A "Peculiarly American" Enthusiasm: George Bellows, Traditional Masculinity, and The Big Dory

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A “Peculiarly American” Enthusiasm: George Bellows, Traditional Masculinity, and The Big Dory

An Honors Paper for the Department of Art

By James Wholley Denison IV

Bowdoin College, 2014

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For my Father,
who taught me to love America’s lands and seas,
my Mother,
who taught me to love art,
and my Grandfather,
whom I never met but whose work
joined my two passions in beauteous harmony.
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JWD
May 2014
“If we consider that a work of art is the finest, deepest, most significant expression of a rare personality it follows that any plastic invention or creative moulding of form which succeeds in giving life to this expression is good art … It may have the mechanical and spiritual shortcomings coincident with even the greatest of people --- but it will still remain good.”

- George Bellows

Typescript of a Foreword for The Paintings of George Bellows (New York: Knopf, 1929), Box 4, Folder 2, Bellows Papers, Amherst College Archives and Special Collections, Amherst, MA.
Introduction

On January 8, 1925, the life of the American artist George Wesley Bellows was cut tragically short when he died of appendicitis in a New York hospital at the age of 43 (Figure 1). *The New York Times*’ obituary of the painter and lithographer notes that he “painted from realities” and “won wide recognition” for his work, which “used a wide variety of themes.”¹ Having arrived in New York in 1904 fresh from college at Ohio State University in his hometown of Columbus, Bellows quickly made a substantial reputation, establishing a healthy standing among both audiences and critics and becoming a full member of several prominent artistic societies, including the National Arts Club and the National Academy of Design.² The obituary mentions this upbringing, his artistic education under the painter Robert Henri and others in New York, and a few of his more famous pictures, including *Forty-Two Kids* and *The Cliff Dwellers*, both of which are scenes from New York completed relatively early in Bellows’ career, in 1907 and 1913, respectively (Figure 2). The article also includes a long list of the prestigious museums where Bellows’ work then hung, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Chicago Art Institute, as well as the many prizes that he had garnered over the course of his

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career, which included the National Arts Club gold medal in 1921 and the first Clark Prize at the Corcoran Gallery in 1923. The language and content of this obituary indicates the esteem in which Bellows was held and the impressive degree of success that he had enjoyed over the course of his career.\(^3\)

This tack has been similarly adopted in most other scholarship on Bellows. Bellows has often been praised as “one of the most prodigiously talented and ambitious artists America has ever produced,” or in similarly glowing terms.\(^4\) Much of the existing scholarship on Bellows focuses on his early career learning from Henri alongside Rockwell Kent, Edward Hopper, and others, while painting in and around New York City and depicting boxing clubs and the urban poor. The fact that *Forty-Two Kids* and *The Cliff Dwellers* were the only two works mentioned in Bellows’ obituary hints at the pervasiveness of urban-centric conceptions of Bellows’ career.\(^5\) To be fair, however, Bellows’ *New York Times* obituary also noted that he “used a great variety of themes” in his work.\(^6\) While they have never been as widely known to the general public or as oft-discussed within the canons of art history as his urban work, there is some scholarship on the artist’s other works, including his martial paintings, portraits, lithographs, and depictions of polo and tennis matches, subjects which have been deemed in the past to have taken on a peculiarly American bent under Bellows’ hand.

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\(^3\) “G.W. Bellows Dies in His 43d Year.”
\(^5\) Works such as these were often praised for their commitment to realism in showing “the seedier side of urban life.” Charles Brock, “George Bellows: An Unfinished Life,” *George Bellows*, exh. cat., ed. Charles Brock (Washington, DC: The National Gallery of Art, 2012), 7-27, 10.
\(^6\) “G.W. Bellows Dies in His 43d Year.”
Although his technique, style, and subject matter all evolved over the course of his career, Bellows, like other members of Henri’s circle and the Ashcan School, achieved his success through his use of realism, a phenomenon which can be understood as “the effort of a work to persuade its audience that it refers to a recognizable ‘real’ world and that it tends to represent some aspect of that world accurately.” Bellows’ style throughout his career fits comfortably within this loose, conceptual definition of realism. In general, Bellows is seen as a brilliant but somewhat enigmatic painter, whose career, shortened by the artist’s early death at the age of 42, was never allowed to run its full course. His oeuvre, while both extremely well known and almost universally praised, seems to lack a single defining characteristic aside, perhaps, from a vague but common characterization as “peculiarly American.”

The idea that Bellows was a realist is further supported by the scholarly perception that he and the other members of the Ashcan school were depicting the city as they truly “saw” it – that, as art historian Rebecca Zurier has suggested, theirs was an “urban vision” as much as it was an urban art, a collective body of work that portrayed what both they and others saw as witnesses to the visual spectacle of early-twentieth-century New York City. Marianne Doezema has argued that

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8 Eugene Speicher, *Letter to Emma Bellows, March 4, 1925*, Box 3, Folder 10, Bellows Papers, Amherst College Archives and Special Collections, Amherst, MA.
9 Rebecca Zurier, *Picturing the City: Urban Vision and the Ashcan School*, 6-7. Virtually all artists assert their importance to and influence on their works through their choices in medium, style, composition, and subject, and the art historians that see Bellows as a visual chronicler of the historical reality of his place and era are doubtless keenly aware of his agency as an artist. Thus, Bellows’ oeuvre still belongs under the purview of “realism” as it is typically defined.
Bellows’ urban work “represented what the critics were referring to as the new movement in American art... without completely disregarding the old, familiar forms and established priorities.”\textsuperscript{10} She suggests that this work helped Bellows present “a professional identity just outrageous [or modern] enough to be acceptable.”\textsuperscript{11} This approach seems reasonable, but it also largely marginalizes the evidence that Bellows’ extensive non-urban work provides regarding his artistic outlook. Bellows scholarship concentrates on his work in New York City more often than it does not, but the recognizability and relative novelty of the urban scene to critics and audiences of the era may have played a role in the perception that Bellows was something of a revolutionary, or at least a mild one. By choosing to concentrate on other, non-urban segments of Bellows’ artistic output, we can begin to develop a fuller understanding of Bellows’ character as an artist and how these other portions of his career can inflect our understandings of his oeuvre as a whole.

One such overlooked segment of Bellows’ career is his work depicting the Maine coast and sea. This Bellows did in a number of places, including, relatively early in his career, on Monhegan Island. The three summers Bellows spent on the island in the early and mid-1910s represent his first artistic forays into Maine. Later on he painted in Camden, depicting the shipbuilding industry there, as well as Ogunquit and the islands of Criehaven and Matinicus (which he had also visited during a trip to Monhegan), with varying degrees of inspiration and success.\textsuperscript{12} Aside

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{11} Doezema, \textit{George Bellows and Urban America}, 4.
\end{flushleft}
from his Monhegan work, Bellows’ shipbuilding paintings have received some of the most attention, and have been interpreted to have marked a “deep exploration into the activity and endeavor of the worker,” which allowed Bellows to further ruminate on “ideal masculinity and [the] virtues associated with a traditional American work ethic,” themes which had also resonated in his earlier work on Monhegan and elsewhere.13

However, despite the compelling nature of these other Maine works, the bulk of Bellows’ output in the state was completed during his first few visits, while painting on Monhegan, and as such his production on the island is likely the best representative of his artistic relationship with the sea more generally. The majority of his Monhegan work features no human figures, but a notable exception is The Big Dory, an oil painting on wooden panel which he completed in October, 1913 (Figure 3).

The panel depicts what looks to be a seemingly straightforward scene, albeit a rather dramatic one. A group of men, cloaked in oilskins, strain together to push a fishing boat into the water as a large cliff and a small building loom in the background. The image, while vibrantly-colored, compositionally dynamic, and somewhat heroic, does not appear to be anything particularly special – it seems relatively simple and unambitious in comparison to, say, Bellows’ more famous boxing scenes. As with most of his seascapes, it has never been counted among the most celebrated of Bellows’ works, having remained in the artist’s private collection,

13 Caitlin Beach, “Envisioning an American Ideal: Masculinity and Traditional Work Ethic in George Bellows’ Paintings of Maine Shipbuilding” (Honors Project, Bowdoin College, 2010).
unsold, until after his early and sudden death in 1925, when it was not included in the retrospective exhibition held for him at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.\footnote{Neither The Big Dory nor either of the two versions Bellows made in preparation for his final panel was included in show according to the exhibition catalogue’s checklist. Frank Crowninshield, George Bellows, exh. cat. (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1925). Bellows’ estate sold The Big Dory to Robert Treat Paine II through the Boston Arts Club in 1926. It also belonged to Mrs. Thomas Metcalf before being sold through the M. Knoedler Gallery in New York to the New Britain Museum of American Art in 1944. George Bellows Curatorial File, New Britain Museum of American Art, New Britain, CT.}

Strangely, despite its visual appeal, and perhaps because of Monhegan’s geographical remoteness or the confusing and difficult-to-define nature of Bellows’ style in the autumn of 1913, The Big Dory has been the subject of relatively little scholarly inquiry. In fact, its mention within the canon of art historical study is limited to a few relatively short paragraphs here and there, with a small handful of exceptions. This is especially true of criticism of Bellows in the first few decades after that summer of 1913. Precious little reference can be found to The Big Dory or either of its preparatory oil panels during this period – with a 1934 Minnesota newspaper clipping declaring the entrance of one of these images, The Harbor, Monhegan Coast, Maine, into the Minnesota Institute of the Arts’ permanent collection standing as a notable exception (Figure 4).\footnote{Unidentified Minneapolis-Area Newspaper Clipping, April 22, 1934, Box 4, Folder 15, Bellows Papers, Amherst College Archives and Special Collections, Amherst, MA.} When the painting and its preliminary versions are mentioned they are often met with enthusiasm – comparisons have been made between the three versions of the scene that Bellows made, with the artist’s gradual manipulation of the picture towards his own purpose resulting in “an intricate composition masked as a simple and natural scene, a true
testament to Bellows’ mastery.” The 1934 clipping notes that Bellows’ sketch has “a freshness and vigor about it, a snap in the air, that transcend even the brilliant use of color,” and that, overall, “It is a gorgeous expression of a bright scudding morning on the Maine coast.” David Peters Corbett devotes a reasonable amount of time to the work in his brief exhibition catalogue, An American Experiment: George Bellows and the Ashcan Painters, noting that the “clearly sculpted figures” work together in a “purposeful human concert” that results in “the stately, decorous rhythm of a frieze,” while also noting the influence of the Armory Show on both Bellows and The Big Dory in particular. There is also scholarship that makes mention of the ways in which Bellows’ 1913 trip to Monhegan differed from his previous trip two years prior as well as the methods of manipulation Bellows employed when adapting The Big Dory from both reality and the two oil panels which preceded the final image.

However, somewhat oddly, while there has been a fair amount of focus on The Big Dory’s formal artistic properties, there have been virtually no attempts to broaden our understanding of the painting or others by Bellows which share a similar theme of men attempting to put a boat out to sea by delving deeper into the significance of such subject matter. Furthermore, those scholars which have treated Bellows’ representations of the sea or his work in Maine as a whole have often viewed such studies as ends in and of themselves with relatively little relevance to

17 Unidentified Minneapolis-Area Newspaper Clipping, April 22, 1934.
19 Kelly, “‘So Clean, So Cold’: Bellows and the Sea,” 155.
the remainder of his career. The most important examples of this trend are Franklin
Kelly’s essay, “‘So Clean, So Cold’: Bellows and the Sea” in the 1992 *The Paintings of
George Bellows* exhibition catalogue and Sarah Cash’s “Life at Sea: 1911-1917” from
the National Gallery’s 2012 retrospective’s catalogue. Both of these essays detail
Bellows’ work depicting the sea, almost all of which comes from his various trips to
Maine, but, while they use the context of Bellows’ career to understand his
representations of the sea and they work to better define Bellows’ relationship with
the Maine coast as a subject, neither one uses Bellows’ Maine output to better
understand the other parts of his career. Whether the consistency of this one-sided
approach is due to the urban-centrism of Bellows historiography or another reason
altogether is difficult to say, but what follows here will attempt to correct this
significant gap in Bellows scholarship, using *The Big Dory* as an example whose
visual qualities, subject matter, and historical context can illuminate certain grander
themes that pervade much of Bellows’ work.

If we are to investigate *The Big Dory* and its relevance to our interpretation of
Bellows’ career as a whole, it is useful to first outline the history of and context
surrounding Bellows’ time in Monhegan. Bellows arrived on Monhegan alongside
Henri in early August, 1911 having already established himself as a successful and
celebrated artist, and he worked there for about a month. Two summers later, in the
wake of his participation as a contributor to and organizer of the landmark Armory

20 Kelly, “‘So Clean, So Cold’: Bellows and the Sea.” Cash, “Life at Sea, 1911-1917.”
Show of February 1913, Bellows was able to convince Emma to accompany him on a return voyage.  

