/revealed homosexuality.⁷⁸ The portrait of Wood's companion and student, Arnold Pyle, includes a quintessential skinny dipping scene in the background. The mood is close to both Thomas Eakins' *The Swimming Hole* and the folksy boy shenanigans of Mark Twain's fictional Huck and Tom. A dark butterfly hovers near the dark sweater sleeve of Arnold's right arm, barely visible. Wood's subterfuge here is in the heavily loaded cipher of that butterfly. Ward explains that the French word *papillon* means butterfly, and obviously relates to transformation. Yet, in French slang, *papillon* also means a gay man.⁷⁹ A "coming out" (ahistorical) is revealed through the butterfly's beauty, but still camouflaged within it, thus allowing the butterfly to exist in nature, to be visible but protected from threats. Ward asserts that this symbolizes the life of Wood as the camouflaged homosexual artist in the midst of the hypermasculine and homophobic school of Regionalism.⁸⁰

Wood and Cadmus are a study in contrasts: Cadmus loud and censored, Wood quiet and immune. Cadmus's willful participation in contemporary cultural dialogues reveals his tolerance for publicity and his success in garnering attention for his artwork. Either a willful attempt at notoriety or an unexpected and innocent consequence that aided the establishment of his career, negative response and publicity aided that same

⁷⁸ David Ward, *Hide/Seek: Arnold Comes of Age, Curator's Tour* (Washington, D.C.: National Portrait Gallery, 2010).

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

career. Some would even characterize his subjection to strings of censorship as a knack for getting into trouble: during the 1930's at least five of his paintings received heated criticism for their visual content.⁸¹ The criticism first loudly emerged during the 1934 controversy over *The Fleet's In* and carried both considerable noise and success in terms of notoriety. The controversy was so widely covered that Cadmus, it seems, would forever be associated with the subject matter. The painting's history of censorship and public review are popularly discussed, but formal analysis of the work is still less consistently considered as many focus on finding the queer in the visual language. Subsequently, the work is divorced from its earlier placement in Regionalist art history. Such a vantage point orchestrates an overall disservice to Cadmus by the insistent attention placed on the *Fleet's In*: looking for the gay artist in the homoerotic visual language is valuable, but potentially too narrow an approach and possibly a distraction from other important issues surrounding Cadmus's cultural production and placement in art history. Cadmus is important as a gay artist, but he is also important as an American artist.

The Fleet's In most importantly illustrates Cadmus's familiarity with a very specific American Scene, a "different" American Scene, but also his interest in classical painting traditions, as well as his emerging interest in a personal philosophy of tolerance and acceptance that I explore in Chapter Three.⁸² The horizontally oriented canvas is longer than it is tall, and reads much like a frieze, from left to right or vice versa, with

⁸¹ Censored works of art include *Coney Island* (1934), *Aspects of Suburban Life: Main Street* (1936), *Sailors and Floozies* (1938) and *The Herrin Massacre* (1940), all of which Anthony Morris explored the controversies in his 2010 dissertation, *The Censored Paintings of Paul Cadmus, 1934-1940: The Body as the Boundary Between the Decent and Obscene*.

⁸² Meyer acknowledges the problematic definitions of Regionalism and ascribes the prefix-like adjective "different" to "American Scene" when discussing Cadmus's pictorial expressions.

multiple figural groupings. The neoclassical composition is further extended by Cadmus's brushstroke, often considered so skilled that many critics refer to it as "renaissance brushstroke" because of the meticulously fine hatching and analytical cross-hatching he employed. Cadmus's exacting technique displays great skill in rendering the figures that fill the canvas: thirteen men and women, and one dog. The horizontal orientation of the canvas makes for a shallow picture plane with the figures spilling out into the viewer's space, encroaching on the viewer much like the figures in *Gilding the Acrobats* (fig. 5). The multiple figural groupings tell stories of different, but similarly suggestive, encounters in a narrative directness that is both pushing upon the viewer, and restraining the figures in the composition. The park's low wall, running the length of the canvas, is the site of these questionable interactions, and reinforces the frieze-like movement. Depending on the mood of the interpreter, the horizontal canvas can be characterized as either frieze-like or comic-strip-like. I support both descriptions. Cadmus's interest in the classical formal tradition of technique and attention to the human figure is well known. Often, the combination is considered a defining trait of his compositions. However, it is impossible to extricate the artist from his contemporary setting to place him as a Renaissance anomaly in the modern era. Likewise, ignoring his interest in Renaissance artistic conventions in order to place him as wholly modern—based on the knowledge that comic strips were a daily part of life for most Americans when they read their daily newspapers—egregiously simplifies his achievement and stated aims.⁸³

⁸³ Eliasoph, *Paul Cadmus: Life and Work*. P. 62. Eliasoph inexplicably chooses the lowest common denominator to interpret the Fleet's In as less academic than mundane.

Philip Eliasoph chooses the lowest common denominator to interpret *The Fleet's In*, solely ascribing the more mundane, and less academic, description whereby the viewer reads the canvas "left to right in comic-strip fashion."⁸⁴ It seems as though Eliasoph surrenders Cadmus's highbrow classical feat to the clichéd rankings of genre and satirical artworks: a low subject surely must be read as a comic strip instead of frieze-like. It is an ambiguity that Cadmus might have welcomed and perpetuated in his precarious situation of being a modern artist with a love of the Classical tradition all the while painting in the 20th century. It would not only allow for interpretations such as Eliasoph's, but also for a sophisticated cleverness for inside jokes: the dog in a Classical tradition is often the sign of fidelity. Here, Fido turns up its nose (snout) to the debaucheries his owner parades him past, as if passing judgment at the goings-ons. However, ambiguity abounds in the canvas. Perhaps the dog is compelled by the goings-ons.

Most accounts of this canvas instruct the viewer to read from left to right. The presence of an elderly woman with a presumably respectable status might interrupt the mood of the scene, but her sidelong glance actually encourages the left to right movement for the viewer's eyes to follow. The older woman is of a different generation as her gloved hands and thick boots indicate. Her body faces left, while her eyes and neck move back towards the scene she has just passed, perhaps dispensing judgment on the scene or simply urging her stalling dog to move along. The lone elderly figure tugs at her dog's leash, a device Cadmus utilizes to connect she and her dog to the tawdry park activities. The length of the dog's leash runs tautly from the old woman's hands to the

⁸⁴ Ibid.

dog, but not without coarsely scraping against the legs of the woman positioned between them. The connection to her dog via the length of the leash further directs the viewer to scan towards the right of the picture plane where the figures emerge closer to us. Crudely, the movement of the dog's leash lifts up the back of the woman's ruffled skirt, exposing more of her leg and emphasizing her broad derriere that faces the viewer. The connections amongst the figural groupings are intricate and emphasize interconnectedness between the scene and the viewer. Like so many of his compositions, Cadmus arranges the figures so that nearly every movement of every figure is answered by the movements of a reciprocating figure. This tactic successfully engages the viewer, pulling them into the scene.

Reading from left to right, the prim and proper elderly woman connects to the woman with raised skirt, via her dog's leash. The woman is connected to a triangular figural grouping consisting of one sailor reclining, perhaps passed out or immovably inebriated, and positioned between a civilian man and a marine seated on the low wall. The nonmilitary man shares a packet of cigarettes with the marine, their exchange occurring over the reclined sailor, his left arm heavily placed over the marine's legs and his right arm in the hands of the woman attired in ruffles who tugs the sailor's arm for attention. If she tugs strongly enough, she might be successful in retrieving him from a same-sex exchange between the civilian and the marine.

It is the figure of the man, the "marcelled, blondined" civilian holding the cigarette, that most legibly makes visible a homosexual in the 1930's.⁸⁵ Quoting a 1933

⁸⁵ George Chauncey, *Gay New York : Gender, Urban Culture, and the Makings of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994); Meyer., *Outlaw Representations: Censorship & Homosexuality*

description of a “fairy,” George Chauncey reveals that “plucked eyebrows, rouged lips, powdered face and marcelled, blondined hair” were absolute markers of “pansy” identity that New Yorkers recognized.⁸⁶ Cadmus included these traits in this figure.

Additionally, the figure wears another marker of his homosexuality: the red tie.⁸⁷

The background behind the narrative is ambiguously plain, save for two trees in the middle ground and another tree in the not-too-distant background. From the foot of the civilian, equally the most left situated prop with the elderly woman’s umbrella, the movement pushes your eye left to right, from umbrella and shoe, to more shoes, open arm gestures, leaning and swaying bodies, to advances and retreats, all the way across the canvas to the far right side where another woman’s *derrière* ends the cycle. She bends over and Cadmus renders only her backside. Her torso and arms obscured by the figures in front of her. Her short skirt and stocking legs are cut off, spilling over the edge of the canvas and creating a momentum beyond its edges. This figure is rendered incompletely, legs and bulging buttocks are all Cadmus has included of her.

As a narrative, the protagonist elderly woman recalls what she has just encountered. Freshly recollected to you the viewer, and close in your mind’s eye, the figures situated most right on the picture plane, closest to the viewer, exhibit a slighter hierarchy in size and notable foreshortening. The pair of sailors at the right, Cadmus renders with exaggerated legs, thick and heavy, an arm reaching towards the viewer as it blocks the passage of the three women walking towards them. As this arm blocks the

in Twentieth-Century American Art. Meyer refers to Chauncey’s explanations of these cultural markers. P. 43

⁸⁶ Chauncey, *Gay New York : Gender, Urban Culture, and the Makings of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*. P. 54

⁸⁷ *Ibid*; Meyer., *Outlaw Representations: Censorship & Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century American Art*. Meyer refers to Chauncey’s explanations of these cultural markers. P. 43

three women, it also welcomes them in an unavoidable and somewhat aggressive gesture, possibly unwanted by the women. All of the figures in this scene share the trait of irrepressible physicality, male and female alike: buttocks, hips, muscles, curves, and groins all undeniably rendered through the colorful clothing adorning their bodies. Yet, as other scholars have noted, all of the figures emphatically connect through the repetition of same-sex contact in spite of the references to heterosexual contact. Some scholars read this as a consistent rejection and repulsion of the opposite sex by Cadmus.⁸⁸

Lincoln Kirstein, Cadmus's close friend and brother-in-law, interprets *The Fleet's In* through an interestingly presumptive lens: he asserts his own authoritative voice via his intimate familiarity with both the artist and the era. His analysis, according to himself, is somehow closer to an authoritative truth in interpretation and historical account because of his experience and closeness in living it *with* the artist.⁸⁹ Kirstein writes about the *Fleet's In*:

Both in spirit of a genre scene and more, in its satirical treatment, Cadmus's second version of encounters between sailors ashore with complaisant [sic] civilians met with unexpected furor. This was also due to implied sarcasm at the naval authority's frightened reaction to an implied lack of discipline. No longer were the lower ranks portrayed as jovial high-school dropouts, but rather as gross, sloppily uniformed gobs, high on bathtub gin, goosing girls no nicer than need be. In coarse byplay, their lewd hijinks shock a nice old lady (drawn from the painter's aunt, with her small dog). A sardonic commentary in the tradition of Hogarth, Rowlandson, and Gilray, its hot color and raw chiaroscuro enforces brute strength.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Eliasoph, *Paul Cadmus: Life and Work*.

⁸⁹ Walter Benjamin implores us to own history as our own and acknowledge that we make it useful to us today and it exists for contemporary purpose.

⁹⁰ Lincoln Kirstein and Paul Cadmus, *Paul Cadmus*, [Rev. ed. (San Francisco, Calif.: Pomegranate Artbooks, 1992). P. 25

The reference to Hogarth is perhaps an attempt to place the artist in the role of cultural moral dispenser. At last, somebody acknowledges Cadmus's agency of ideology! However, the morality Cadmus adhered to was not of the same directive and preachy nature of Hogarth, particularly in Cadmus's works of this era. *The Fleet's In* embodies subject matter which some find undesirable or immoral, then and now, but it does not hold the same moralizing lessons that Hogarth impressed upon his audiences, nor were they intended to be distributed in the same way. In Mark Hallet's *The Spectacle of Difference*, the author looks at satire in the English tradition and illuminates the conflation of the highbrow (fine art) and the lowbrow in an era that welcomed satirical themes. Hogarth had set out to teach a lesson in morals, much like the morality tales staged in English theater that Hogarth thought to distribute via the graphic arts. In contrast, Cadmus's only lifelong moral credo was based solely in an individualistic pacifism and non-violence. When asked to describe the scene he depicts in *The Fleet's In*, Cadmus had this to say: "I simply painted what I saw----people having a gay time."⁹¹ It seems to be a light-hearted claim, but inherently espouses the right to personal freedoms no matter how sordid some may perceive them to be. Further, it shows a consistency with his interest in individuality and non-violence—nobody gets hurt.

As noted before, most scholars focus on the censorship of *The Fleet's In*. Reading academic accounts of the censorship, perusing newspaper articles and comics is highly entertaining. The publications informing the general populace about the controversy took a lighthearted approach that ultimately poked fun at the U.S. Navy, not Cadmus. The idea that the censorship did not ultimately ruin Cadmus helps to soften the

⁹¹ Copyright Collection, "Paul Cadmus, *Enfant Terrible* at 80," (1984).

seriousness of the issue. Suffering censorship did not outrage him, he explains, because he “just took it as a matter of course that people were censored.”⁹² Cadmus stated that he was not even angry over the censorship, only “a little bit indignant.”⁹³ In fact, Cadmus acknowledged it was because of the Navy’s attack on his work that his career took off, and as characterized by Richard Meyer, it would prove to be Cadmus’s “inaugural moment of notoriety.”⁹⁴ A few years after the controversy, a 1937 Esquire magazine article calculated Cadmus’s unexpected benefit from the whole affair: “For every individual who might have seen the original at the Corcoran, at least one thousand saw it in black and white reproduction.”⁹⁵

Scholar Anthony Morris claims that the source of criticism against Cadmus centered more on heterosexual moral issues in concert with the general display of debauchery on the canvases, and less so on the homoerotic imagery.⁹⁶ However, the fact remains that Cadmus’s subject matter, and his choice to depict homoerotic imagery, left him susceptible to the discrimination lobbed against homosexuals. Whether or not the discrimination was blatantly or quietly deployed, he both benefitted from and suffered the consequences of it. Morris is right to point out that much of Cadmus’s work is overtly homoerotic yet not all of it received public controversy. The theme of *The Fleet’s In* is clearly a scene that captures the spirit of shore leave for American sailors renowned for the ribaldry and carousing activities that take place during this free time. That Cadmus

⁹²Judd Tully, *Oral History Interview with Paul Cadmus*, vol. April 7, 1988, *Oral History Program* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1988), Interview with Paul Cadmus.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Meyer., *Outlaw Representations: Censorship & Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century American Art*. P. 39

⁹⁵ Quoted in Ibid.

⁹⁶ Anthony J. Morris, "The Censored Paintings of Paul Cadmus, 1934-1940: The Body as the Boundary between the Decent and Obscene," (Case Western Reserve University / OhioLINK, 2010). p. 2

would choose to paint this scene at all discloses information about him, then and now. Author George Chauncey conveys the insider knowledge available to homosexuals of the day when he explains an illustration of a joke certificate of membership in the “Ancient Order of Pansies of America” that was distributed amongst New York City homosexuals during the 1930’s.

This “certificate” circulated among gay men in the 1930’s. It can be read as a spoof of pansies or as an assertion by those pansies of their membership in a social group—or both. The “C Food” signature draws on gay slang (“seafood” referred to sailors as sex objects) to make an insider’s joke about the desirability—and availability—of sailors.⁹⁷

Sailors were of interest to civilians as well as navy officials that were concerned about their same-sex shore leave shenanigans. Norman Rockwell painted the sailor many times. He created multiple images for the Saturday Evening Post that feature the sailor as subject matter. Yet, how does Cadmus’s choice of sailor differ from Rockwell’s? Famously, Rockwell portrays a sailor getting a new tattoo, in *The Tattooist*. Though for decades innocuously interpreted as a masculine heterosexual sailor, Elizabeth Lee recently reinterprets the image to find the queer within.

Rockwell has arranged the two male figures so that the tattoo artist’s left arm, while concealed, would logically have to be resting on the sailor’s lap—perhaps this helps explain the sailor’s uncomfortable sidelong glance. What’s more, the tattoo artist’s legs are openly splayed against the sailor, while his buttocks—foregrounded for the viewer and clothed in flesh-colored pants—are oddly stained with dirty patches. The tattoo artist’s anal region, bracketed by a white towel that is spread across his upper thighs, forms a focal point for the painting, offering the

⁹⁷ Chauncey, *Gay New York : Gender, Urban Culture, and the Makings of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*. P. 52

kind of exaggerated detail which lends itself to reading the painting “‘queerly.’”

These contradictory cues make it difficult to assign Rockwell’s image of the sailor any one particular meaning; rather, he remains a sexually ambiguous figure.⁹⁸

The ambiguity Lee identifies has allowed queer visual culture to function within normative heterosexual social structures. However, I further propose that the ambiguity is not silent, but rather articulated in silences. For example, the Navy Admiral that censored *The Fleet’s In* never referred to homosexuals in his reasoning. Further, in his own defense against the Navy’s actions, Meyer identifies Cadmus’s rebuttals as only alluding to homosexuality where “he leaves the content of that knowledge largely unspoken.”⁹⁹

Yet, the complication and ambiguity of sexuality evident in Rockwell’s work certainly does not carry the same inference as that found in the work of Cadmus. However, such ambiguity in sailors as subject matter presents the important proof that homosexuality amongst sailors was of concern to many people. In fact, a national scandal erupted years earlier beginning with the United States Navy’s 1919 efforts to root out homosexuals in Newport, Rhode Island.¹⁰⁰ The Navy’s tactics included undercover agents that would entrap sailors and civilians. The resulting trial was widely covered in newspapers and ended with shame on Navy leaders. So, as Elizabeth Lee asserts, both

⁹⁸ Elizabeth Lee, "When Sailors Kiss: Picturing Homosexuality in Post-World War II America," *The Journal of American Culture* 32, no. 4 (2009). P. 322.

⁹⁹ Meyer., *Outlaw Representations: Censorship & Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century American Art*. P. 53

¹⁰⁰ Lawrence R. Murphy, *Perverts by Official Order : The Campaign against Homosexuals by the United States Navy* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 1988).

Cadmus's and Rockwell's sailors embody a legibility for both homosexual and heterosexual viewers.¹⁰¹

Only recently has potential homoeroticism in the work of Rockwell been investigated and Rockwell has not suffered the silence around his work that Cadmus has. Yet, what most scholars fails to distinguish about Cadmus's career and what I try to illuminate here is that it is later in Cadmus's career, where his homoerotic imagery is positioned outside of the American Scene, that a silence falls around his work and even the spectacle of controversy subsides.

Sarah Burns explains how spectacle contributes to the formation of the modern artist's identity when she discusses James McNeill Whistler's understanding of public identity. Indeed, the modern artist's identity, or at least the performance inherent in creating such an identity, could perhaps be romanticized as an inherently American endeavor. After all, the nation has always strived to create identity, and continues to do so through this moment. In terms of Whistler, Burns explains that his "attention-getting techniques fell perfectly in line with the technology and psychology of advertising, a budding new industry serving the interests of an ever more powerful consumer ethos."¹⁰² Acknowledging the new industry of advertising offers a powerful view into an emerging modern society. It is no small coincidence that the young industry of advertising during Whistler's era became, during Cadmus's era, a full-blown bona fide force of cultural production that Cadmus grew up in. He also worked in advertising during the earliest part of his professional life as did many other contemporary artists. Shrewdly, Cadmus

¹⁰¹ Lee, "When Sailors Kiss: Picturing Homosexuality in Post-World War II America."

¹⁰² Sarah Burns, *Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996). P. 231.

had engraved a reproduction of *The Fleet's In*, before it ever went to the Corcoran, thus allowing for the image to be carried in newspapers all over the country when his own sailor scandal erupted.

Other artists made their way by working in advertising, just as Cadmus had. Their paths would cross in shows, exhibits, newspaper accounts of shows, and magazines. The persona of the Regionalist artist could have been pierced and challenged if homosexuals in their midst were acknowledged. The American Scene were a group of artists, if not tight-knit, at least aware of each other and supportive during this time. Even Thomas Hart Benton sent Cadmus a letter of support when *The Fleet's In* controversy occurred.

Mr. Paul Cadmus
54 Morton Street

I've never seen a reproduction of the picture the old navy boys are kicking about. If I can be of any service to you in its defense, call on me.