This trip was to be one of the most fruitful periods of Bellows’ career. While on the island he produced over 125 paintings, the vast majority of them studies of the sea and shore. He bounded about the island with abundant enthusiasm, depicting, as one biographer has written, “the combers plunging against headlands, raking the coves and crevices with hungry hands, breathing a waiting interlude over the beaches.” One of the fruits of this eagerness was *The Big Dory*, produced in October, as the tourist-filled summer atmosphere of the island dwindled.

Bellows did not shy away from expressing his enthusiasm for Monhegan. Writing home to his wife Emma during his first summer sojourn on the island in 1911, Bellows declared that, “I could stay here and work for years… This place is an eternal subject, and it is easy to work hard.” This first visit was also, as one might guess, a prolific and inspirational one, as Bellows also told Emma that, after only a few weeks on the island, “I have 24 panels done, only 6 more blank ones… My head is full of millions of great pictures which I will never have time to paint… I climbed all over this wild mountain today, Feeling a wild spirit of adventure… I lay on the edge for awhile in some soft long grass, watching the clouds above and the mighty

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21 Kelly, “‘So Clean, So Cold’: Bellows and the Sea,” 133, 162-4, 170-1.
22 George Bellows, *Letter to Professor Joseph Taylor, January 15, 1914*, Box 1, Folder 12, Bellows Papers, Amherst College Archives and Special Collections, Amherst, MA. This figure includes a few works produced during a visit to Matinicus while in Maine.
23 Morgan, *George Bellows, Painter of America*, 170-1.
24 George Bellows, *Letter to Emma Story Bellows, August 18, 1911*, Box 1, Folder 3, Bellows Papers, Amherst College Archives and Special Collections, Amherst, MA.
sea far below.”\(^\text{25}\) After 1913, however, Bellows would only return to Monhegan for one summer more, in 1914, a fog-bound stay which proved significantly less inspirational than his two prior summer sojourns and during which Bellows produced little work. Afterwards, Bellows was to abandon Monhegan for more convenient spots on the Maine coast, including Camden, and later a house in Woodstock, in upstate New York.\(^\text{26}\) Although Bellows painted many pictures during his various stays on Monhegan, *The Big Dory*’s bold colors, dynamic composition, and use of figures help it to stand out as one of the most visually engaging yet frustratingly enigmatic works to result from this unusually prolific and important period of the painter’s career.

Furthermore, studying *The Big Dory* and other non-urban Bellows works can help us understand the ways in which Bellows was less a chronicler of the present and more an artist who reasserted the past. Such a study must begin with close analysis of *The Big Dory*’s subject matter and historical context, which in turn can help us to better deconstruct the painting’s potential meaning, and thus its significance to our understanding of Bellows more generally. To begin with, Maine, and above all Monhegan, is a place with a very particular cultural history, and that history is vital to how we interpret Bellows’ work in Maine and its significance to his career as a whole. As we will see, Monhegan, like much of coastal Maine, has a long history of relying upon the fishing and lobstering industries as sources of economic prosperity, and Bellows, in showing fishermen hard at work, is contributing to the

\(^{25}\) George Bellows, *Letter to Emma Story Bellows, August 20, 1911 (Sunday Night)*, Box 1, Folder 4, Bellows Papers, Amherst College Archives and Special Collections, Amherst, MA.

rich tradition of representing this aspect of the state’s industrial and cultural heritage in the arts. However, 1913 was also a time when Monhegan’s tourism industry was reaching unprecedented heights – each summer the island teemed with vacationers from points south, and the locals were forced to scramble to accommodate them all. By examining The Big Dory visually within its historical context, we can begin to understand the ways in which Bellows exploited traditional methods of representation and conceptions of Maine and its inhabitants in order to display a heroic scene of simple provincial fishermen working as one to achieve a common goal. This investigation can not only help us better understand what Bellows may have intended when painting The Big Dory or what the culture and economy of Monhegan Island might have looked like in the early 1910s, but also can lend insight into Bellows’ career arc as well as his psychological character, the trajectory of the formal evolution of his art, and his aspirations as an artist.

Although The Big Dory is only one of many images produced by Bellows of the sea, while on Monhegan, in Maine, or over the course of his greater career, themes we identify when studying the painting reflect significantly on greater currents within the artist’s oeuvre. Most prominent among these may be his presentation of masculinity, a theme with a particular importance to our interpretation of The Big Dory. In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries gender roles began to change in the United States, with perceived effeminacy, or

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27 Bruce Robertson, *Reckoning with Winslow Homer: His Late Paintings and Their Influence* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1990), 1.
28 Bellows himself remarked upon the hordes of tourists overrunning the small island during his initial visit in 1911 in a letter home to his wife Emma. George Bellows, *Letter to Emma Story Bellows, August 9, 1911*, Box 1, Folder 4, Bellows Papers, Amherst College Archives and Special Collections, Amherst, MA.
“male degeneracy” slowly seeping into the cultural mainstream. At the same time women were beginning to assert their right to occupy and participate in traditional male spaces and power structures, and together these forces compelled many men to assume hypermasculine stances, as if they feared that their own male self-identities were threatened by these other societal groups’ newfound assertiveness. To the exclusion of women and people of color, Bellows’ figures are predominantly white men and boys. Through the lens of these figures, Bellows asserts a traditional, nineteenth-century ideal of white male heterosexual masculinity that reflected the early twentieth-century American cultural mainstream’s fight against the perceived threats of effeminacy and homosexuality. This is a vision of manhood which is grounded in perseverance through struggle and characterized by strength, stamina, industriousness and self-reliance, and one which is also founded upon, as the word “tradition” implies, understandings of masculine comportment from earlier moments in American history. Interestingly, this “traditional” view of male identity was demonstrated by Bellows not only through his artistic output, but also through his self-presentation as an individual who conformed to mainstream societal expectations for manhood.

Quite often, and particularly in the months and years directly following Bellows’ 1925 death, both the artist and his art have been subject to critical

comment which has emphasized their unusually “American” qualities. This characterization suggests that there are certain aspects of both which have again and again reminded observers of the principles from which Americans derive (or derived) communal identity and self-definition. As the American realist painter Eugene Speicher suggested in his letter to Bellows’ widow Emma of March 1925, there lay somewhere within Bellows’ public persona and artistic oeuvre a “peculiarly American” enthusiasm. A variety of factors can be said to have contributed to such an understanding of the artist and his work, among them Bellows’ Midwestern roots, his American artistic training, the breadth of his (almost universally American) subject matter, and his realist style. However, no aspect of Bellows’ personal life or art had as much influence on their perceived “American” qualities as his assertion of older, traditional modes of masculinity. As one exhibition press release remarked, Bellows’ work was what “one expects from a young virile country, confident and glorying in its strength. It is what is expected from America.” This characterization is not alone in conflating the “Americanism” of Bellows’ work with masculine qualities, and as such it helps begin to suggest the

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32 “Americanism” can be understood as “attachment or allegiance to... the traditions, institutions, or national ideals of the United States.” Thus, Bellows’ work was perceived to have visually portrayed such attachment or allegiance. To give a few examples, a tradition Bellows engaged in was the American realist tradition. Institutions he regularly interacted with included a number of prominent New York art museums and galleries. An American ideal that The Big Dory represents is the value of hard work to achieve success. “Americanism, n.”. OED Online. March 2014. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/6345?redirectedFrom=americanism (accessed May 12, 2014).
33 Speicher, Letter to Emma Bellows, March 4, 1925.
34 What type of document this is remains difficult to determine, but it seems to be a press release promoting an upcoming exhibition of the work of Bellows and two other painters. Boston Arts Club, Strong Armed Painters, Box 4, Folder 8, Bellows Papers, Amherst College Archives and Special Collections, Amherst, MA.
centrality of Bellows’ assertion of “traditional” white heterosexual masculinity to the perceived “American” qualities of his work.

Interpreting *The Big Dory* in the context of masculinity and Americanism gives us the opportunity to, first and foremost, inquire about a certain moment in Bellows’ career and how the personal, artistic, and cultural forces that Bellows experienced in the weeks, months, and years leading up to October 1913 may have conspired to compel the artist to craft his image of mariners pushing a large dory into the Monhegan Harbor. However, this study can also propel us into further investigation of the throes of Bellows’ life as well as his artistic career and its critical reception. Such inquiry is overdue. By considering how *The Big Dory* simultaneously stands alone as evidence of a particular moment of artistic inspiration and creation in Bellows’ career, conforms to a substantial tradition of artistic renderings of the Maine coast, and testifies to themes which can help us to better organize our perceptions of both Bellows’ personality and his collective artistic output, we can help ourselves better our understanding of a man whose life and work, despite being shortened by a premature death, have often previously frustrated attempts at clear definition.

Specifically, *The Big Dory* is helpful to us because it allows us to more easily recognize the traditional masculinity with which Bellows regularly infused his art and understand the means by which Bellows introduced this theme into his work. *The Big Dory*, as a painting of fishermen at work, asserts that the fisherman represents an American masculine ideal, as Winslow Homer and others had in the past, and in so doing links itself with traditionalism, and, more specifically,
traditional conceptions of masculinity. Such traditionalism is inherent to the Americanism with which Bellows’ oeuvre is often associated, and it also weakens the claims of those who would contend that Bellows above all sought progress through his art rather than the reassertion of the past. Thus, by examining *The Big Dory* and working to better understand its visual qualities and significance, we can use it as an illustrative example in order to gain greater insight into the themes of masculinity and Americanism which pervade Bellows’ career and which have significantly affected his art historical reception over time. Marianne Doezema suggested that Bellows “represented what the critics were referring to as the new movement in American art... without completely disregarding the old, familiar forms and established priorities,” but in fact the traditional masculinity and “Americanism” identifiable within his work suggest that it was the other way around – as *The Big Dory* highlights, but much of his work demonstrates, Bellows was not a revolutionary who did just enough to seem dedicated to the past, but was rather a traditionalist who did just enough to remain relevant in the present.

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Section I

See to Shore: Visually Reading Male Labor in *The Big Dory*

As with most art historical studies, if we are to better understand the meaning and significance of *The Big Dory*, we must begin with visual analysis. This approach can indicate some of Bellows’ goals in crafting this image, which can in turn help us better understand his approach as an artist and what qualities or aspects of a scene he often emphasized. This information, alongside comparisons with other Bellows works and study of the cultural context surrounding the artist’s image-making and the historiography of his oeuvre, will allow us to better understand Bellows’ career and legacy as a whole.

To begin with, *The Big Dory* is, perhaps above all, a picture of monumental effort, and this point is emphasized in the figures seen in the painting – the thick, muscled bodies of the men depicted here lean forward tautly, backs and arms straining against friction and fatigue. That these men are personifications of a type rather than particular individuals seems clear - their only calling, their only purpose, is the achievement of their simple but valuable and necessary work, and their various characteristics emphasize this point. The men wear waterproof gear appropriate to their calling, and the yellow of their oilskins has even leached into their skin tones, melding vocation and personal identity into one. Although
differences in attire, such as the central figure’s navy blue shirt and lack of a slicker, help us to distinguish between the men, they remain anonymous – these different outfits are only variations on a single theme, and all are appropriate for work as a fisherman. Ultimately, despite these minor differences and slight hints at facial features, the men are interchangeable, and are depicted as equals who are generic iterations of a type rather than true individuals.

The fact that the men are even wearing their rain gear suggests trials ahead – bulbous and seemingly rain-heavy clouds loom over both land and sea on a dark, gloomy day. However, it is not only the painting’s hues which frustrate us in our attempts to read these men’s faces, as their poses, with the men bent over and overlapping with one another, all while moving away from us and deeper into the painting’s three-dimensional space, augment this frustration. The handling of the brushwork of which they are composed, which is relatively loose and painterly, also prevents us from learning much about the facial features of the men or identifying them in any way other than by their occupation.

These men and their boat dominate the picture. They stand in the near middleground, partially stymying our visual entrance into the cove that lies behind them and denying us the easily-understood horizontal landscape that many marine pictures tend to provide. The entrance into the sea beyond draws our eyes as well, but these men are, without a doubt, the painting’s principal focus. This partial denial of the horizontal and clear emphasis on the men is an inversion of the typical visual effect of marine paintings – as Roger Stein points out, normally, in marine painting, “beach, waves, and clouds articulate and emphasize rather than control the vast
openness of seascape space... [the] horizontal format emphasizes the panoramic, the eye traveling laterally across open space.”37 For the viewer, the result of this denial of the typical horizontality of a marine painting is an inescapable emphasis on the appearance, actions, and character of the men clogging the middleground. It is vital, when attempting to interpret *The Big Dory*, or even any of its component parts, to first consider the role of these men – they tie the painting together both visually and in terms of subject matter. The unity that is borne of their overarching importance to *The Big Dory* is achieved in the painting with the help of a number of different visual strategies.