Sincerely Yours,
Thomas H. Benton¹⁰³

The complications of Cadmus's homosexuality as a prominent barrier to his inclusion within Regionalism reveal the ever-changing and ever-negotiated category of Regionalism and its articulated markers of difference. The pose of Cadmus's homosexuality within Regionalism, and the resulting predicament, highlights the social and political forces that separate heterosexual Anglo-Saxon Midwestern America from artists such as Cadmus. Not only has he been refused recognition as a Regionalist precisely because his homosexuality and homoerotic imagery seemingly fall outside of

¹⁰³ Meyer. P. 305. Meyer includes this undated letter in the notes of his text. Cadmus granted him permission to cite it, but it was not reprinted.

the accepted national identity of what it means to be an American, but his exclusion escalated throughout the decades of the twentieth century when the visual dialogue of American nationalism shifted from Regionalism to Abstract Expressionism. Cadmus was held up as a marker of exclusion (predicated on a limited and delimiting type of inclusion) in favor of artists such as Wood who seemingly embodied the heteronormative masculine gender acceptable to Regionalists.

Wood's most iconic image, *American Gothic* is inarguably also the greatest icon of Regionalism. The image is enduring, unquestioned in its status of representing the American ideal. Wood himself remains an unquestioned Regionalist, continuing to maintain that designation, despite his known homosexuality. Satire was the sharpest antecedent to the saucy queer humor emergent later in the 20th century and Wood has been cast as incapable of such an endeavor because of a stereotypical conflation of cowardice and homosexuality. R Tripp Evans acknowledges the supposed disdain epitomized in *American Gothic* and exposes the conflation of cowardice and homosexuality identified by one critic as a false connection that belies the truer "gay sensibility" he is able to identify through more careful and thoughtful analysis.¹⁰⁴ Such "gay sensibility" is not the pansy-like caution of a homosexual afraid to openly make fun of his subject matter through a satirical approach, Evans concludes. Rather, it is an 'inventive subversion' more powerful and representative of Wood's gay sensibilities precisely because of the restraint conducted.¹⁰⁵ Such restraint could be honored by the Regionalists when Cadmus's bold colorful scenes almost always focused on the male nude filling the service of exemplary foil.

¹⁰⁴ Evans, *Grant Wood : A Life*. P. 103

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, p. 104.

Chapter 2

Conversation Pieces not Quite Rural

Julia Heller asserts in *The Regionalists*, her account of the wide-ranging multi-faceted art movement she places in the 1930's, and I concur, that Regionalism did not always refer to the specific Midwestern regions of the United States. In fact, Regionalism was a phenomenon that artists engaged in all across the country and from coast to coast. Regionalism never was and, yet, was everywhere, all over America. Perhaps part of Cadmus's inclusion in the rural versus urban equation can be answered by Matthew Baigell, who nicely termed it "urban Regionalism" in reference to Reginald Marsh's images of bustling crowded urban street scenes.¹⁰⁶ "Urban Regionalism," a term mostly lost to us now, but Regionalism nevertheless.

As a matter of inclusion, Paul Cadmus was no different than other artists painting scenes of America during the 1930's and 1940's. However, the answered urge to paint the scenes of America was more personal than most scholars have acknowledged. Not only were artists painting scenes of America, but scenes of America from their own experience innately infused with their personal ideological underpinnings. For Cadmus, that meant communicating his sophisticated Humanist pursuits and idealizations of artist masters that he so often referenced in his work and served as a foundational quality of his individualism. Paul Cadmus's 1942 tempera on panel *Lloyd and Barbara Wescott With Eclipse of Morston, Mulhocaway Butterfat Favorite, and Heartsease Butterfat Heather* is one entree into exploring the unequivocal saturation of Regionalism throughout the United States. According to his friend Lincoln Kirstein, though Cadmus rarely painted

¹⁰⁶ Baigell, *The American Scene: American Painting of the 1930's*. p. 146 in discussion of Reginald Marsh.

commissioned portraits, this painting was one of only two exceptions, both of which occurred between 1940 and 1942. (Kirstein and Cadmus 1984) (Kirstein and Cadmus 1984)¹⁰⁷ Cadmus portrays his friends, the Wescotts, at their dairy farm in New Jersey, an obvious geographic departure from the Midwest for those that find Regionalism located solely there amongst corn fields.

Despite the medium size of the panel, the horizontal orientation of the painting lends a monumental feeling to the subject at hand: a couple leans against the fence on their farm. Lloyd Wescott's tall pose in the center of the canvas reinforces both the monumentality of the scene and his own masculine physical stature. Here, Wescott is heroic and Cadmus makes him so, without any hint of the satire or disdain for humanity that Cadmus is so often faulted with portraying. Indeed, the men were friends and Cadmus creates on the canvas a controlled precision, nearly a reverence for the goings on of his farmer friend (a gentleman farmer), the farmer's wife, and their farming life. Though Kirstein wants to place Cadmus in the company of English portraiture as evidenced in his reference to Gainsborough (indeed, his writing about Cadmus is edited for the second edition of the book, to clarify his thoughts and identify his esteem for Cadmus), he misses a crucial reference with origins much closer to home. John Steurat Curry's *Tornado Over Kansas*, from 1929, presents a Midwestern farming family in the midst of a storm on their farm.

In Curry's *Tornado Over Kansas*, the family's patriarch is posed central to the canvas, much like Cadmus's placement of Lloyd Wescott. Though Curry's figure is with

¹⁰⁷ Kirstein and Cadmus, *Paul Cadmus*. The other commissioned painting was *Conversation Piece*, a group portrait of Glenway Wescott, Monroe Wheeler and Goerge Platt Lynes---Lloyd Wescott's older writer brother. P. 73

his back to the viewer, his placement as central to the welfare of the farm is emphasized by the proportion of his figure and his placement as the nearest figure to the viewer. Another striking difference between the two canvases is the state of affairs each artist has chosen to portray. The Wescotts appear refined, wealthy, and in control of their surroundings, employee and prized animals all. Even though the sky hints at the inherent risk of weather with low heavy swaths of gray clouds heavily filling two-thirds of the composition, it is not nearly the savage storm sky of Curry's farm. In *Tornado Over Kansas*, the whole family struggles against the wind of the storm. The farm animals, save for a chicken and black cat in the arms of a child, are left to fend for themselves during the life-threatening tornado. A sharp gray funnel cloud emerges from the nearly black upper portion of the sky and blasts down into the landscape on the horizon in the background.

A valuable juxtaposition of symbology emerges between the controlled farm of Cadmus's gentleman farmer and Curry's rugged farmer in the uncontrolled wild of a tornado advancing on his Midwestern farm: the rural versus the urban. Heller acknowledges that during its decade, Regionalists did not seek to elevate the rural over the urban, or vice versa.¹⁰⁸ This device of differentiation came later, orchestrated by Benton, Curry and art critics.¹⁰⁹ Here on Cadmus's farm, the figures and subject matter retain an urban sophistication that is absent in *Tornado Over Kansas*, yet it captures an American Scene well within the scope of Regionalism at that time. Even though the

¹⁰⁸ Heller places Regionalist production in the 1930's.

¹⁰⁹ Deborah Bricker Balken also thoroughly investigated this divide in her recent catalog for the exhibit, "After Many Springs," where she claims that modernism hailed from both the city and the rural. However, she perpetuates the narrowed collections of rural Regionalists as solely the recognized triumvirate.

Wescotts were worldly and sophisticated with professional experience in both art and literature, their farm was indeed an American farm. According to Kirstein, the Wescott's farm, Mulhocaway, was a "large, model farm in Central New Jersey where they pioneered artificial insemination of cattle. Their prize herds of brown-and-white Guernseys and sleek, heavy Suffolk Punch draft horses became famous." (Kirstein and Cadmus 1984) (Kirstein and Cadmus 1984)¹¹⁰ In a sense, their rural farm bore more traits of an industrialized farm, much different than the traditional agrarian setting found in *Tornado Over Kansas*. Mulhocaway is cultivated to an extreme orderliness found in the symmetry of the barn and multiple grain silos not evident in Curry's farm. Wescott wears refined clothing, a work shirt with the sleeves rolled up above his elbows, revealing the readily available message of his willingness to subscribe to the American work ethic of "pushing up sleeves." He does not wear the almost ragged overalls of Curry's farmer, but rather, tidy workpants with his shirt neatly tucked in at the waist. His tanned skin reveals his time spent working in the outdoors. Unlike Curry's farmer, the ruggedly weather worn farmer's tan, Cadmus's subject appears comfortably exposed to the elements as though he might even control the environment.

The controlled environment of a gentleman's farm, agriculturally sophisticated, brings to mind the intellectual order of another earlier American painter: Charles Willson Peale. Peale's *Belfield Farm* 1816 oil on canvas exemplifies the spirit of American agriculture as a scientific endeavor (figure 14.) That spirit of agricultural innovation evident, if not originating in Peale's work, is also visible in Cadmus's farm scene, amplified to a showy crescendo of agrarian technical bravado.

¹¹⁰ Kirstein and Cadmus, *Paul Cadmus*. P. 73

In fact, Cadmus is sharing valuable identifying information about Wescott and his farm. As Kirstein points out, Cadmus is calling to mind the tradition of English landscape portraiture in the same vein as Gainsborough.¹¹¹ It is a familiar trope for Cadmus and evident in a work from two years earlier, 1940's *Conversation Piece*. Like conversation pieces from centuries past, Cadmus utilizes the trope of the outdoor conversation piece with devices that convey a natural sense of entitlement. In the group portrait Cadmus places the figures in the landscape of a country estate, a cultivated garden and lawn that on the one hand diminishes any potential opposition between culture and nature, and on the other hand reinforces the naturalness of the figures. The three figures include Glenway Wescott, Lloyds younger brother, photographer George Platt Lynes and Monroe Wheeler. Cadmus arranges the men at the base of a strong and hearty tree several hundred feet in front of the home, "Stone Blossom," that they occupied.¹¹² The tree as a compositional device harkens back to Gainsborough's 1749 portrait, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Andrews Conversation Piece. Like the conversation pieces Gainsborough is known for, Cadmus presents a juxtaposition of culture and nature in the landscape, culminating in a delicate balance of the innate naturalness found in a person of a certain class, embodied by the looser body language evident in the men he portrays.