The paint hues Bellows has used in depicting these men and their boat are echoed elsewhere in the painting, and thus give it a unity that ties the men to the sea, land, and one other, as well as their dory, their means of egress to the sea, which is in turn their place of labor and the source of their prosperity. The bright, eye-catching orange stripe on the craft’s hull is echoed in orange tints present in the gleaming skin of some of the mariners, subtle flecks in the distant sea, and loose, impressionistic brushwork in the rock-strewn foreground. Hints of the yellow seen in the fishermen’s oilskins can be found in the massive promontory on the left hand side of the panel, on the beach in the foreground, and in the sailboat that lies anchored in the bay, and the round forms of the mariners’ heads are repeated in the rocks behind them as well.38 The central figure, who, straining forward alone between two multi-figure groups and in front of the entrance to the cove towards

38 Cash, "Life at Sea, 1911-1917," 163.
which our eyes gravitate as we attempt to read the painting’s depth, is the most visually prominent and important of the men, sees the deep blue of his shirt recalled in the navy tints of both bluff and cloud in addition to the dark sea. These shared hues lend *The Big Dory* a sense of visual unity which ties each of its elements together into a coherent whole and help suggest that the all of the essential components of the painting, namely man, sea, land, and sky, are a part of a greater whole. Thus, as these men labor across our view, they and their work are united with their environment, an effect which highlights the links between fishermen and Monhegan and also emphasizes the connections between these men, their labor, and the sea.

The fact that the men move across the panel with what David Peters Corbett has called the “stately, decorous rhythm of a frieze” might lead one to understand the placement of the fishermen and their boat as a means of heightening the sense of progress in the picture. After all, the fact that they are making headway across the panel is of vital importance to our understanding of them – the mariners depicted here are competent workers who, through dint of their effort, accomplish their jobs as fishermen reliably. The visual depiction of their labor within the picture suggests as much, as does the nature of their profession as fishermen. This progression is

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39 Cash, "Life at Sea, 1911-1917," 163. This is not to say that this central figure is not anonymous or non-individualized. Although his pose, location, and attire make him a particularly visually compelling figure, this does not mean that he is in any significant way different from his fellow mariners – rather, we are to assume, he has just happened to be in the right place at the right time wearing the right clothes, even if the visually striking nature of his attire clearly speaks to Bellows’ agency.

40 Somewhat frustratingly, Corbett alludes to ancient Greek sculpture with his use of the term “frieze” but does not elaborate on potential links between Bellows’ men and ancient artistic forebears. Corbett, *An American Experiment: George Bellows and the Ashcan Painters*, 44.
vital to our understanding of the men and the picture writ large. However, the men are not only proceeding across the panel, but are also penetrating into it and towards the sea, albeit at an acute angle, via a “vigorous diagonal thrust”.41 In so doing, the sailors dynamically engage the pictorial space of the painting, actively unifying themselves with the sky-, land-, and seascape we can glimpse beyond them and thus echoing the sense of unity between the sailors and these other elements of the painting that was suggested by their shared colors.

The narrative suggested by the arrangement of the figures, boat, and natural surroundings represented in The Big Dory is at once clear and enigmatic. We can see that these men are pushing the dory out to sea, and yet the reason for this action is unclear - it seems probable that this is just another day on the high seas for these fishermen, and yet we have no way of being certain of that fact. The boat is being pushed by nine men, of which only two would typically have manned the craft, and the urgency apparent in the taut frames of the mariners gives us pause as we consider what, exactly, these men are up to.42 Our confusion is only heightened by the presence of an odd shadow that mars the dory’s hull.43 Regardless of what we

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41 Cash, "Life at Sea, 1911-1917," 162.
43 It has been suggested that it might be the shadow cast by the artist’s easel itself. However, it seems unlikely that Bellows chose to include visual traces of his own presence as an artist depicting this scene when he has no track record for doing so in other works. It is important to note that this is not the only plausible theory explaining the presence of this dark patch – it could easily be an area of the boat’s hull that had to be repaired, or the shadow cast by one of the fish houses that lie crowded around Fish Beach, above all since late fall mornings do indeed see long shadows cast towards the shoreline from the houses and anything else that sits on or near the beach. Charles Darwent. "An American Experiment: George Bellows and the Ashcan Painters, National Gallery, London." The Independent, sec. Art, March 13, 2011. http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/reviews/an-american-experiment-george-bellows-and-the-ashcan-painters-national-gallery-london-2240290.html (accessed November 3, 2013).
interpret the source of this dark area on the hull to be, there is no denying that it further visually grounds and reinforces the importance of the solitary central mariner, who we have already identified as key to interpretation of the painting. It is important to remember that, despite the fact that Bellows is a “realist artist”, his works, like all art, are imbued and deeply influenced by his own creative powers, and that the observations we make about them are comments on both what is being depicted and who is depicting them.44

Visual analysis of the painting can help us understand The Big Dory as a work that emphasizes not only the immense effort of the figures it features as they set about performing their task, but also their unity with one another and with the place in which they live and work, including Monhegan’s rock-strewn beaches and imposing cliffs as well as the dark, choppy Gulf of Maine seas. However, we can also improve our understanding of The Big Dory by turning to the two panels that exerted a direct influence on the painting as Bellows was working on it and thus reveal how the artist’s conceptions of the scene evolved during the course of his artistic process.45

The Big Dory’s underdrawing, consisting of a “simple line underdrawing and grid… most apparent in the sky” suggests that it was started en plein air before being completed in an indoor studio, and that this underdrawing was intended as a guide

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44 On one hand, it is apparent that Bellows, like virtually all artists, manipulated The Big Dory and all of the other images he produced during his career for his own ends. The differences between reality and the version of it that Bellows represents in his art tell us the ways in which he felt compelled to alter the world as he saw it in order to assert his own vision of his surroundings. This approach necessarily emphasized certain qualities at the expense of others, and we must interpret these discrepancies between image and reality as purposeful and meaningful.

45 Bellows’ working method on the island, partially described in his 1911 letters home, suggests that both of these paintings were likely painted en plein air.
for Bellows after moving indoors. The fact that the final painting was likely made in a studio rather than outdoors furthers the perception that *The Big Dory* is an image that differs significantly from reality due to the artist’s manipulation of his scene. Bellows’ 1911 letters suggest that he did sometimes make use of a shared studio on the island that year. However, he also wrote home of a “palette invention” used for holding paints when working in situ “[that] has made a big hit with the artists that have seen it.”

We can see Bellows going out to work *en plein air* in a photo taken during one of his summer trips to Monhegan (Figure 5). These clues indicate that he balanced his time between field and studio work, a method which we can suppose continued in 1913 given the presence of *The Big Dory*’s grid-like underdrawing. During this period Bellows employed a simple compositional system which emphasized the use of the golden section, a scheme that results in the grid-like underdrawings of works such as *The Big Dory*. Although we do not know whether or not the two images Bellows made in preparation for his completion of *The Big Dory* also made use of grid underdrawings, the fact that Bellows used these two panels to experiment with different compositions for his scene makes this scenario seem likely.

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47 *George Bellows, Letter to Emma Story Bellows, August 27, 1911 (Sunday night)*, Box 1, Folder 4, Bellows Papers, Amherst College Archives and Special Collections, Amherst, MA.
48 *George Bellows, Letter to Emma Story Bellows, August 19, 1911 (Saturday night)*, Box 1, Folder 4, Bellows Papers, Amherst College Archives and Special Collections, Amherst, MA.
Bellows also planned his canvases meticulously in other ways, and was, by 1913, a follower of the paint manufacturer and art theorist Hardesty Maratta’s color system, which emphasized the use of “harmonious” colors that complemented one another within a grander organized scheme of complex color relationships. This system resulted in the extensive use of tertiary colors, such as blue-grays and blue-purples, as well as some stark contrasts (such as the blue and orange contrast of *The Big Dory*).\(^{50}\) Bellows remained interested in Maratta’s color philosophies during his time on Monhegan that year, although his choices of color from this period seem bolder than one might expect from a true follower of Maratta, as *The Big Dory* suggests. The painting features extensive use of tertiary colors, including the blue-gray of the skies and Blackhead and the green-browns of the shore and the land beneath the house on the right, as well as a prominent juxtaposition of orange and blue, a combination that Bellows was particularly fond of and used in other works. Bright yellows and whites complete the sometimes-bold, sometimes-muted color scheme, which signals the liminal moment that October 1913 represents in the evolution of Bellows’ palette.\(^{51}\)

Importantly, 1913 also marked a shift in Bellows’ attitude towards his use of oil studies when attempting to compose larger canvases, although it is unclear why. Whereas Bellows had, during his first trip to Monhegan in 1911, completed landscape studies which were only intended for practical use as aids when completing a larger final picture, in 1913 his view of the role of such studies

\(^{50}\) Quick, “Technique and Theory: The Evolution of George Bellows’ Painting Style,” 34.
\(^{51}\) Quick, “Technique and Theory: The Evolution of George Bellows’ Painting Style,” 35-6, 42-5.
changed. By the summer of 1913, Bellows had shifted to considering his sketches as worthwhile artistic endeavors in and of themselves, and he exhibited some of his sketches from his Monhegan trip that summer in a one-man exhibition of his work held a few months after his return to New York, in January, 1914.\textsuperscript{52}

Despite his newfound predilection for producing polished studies, the first of Bellows’ two preliminary versions of \textit{The Big Dory} is an unfinished sketch. This image, \textit{The Big Dory, The Harbor, Monhegan Coast, Maine} (Figure 4), shows a single, stoop-shouldered, yellow-clad man standing in the middle of a rocky beach near a half-rendered orange-and-white boat. This beach is identifiable as Fish Beach, which opens onto Monhegan Harbor and was often used by the island’s fishermen for the purpose of offloading their catch after a day at sea (see Figures 6 and 7). We can see Bellows enjoying Fish Beach along with his daughter, Anne, in a photograph from either 1913 or ‘14 (Figure 8). Behind this single figure are a slew of sailboats, dories, and other small craft lying peacefully within a cove with no clear point of egress. Whereas there will in the final work be a wide and reasonably inviting channel leading from the harbor to the sea behind the dory, instead here lies, as any visitor to Monhegan will attest, Smutty Nose Island. Smutty Nose rests between the larger Manana Island, from whence the cliff on the left side of the image springs, and the shore of Monhegan proper, which supports the small building on the right-hand side of the image (see Figure 9 for a better illustration of the geographic relationships

\textsuperscript{52} Quick’s source for this information appears to be Bellows’ own private records of his various works and their exhibition histories, which still belong to the Bellows family. There is no indication as to whether or not the preparatory versions were identified as such when exhibited, although the relatively polished nature of works such as \textit{The Launching} suggests that some might have been able to pass as finished products. Quick, “Technique and Theory: The Evolution of George Bellows’ Painting Style,” 34.
between the three islands). The inclusion of Manana and the house on the promontory on the right mimics the arrangement of the finished painting, as does, far across the distant sea, the presence of the rolling blue hills of the mainland.

In contrast, a significantly more polished panel, *The Launching*, much more closely resembles *The Big Dory* (Figure 10). A group of yellow- and blue-clad fishermen push a white-and-orange dory from right to left and also into the three-dimensional space of the painting, willing it towards a cove that is framed by a house on the right and an imposing cliff to the left – the basic story here is more or less the same as in the final picture. However, the two paintings differ in a few important ways, all of which can help us better understand *The Big Dory*. The cove holds just three boats now, a single sailboat and two smaller craft, and, whereas no channel out of the cove could be seen in *Harbor, Monhegan Coast, Maine*, the narrow yet navigable channels between Smutty Nose and the islands that flank it are, if not completely clear, at least more readily visible now than before.

Strangely, though, the immense urgency which marks the movement of the figures in Bellow’s later panel is absent here. Although the men still resolutely push and pull the dory to the water’s edge, for a number of reasons their attitude seems far more casual and less heroic than it does in *The Big Dory*. Firstly, the figures themselves are different – in lieu of the thick, fit, muscled men of the final panel, we have here an assortment of men of a somewhat more average build. Moreover, as art historian Sarah Cash has noticed:

*The Big Dory*’s lowered vantage point and horizon line – combined with the elimination of all but one sailboat from the middle ground and shoreline boulders from far left and right – converges all attention on the vivid color and graceful lines of the vessel’s broad hull.
Reinforcing this focus, Bellows spread the men to the boat’s bow and stern, extending their leaning, straining bodies to meet the edges of the picture plane.\textsuperscript{53}

Bellows’ decision to zoom in on these figures provides us with the partial denial of horizontality that is so crucial to our understanding of these men as the inescapable keys to understanding the picture, and the darker tones and more foreboding weather present in \textit{The Big Dory} help emphasize the momentous importance of the scene being portrayed as well. Combine this with the strategies pointed out by Cash, namely arraying the men from bow to stern along the boat with a single, visually compelling figure at center and manipulating background details in \textit{The Launching} and \textit{Harbor, Monhegan Coast, Maine}, and we can begin to understand how Bellows was able to imbue what seemed to be a rather quotidian scene in his two preliminary versions with a more substantial sense of drama and intensity in the final panel that these two earlier images built towards, \textit{The Big Dory}.

Furthermore, Bellows’ choice to excise Smutty Nose Island completely from \textit{The Big Dory} is also one vital to the visual effect of this final panel. While this continual manipulation of the topography of the scene certainly speaks to Bellows’ agency as a painter in manipulating geographic reality to suit his own needs, the importance of these changes to our interpretation of the painting’s meaning provides what is perhaps an even greater insight into their purpose, and thus Bellows’ intent in crafting this image. The harbor, cloistered as it is in the first oil sketch, seems like a relatively safer and more protected space than it does with Smutty Nose Island missing in the final panel. There is very little sense of danger in

\footnote{Cash, "Life at Sea, 1911-1917," 163.}
the first two images, whereas the dramatic lighting and open sea behind the
fishermen in *The Big Dory* makes the very act of putting to sea, above all in a small,
exposed dory, seem significantly more perilous. The power of the sea and the
danger inherent in maritime professions was well-understood by Bellows. As he
wrote in 1910, “what is the sea if it isn’t terrible [?]”\(^\text{54}\) This effect is augmented by
the reduction in the number of boats in the harbor – a harbor replete with moored
vessels such as the one shown in *Harbor, Monhegan Coast, Maine* would seem to be a
significantly more secure place than the more desolate one presented in *The Big
Dory*. In fact, the presence of a single sailboat only adds to the feeling of solitude or
isolation in the picture by calling attention to the harbor’s emptiness. Much the
same can be said of the house on the right. Together, these changes merely add to
the sense of heroism already present in the painting for other reasons. Showing the
harbor completely open to the sea visually demonstrates the sobering vastness of
the ocean, and makes the act of pushing a dory into the water seem a significantly
more dangerous and less commonplace activity than it does within the sunny, boat-
filled harbor of the first oil sketch. We do not see these men in the act of fishing itself
– the only labor we bear witness to is the act of pushing the dory – but the open sea
behind the fishermen lends further emphasis to this act while alluding to their
future labor at sea.

This sense of danger and drama is only heightened by the manipulation of
Manana’s northern edge on the lefthand side of the painting. As Figures 6 and 7

\(^\text{54}\) George Bellows, *Letter to Professor Joseph Taylor, April 21, 1910*, Box 1, Folder 11, Bellows Papers,
Amherst College Archives and Special Collections, Amherst, MA.
illustrate, the profile of the island as seen from Fish Beach is relatively gentle. *Harbor, Monhegan Coast, Maine*’s version of the cliff is demonstrably more precipitous, while *The Launching*’s iteration takes this effect even further. As other scholars have noted, by the final image, what remains is essentially a copy of the dramatic promontory of Blackhead, a massive cliff which lies on the opposite side of Monhegan (see Figure 11). Replacing a relatively ordinary escarpment with a large and striking cliff face again makes the act of braving the ocean’s waters seem fraught with possibilities for disaster – being dashed against the large and vertical bluff shown in *The Big Dory* seems far less palatable than being washed ashore on Manana’s real coastline. Moreover, it provides a more robust framework to the image, causing us to focus on the fishermen in the foreground, and in particular the solitary central figure, because, with the lefthand side of the panel now virtually entirely blocked off, the middle portion of the painting is the only area where a full visual recession into space is possible. Because of this, the central portion of the scene draws our eyes and lends further emphasis to the mariners themselves. Furthermore, the cliff’s newly rounded head is echoed in the hats of several of the figures as well as the arched back of the man in white, once again unifying the painting’s pictorial elements.

Bellows elected to depict this end of the harbor despite the fact that he could easily have chosen to show the other end, towards which the men in the picture seem to be striving, which features a significantly wider channel that faces away

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from the mainland and towards the open sea. Although Fish Beach angles away from this wider channel, there is no practical reason Bellows could not have shown this other end. In fact, the only plausible reason for such a choice was that it better suited Bellows' purposes as an artist. Of course, the presence of the solitary house on the main island, Manana's exaggerated northern tip, and the distant mainland all serve dramatic purposes that have already been noted and which explain the attraction of this end of the harbor to Bellows. However, more generally, showing the end of the harbor towards which these men are not moving imbues the scene with a greater sense of mystery. Although the sea present in *The Big Dory'*s background is both dark and vast, the willful progress of the mariners towards waters unknown to the viewer makes their act, and so their profession more generally, seem all the more perilous.

We can thus conclude that Bellows, over the course of the creation of his three iterations of the scene that was finalized in *The Big Dory*, manipulated its composition with a specific goal in mind. In developing his scene from sketch to somewhat-polished panel to final product, he clearly showed an intent to home in on the central part of his scene, which includes the fishermen and the boat that lends *The Big Dory* its name, and to heighten the drama and intensity surrounding the act of pushing the craft across the rock-strewn beach. Virtually all artists, realists included, manipulate visual reality to imbue their works with particular meanings, and Bellows is no exception. He achieved the visual effects that we have highlighted in *The Big Dory* using a number of different artistic devices, as detailed above, but the question now must be what might have motivated Bellows' interest
in these men, their occupation, and the act of pushing a dory into the sea in the first place. In order to understand this fascination, we must first better understand the history of the Maine fisherman and that figure’s role within both American art history and the cultural and economic history of the state of Maine.
Section II

An Island in the Sea: Monhegan and the Maine Coast in 1913

Using *The Big Dory*'s example to understand themes which pervade both Bellows’ Maine work and the remainder of his career requires developing our comprehension of the cultural, economic, social, and art historical context into which the painting was born in October of 1913. Comparing history, tradition, and the reality presented by Bellows in his pictures can provide insight into his intent as an artist and allow us to recognize certain themes present in and important to *The Big Dory*, which can in turn help us better evaluate Bellows’ other work within and outside of Maine. Having closely examined *The Big Dory* and its two precursors’ visual qualities, the next step in our journey towards assessing their significance is to address the historical context surrounding the place (Monhegan, or, more broadly, Maine) and occupation (fishing) that they portray. By taking up the Maine fisherman as an artistic subject Bellows necessarily engaged with a number of preexisting layers of meaning, and if we are to understand *The Big Dory* we must first attempt to parse some of the history that accompanies this subject.

Maine has been associated with the sea and, perhaps above all else, with the fishing industry throughout its history. Even in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Maine was renowned for its prowess in providing the rest of colonial
America and, later, the nascent United States with improbable numbers of sea
 captains, boats, and fish. It was cod shoals that first drew Europeans to the area, and
 that the lobster industry has been synonymous with Maine since time immemorial
 need hardly be stated.56 Until the mid-nineteenth century inshore fishing was
 dominant, but starting in the 1850s dories, typically operated from a schooner as a
 base, began to gain prominence as the boat of choice for most Maine fishermen.57

The dory can be defined as “a flat-bottomed boat, with sides and bottom
 planked lengthwise and with no keel structure other than the bottom planking.”58
 The sort seen in Bellows’ painting is a Swampscott dory, which could be fitted for
 either sails or oars and which was meant to be launched from the shore, unlike most
dories.59 As a fishing boat in 1913, it is something of an anomaly – most Maine
fishing operations in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries involved
numerous smaller vessels relying upon one larger craft as a base while out to sea,
and few fishermen still launched their boats from the shore rather than from a dock,
mooring, or larger craft’s deck.60 Of course, Bellows derives a benefit from choosing
this particular sort of boat for his painting – since the development of The Big Dory
over the course of three separate panels demonstrates a desire to emphasize the
effort and urgency of the men in the picture, we can begin to imagine how having a
boat that actually needed to be pushed into the water suited Bellows’ hope to show
heroic fishermen a bit better than a dory that had to be hoisted from the deck of a

56 Lincoln Paine, Down East: A Maritime History of Maine (Gardiner, ME: Tilbury House, Publishers,
2000), 3, 118.
schooner or simply cast off from a mooring might have. Still, despite their relative rarity, such boats did persist, and in the 1910s and ‘20s herring and mackerel were the principal pursuits of Monhegan fishermen in the summer and autumn months, lobstering being outlawed on the island from late June to early November.61

Monhegan Island has historically been especially closely associated with marine industries. It has been said of Monhegan that “the island’s history begins with fishing” and that “sailing vessels of all types, climes, and nations have dropped their anchors in her harbor to stop for a catch of cod, haddock, mackerel and lobsters.”62 In fact, fishing and lobstering remained the principal occupation of the island’s residents well into the twentieth century.63 Monhegan is, then, an island with especially strong ties to fishing both historically and economically. If one is to represent this particular place truly and realistically, it is necessary to emphasize the importance of this industry to the nature and character of the island more largely. It is thus unsurprising that Bellows, in visiting and representing Monhegan, chose to paint a fair number of fishing scenes. However, in so doing, Bellows also conformed to a long tradition of representing Maine, and in particular Monhegan, through the lens of the state’s fishing industry.64

In fact, various visual and literary chroniclers of the state have historically emphasized the impoverished but industrious and manly seaman as the single

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61 Since it is October, the men of Bellows’ paintings must be going after fish rather than lobster. Charles Francis Jenney, The Fortunate Island of Monhegan: A Historical Monograph (Worcester, MA: The Davis Press, 1922), 57-8.
63 Proper, Monhegan, the Cradle of New England, xi.
cultural figure most representative of Maine’s culture more largely. This fact is continually reinforced when inspecting the best-known paintings and novels from this era and the decades before it that depict Maine. Tourist materials from the first two decades of the twentieth century also highlight the figure of the Maine fisherman as a representative of the state. A prototypical image to illustrate the shared qualities of these representations of the state might be Walter Lofthouse Dean’s 1901 canvas *On the Deep Sea* (Figure 12).

Featuring two fishermen outfitted in oilskins and sou’westers hauling in what appears to be a massive codfish as fog looms around them, *On the Deep Sea* captures many of the characteristics which images of Maine tend to include. The men are strong and competent, and they ply their trade in a workmanlike fashion. The feat of hauling in this massive catch as they stand above the flat sea gives them a sense of heroism, a quality which is augmented by the fact that captured here is their moment of triumph, when a fish is pulled from the waves and into the safety of the boat. Also, the thin distance between the gunwale and sea and the presence of a thick, enveloping fog around them lends the scene a sense of danger. Dean’s picture includes suggestions of humility, industriousness, heroism, and danger in its

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65 To be fair, the farmer and the lumberjack have also played significant roles in Maine’s history. The farmer and the mariner are in fact both represented on the Maine state flag. However, the cultural tradition of depicting Maine through the archetype of the mariner dwarfs the representations of the state via these other figures in terms of both ubiquity and renown. Within the realm of fine art, Winslow Homer is the most obvious and important example of this cultural tradition, but countless others, including a number of Bellows’ Ashcan School peers as well as Homer’s nineteenth-century predecessors such as Fitz Henry Lane and Frederic Edwin Church, also reinforce the point. Meanwhile, the works of authors such as Sarah Orne Jewett and Elijah Kellogg, Jr., both of whom were active in the late nineteenth century, serve as written counterparts to the art of Homer and others.

depiction of the Maine fisherman, features which are characteristic of representations of the Maine coast during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and are shared by works such as Winslow Homer’s 1885 *The Fog Warning* and Rockwell Kent’s 1907 *Toilers of the Sea*, images which Bellows might easily have seen in person or as prints. Moreover, by the late nineteenth century, the image of Maine fisher- and lobstermen hard at work was to become the typical mode of conception of Maine life, in large part because it was one of Winslow Homer’s principal methods for representing the character of the state.

When speaking of such a tradition, it is important to remember what, exactly, we mean. As the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines it, “tradition” can be understood as “a statement, belief, or practice transmitted... from generation to generation.” A tradition is an invented usable past iterated in the present. Those participating in tradition are implicitly recognizing the value of what they imitate, and in so doing they recognize that the older cultural forms that they are mimicking are superior, at least in some ways, to any new forms which have sprung up in the time since these older forms came into existence. Thus tradition and nostalgia go hand in hand. In fact, the two could be said to be the same idea - the valuing of the statements, beliefs, and practices of the past - expressed with varying levels of cynicism, and it is vital to remember to consider tradition in a nuanced fashion when examining the

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67 “tradition, n.”
various ways in which cultural and personal perceptions of the value of the past impacted Bellows’ career.68

Naturally, art history is its own particular cultural tradition, and it features countless sub-traditions, some of which profoundly impacted Bellows and his art. In the case of The Big Dory, Bellows’ most significant source tradition is likely the work of Dean, Homer and other nineteenth- and early twentieth-century artists who also depicted the Maine coast through the representative figure of the heroic mariner.