The ideology of landscapes is fruitfully explored by Ann Bermingham in her investigation Landscape and Ideology: the English Rustic Tradition, 1740 – 1860, which I consulted in my attempt to decipher Cadmus's references to conversation pieces in the context of a 1930's U.S. American sensibility. She provides a great clarification about the execution of landscapes as conversation pieces and connections between people and the

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*

landscape portrayed. The occupants of Cadmus's conversation pieces are connected to the landscape superficially in the same way that the farmer in Curry's *Tornado Over Kansas* is connected to the land. Yet, the reference to any sort of aristocratic class, whether rooted in Renaissance Humanism or Cadmus's more modern iteration influenced by EM Forster, places him closer to Gainsborough than to Curry.

Morris thinks to look at Thomas Hart Benton's representation of the working class in his *America Today* mural panels of 1930. What we find is, in fact, representations of both the rural and the *urban* at a moment in art criticism when Regionalism had not yet been narrowed to a lone isolated category of the *rural*.

Cadmus's visual language of homoeroticism, as found in *The Fleet's In*, is predominantly based in the urban, thus, providing strong measures for those who would want to differentiate the urban from the rural and conveniently place the homosexual as solely an urban creature. Placing the homosexual in the city allowed Wood more breathing room in the country. Yet, to Cadmus's urban homosexual, there is Wood's rural iteration in *Arnold Comes of Age*, not so legible during its day.

The assertion that painters of the 1930's aimed either to convey a nationalist optimism, or expose social ills, is a false binary that supports the rural/urban divide, even when casting a wider net beyond Cadmus in order to consider other artists. Many American scene painters, including Regionalists and Urban Regionalists, often looked to the working class in their subject matter. Morris highlights the problem artists had in addressing social issues of the day in a responsible way and without insulting the subject by portraying them as the feeble poor. All the while, Morris claims, they strived to portray the working class subject realistically, true to the issues, and without

romanticizing them as heroic.¹¹³ Morris looks to Thomas Hart Benton in order to differentiate his interest and concern for the heroic worker contrasted against what he claims is Cadmus's disinterest in social issues or the worker.¹¹⁴ Unfortunately, this plays to his argument that Cadmus looked down on his subjects with disdain in a vein of sardonic social critique. He analyzes Benton's *America Today* murals to prove the difference. As for Cadmus, after having highlighted how seriously concerned Benton and other artist's were with the state of social ills in the U.S., he then goes on to exclude Cadmus from having any concern with the world. He acknowledges the differences amongst a selection of artists purportedly concerning social justice, including Reginald Marsh, but then seems to differentiate their collective aim as universal, but still in opposition to Cadmus:

What is striking about Cadmus's work, on the other hand, is its apparent lack of interest in issues of social reform. They simply enact a human comedy, in which the viewer observes with sarcastic humor. As will be argued in this dissertation, social critique is present in Cadmus's paintings, but is manifest in a less explicit manner than that of his contemporaries.¹¹⁵

In contradiction to his assertion, Morris includes mention of Cadmus's *Herrin Massacre*, an image too realistic in its violent subject matter and social relevance to be included in the Life Magazine project it was commissioned for. This, despite the astonishing fact that when Cadmus was invited to depict a historic American event, he chose a scene that is furiously concerned with labor issues!

¹¹³ Morris, "The Censored Paintings of Paul Cadmus, 1934-1940: The Body as the Boundary between the Decent and Obscene." P. 23.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, p. 23

¹¹⁵ Morris, "The Censored Paintings of Paul Cadmus, 1934-1940: The Body as the Boundary between the Decent and Obscene." P. 27

Morris's oversight is in his acceptance of Regionalism as an uncontested and static category of American art. The oversight is not his own, but one casually inherited from Eliasoph and others. The oversight of an unquestioned Regionalism allows him to refrain from inquiries of ideologies that help shape Regionalism, in favor of following the more recent paradigm of Cadmus as lone anomalous gay artist as differentiated in Eliasoph's dissertation. This is because it makes it an unchanging argument for him to challenge. To be fair, Morris is only one of the most recent scholars to diminish Cadmus's presence in Regionalist investigations. In her 2009 book, *After Many Springs: Regionalism, Modernism, and the Midwest*, Debra Bricker Balken importantly explores what she characterizes as the "artistic battles that waged simultaneously in New York and the Midwest during the 1930's and 1940's."¹¹⁶ In her argument, she attempts to bridge the often confused relationship between Regionalism and Modernism by illuminating the state of the arts, post-Depression era, as "polarizing and alienating communities of artists who would be variously labeled either modernists or Regionalists, without a full assessment of the interconnections that at times unified their work."¹¹⁷ Yet, she too finds herself relying on the exclusive and inaccurate Regionalist triumvirate of Benton, Wood, and Curry to argue her case: Regionalism's origins were actually in the modernist movement. She does so at the expense of perpetuating the rural/urban divide. Consequently, there is no room in her discussion to even mention Paul Cadmus or his contributions at all.

¹¹⁶Balken, *After Many Springs : Regionalism, Modernism, & the Midwest*. preface page 1

¹¹⁷*Ibid.* page 37.

Ever Censored, Ever About Censorship

As shown in Chapter One, scholar Anthony Morris centers his investigation of Cadmus within a discourse on censorship and argues that though the homosexual eye is an acknowledged viewpoint of the artist, it is not the overarching reason for the controversy Cadmus's work often stirred up. It is curious that in an age of continued "don't ask, don't tell" negotiations, a current scholar would argue that the homoerotic imagery of the *The Fleet's In* would be a subordinate reason for censorship, then, and obviously now. Instead, as Morris acknowledges the homoerotic imagery of sailors on shore leave, he sets out to diminish the potential impact this subject would have had in the United States during the 1930's. And while the issue of censorship has proven to be an important topic throughout the 20th century and now into the 21st century, so too does the issue of discrimination against homosexuals remain a constant struggle. It is dangerous to whittle away the very real issues of discrimination against homosexuals and turn it into a discussion of censorship derived from a sense of the proper, supposedly deployed to protect the social mores attributed to decent lady-like demeanor a la the carnivalesque.¹¹⁸ Throughout Morris's attempts to convince us of the reasons for the censorship of Paul Cadmus's artwork, he ultimately succeeds in completely removing Cadmus from discussions of Regionalism, all the while including Regionalists in his argument, without even ever specifically referring to Regionalism, except in the citations that include much scholarship on Regionalism itself.

Regionalism unquestioned allows a freedom from ideological inquiries that could reveal shaping of the genre. This perpetuates the more recent paradigm of Cadmus as a

¹¹⁸ Morris, Anthony. *The Censored Paintings of Paul Cadmus, 1934-1940: The Body as the Boundary Between the Decent and the Obscene*. Dissertation 2010.

lone anomalous gay artist as differentiated in Eliasoph's dissertation and elsewhere. This is because it makes it an unchanging argument unnecessary for him to challenge. Instead, Morris challenges Eliasoph's argument surrounding censorship of the homoerotic as though it is sound, when its foundations are in fact systematically weak in that they fail to consider what the actual censorship achieves in relation to Regionalism. Cadmus, intentionally or not, is utilized as means to create the category of Regionalism and its inherent heterosexual masculinity (heteronormativity) that allowed Grant Wood's homosexuality to remain relatively unnoticed. Likewise, in Morris's dissertation, Regionalists are slyly used as a means to differentiate Cadmus from Regionalism. Morris inserts artists culled from recent scholarship on Regionalism, in order to generally argue that Cadmus's association with American Scene painters and their mid-century rejection by critics such as Clement Greenberg exemplified their liberal leanings more than the consequent conservatism asserted by the likes of Greenberg. Morris does this in order to argue that Cadmus lacked concern for the social issues his peers of the 1930's portrayed on their canvases. Morris simply states that his "paintings stand out as somewhat different from that of the other major American artists of the 1930s in their representation of the working class, women, and in liquor and prohibition issues prohibition."¹¹⁹ As though Cadmus were amoral and divorced from the world he occupied. Morris references Eliasoph's differentiation of Cadmus from Regionalism as being exemplified through his subject matter, minimizing Cadmus's satiric critique of the powerful in favor of the generalized American.

¹¹⁹ Morris, "The Censored Paintings of Paul Cadmus, 1934-1940: The Body as the Boundary between the Decent and Obscene." P. 23

Morris mistakes Eliasoph's claim that Cadmus's satire is inherently European and not American because "Cadmus's paintings did not present the same nationalistic optimism as the other Regionalists, and did not address specific political policies and events taken up by the social realists."¹²⁰ Satire is necessarily specific about the time and place it depicts.¹²¹ Morris goes so far as to claim that Eliasoph locates Cadmus's satire in traditional European sources, not American.¹²² Eliasoph argues that the artist belittles the inflated subject (or "victim" of the satire) through distortion and disfiguration. However, Eliasoph notes that unlike Cadmus's European forebears, the subjects are not political leaders or members of the aristocratic elite, rather "he deals with the average American and exposes the bourgeois sense of overblown self-importance."¹²³ A look at the formal qualities of the *Fleet's In* illustrates a thematic decision that clearly separates types/worlds/sexualities/morals; a device Cadmus utilizes in many of his works, including his later canvas titled *What I Believe*, which I focus on in Chapter Three. Cadmus's distinct division is thematic and purposeful: he narrates E.M. Forster's discussion of, and affinity for, the "sensitive," a moniker referring to homosexuals and those tolerant of them.

¹²⁰ Eliasoph, 120.

¹²¹ Rauser, *Caricature*, p. 19

¹²² *Ibid*, 45.

¹²³ *Ibid*, p. 45.

Chapter 3

How the Gay Grinch Almost Stole Christmas

“WARNING: This story contains graphic photographs of items on display in an exhibit at the Smithsonian Institution’s National Portrait Gallery,” admonished readers of CNS News, a news website that features the “*right news, right now.*”¹²⁴ The titillating headline read, “Smithsonian Christmas-Season Exhibit Features Ant-Covered Jesus, Naked Brothers Kissing, Genitalia, and Ellen DeGeneres Grabbing Her Breasts.”¹²⁵ With that, it is no wonder conservative politicians considered it a cue to voice their objections of the Smithsonian’s Hide/Seek: Difference and Desire in American Portraiture exhibit. In fact, the titillating headline of the article followed in tone Pat Robertson’s Moral Majority *modus operandi* in which twenty years before his conservative Christian followers received sealed red envelopes with a personal warning from him that they would be as outraged as he when they opened the envelope.¹²⁶ The style of tactical outrage lobbed against artist Robert Mapplethorpe in 1989 felt like just yesterday in 2009 when Republican Speaker of the House John Boehner, and fellow Republican Representative Eric Cantor both called for the cancellation of Hide/Seek.¹²⁷ Cantor

¹²⁴ Penny Starr, "Smithsonian Christmas-Season Exhibit Features Ant-Covered Jesus, Naked Brothers Kissing, Genitalia, and Ellen Degeneres Grabbing Her Breasts | Cns News," *CNS News*, 2013-08-20T00:00:00Z 2013. Italic emphasis on the word “right” is my own, to show the conservative nature of the online publication.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Pat Roberston letter, October 25, 1989, reprinted in Richard Bolton, *Culture Wars : Documents from the Recent Controversies in the Arts*, 1st ed. (New York: New Press, 1992) and discussed in Meyer., *Outlaw Representations: Censorship & Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century American Art*; Richard Bolton, *Culture Wars : Documents from the Recent Controversies in the Arts*, 1st ed. (New York: New Press, 1992).p. 3.