It is difficult to underplay the importance of Homer’s role as the leader of this representative tradition, which likely needs no explanation – in the 1910s, Homer was considered America’s greatest realist artist, and his defining subject was the Maine seascape.69 However, as art historian Bruce Robertson has argued, “it was also critical that... [these seascapes] be exemplified in a society, and so [representing] the fisherfolk who inhabited this landscape” and who were “united by [their] work” was crucial to Homer’s depictions of the Maine coast as well.70 When Homer painted scenes of Maine with fishermen in them, the world noted it, and his representation of Maine was gradually incorporated into both commonly-held perceptions of Maine’s true nature and the dominant modes of the state’s artistic depiction – thus, “the high art of Winslow Homer had become part of an American visual culture,” or tradition.71 Bellows was a great admirer of Homer,


69 Robertson, “Perils of the Sea,” 147.
70 Robertson, “Perils of the Sea,” 148, 158.
71 Robertson, “Perils of the Sea,” 144-8, 166.
saying in response to a list of “great artists” sent to him by a correspondent that “all the men you mention are beyond a doubt great painters, great artists as well. Of them, Winslow Homer is my particular pet.” Bellows also later suggested in a 1921 speech to the National Arts Club that “You will do well to appreciate the work of Homer, Ryder, and Thomas Eakins over and above most of the antique and foreign masterpieces brought to this country for sale at large prices.” When Bellows was painting *The Big Dory*, he was participating in this rich tradition of representing members of Maine’s fishing industry as the personifications of the state’s character as a whole.

Although the Maine fishing industry thrived throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, in the early twentieth century this success waned. Decades of overfishing had taken a significant toll on the Gulf of Maine fishery, and the populations of cod, haddock, halibut, and other groundfish species were in severe decline. Cheap, undesirable dogfish sharks, who share food sources with these species, suddenly abounded, and the effect was felt quite keenly by Maine’s coastal communities. Meanwhile, the state of the shellfish industry in Maine fared little better in the first decade-and-a-half of the new century. Overfishing was a serious problem among shellfish populations as well, and an irregular imposition of size limits meant that immature lobsters were still being harvested in large numbers.

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72 George Bellows, *Letter to Dr. S.C.G. Watkins, February 25, 1924*, Box 1, Folder 15, Bellows Papers, Amherst College Archives and Special Collections, Amherst, MA.
73 George Bellows, *Speech to the National Arts Club, 1921*, Box 4, Folder 3, Bellows Papers, Amherst College Archives and Special Collections, Amherst, MA.
during this period. By 1905 Maine shellfish population levels were critically low, prompting emergency environmental legislation and subsequent conservation measures. By 1913 Maine’s lobster catch was down 60 percent from its numbers in 1889. Overall, in the first two decades of the twentieth century, Maine, a state which had so long been reliant on fish, lobster, and other shellfish as one of its principal sources of economic prosperity (as well as a key factor in conceptions of its identity both within the state and elsewhere in the United States), reeled in the face of a severely depleted fishery.

Monhegan, for so long an unusually prosperous fishing community, felt the keen sting of the industry’s struggles too. A 1910 Portland newspaper article says as much. A resident of the island states that “Fishing has gone from us, however, in the tremendous quantities in which we used to get it.” Although the industry was to persevere on the island, in the early 1910s it struggled mightily. What was before a local fishery with the means to provide handsomely for all of the island’s residents was now suffering from the effects of centuries of thoughtless exploitation. However, at the same time that Maine’s marine industries suffered, the state’s coastal communities, and Monhegan in particular, were able to turn to a burgeoning tourism industry to fill the void. When George Bellows stepped onto Monhegan Island in 1913, he and his family were, despite his artistic mission that summer and

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76 Bolster, *The Mortal Sea: Fishing the Atlantic in the Age of Sail*, 250, 255.
fall, a part of this new reliance on tourism both on Monhegan and all along the Maine coast.

When Bellows arrived on the scene on Monhegan in the early 1910s, the Maine tourist industry was still booming – the Maine coast was one of the most popular and fashionable vacation destinations in the country, and visitors would have been virtually omnipresent on the island. In fact, Bellows commented upon the teeming hordes of tourists which enveloped the island during the summer months, suggesting soon after arriving on the island that “there are more people here than nations.”

Maine’s reputation as an enjoyable and fashionable summer getaway began in the late nineteenth century. Fueled by the reputation of the state’s inland lakes, rivers, and forests as well as its coastlines and offshore islands and the ease of accessibility to these attractions via steamship from Boston and other large cities to the south, in the 1870s Maine saw an initial boom in its vacation industry. This surge in popularity was to continue as the century progressed, and by the end of the nineteenth century the anticipation of the growth of tourism in Maine was such that by 1895 virtually every appropriate plot of land along the state’s coast had been purchased with the intent of building a resort, and promotion of the state’s many new hotels and getaways in various newspapers and magazines in New York and other tourist centers exploded. The first two decades of the twentieth century saw continued dramatic growth, with almost 500,000 vacationers visiting the state by

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78 Bellows, Letter to Emma Story Bellows, August 9, 1911.
the mid-1910s, a figure which more than doubled the number of visitors per year in the 1890s.\textsuperscript{81}

Among all of Maine’s immensely successful vacation destinations, Monhegan has long been one of the most notable and popular. This is, perhaps, not entirely surprising - its reputation as a vacation destination is in fact what led to its being visited and subsequently chronicled by Bellows in the first place. It has been remarked before that “deep sea islands have always had a vivid charm, a romantic fascination for mankind,” and that Monhegan, “the most famous deep sea island on the Atlantic seaboard,” might capture the imaginations of many outside of Maine’s local populace is not exactly shocking, especially given its intrinsic beauty.\textsuperscript{82} This quality is not only apparent to the modern visitor but was also remarked upon historically – an unidentified Portland newspaper clipping from 1910 illustrates this point clearly. Included are photographs of “Picturesque Monhegan Island” and a proclamation that the island is “One of Maine’s Most Interesting Places,” while the text of the article talks at length about the quaint charm of the isolated village and its peaceable inhabitants.\textsuperscript{83} Thus, by the beginning of the 1910s Monhegan was being marketed as a remote vacation destination just as countless other spots along the Maine coast were.\textsuperscript{84}

\textsuperscript{81} Wescott, “Economic, Social, and Governmental Aspects of Maine’s Vacation Industry 1850-1920,” 64-5.
\textsuperscript{82} Proper, Monhegan, the Cradle of New England, 3.
\textsuperscript{83} “Monhegan Island, Home of Fisher Folk, One of Maine’s Most Interesting Places,” Unidentified Portland Newspaper.
\textsuperscript{84} It is also important to note that Monhegan had a reputation as a particularly popular summer destination for artists. A variety of artists had visited the island in the nineteenth century, establishing the colony there. Robert Henri, Bellows’ companion during his 1911 visit, had first come to the island in 1903, and he would later convince Rockwell Kent, Leon Kroll, and several others, in addition to Bellows, to visit the island for artistic inspiration as well. Concurrent with the Henri
However, Monhegan’s transformation from isolated fishing village to chic vacation destination, like many other things on the island, lagged behind the progress of the tourism industry on the mainland, and ended up taking place just before Bellows first visited the island. The transformation of the island’s economy during the last few decades of the nineteenth century and the first few of the twentieth is perhaps best illustrated by a series of photographs of its village and harbor which document their growth.

The first of these is, from 1879, the first known photographic image of the island, and it shows a simple, quiet fishing community (Figure 13). Fishing boats stud the harbor and we can already see the fish houses surrounding Fish Beach. There are what appear to be cultivated fields near the northern end of the harbor, and several dozen buildings are present, but there are no signs of tourism or outside influence on the island. This is a community living free from the concern of catering to vacationers. As Maine’s economy was bolstered by tourism over the next several decades, this scene was to change dramatically. Likely because of its remoteness, Monhegan was infiltrated more slowly by tourists than many other spots on the Maine coast, however, and its vacation industry grew gradually over the course of several decades. Monhegan House, where Bellows stayed during his first visit to the circle’s discovery of the island was that of the American Impressionists, led by Edward Willis Redfield, a longtime friend of Henri’s who had in fact recommended the island to him in the first place. By the time Bellows first arrived on the island in 1911, several other members of the Henri and Impressionist circles were making regular visits, and thus the island’s reputation as an artist’s haven had grown even stronger. Susan Danly, *Side by Side on Monhegan: The Henri Circle and the American Impressionists*, exh. cat. (Monhegan, ME: Monhegan Museum, 2004), 7, 13, 16.

In truth, the very fact that Monhegan was developed for tourists later than most other sites on the Maine coast may well have contributed to its immense popularity in the 1910s, when vacationers continued to seek an idyllic Maine vacationland that remained more or less untouched by civilization.
island in 1911, the first of the larger and more prominent hotels on the island, was founded in 1884 and grew in stages until reaching its full size in 1908. A second photograph shows the island at around this time (Figure 14). There are, sprawled along the shore and hillside, significantly more houses visible than before, some of them presumably the precursors to the many summer homes which envelop the island’s inhabited area today. Many more boats sit in the harbor than in the 1879 photograph, and these vessels include two larger sailboats that appear to be the sort of pleasure crafts typical of coastal tourist destinations, while we can surmise that most of the other new boats in this image were not fishing vessels belonging to locals but rather boats owned by or used for the entertainment of visitors to the island. Here is a town which is clearly being affected by the tourism industry but which has not yet been overrun by it. Thus the Monhegan of the latter part of the first decade of the twentieth century still retained something of its original character as a small, humble fishing village despite the growing presence of tourism on the island. The same cannot be said for the vision of the island presented in a photograph taken in the early to mid-1910s, around the time when Bellows was visiting the island (Figure 15). Over the space of just a few years, the island’s tourist infrastructure has been significantly improved. Not one, but two large hotels, in addition to numerous smaller inns and boarding houses, are clearly visible, more pleasure boats than ever before lay at anchor, and a wharf, flanked by three steamboats, has been constructed as well. This image of the island makes clear that,

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86 Bellows mentions staying in Monhegan House that year in *Letter to Emma Story Bellows, August, 1911*, Box 1, Folder 4, Bellows Papers, Amherst College Archives and Special Collections, Amherst, MA.
over the space of just a few years, it had fully embraced its potential to attract tourists.

This change is made apparent in a few newspaper articles of the era. A 1910 article notes that a third major summer hotel, The Island Inn, had just been completed, and that, in the opinion of one native, “the rapidly increasing number of summer visitors” was destroying the island’s traditional way of life. Another article from around the same time also notes a massive uptick in summer tourism, and attributes the island’s newfound popularity to both its natural beauty and its “discovery” by artists and authors in the first decade of the twentieth century. Other articles in newspapers and magazines of the era also underscore this same point – in the early and mid-1910s tourism on Monhegan boomed, so much so that, rather conveniently given the state of the Gulf of Maine’s fisheries at the time, fishing became a little-practiced endeavor during these summer months, when the housing and entertainment of visitors was the island’s principal and in fact nearly only business.

For George Bellows, visiting the island in the summers of 1911, ’13, and ’14, the omnipresent tourist set would have been unavoidable. Monhegan is, after all, a small island, and the thousands of tourists that visited it each year would have blanketed it during his time there. In point of fact, photographs of Bellows on the island indicate that he embraced this community wholeheartedly. He can be seen as

88 “Quaint Monhegan, Maine Isle Far at Sea, to Have Tercentenary Celebration,” Unidentified Newspaper, c. 1913. Historical Records and Archives, Monhegan Museum, Monhegan, ME.
89 “Quaint Monhegan, Maine Isle Far at Sea, to Have Tercentenary Celebration.”
a member of a band on the island and several photographs exist of the artist acting as ringmaster in an island circus organized by summer visitors in 1913 (Figures 16 and 17). Furthermore, Bellows was not merely a witness to this summer vacation industry but, as an artist, also a rather stereotypical visitor. Letters from 1911 make clear that Bellows’ first trip to the island was both agreeable and inspirational – he writes passionately of days spent “climbing all over this wild mountain... Feeling a wild spirit of adventure,” and also mentions the overwhelming visual splendor of the island, saying that Monhegan was “possessed of enough beauty to supply a continent.”

He also commented on Monhegan’s picturesque qualities, complaining that “My head is full of millions of great pictures which I will never have time to paint.” A letter penned by Bellows to his friend, mentor, and former professor Joseph Taylor makes clear that Bellows’ 1913 visit was equally, if not more productive and enjoyable. He writes, “I did have a great summer... You could find no finer place... I am longing to go back right now,” and also mentions his completion of 125 works during his stay, a haul which represents an incredibly productive period by Bellows’, or any indeed artist’s standards.

Maine’s fishing industry was not only a secondary source of income for Mainers during the tourism boom, but also played an important role in this tourism industry itself. In going to Maine, many tourists sought to experience an “elemental” or simple way of life, an experience that was often conveniently marketed to them in

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90 George Bellows, Letter to Emma Story Bellows, August, 1911. This letter was not marked with a specific date and when during his month on Monhegan in 1911 that Bellows sent it is uncertain.
91 George Bellows, Letter to Emma Story Bellows, August 20, 1911, Box 1, Folder 4, Bellows Papers, Amherst College Archives and Special Collections, Amherst, MA.
92 George Bellows, Letter to Professor Joseph Taylor, January 15, 1914. As previously mentioned, this figure includes a few works produced during a visit to Matinicus while in Maine.
the form of fishing trips or pleasure cruises provided by local mariners. Bellows in fact participated in such trips, writing of “Going out [to sea] with some big fellow,” presumably in search of further artistic inspiration, and his decision to pay for a boat ride further signals the stereotypically touristic nature of his time on Monhegan, despite his professional objectives on the island. This representation of Maine which emphasizes the state’s “simple” lifestyle and the importance of its marine industries made a significant impact on the perception of the state in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries elsewhere in the United States. Beginning in the middle of the nineteenth century, various reports, often in the form of books, including the writings of the celebrated author and explorer Charles Lanman, and magazine articles, published in widely-read publications such as Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper, Harper’s, and Lippincott’s Monthly, made the richness of the state’s inland and deep sea fisheries clear to sportsmen from points south. Various touristic ephemera of the period help illustrate the ways in the close affiliation of Maine, and in fact of the New England coast more largely, with the sea and fishing was marketed to potential visitors.

In his essay “Perils of the Sea,” art historian Bruce Robertson presents a few examples which help illustrate the ties between the fishing industry (and the marine industries more largely) and New England’s marketing to tourists. The first of these is a poster for a pageant on Cape Cod which, as Robertson puts it, “reduces fishing to

94 George Bellows, Letter to Emma Story Bellows, August 26, 1911, Box 1, Folder 4, Bellows Papers, Amherst College Archives and Special Collections, Amherst, MA.
its basic elements: an old salt behind the wheel, a large sailboat to the left of him, and a lighthouse to the right” (Figure 18).96 The cover of Success Magazine also highlighted by Robertson has many of the same qualities – here a weathered, aged sailor stands at the tiller, surrounded on the boat’s deck by some of the day’s catch while whitecaps crash about behind him (Figure 19). Images such as these were, in short, “trivialized, marketable, consumed.”97 New England, and above all Maine’s fishing industry had become packaged into an easily-recognized set of visual norms (in large part based on the imagery of the area encouraged and made famous by Winslow Homer) that equated the iconic fisherman with the state’s general character and used the figure to market the region to impressionable tourists looking for a taste of non-urban life. In other words, as Robertson wrote, such images “had become part of an American visual culture, one marketing a New England commodity.”98 Of course, that the two above images, from 1914 and 1907, respectively, come from around the time Bellows first came to Monhegan to vacation and paint is far from happenstance – the acceleration of the New England tourism industry in the first two decades of the twentieth century made such canonical idealization of the region’s fishing industry all the more desirable to all involved, including both those who were to profit from tourist traffic and the visitors themselves.

There are a number of images which market Monhegan specifically via similar visual conventions. One such photograph, produced for a magazine article on

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96 Robertson, "Perils of the Sea," 165.
97 Robertson, "Perils of the Sea," 165.
98 Robertson, "Perils of the Sea," 166.
the island and its many attractions, features two men attired in oilskins and sou’wester hats (the traditional garb of the fisherman, and that which is featured in the poster and magazine cover discussed above) and ready to take on the sea (Figure 20). Later postcards sent from the island further demonstrate its role within this greater visual tradition described by Robertson. *A Friendly Line for You* is perhaps the most prototypical of the bunch (Figure 21). Its sentimental poem and depiction of an aged, solitary fisherman quite literally embodying the state of Maine look rather hackneyed now but seem to mesh quite organically with the precedent established by images such as those used in the Robertson essay, and of course countless others. *Fish House and Surf, Monhegan, Me.* shows a scene that is specific to Monhegan, namely Fish Beach, with a lonely boat left ashore and waves crashing dramatically behind, while an untitled photographic postcard from the 1890s captures hardworking Monhegan fisherman plying their craft, rowing out to sea before setting their fishing net (Figures 22 and 23). These three postcards, alongside the picturesque scenes presented in the types of photographs that typically accompanied write-ups on the island in magazines and newspapers of the early twentieth century, demonstrate that fishing culture, and more specifically the strong, industrious, masculine figure of the fisherman, was a key part of how Monhegan was being marketed to potential tourists, and that in this respect Monhegan’s visual representation in various touristic materials of the late

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99 “Fish Beach” Folder, Historical Records and Archives, Monhegan Museum, Monhegan, Maine.
nineteenth and early twentieth centuries closely mimicked that of other seaside tourist destinations in Maine and elsewhere in New England.

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Having investigated the visual qualities of *The Big Dory* and the historical context in which it was created, we can now perhaps begin to understand what Bellows sought to convey in creating this image and how he engaged with the many layers of preexisting meaning that a scene of Monhegan fishermen in 1913 necessarily engaged with. Vibrant and dynamic, the painting itself is a scene of effort and action. We see men going about their humble profession, accomplishing the tasks necessary to their work with consistency and skill. The tight framing of the image and the heightening of the drama of the scene evident in the examination of its two preparatory oil panels imbue the quotidian action of pushing a dory into the harbor with a real heroism. Outside of the context of the visual history of Maine culture, such heroism might seem odd, but, with Homer and others as predecessors, here it seems easy and natural. Monhegan is an island that, historically, has long been defined by its association with the harvesting of the fruits of the sea that surrounds it, namely lobster and fish. Of course, in this respect it is merely a microcosm of the Maine coast more generally. However, when Bellows came to the island, this was an industry in dire straits. Catches of fish, lobster, and other shellfish had all undergone precipitous declines in the first part of the twentieth century. Instead of struggling economically, Monhegan embraced the tourist industry, and by 1913 the island welcomed thousands of vacationers each summer.
There is no way Bellows could have been ignorant of Monhegan's marginalization of marine industries in favor of its flourishing vacation trade. After all, he was a part of it. Certain fictions in *The Big Dory* have already been identified – the elimination of Smutty Nose Island and of boats in Monhegan Harbor, the dramatic growth of Manana's northern shore, the curious, if plausible inclusion of an entire slew of men pushing and pulling the dory to sea when only two or three would fish from it. However, at question here is not whether or not it is accurate or appropriate to represent Monhegan with this image, or with these men, or with this industry and profession at all. Rather, at question here is what, exactly, Bellows' decision says about his intent as an artist and about the understanding of Monhegan, of Maine, and of America that his work asserts.

The fishermen shown in *The Big Dory* appear as simple but hardworking people who carry out their dangerous but necessary business in a reliable manner. In this way they are but another iteration of a code of ideals by which the state of Maine had been known for decades, as a place which had “represent[ed] the constancy of timeless values, a strong rock amid a sea of change,” since the mid-

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100 Ultimately, this is perhaps the greatest enigma that *The Big Dory* presents us with: why are there more men pushing the dory out to sea than would actually man the boat? On one hand, one can view these extra men as figures artificially added by Bellows to serve compositional or ideological purposes. The groups of men at either end of the dory add balance to the panel and force us to focus on the key central figure and the sea beyond him. Furthermore, the addition of these extra mariners suggests the importance of men working together, although what purpose that might have had for Bellows remains difficult to explain. On the other hand, it is equally possible to search for practical reasons why these men might actually have needed to work together to push the boat into the harbor, an approach which suggests that their inclusion was not due to Bellows' manipulation of his scene but rather was simply part of his observation of Monhegan's fishermen at work. The dory seen in Bellows' painting is abnormally large, and there are any number of potential explanations for why it might have been uncommonly difficult to launch the boat on the day Bellows depicted in his painting – a rocky beach, strong winds or other bad weather, a boat that had been on the mainland for some reason and needed to be pushed or carried farther than usual – all of these are perfectly plausible explanations for the presence of these extra men as well.
late nineteenth century at the very least. Although they appear to be younger than
the figures presented in many depictions of Maine mariners and Bellows’ picture
emphasizes effort on a collective level rather than an individual one, the men of The
Big Dory still conform to most of the stereotypes surrounding the archetype of the
Maine fisherman or sailor, and so present a slightly updated version of an old type,
one which emphasizes youth and male physical vitality. Thus Bellows’ painting both
exploits and participates in this tradition, while also updating it to better emphasize
male youth and strength. Whether the image it purveys of Maine culture has ever
been as true as it might lead us to believe is a matter for debate. Whether or not it
was true on Monhegan in 1913 is another question.

It is certainly possible that Bellows in fact saw and was inspired by a scene
resembling the one we are presented with in The Big Dory during his stay on
Monhegan in the summer of 1913, although in October many vacationers would still
have been present on the island and thus most natives would still have been
occupied in housing, feeding, and entertaining these visitors. Lobster season was not
yet open, and, as noted earlier, there was a paucity of desirable fish available in the
Gulf of Maine during this era. But The Big Dory is still plausible. However, ultimately
whether or not Bellows observed this scene with his own eyes or made it up
completely is something of a moot point. The fact of the matter is that Bellows
elected to represent Monhegan and its permanent residents with this image, a
marine painting in the tradition of the fishing scenes of Winslow Homer, Walter
Lofthouse Dean, and others, at a time when the link between Monhegan and the

101 Robertson, "Perils of the Sea," 147.
fishing industry was more tenuous than it had ever been before. Was Monhegan still truly a fishing village in 1913, or was this image merely one perpetuated by natives and vacationers alike out of nostalgia and/or for the benefit of the throngs of tourists who visited it hoping for a taste of a simpler lifestyle? The Big Dory serves as proof positive that, regardless of what he really thought or saw on the island, Bellows chose to present the former rather than the latter. This decision hints at an interest in tradition, or, more generally, America’s past, as well as masculinity, two themes which, with further investigation, we will find pervade Bellows’ oeuvre.

The fact that Bellows purposefully manipulated a number of crucial aspects of his scene in order to heighten its drama and the heroism of its figures would seem to indicate that these were aspects of his image that he wished to highlight because they were not immediately evident in his source material. If this is to be believed, then Bellows was not merely an observer of the quiet fishing village he visited for a few summers, but an artist who chose to continue to canonize Monhegan (and thus Maine) and its inhabitants in the same way that countless others had despite mounting evidence that this characterization was at the very least incomplete, if not false. In this respect, The Big Dory can be understood to demonstrate Bellows’ adherence to the cultural and artistic tradition of depicting the Maine coast via the mariner, an archetype which pervaded representations of the state in both high and low art. This adherence to tradition in depicting a single image is important because it both tells us how a specific segment of Bellows’ career was shaped and influenced by certain cultural precedents and, when compared alongside other images from
Bellows’ career, it can help reveal a significant trend within the artist’s greater oeuvre – his profound fascination with America’s past.
Section III

A Painter in his Time: *The Big Dory* and 1913 in the Context of Bellows’ Career

It would seem clear by now that *The Big Dory* can be interpreted as valorizing the heroic nature of the hardworking Maine fisherman. A vital step in making this interpretation is our knowledge of the traits shared by many of the images produced by other artistic chroniclers of the Maine coast in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – Winslow Homer, Walter Lofthouse Dean, and countless others consistently depicted the cultural and economic spirit and ethos of coastal Maine through the archetypal figure of the heroic, strong, industrious mariner, as Bruce Robertson has carefully chronicled in both "Perils of the Sea" and *Reckoning with Winslow Homer*. *The Big Dory* is a part of this tradition. However, it is also paramount that we interpret the meaning of *The Big Dory* through the lens of Bellows’ own career, and not solely through the achievements of the other artists from whom he likely drew inspiration. In order to achieve this contextualization, we must locate *The Big Dory* and the summer and fall of 1913 within Bellows’ greater career arc and the evolution of his ideas about his art.

Virtually all discussion of American Art in 1913 typically begins (and often ends) with recognition and interpretation of the Armory Show, a massive exhibition
which brought modern art from both Europe and America together in New York and, the conventional story goes, changed the face of American art forevermore upon its opening in February of that year. Bellows was both a participant who exhibited 14 paintings and drawings in the show and an organizer who helped to bring it about as a member of the Association of American Painters and Sculptors. However, the influence of the show, as well as that of its predecessor, the 1910 Exhibition of Independent Artists (which featured only American art), on Bellows is not easily definable. It seems clear that Bellows and others in his cohort, including Henri and Sloan, were quite pleased to be able to put on a vast and culturally significant exhibition that exposed the American audience to modern art of many different ilks but did so in a “democratic” manner free from the politicization of juries or other mechanisms of selection and exclusion (which Bellows quite vocally and publicly abhorred), but what exactly Bellows might have gleaned from the show and subsequently infused into his own work is somewhat unclear. Although some have attempted to parse potential influences in the show amid Bellows’ later works, these efforts often fall somewhat flat, primarily because Bellows speaks relatively little of the show in his letters and the evolution of Bellows’ style over the course of his career is difficult to understand or explain.