¹²⁷ Scott Jaschik, "'Hide/Seek' (and Remove) | inside Higher Ed," (2013).

characterized the show as a deliberate effort to steal Christmas by ruining a “Christmas show” with filth. For them, the Gay Grinch was stealing Christmas.

Hide/Seek was suffering a new but familiar and more or less traditional 20th century congressional flogging. Critics and blatant homophobic leaders successfully meted out censorship, but were not able to shut the whole show down. w.¹²⁸ Despite the bold objections, the show co-curated by Jonathan Katz and David C. Ward went up in the halls of the Smithsonian’s National Portrait Gallery, and for once, it was not Paul Cadmus specifically under the censorship spotlight. Instead, in addition to objections over the exhibit’s perceived overall general debauchery, artist David Wojnarowicz’s video, *A Fire in My Belly* marked the loudest rumblings. His video concerned with the AIDS epidemic was removed from the show. It was as though the fire for sacrificial torchbearer passed from the old guard, elder torchbearers of openly gay artists like Paul Cadmus, to later artists targeted or drafted for the censorship frontline.¹²⁹ Such a position is subjective and depends on how one looks at it.¹³⁰ The seriousness of the matter is clarified in David C. Ward’s response to an interviewer’s question if all of the show’s “brouhaha” was ultimately positive or negative for the show.¹³¹

There’s an actual political debate going on that has material consequences. If that struggle is lost by the National Portrait Gallery and the Smithsonian, this will chill [scholarship and exhibitions] for another 20 years. I’m very happy we raised this issue. I think the fact that the controversy has developed shows the exhibition’s salience and explosiveness. It shows that our framing of the issue is correct — except that the issues that were issues in 1890 or 1920 or 1950 or 1980 are still

¹²⁸ The Huffington Post, "Republican Congressman Calls for Congressional Investigation of Controversial Artwork," (2013).

¹²⁹ "Surprising Revelation At "Hide/Seek" Conference: Smithsonian’s Conservative Congressional Hero," (2013).

¹³⁰ Jaschik, "'Hide/Seek' (and Remove) | inside Higher Ed."

¹³¹ Tyler Green, "Q&a with "Hide/Seek" Curators Jonathan Katz and David C. Ward | Tyler Green: Modern Art Notes | Artinfo.Com," (2013).

alive and this is still a show that is perceived as a threat. That threat is not just academic, it is existential.¹³²

A lot of post-Stonewall “queer” art is constructed to challenge society and popular culture to consider equal rights for gays and lesbians, or at least to make them visible, weaving them into the knotted fabric of American identity. David Wojnarowicz’s video, *A Fire in My Belly*, was this time the target of such scrutiny and was ultimately served up as the *piece de resistance-censure* that could be astoundingly symbolically removed from the show. Left behind in its wake, literally and physically, was Paul Cadmus’s 1948 canvas, *What I Believe*. It is not without irony that Cadmus’s canvas stayed behind, included in the show without even a question, after the numerous instances of censorship throughout his career, and the multiple inquiries into the drama of such censorship recently. Paul Cadmus, by all accounts, did not self-identify as solely a gay artist. Thus, *What I Believe*, as his most vivid self-doctrinal canvas, his personal ode to a modern 20th century Humanism, again asserts his reluctance at being considered “America’s Greatest Gay Artist.”¹³³ Yet, here he is in a gay show.

In one review of *HIDE/Seek*, “Seeing Queerly,” Faye Hirsch brings up the salient point that the show may have originally found legitimacy in what she characterizes as the polite effort of refraining from offense through the prominent inclusion of *establishment* artists: “Thomas Eakins, Grant Wood, and Marsden Hartley to Jasper Johns, Ellsworth Kelly and Georgia O’Keeffe.” It should bring us pause to leap from one tidy group summing with Hartley, to another tidy group beginning with Johns. However, I understand why the author makes this leap: it is tidier, and easier than

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ The Advocate, check date.

complicating a simple binary (social/academic?) divide of the heterosexual and the homosexual that makes looking at the homoerotic in art a much less taxing task.

Though Hirsch utilizes Cadmus's canvas as evidentiary illustration of a singular binary world in which homosexuals and heterosexuals live divided, it is not really so. Jonathan Weinberg, with similar concerns in an earlier work, cautions us of such simplicity. In Male Desire: the Homoerotic in American Art, Weinberg reminds us that "it is always a mistake to confuse the work of art with its creator," and he reminds us that within this queer history there recurs a monumental theme that "images of the erotic male trouble such binaries as straight and gay, masculine and feminine."¹³⁴ Weinberg's admonition allows us to also consider Cadmus's role as a cultural producer of homosexual gender, instead of just an example of it or a mere product of it. Thus, we can also consider the relational differences of homosexuality in art that are made possible by Cadmus's artistic production and subsequent ongoing deployment. In fact, the intellectual humanism of *What I Believe* could be a hortatory guide to homosexuality, especially in the context of Hide/Seek and in contrast to David Wojnarowicz's video, *A Fire in My Belly*.

It is possible to ascertain that a cultural producer is also a performer and that performers are also cultural producers. Artistic cultural production is a dialogue, not a one-way expression. Similarly, my consideration of Cadmus as an "agent of ideology" is indebted to Buick's inquiry of Albert Boime's assessment of Edmonia Lewis as passive casualty (as a black victim) instead of an "agent of ideology."¹³⁵ In the same spirit of

¹³⁴ Jonathan Weinberg, *Male Desire : The Homoerotic in American Art* (New York: H.N. Abrams, 2004). P 11.

¹³⁵ Buick, *Child of the Fire : Mary Edmonia Lewis and the Problem of Art History's Black and Indian Subject*.

inclusivity for all cultural performers and all cultural producers authorized as agents of ideology, I propose that Cadmus's cultural production was the means of his agency of ideology. However, beyond acknowledging his own performance as the subject within homoerotic images, particularly in friendly collaborative photography suites, I instead focus on the cultural production of his paintings. It is through his painting, particularly the canvas *What I Believe*, that Cadmus asserts his agency of ideology most interesting to queer theory in art history. That is, when we understand queer theory to include challenges to the notion that identities, both sexual and gendered, are neither fixed or unwaveringly universal. The result, as stated before, is that Cadmus is held up as an exemplary foil to a homegrown Regionalism. However, in this case, we see how Cadmus actually contributes to the construction of a paradigm that separated and defines homosexuals from heterosexuals, and astonishingly, homosexuals from homosexuals! This is one reason Wood remained mostly unscathed in the heterosexual realm of Regionalism, and how Cadmus remained marked as different but in an equal but separate kind of way.

Cadmus's Humanism

Despite Cadmus's celebrated reputation as *enfant-terrible*, he lived by a Humanists moral code, dedicated to pacifism and tolerance. The rich visual-literary narratives he executed in the Renaissance medium of egg tempera and oil, or in etchings, drawings, and even in photography he claimed were meant for the viewer to stake meaning. However, Cadmus was not so naïve that he would not have even a little say, as indicated by his purposeful statement of philosophy that was included in an exhibition catalogue from 1937. "Credo" exemplifies his self-aware agency as a cultural contributor

purposeful in the technical, artistic, thematic, and philosophical decisions put forth on his canvases. He writes:

I believe that art is not only more true but also more living and vital if it derives its immediate inspiration and its outward form from contemporary life. The actual contact with human beings who are living and dying, working and playing, exercising all their functions and passions, demonstrating the heights and depths of man's nature, gives results of far greater significance than those gained by isolation, introspection or subjective contemplations of inanimate objects. Entering the world of human beings plunges one immediately into a mixture of emotions, thoughts and actions, some pleasant, some disturbing; but whether uplifting or disgusting, these reactions spring from a vital source...in order to make clear one's disgust (with base actions, conditions, habits, etc.) all sweet and lovely thoughts must be dropped by the wayside. Thus, this apparent falsification is in reality a clarification... This, then, is my viewpoint—a satirical viewpoint; and I think I'm correct in saying that genuine satire has always been considered supremely moral.¹³⁶

Cadmus was concerned with living a moral life. Early in his career and already with a significant amount of success and notoriety, Cadmus's stated credo foreshadows his later, more directly communicated, Humanist ideology. Part and parcel with his concern in painting the modern American life with a satirical spirit, warts and beauty all, his interest in Humanist ideology was both informed by and exemplified in the literary works of E.M. Forster. In his thoughtful exploration of Cadmus's personal brand of Humanism, Eliasoph identifies the critical themes of Forster's work in an overarching persistence of realism and morality.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ "Credo," Paul Cadmus, in Philip Eliasoph, Paul Cadmus, and Miami University . Art Museum., *Paul Cadmus, Yesterday & Today* (Oxford, Ohio: Miami University Art Museum, 1981). P. 31

¹³⁷ Eliasoph, *Paul Cadmus: Life and Work*. P. 210. Critical assessment of Forster's work includes general inclusion of realism in its different forms: physical, social, psychological, moral, and humanist-liberal.

If not meant to improve the ills of society, his canvases would at least acknowledge modern horrors while emphasizing the importance of the individual, as well as the freedom of the individual. His tolerant philosophy, a sort of modern Humanism, served his career well from the outset and he surrounded himself with like-minded friends. Close friends Lincoln Kirstein, Margaret French, and Lloyd Goodrich shared admiration for the themes in Forster's work and supported Cadmus's pursuit of Humanism. In fact, Cadmus and Forster forged a trans-Atlantic friendship via letter writing and spent time together in person in England and New York City. The friendship between the two men overlapped amongst Cadmus's closest circle of friends.