Looking at Bellows’ works from 1913, they do seem relatively painterly in comparison to some of his other works. Paintings such as Vine Clad Shore – Monhegan Island or Sea in Fog (Figures 24 and 25), or the fore-and background of The Big Dory feature unusually loose brushwork for Bellows, above all when compared to the more distinctively figurative work he produced in the late 1910s and 1920s. It is tempting, and perhaps not altogether incorrect, to suggest that such loose technique may have been the product of the influence of the masters of Impressionism and other, related art movements that Bellows saw that February. However, looking back on Bellows’ 1911 Monhegan work muddles this picture somewhat. Gorge and Sea and An Island in the Sea (which Bellows believed to be the best picture he produced during his four week stay that summer) also exhibit loose, expressive brushwork of the sort employed in Sea in Fog and the other 1913 works mentioned above (Figures 26 and 27).105

It seems perfectly reasonable to suggest that Monhegan’s idyllic beauty, the immense power of the sea, or another factor might have compelled him to pursue this slightly altered style in both 1911 and 1913, rather than European modernist influence. After all, although there were some photographs of modern European art available, exhibition of such art in the United States was haphazard at best in the early part of the twentieth century. In fact, “[a]lthough the most recent European developments from Cézanne on had occasionally been seen in small shows at Alfred

105 Admittedly, Bellows did produce many more images while on Monhegan in 1911 than just these two, and among these most featured somewhat neater brushwork than that observable in Gorge and Sea and An Island in the Sea. It is mentioned that Bellows was particularly enthused by this last picture in Cash, "Life at Sea, 1911-1917," 161.
Stieglitz’s… Photo-Secession Gallery… [the Armory Show] was the first massive presentation to the American public” of modern European art.\textsuperscript{106} Although Bellows would have seen reproductions of European artworks, his youth in Columbus, Ohio and the decade or so he had already spent in New York by 1913 would have provided relatively little opportunity for firsthand viewing of modernist European painting, above all since Bellows never travelled outside the United States.\textsuperscript{107}

Therefore, Bellows’ trips to Monhegan straddle what would have been the artist’s first significant firsthand exposure to European modernist forms and methods at the Armory Show. Strangely, however, given the predominant narrative about the transformative nature of the Armory Show on American art, Bellows’ work during those two trips northward does not seem to have changed all that much.

Perhaps the best evidence for understanding Bellows’ mindset towards modernism and his own art is a telling remark he made in a January 1914 letter to Joseph Taylor. Bellows writes that,

> Having got what I can out of the modern movement for fresh spontaneous pure color, I am now turning my attention to The “Secrets of the Old Masters”... I have come to realize that permanence demands more care... I... realize that there are gross dangers in too much spontaneity and haste... But the old masters got different results and I want to know how they did it... This is the process of Rubens and Titian Velazquez Hals and the rest.\textsuperscript{108}

Bellows here admits that he had felt inspired by the “modern movement for fresh spontaneous pure color,” but that it had not worn well with him – there were

\textsuperscript{106} Brown, The Story of the Armory Show, 27.
\textsuperscript{108} Bellows, Letter to Professor Joseph Taylor, January 15, 1914.
hazards, he believed, in such methods, which threatened the quality and “permanence” of his work. Although this letter was penned in mid-January, a few months after Bellows had left Monhegan, it can help us understand Bellows’ artistic approach when creating *The Big Dory* and the two preliminary versions of the image, all of which were completed in October, as Bellows’ time on the island was coming to a close. Might Bellows have already been tiring of whatever modernist forms or techniques the Armory Show might have inspired him to try out? The paucity of letters written by the artist during or about his stay on Monhegan in 1913 makes this question a difficult one to answer, but our best response may lie in the qualities of *The Big Dory* itself.

Whereas most of Bellows’ 1913 Monhegan output consists of painterly land- and seascapes, *The Big Dory* is not easily defined as either painterly or sharply detailed. The rock-strewn beach in the foreground, the hulking form of Manana on the left, and the faces of some of the men are loosely rendered, but many other significant portions, including several of the mariners, the sailboat in the harbor, the house on the promontory, and the dory itself are much more sharply painted. Compared to the work Bellows had completed earlier in the summer, it seems to be much more stylistically traditional – that is to say, illusionistically realist and non-painterly. Given Bellows’ later letter to Joseph Taylor about his work that summer and fall and his mindset towards his future work, we can already begin to see a movement away from new, modern techniques and towards traditional forms, such as those of the “Old Masters” that Bellows mentions. Bellows was hardly a photorealist at any point in his career, but a fair number of his Monhegan paintings
of 1911 and 1913 (and especially during this second stay on the island) represent a departure from his dominant mode of representation up to that point, which typically included human figures rather than pure land- or seascapes and which, although it certainly did not attempt to represent the world exactly as it was, at the very least was far more perceptually realist than the Monhegan land- and seascapes. Overall, however, Bellows’ style in the summer of 1913 remained firmly within the bounds of realism as a concept which can be identified as “the effort of a work to persuade its audience that it refers to a recognizable ‘real’ world and that it tends to represent some aspect of that world accurately.”

_The Big Dory_ can, then, be construed as something of a return to normalcy for Bellows – that is to say a movement towards the more traditional visual style to be found in the earlier work which had made Bellows’ reputation and even more strongly in the later work which strengthened it and away from the slightly Fauvist “modern movement for fresh spontaneous pure color” that had influenced some of his earlier work that summer. We can speculate that this return to a previous, more conservative visual style was the result of his zeal for the subject matter of the Maine fisherman, which is a decidedly traditional subject that evokes the work of Homer and others. In light of the lengthy nineteenth-century conservative realist tradition of depicting the Maine mariner, it would seem appropriate to revert to a less Fauvist or painterly technique when treating such a subject.

Such a reversion to older, less modern artistic methods is all the more remarkable in light of the significantly more permanent and radical effect that the

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Armory Show exerted on other American artists, and on the course of American art more generally. Artists such as Arthur Davies, Henry Fitch Taylor, and Andrew Dasburg saw their art grow significantly more modern and experimental soon after the show ended, while the influence of the show also seeped into the work of others, such as Stuart Davis, Frank Stella, Patrick Henry Bruce, and Marsden Hartley, much more gradually, although no less drastically. After Bellows’ mild experimentation in the summer of 1913, there is no evolution, no slow and subtle creeping towards avant-garde forms or styles – only a reversion to his former mode of artistic production, which was only to grow closer and closer (though never that close) to illusionistic realism as his career wore on.

The idea of traditionalism is one of the most important themes present in The Big Dory. We have already remarked upon the fact that The Big Dory is traditional in certain other ways, and in particular in its adherence to the visual, literary, and popular tradition of representing Maine, and above all the Maine coast, through the lens of the state’s marine industries and the men that those industries employed (despite evidence that this characterization of Monhegan at that time was at the very least somewhat anachronistic). We can now also better understand how Bellows’ style further emphasized the traditionalism inherent in his 1913 Monhegan work by defying the modernist styles that typified a great deal of other American art produced in the months that followed the Armory Show. However, it may be that there is another way in which The Big Dory represents traditionalism which may in

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fact be even more vital to our understanding of both the painting’s message in and of itself and its significance to our conceptions of George Bellows’ career on a grander scale – in its depiction of masculinity.
Although a variety of factors contribute significantly to the sense of tradition inherent in *The Big Dory*, none contributes as substantially as Bellows’ inclusion and portrayal of men. Interestingly, Bellows’ decision to include men at all in his image represents a departure from the seascapes he had completed on the island in August 1911 and earlier in 1913, which were mostly barren of human forms, and this difference signals the importance of *The Big Dory* among the hundreds of works Bellows produced during his three stays on Monhegan. In general, the group of burly fishermen pushing a boat into Monhegan Harbor are essential to whatever narrative we are to read into the painting, and thus to our comprehension of the image. Because these men are so obviously important to the painting, and because they are, quite clearly and definitively, men, the idea of masculinity is apparent as a theme in *The Big Dory* from the outset.

Deeper investigation of these men and the methods of their representation further contributes to the presence and power of masculinity in the painting. As we have mentioned before, they appear to conform to the archetype of the Maine mariner – they are physically strong and industrious and yet retain a certain
humility that is demonstrated by their continual application to their simple but difficult work. This characterization of these men aligns them with what one might label “traditional” modes of masculinity.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines the word “masculine” as, “Of a personal attribute, an action, etc.: having a character befitting or regarded as appropriate to the male sex; vigorous, powerful. Of a man: manly, virile.”\textsuperscript{111} This is a telling description – it implicitly recognizes the necessity of a cultural context in order to understand what masculinity means. Unsurprisingly, the qualities used to define manhood vary wildly across time and space in worldwide cultural history. In the United States, the mutability of masculinity across history and geography is clear – we do not usually associate all of the same qualities with men now that we did in the seventeenth century, nor have the citizens of the many towns and provincial communities that dot each of the fifty states ever, at any point in time, come close to sharing a single ideal vision of manhood.

For Bellows and other artists working in the American northeast in the 1910s, we can define “traditional masculinity” as having qualities usually associated with men from earlier points in the United States’ cultural history, and above all before the influx of modern European thought that began to take place in the last few decades of the nineteenth century. Modernist ideals represented an intellectual paradigm shift that would, as we will see, have a significant impact on perceptions of masculinity in the United States, and above all in urban areas. We can therefore

think of “traditional masculinity” as manhood as it was defined earlier in the
nineteenth century, namely before homosexuality and the growth of the importance
and assertiveness of women within society helped provoke gradual (but significant)
changes in manhood around the turn of the century, which is to say in this particular
example from around 1880 until 1920 or so.\textsuperscript{112} Admittedly, as Michael Hatt points
out, “The concept of ‘manliness’ in Victorian America was a hazy one, referring to
diverse characteristics... as well as different... categories of manhood, such as
citizen, economic unit, sexual being, and so on,” and so it is vital to remain
circumspect when considering what “manliness” means and how it is expressed.\textsuperscript{113}
However, there are certainly a number of qualities which might be described as
characteristic of traditional masculinity as it was asserted in the white society of the
early twentieth-century American northeast.

As with our previous discussion of Bellows’ style in 1913, the “traditional” is
here juxtaposed with the modern. However, while the Armory Show is often
characterized as an event which caused a paradigm shift in the course of the
evolution of form and style in American art, the changes in depictions of masculinity
and sexuality in late nineteenth and early twentieth century America occurred much
more gradually, and at different rates and in different ways in different places,

\textsuperscript{112} Mark C. Carnes, “Reconstructing Masculinity from the Evangelical Revival to the Waning of
Progressivism: A Speculative Synthesis,” \textit{Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in
Victorian America}, Mark C. Carnes and Clyde Griffen, eds. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1990),
183-204, 183.

\textsuperscript{113} Michael Hatt, “Making a Man of Him: Masculinity and the Black Body in Mid-Nineteenth-Century
American Sculpture,” \textit{Race-ing Art History: Critical Readings in Race and Art History}, ed. Kymberly N.
within the context of the art world just as it did more broadly within turn-of-the-century American culture.

As scholar David Pugh has suggested, for much of the United States’ history, and particularly in the nineteenth century, “WASP males dominated the... affairs of... [the] nation to such an extent that any effort to assess them historically as men could be dismissed as a superfluous analysis of the obvious... men were men.” As such, they were thought to collectively embody certain characteristics which defined their shared manhood – to possess “qualities appropriate to or usually associated with a man.” Typical (white) men were, in mid-nineteenth century America, understood to possess strength, stamina, self-reliance, and industriousness, as well as other, perhaps less easily defined traits, many of which sprang from the political and ideological origins of the United States of America itself. That is to say that these traits, although they are hardly exclusive to America or her citizens, can be understood to be particularly American because they largely sprang from the specific political and cultural circumstances surrounding American society in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as American men sought “to define their social, political, and economic positions within a nation attempting to do the same things in the broader community of nations.”

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114 Pugh, Sons of Liberty: The Masculine Mind in Nineteenth-Century America, xv.
115 This is particularly true of men of English descent. Pugh, Sons of Liberty: The Masculine Mind in Nineteenth-Century America, xv-xviii, 41.
116 Pugh, Sons of Liberty: The Masculine Mind in Nineteenth-Century America, 3. Then again, this is an exceedingly slippery slope to tread, and could be considered an exercise in circular logic – perhaps the reason we associate certain masculine character traits with America is not because such traits grew here organically as a result of the circumstances surrounding the United States’ revolution and growth, but instead because they are so essential to later American self-understanding that we have artificially imposed their origins upon these circumstances after the fact, which would imply that the true origins of such quintessentially “American” traits lie elsewhere. This quote is also provocative...
Over the course of the nineteenth century, labor and masculinity came to be associated with and especially powerfully represented in several archetypal figures, including the cowboy of the American West and the New England mariner.¹¹⁷ It is important that these figures were virtually always both white and non-bourgeois. As David Pugh's words about American male self-definition illustrate, whiteness was essential to the American self-image throughout the nineteenth century as well as much of the twentieth. White men had not only founded and shaped the United States as generals and politicians, but they had also remained the nation's primary political, economic, and cultural leaders throughout the period since the nation's genesis. It is thus far from surprising that white men came to embody nineteenth century American culture – not only are the representations created by white men of an America epitomized by white men which characterize nineteenth century American culture somewhat self-congratulatory, they are also, to a significant extent, true to history – white men had shaped widespread notions of American identity through the beginning of the twentieth century as no other group of Americans had, and thus were, for the sake of accuracy (if not the assuagement of our collective racial conscience) likely the most appropriate choice to represent America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Because it can lead us to consider The Big Dory with a political-minded eye. With its display of a group of men performing work together as part of a small, self-sufficient island community, it is tempting to read a microcosmic idyllic American democracy here. However, Bellows was significantly less politically involved than many of his peer artists, and interpreting a political statement in The Big Dory with little evidence outside of the fact that the painting represents men working together distracts from other, more strongly-supported readings of the picture. However, there is still a strong emphasis in the painting on the value and importance of communal work.