Some of Cadmus's canvases display an unparalleled degree of tolerance towards sexuality, as found in *The Fleet's In* and *Sailors and Floozies*. The intolerant reception of these artworks ironically mirrors Cadmus's own intolerance of subjects he found to be objectionable: violence and vice exposed in his more satirical works like *The Seven Deadly Sins* and *Aspects of Suburban Life*. That his tolerance was ideologically derived from an anti-nationalist, pro-individual, and pro-democratic agenda, he was free to dissent politically under the camouflage and guise of saucy urban scenes. If people in power objected to his artwork because of the debauchery exemplified and even seemingly celebrated, it also garnered him lively attention again and again. In Two Cheers for Democracy, Cadmus's friend E. M Forster argued that nationalism, and loyalty to the State that results, threatens the independence and individualism of humanity.¹³⁸ These issues concerned Cadmus and he built his agency of ideology around this sensitive Humanism.

¹³⁸ {Forster, 1951, Two cheers for democracy}E. M. Forster, *Two Cheers for Democracy* (London,: E. Arnold, 1951). p. 80

Despite Cadmus's most notable visual declaration of Humanism in the 1947 canvases, *To E.M. Forster* (1943) and *What I Believe*, Anthony Morris omits Cadmus's self-referenced Humanist ideology referenced in the paintings. Morris deemphasizes Cadmus's Humanist ideology in order to argue against prior assertions that censorship lobbed against Cadmus was based on his homosexual content. Instead, Morris claims, the censorship is a reaction against the political and sexual dissidence apparent to him in *Sailors and Floozies*. *Sailors and Floozies* was objectionable, Morris argues, because of two apparent themes: barefaced political dissidence and the trampling of traditional sexual mores of women. Such portrayal in the painting resulted in its removal from an art exhibit at San Francisco's 1940 Golden Gate Exposition. Morris claims that Cadmus includes fascist graffiti in *Sailors and Floozies* as a sign of sympathy. Enlightenment does not usually carry with it the tenets of fascism. In fact, this flies in the face of his Humanist beliefs. It was protest, not complicity. Cadmus's world at that time was rife with fascism in Europe and even sympathy and empathy for fascism stateside. A world war on the horizon would certainly have conflicted with Cadmus's Humanist philosophy.

Strikingly, Morris references Forster's essay titled "What I Believe," but deems it unimportant enough to mention that Cadmus painted a canvas by the same title. It is a heartbreaking omission when one considers the fact that Cadmus resolutely told Eliasoph that Forster was the greatest influence on his thought and intellect. Cadmus even referred to Forster as his "intellectual mentor" in an interview from which Eliasoph culls these first-hand facts and includes in his dissertation.¹³⁹ Instead of acknowledging and affirming Cadmus's interest in Humanism, Morris presents Cadmus simply as a gay artist

¹³⁹ Eliasoph, *Paul Cadmus: Life and Work*. P. 210

whose “identity as a gay man became a platform for examining humanity as a whole.”¹⁴⁰ So, then, if this is the case for Cadmus, why would artist Grant Wood’s identity as a gay man not inflect his whole oeuvre as well?

It was just a few years before meeting his literary hero and the like-minded humanist, author E.M. Forster, that Paul Cadmus blatantly revealed on canvas his personal Humanist philosophy and hinted at some source of personal philosophical camaraderie with him. *To E.M. Forster*, from 1943, is a lazy beach scene featuring a clothed young woman lounging on the beach with a nude young man by her side. The couple is Jared and Margaret French, close friends of Cadmus. Together with Cadmus, they made up a photography threesome. They took the first three letters of each of their names and labeled themselves PaJaMa. It was a photography collective---and more. Jared was not only Margaret’s husband, but also Cadmus’s lover.¹⁴¹

In the muted palette, Cadmus captures a tired and restful moment induced by the beach, wind, and sun. The couple lies on a blanket with their heads closest to the viewer. Jared French sleeps with his head burrowed in the crook of his arm and his back towards Margaret French. There is no physical tension between the two figures and Eliasoph asserts that this in fact represents French’s acceptance of homosexuality. She holds no expectations of physicality with him, but in fact, comfortably accepts his innate rejection of her as a potential sexual partner.¹⁴² Eliasoph characterizes this symbolic physical interchange as representing a friend that understands his homosexuality and places no

¹⁴⁰ Morris, "The Censored Paintings of Paul Cadmus, 1934-1940: The Body as the Boundary between the Decent and Obscene."

¹⁴¹ Eliasoph, Cadmus, and Museum., *Paul Cadmus, Yesterday & Today*. P. 17. In this exhibition catalog essay, Eliasoph diverges from his earlier dissertation and asserts that the two figures are a couple, Margaret and Jared French.

¹⁴² Eliasoph, *Paul Cadmus: Life and Work*. P. 215.

concern or judgment towards him about it. Cadmus has captured the beauty of a loving friendship.

The couple is on a beach where the wind has swept the sand into an easily legible linear order. The lines follow the length of the couple's bodies back towards the center horizon line where in the background even the sand dunes and grasses reemphasize the linear order. On that high horizon line, but in the upper left corner of the scene, a lighthouse is visible. Cadmus scholar Philip Eliasoph justifiably interprets the lighthouse as a symbol of "the enlightenment gained from Forster's works."¹⁴³ The simple analogy of a lighthouse as a beacon of knowledge is powerful and familiar. "As form and symbol," Eliasoph writes, "the beacon of knowledge radiates out to those, like the female figure in the foreground, who search for it."¹⁴⁴ Eliasoph's close relationship to his artist-subject allows him to ascertain that the figure of the woman represents Cadmus's good friend, Margaret French.¹⁴⁵ However, this representation of French is not a true-to-life portrait of Cadmus's friend, but Eliasoph claims, an embodiment of her personality that he characterizes as "remarkable."¹⁴⁶ It was through French's friendship and correspondence with Forster that he found entrée to make himself known to Forster. During World War II, Eliasoph notes that French even sent Forster care packages to alleviate the harsh living of wartime rationing.¹⁴⁷

Margaret French's figure could embody the quest for knowledge and enlightenment, and that would include notions of tolerance towards Jared's nude figure

¹⁴³ Eliasoph Yesterday and Today p. 16.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid

¹⁴⁵ Eliasoph, *Paul Cadmus: Life and Work*. P. 215

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 215.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 215.

representing not only beauty, but also carnality. This image could serve as another composite of the whole of Cadmus's Humanist philosophy, like in *What I Believe*. Cadmus's intellect shines on this canvas where his mastery of line is exemplified and a supreme calm balance is conveyed. For each sinewy curve of one body, there is an equal and opposite answered with his use of line in the other body. Jared's naked hip mirror Margaret's clothed hip, her head up while his head is down, and her right elbow bent to the same degree of his left elbow. In her right hand she holds the book with the tips of her fingers pointing towards her husband's open hand where his fingers extend towards his wife's hand that holds the book she is reading.

She leans on her elbows with her face resting on one hand and thoughtfully reads an open book bearing the inscription "To E.M. Forster," on its cover. The scene is calm, soothing, and safe, if not somewhat isolated, on a beach where the wind has swept the sand into easily legible linear order, the lines following the length of the couple's bodies back towards the horizon line in the background. The isolation embodied in this scene could also represent an intellectual or moral isolation, instead of merely a physical setting amongst the sand dunes. The calm of the scene and its linear order presents the beach as a safe haven away from the horrors of the modern world that includes hostility towards homosexuals and the violence of war. A human connection of mutual satisfaction is conveyed and the referenced lighthouse explains how enlightenment can bring such peace.

Cadmus places the Alexandria lighthouse, symbolic of all that is enlightened, in another of his important works that addresses the impact, influence and like-mindedness

of E.M. Forster. This canvas is also symmetrical, balanced, orderly and staged despite its commotion, and painterly through the sweeping ethereal brushstrokes.

In addition, it is noteworthy that Cadmus places the couple in a realistic beach setting, the famously carefree Fire Island, a well-know enclave not only for artists, but most especially homosexuals. The reference brings to mind the idea that tolerance and love abounds amongst Forster's preference for the "sensitive" people of the world, found here in a community made up of the "aristocracy of the sensitive."¹⁴⁸ In his credo, "What I Believe," Forster writes:

I believe in aristocracy, though - if that is the right word, and if a democrat may use it. Not an aristocracy of power, based upon rank and influence, but an aristocracy of the sensitive, the considerate and the plucky. Its members are to be found in all nations and classes, and all through the ages, and there is a secret understanding between them when they meet. They represent the true human tradition, the one permanent victory of our queer race over cruelty and chaos. Thousands of them perish in obscurity, a few are great names. They are sensitive for others as well as for themselves, they are considerate without being fussy, their pluck is not swankiness but the power to endure, and they can take a joke. I give no examples - it is risky to do that - but the reader may as well consider whether this is the type of person he would like to meet and to be, and whether (going further with me) he would prefer that this type should not be an ascetic one. I am against asceticism myself. I am with the old Scotsman who wanted less chastity and more delicacy. I do not feel that my aristocrats are a real aristocracy if they thwart their bodies, since bodies are the instruments through which we register and enjoy the world. Still, I do not insist. This is not a major point. It is clearly possible to be sensitive, considerate and plucky and yet be an ascetic too, and if anyone possesses the first three qualities I will let him in!¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ Forster in What I Believe in Two Cheers for Democracy.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

In Art and Homosexuality, author Christopher Reed highlights two relevant points of information to the Cadmus-Forster conduit of homosexual enlightenment in the “aristocracy of the sensitive.” First, Reed claims that Oscar Wilde was the original homosexual artist-genius, the genesis of a paradigm that implicitly places the artist-genius within a homosexual identity. Curiously, the notoriety of Wilde’s widely reported trial throughout popular culture could also serve as the ur-text of Cadmus’s own romp through the newspapers earlier in his career. Second, Reed refers to E.M. Forster’s influence as a gay cultural arbiter when he links the author’s eponymous protagonist from the novel, *Maurice* to Wilde himself. Forster’s protagonist refers to his homosexual self as being an “unspeakable of the Oscar Wilde sort.”¹⁵⁰ Of interest is the fact that Cadmus heard this very sentiment directly from Forster’s mouth during an intimate artistic exchange in which Forster read aloud the unpublished *Maurice* while he sat for Cadmus to draw him.¹⁵¹ Finally, Reed reveals to what great degree early 20th century ideas of homosexuality followed 19th century maneuverings in sustaining the acceptable (as a marker of difference) character of the homosexual artist. And in reference to the early 20th century, Cadmus tells an interviewer

My work was never in the closet for people with eyes to see," says Cadmus. "But in the '30s I guess, people were much more naive about the subject. The word *homosexual* was never used; they just said, 'He's an artist.' And artists were forgiven a lot. In fact, it's much more clever to be an artist than to be an ordinary citizen. People forgive you for eccentricities that they would never tolerate in a businessman."¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ Quoted in Reed, *Art and Homosexuality : A History of Ideas*. P. 94.

¹⁵¹ Richard Goldstein, "Through the Peephole," (2013).

¹⁵² *Ibid*.

Cadmus's cultural contribution beyond making great art included an ideology as messaged in his paintings as sometimes political, often ironic and satirical, condemnatory of immoral behaviors, but tolerant of peaceful pursuits of pleasure.

The recent Hide/Seek exhibit at the Smithsonian included Cadmus's *What I Believe*. Touted in the accompanying exhibition catalog as an example of a dichotomized homosexual existence, it was a daydream fantasy of a perfect world as created by the artist under the influence of E.M. Forster. Scholar Jonathan Katz is very conscientious, even sensitive, to the subject matter in the exhibit, yet when discussing *What I Believe*, he makes a mistake by overemphasizing the gay at the expense of the political. Katz refers to Forster's essay "What I Believe," from his collection *Two Cheers for Democracy*. Utilizing extricated statements from the essay, Katz nearly concludes that both Forster and Cadmus would claim that if only the whole world were gay would there ever be beauty and peace! The supporting information for Katz is Forster's stated belief in an "aristocracy of the sensitive."¹⁵³ The key word, "sensitive," he identifies as "serving as the code for homosexual at the time."¹⁵⁴ Indisputably, Forster does speak about the aristocracy of the sensitive, but Katz ignores the rest of the essay where Forster elaborate on this special group of people that he believes to be of a higher moral order than those outside of the group of the sensitive.

Certainly, many people within Forster's description of the traits held by the "aristocracy of the sensitive" would include homosexuals, but not only homosexuals as Katz would have it. If we are to take Forster's words at face value, we would include in

¹⁵³ Jonathan D. Katz et al., *Hide/Seek : Difference and Desire in American Portraiture* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 2010). P. 32

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 32.

this group of the sensitive any person that values the lives of others via a focus on the individual, much in line with the tenets of Humanism. Both Cadmus and Forster were homosexuals, but more than that, they were Humanists living in a world where they witnessed the atrocities of modern war, *World War*.

Further, to dismiss the title of Forster's collection of essays also serves to dismiss the intent of Cadmus in addressing them on his canvases. His cultural and intellectual agency is minimized into an excuse to paint naked men, to pervertedly focus on their figures, instead of as thoughtful endeavor to address the technical virtuosity of Renaissance artists. Yes, it is all of that, because Cadmus did not live in a vacuum where he was unaffected by the goings-on of the modern western world he occupied.

Forster's words also seem to reach towards the ideals of the Aesthetes and their associated decadent behavior, at least in a way that the successive generation might. Forster writes in the same essay, "I do not feel that my aristocrats are a real aristocracy if they thwart their bodies, since bodies are the instruments through which we register and enjoy the world."¹⁵⁵ The idea of sexuality as a positive source of exploration, including same-sex relationships and androgynous characters, harkens back to the aesthetes. Even more than that, such sexual cognizance also references the Humanism that guided Forster and Cadmus. I argue that the *sensitive* is necessarily connected to the Aesthetes, and that both are necessarily connected to Humanism. I am reminded of earlier generations of Humanist artists and acknowledgement of the four humors. For instance, in Albrecht Durer's great *Melancholia*, the artist's propensity for sensitivity in both intellectual and creative pursuits is personified. All of the great intellectual pursuits are represented in

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 83.

the same image with an androgynous (to our post-modern eye) angel whose melancholy is evident. The idea that artists are closer to the melancholy---the emotional and the sensitive---has a longer history than the association of the sensitive and the homosexual.

In his recent book Art and Homosexuality, scholar Christopher Reed illuminates this connection and identifies the source of the unfortunate association of the “sensitive” with the homosexual: Oscar Wilde.¹⁵⁶ Before Oscar Wilde’s trials, there seemed to exist a paradigm by which homosexuality could comfortably exist within the arts, through the idea of aesthetic sensitivity.¹⁵⁷ After Wilde’s trials, everything associated with the Aesthetes, including aesthetic sensitivity, were all exposed as traits of once secreted homosexuality.¹⁵⁸ Within inherited Victorian social spheres, there were expectations of gendered social exchanges that occurred in different spaces. Martin Berger convincingly explains that artist Thomas Eakins nurtured private homosocial interactions to separate his students and himself from the rigid demands of the day.¹⁵⁹ In fact, the example of Eakins provides us proof that there were negotiated homosocial realms generally socially accepted in the art world.

Still, the idea of the “sensitive” in relation to art deserves more consideration. Reed also addresses the power of the “sensitive” as not only code for homosexual but also as an identifiable marker of homosexuality, especially in close relation to the arts. The paradigm that once allowed homoerotic imagery in the arts, without any suspicion of homosexuality, closely followed classical themes and the classical past. One early 20th

¹⁵⁶ Reed, *Art and Homosexuality : A History of Ideas*. P. 102

¹⁵⁷ Reed discusses this in *Art and Homosexuality*, p. 102.

¹⁵⁸ Reed, again, p. 102.

¹⁵⁹ Martin A. Berger and Thomas Eakins, *Man Made : Thomas Eakins and the Construction of Gilded Age Manhood*, Men and Masculinity (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2000). P. 99

century example of such a tactic is found in the world of Wilhelm von Gloeden. He photographed contemporaneous Italian youths in compositions explicitly based on ancient Greek and Roman art. As Reed explains Gloeden's work, "Both the production and the reception of von Gloeden's photography exemplify the extent to which homoerotic images and even experiences could, in some contexts well into the 20th century, be experienced as class-transcendent aesthetic encounters with the classical past."¹⁶⁰ This proved true in a legal battle where von Gloeden's estate was confiscated by Fascist officials in the 1940's for containing pornography. The defense was able to prove that the images were art, instead of pornography, based on the classical visual language as the aforementioned "class-transcendent aesthetic."¹⁶¹ Yet, so powerful is the link between the sensitive and the Aesthetic (Aesthetes) that even heterosexual artists affiliated with the movement are today sometimes remembered as homosexual artists.¹⁶²

Paul Cadmus, who is generally recognized as having always lived an uncloseted life, even before the closet, reminisced that artists enjoyed a freedom that other homosexuals did not. Further, the "closet" is a phenomena attributed to post-Stonewall events and the concept was first verbalized in the 1960's. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick reminds us

The epistemology of the closet is not a dated subject or a superseded regime of knowing. While the events of June, 1969, and later vitally reinvigorated many people's sense of the potency, magnetism, and promise of gay self-disclosure, nevertheless the reign of the telling secret was scarcely overturned with Stonewall. Quite the opposite, in some ways."¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ Reed, p. 102.

¹⁶¹ Reed, p. 102.

¹⁶² Reed, p. 102. English artist Aubrey Beardsley is included in contemporary lists of homosexual artists, unduly.

¹⁶³ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). P. 67

However, early 20th century artists like Cadmus were able to navigate the idea of the “artist” to serve their best interests. The role of artist was, if not its own type of closet, at least a “pass,” according to Cadmus.¹⁶⁴ Cadmus shares in constructing the American historical narrative in the modern 20th century and does so from the spaces of his own privileged racial and class status that was philosophically driven by his Humanist beliefs.

¹⁶⁴ Goldstein, "Through the Peephole."

Conclusion

The temptation to reconcile the artist, his work, and his placement in art history is extremely difficult to avoid. Cadmus's career was so lengthy that his placement changed over the decades, as did his interests. To complicate matters, the ideology of Regionalism changed over the decades as well. This project is important for two reasons: One, I reveal Cadmus's Humanist agency of ideology and his own issues related to race, class, and gender—I hope without making judgment and only explaining the context of his artworks. His contribution to art of the United States exposes the fallacy of what it means, or what it looks like, to be an American. Consequently, the house of Regionalism shakes in the winds of ideologies of Americanness, from the 1930's through Abstract Expressionism and all the way to our contemporary issues of equal rights and immigration.

The task in organizing the context of Cadmus's relationship to Regionalism and Regionalist artists is highly complicated because of the unsound and mostly unquestioned status of its ideologies in art history. Yet, Regionalism is the genesis iteration of modern American art that leads us to the United State's aims of cultural domination via Abstract Expression. The general disinterest in acknowledging how ideologies are the wizard behind the curtain of art history allows for unquestioned truths. It is not enough to simply highlight Cadmus's proximity to the Regionalists and then claim, "See! He was a Regionalist, too!" He was closely aligned to the Regionalists, but the Regionalists were not just the triumvirate we think of today. Further, he is not alone in this predicament. However, I have attempted to use his story as the illumination that shows the weakness and injustice in failing to acknowledge the ideologies that guide our histories, our actions,

and even who we are as a nation including what a citizen looks like. This thesis is as much about Paul Cadmus as it is about Regionalism and U.S. American identity.

Cadmus and his canvases as markers of homosexual difference, as well as his Humanist philosophy, complicate what it means to be an American and an American painter.

Deciphering the written record is a challenge when two scholars or two critics look at the same canvas and see different compositions. Then, when nametags are assigned, everything from *enfant-terrible* to satirist to America's greatest gay artist, the monikers compete against one another as though an artist can only be one thing in their career. Yet, despite Cadmus's most enduring reputation as *enfant-terrible*, the earliest moniker he earned, he was both a satirist and a Humanist and his temperament was a lifelong testament to the tenets of Humanism.

I have shown that it is easy for critics, scholars and cultural sages to place artists in the history books in ways that reinforce our unquestioned ideologies in competitions to establish historical fact or truth. I contend that layered ideologies of Regionalism and the scholarship applied to Cadmus's work diminished his status into a deferential role that perpetuated his placement in art history as a gay artist that was censored. The scholarship, which pushes and pulls at Cadmus's placement in Art History, forced him into lonely waters where the value of his cultural impact was narrowed. It would be alright if he was America's Greatest Gay Artist, if we see what else he is, too. The dissimilar Cadmus scholarship has covered the biography and the monograph, but mistreated the effect Cadmus's homoerotic imagery may have had on his reception and placement in Art History.

The Fleet's In is a powerful canvas that first brought him national public attention and its exciting history is a story others have told sufficiently. Others have also acknowledged his homoerotic visual language, his own homosexuality and crowned him "America's greatest gay artist." I have gone a step farther and illuminated the forces that move Cadmus away from Regionalism, and keep him within arm's length, to prop up the heteronormative masculine gender of Regionalism. Through the process, I have focused on the changing fashions of ideology as constructions that can manipulate the placement of artists and shown that Paul Cadmus was detained for the sake of Regionalism. Instead of reestablishing Cadmus as Regionalist or something else, I have shown that Cadmus contributed greatly to the Regionalist paradigm. Talking about Regionalism as ideology instead of fact, we have moved forward in understanding that the visual representation of American ideologies is, in part, defined through exclusions, as exemplified in the case of Paul Cadmus: the exemplary foil to a homegrown American art.

Figures



Figure 1. Paul Cadmus, *The Fleet's In*, 1934, oil on canvas.



Figure 2. Paul Cadmus, *Shore Leave*, 1933, oil on canvas.



Figure 3. Grant Wood, *Daughters of the American Revolution*, 1932, oil on masonite.

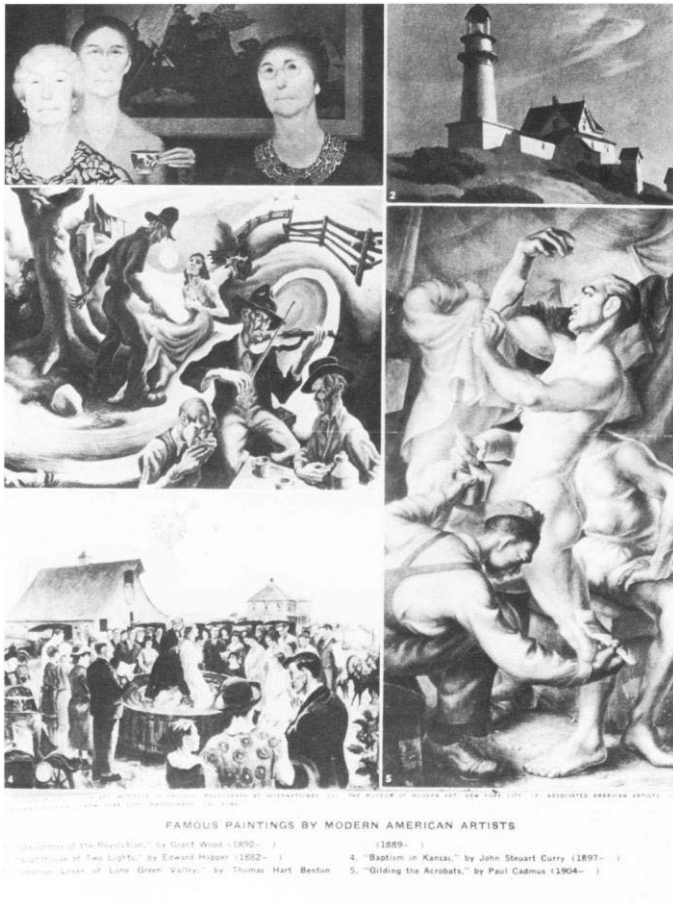


Figure 4. Illustration for "Famous American Painters," 1941, Encyclopedia Britannica.

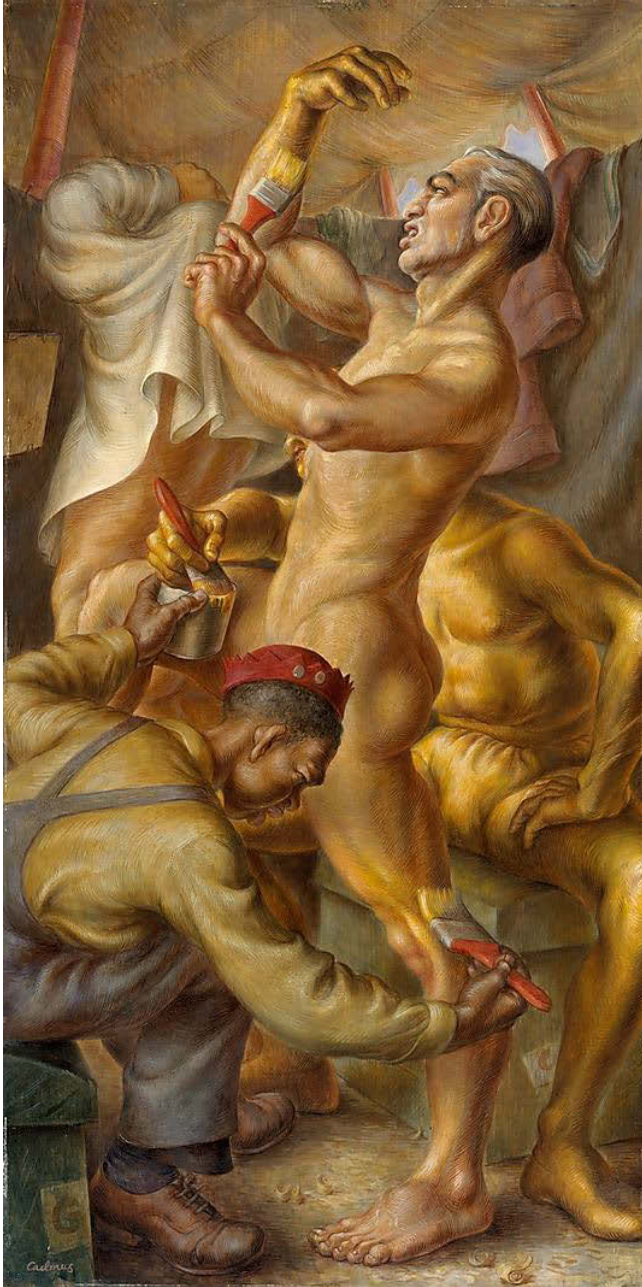


Figure 5. Paul Cadmus, *Gilding the Acrobats*, 1935, oil and tempera on wood panel.



Figure 6. Grant Wood, *Sultry Night*, 1935, lithograph.



Figure 7. Grant Wood, *Fall Plowing*, 1931, oil on canvas.



Figure 8. Grant Wood, *Arnold Comes of Age*, 1930, oil on board.



Figure 9. Norman Rockwell, *The Tattooist*, 1944, oil on canvas.

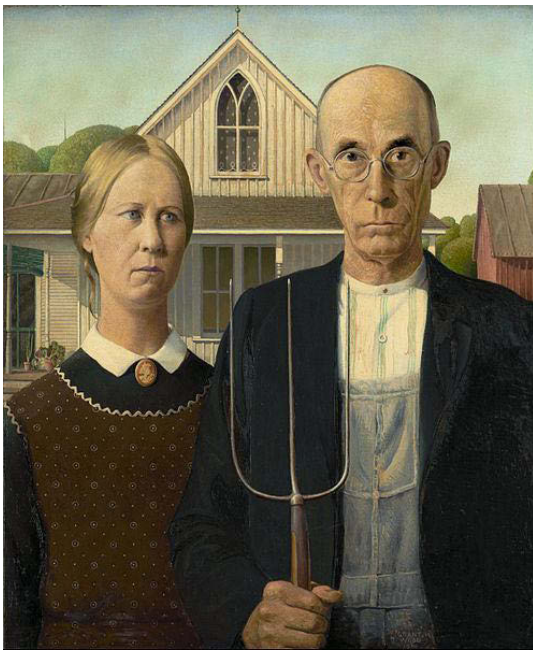


Figure 10. Grant Wood, *American Gothic*, 1930, oil on board.



Figure 11. Paul Cadmus, *Lloyd and Barbara Wescott*, 1942, tempera on board.



Figure 12. John Steuart Curry, *Tornado Over Kansas*, 1929, oil on canvas.



Figure 13. Charles Willson Peale, *Belfield Farm*, 1816, oil on canvas.

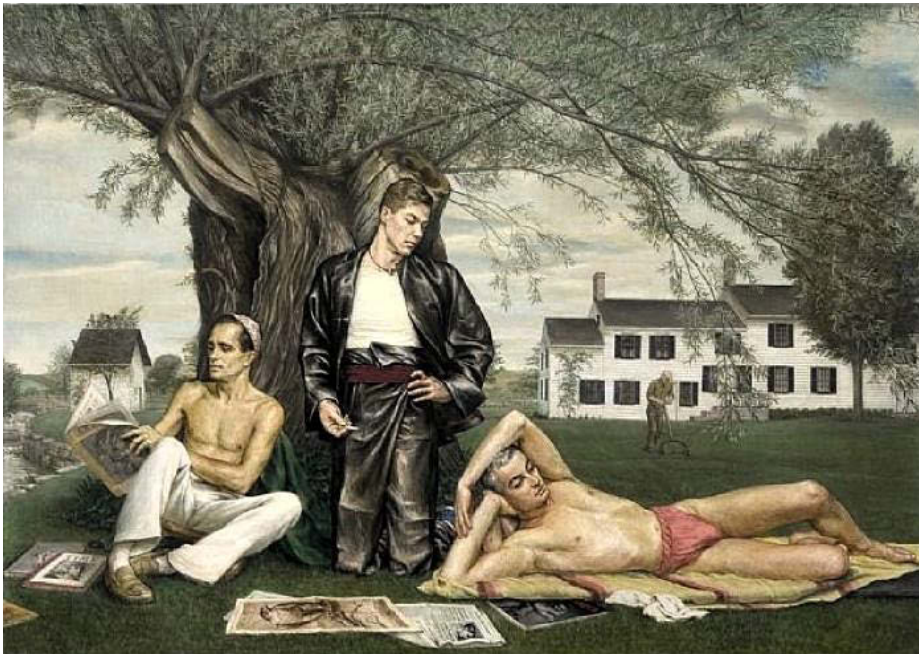


Figure 14. Paul Cadmus, *Conversation Piece*, 1939, tempera and oil on board.



Figure 15. Paul Cadmus, *Herring Massacre*, 1940, oil and tempera on canvas.



Figure 16. Paul Cadmus, *What I Believe*, 1947, oil and tempera on board.



Figure 17. Paul Cadmus, *To E.M. Forster*, 1943, tempera on panel.

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