The use of middle- and lower-class figures as American masculine ideals is also far from coincidental. Since the majority of nineteenth-century writers, artists, and other creators of cultural content sprang from upper- or upper-middle class backgrounds, we must consider the employment of working-class individuals as American icons as at the very least somewhat voyeuristic (although the positive nature of these representations helps them avoid an air of condescension).

However, one could also read their use as a necessity – the United States has never sought to define itself as anything other than a hard-working nation, and yet the visual or written image of intellectual work being accomplished in an office by an educated man has never reified the idea of effort as well as those depicting physical work can. As art historian Tim Barringer wrote, “to perform a specific type of labour was to assume or to inhabit... a particular style of masculinity,” and “physical labour... form[s, or is perceived to form] the very bedrock of national prosperity,” and this is as true for nineteenth-century America as it was for Britain.\textsuperscript{118} In American history, no figure has ever been able to stand out as a reminder of an idyllic past or a harbinger of a successful future in quite the way the working white man can – he is simultaneously a reconfirmation of the power and importance of the white men who wielded, and always had wielded, the nation’s political, economic, and cultural power, and an ironic nod to the America’s supposed tirelessness and humility.

We have already traced the history of the representation of the New England mariner, and linked The Big Dory to it, although we have also suggested that Monhegan as Bellows would have known it would have been riddled with far more tourists than humble fishermen. But it is vital to our understanding of the figures in The Big Dory, as well as the many other, similar depictions of fishermen and sailors in Maine's visual and literary culture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, that they exhibit strength, stamina, self-reliance, and industriousness – that they exhibit traditional nineteenth-century, heterosexual, white, working-class masculinity. Arnaldo Testi notes that men were typically understood to be “aggressive, independent, and self-sufficient” in the nineteenth century.\(^{119}\) Even as they work together to achieve their goals, The Big Dory's mariners, both independently and as a part of the ongoing representational tradition of Maine seamen, conform to this heroic masculine ideal.

In fact, the very act of putting to sea (as The Big Dory's men are) can be tied to such traditional American masculinity. As Pugh writes, “American men often sought self-definition not through direct confrontation with society but by first evading society and then reuniting with it... and thereby enacting one of the most dominant patterns in our culture.”\(^{120}\) Pugh goes on to highlight this pattern in Washington Irving's classic 1819 short story, Rip van Winkle, whose title character leaves his wife at home and sets off into the woods, only to fall asleep and reawake only decades later, as well as other classic American literary and folk heroes such as

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\(^{120}\) Pugh, Sons of Liberty: The Masculine Mind in Nineteenth-Century America, 6.
Natty Bumppo and Daniel Boone.\textsuperscript{121} This story can be seen as an allegory for male experience more largely in the nineteenth century – it is by fleeing home and family responsibility (and thus female influences) and entering into the terror of nature that nineteenth-century men established the “manly independence” that was key to their self-conceptions.\textsuperscript{122}

It is important that by pushing their boat into the Monhegan harbor and out to sea, \textit{The Big Dory}'s men submit themselves to the immense power of nature, and in so doing escape their home lives. This “escape” is a means of establishing their masculinity as well, although not necessarily in the same way as many of the literary figures who have hazarded similar journeys – rather than hoping to come of age (“become a man”) or resolve a crisis of identity (and thus discretely assert a new self-conception of masculinity), as humble fishermen the men of Bellows’ image assert their manliness continually, exerting consistent effort and confronting the risk of working at sea day after day in order to provide for themselves and their families.\textsuperscript{123} Strangely, they do so by entering into the homosocial space of the sea, an exclusively-male environment of the type where “masculinity can be displayed, transmitted, learned, and controlled... for the consolidation of [male] gender positions.”\textsuperscript{124} Although \textit{The Big Dory} presents us with a liminal point in the narrative of the sailor, as these men are, momentarily, somewhere in between sea and land,

\textsuperscript{121} Countless other nineteenth-century figures doubtless spring to mind as examples as well – Young Goodman Brown, Thoreau, Ishmael, Huckleberry Finn. The list goes on and on.

\textsuperscript{122} Pugh, \textit{Sons of Liberty: The Masculine Mind in Nineteenth-Century America}, 6-11.

\textsuperscript{123} Ironically, Bellows represents the continual nature of the work of these men by capturing a single moment in time through a single (representative) image.

\textsuperscript{124} Hatt, “Making a Man of Him: Masculinity and the Black Body in Mid-Nineteenth-Century American Sculpture,” 195.
the shore is almost as much the man's realm as the sea itself is. No women are
featured in The Big Dory, and Fish Beach is almost as much a masculine, homosocial
space as the dory itself will be just a few moments later, after launching.

The example of the men in The Big Dory can lead us to another key theme
inherent to nineteenth-century “traditional” masculinity – the importance of work.
For both of the archetypal figures mentioned above - the cowboy and the sailor -
work is an especially essential component of male identity. However, in the late
nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, what “work” meant began to change in the
western world. Tim Barringer’s Men at Work: Art and Labour in Victorian Britain
traces the relationships between masculinity, work, and artistic representation
during this period, and can help us better understand their state in America at the
time despite its principally British focus. Barringer argues that investigations of
these three correlated themes are extremely prominent in nineteenth-century
British art, as visual chroniclers of the era sought to understand how to define the
men of their culture as former, simpler understandings of masculinity eroded in the
face of the wave of modernity that accompanied the Industrial Revolution. As
Barringer noted, “The cultural forms of modernity – the erosion of traditional social
hierarchies and the demands of city life, commercial and industrial work practices
and workplace organization, and modern media such as the illustrated press – can
all be seen to have challenged traditional accounts of the role and behaviour of
men.”125 Importantly, similar concerns permeated the man/work relationship in the
United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. At the same time

125 Barringer, Men at Work: Art and Labour in Victorian Britain, 16.
that modernity corroded this relationship in Britain by eliminating jobs that were formerly sources of pride for men, a similar shift was occurring in America. Work, so long an important component of masculine self-conception, was being undermined by new reactions to a changing world which challenged understandings of what a man's proper relationship to his work should be, or what role gender should play in a certain workplace.\textsuperscript{126} Meanwhile, the high and low representational traditions surrounding fishing and the difficult, humbling nature of the work it entailed allowed it to stand out as an unimpeachably masculine profession characterized by continual struggle, and thus it served as a convenient vehicle for the reassertion of a traditional masculine ideal. This is true even in the case of \textit{The Big Dory}, which was, as we have noted, produced during an era when Monhegan was still marketed as an out-of-the-way fishing community despite the tourism industry's substantial growth on the island and fine artists were still depicting the island through the lens of the archetype of the fisherman as well.

By the early 1910s American conceptions of masculinity had changed and continued to change significantly from the “traditional” manly ideals of the century before. Having lived in New York for nearly a decade by 1913, Bellows would doubtless have encountered these new modes of understanding the male gender, which were tolerated in a society that was, haltingly, then demonstrating increasingly open-minded attitudes towards homosexuality. Thus, during this period Bellows bore witness to the gradual, piecemeal erosion of the pillars of

\textsuperscript{126} Mark C. Carnes and Clyde Griffen, \textit{Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America}, (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1990), 129.
nineteenth-century, definitively heterosexual masculinity and the slow growth of novel ideas about men and their defining characteristics.\footnote{Art historian Sarah Burns has linked the beginning of these changes in American ideas about men to Oscar Wilde’s American tour in 1882. Wilde was something of a conundrum to the Americans he encountered – he was simultaneously strong, tall, handsome, and a good drinker (all manly qualities) and yet was also “identified with the female world in a way that most men would never be, and... showed an obsessive interest in his appearance that was also coded as feminine.” Although Wilde’s appearance and comportment were roundly decried as a threat to “social stability” by many men of the era, Wilde’s visit can still be seen as an early signpost of what would later become a major movement – the slow shift away from “traditional,” nineteenth-century male self-identity and towards more modern, diverse male self-understandings. Burns, \textit{Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America}, 94-96.}

By the turn of the century, much of establishment America was in something of a crisis, desperate to fight off what was perceived to be a noxious plague of feminization. As historian Joe Dubbert puts it, at that time “many men began to feel that too many women were taking too seriously their duties as mothers in pledging to protect America’s moral integrity when they criticized sports, agitated for prohibition, became socially and culturally sophisticated, and even became politically informed.”\footnote{Dubbert, “Progressivism and the Masculinity Crisis,” 308-10.} Women were encroaching on some of the traditional domains of masculine activity, including the playing field, bar, and voting booth, and many men felt as though this wave of female power was “a threat... that would both masculinize their women and attack their masculinity.”\footnote{Testi, “The Gender of Reform Politics: Theodore Roosevelt and the Culture of Masculinity,” 1512.} Homosexuality was also perceived to be a significant threat – as George Chauncey wrote, “In the half-century between 1890 and the beginning of the Second World War, a highly visible... gay male world took shape in New York City.”\footnote{Chauncey, \textit{Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Makings of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940}, 1.} The rise in the prominence of homosexuality in the United States during this period caused a concurrent rise in
demonstrative heterosexuality. The reactions of the white heterosexual male-dominated cultural mainstream against the growing tide of female power in America serve as both an example of the enduring power and importance of “traditional” masculinity in early twentieth century American society and a testament to the significance of the “femininization” and homosexuality they were fighting against and defining themselves in distinction from.

Strident traditional masculinity in the first decade of the twentieth century is often expressed through the lens of a single, hugely famous and celebrated public figure: Theodore Roosevelt. To many men, Roosevelt was not only an effective politician who distanced the United States from European culture and practices, but also a figure who “symbolized a restoration of masculine identity at a time in national life when it appeared to be jeopardized.” As David Pugh wrote, Roosevelt was, “an amalgamation of nineteenth-century attitudes... a pivotal figure, or link, between the real frontier and the mythologized frontier of the modern era, the popularized version of his character – a civilized cowboy – sanctioning he-man behavior in [the twentieth century].” Roosevelt’s politics and his image were inextricably intertwined – he was perceived to have launched the Progressive Era by being “simply too rugged, too manly, too courageous to be... negatively affected” by the problems that had stymied others and prevented important reforms before.

Roosevelt, in short, possessed “an instinct for charismatic leadership and direct action and for playing the masculine hero of muscle and mind,” and together these

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131 Burns, *Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America*, 100.
132 Burns, *Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America*, 313.
traits, along with his heroic past as a “Rough Rider,” helped him gain an incredible popularity as a strong, forceful, manly American leader in the early twentieth century.\textsuperscript{134}

However, our image of Roosevelt’s America as a hypermasculine place is undermined not only by our knowledge that much of that masculinity was a reaction against strong anti-traditional masculinity forces in American culture at the time and the fact that Roosevelt’s own public persona was a carefully constructed, largely false one. Sarah Burns provides a compelling argument detailing the deceptiveness of Roosevelt’s image, noting that, “In 1882 [Roosevelt] was elected to the New York State Assembly, only to become the object of merciless derision. Roosevelt’s elite background and Harvard education were held against him,” as was his appearance, including his eyeglasses held by a silk cord, tight pants, hair parted in the middle and high-pitched voice. He acquired such nicknames as “Jane Dandy,” “Punkin-Lily,” and, worst of all, “Oscar Wilde.” As Burns notes, “Roosevelt’s much better-known persona as athlete, rancher, Rough Rider, Strenuous Life missionary, and big-game hunter was the result of his sustained efforts – under heavy masculine social and political pressure – to overcome that early and nearly disastrous mode of self-representation.”\textsuperscript{135}

If the public image of Theodore Roosevelt, a man who enjoyed what might be labelled a cult of personality surrounding his persona as a hyper-masculine American leader was, in fact, a charade designed to orchestrate political success, if

\textsuperscript{134} Testi, “The Gender of Reform Politics: Theodore Roosevelt and the Culture of Masculinity,” 1514-16.

\textsuperscript{135} Burns, \textit{Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America}, 97.
he had simply “become a cowboy by artifice, calculation, and pure determination,”
then any vision of the first decade of the twentieth century as a time when the
United States remained free from the influence of new understandings of
masculinity begins to fall apart at the seams.\textsuperscript{136} The very fact that Roosevelt felt
bound to represent himself as a hypermasculine man speaks to an insecurity which
implies that non-traditional self-representation among men was in fact a significant
current in early twentieth-century American culture which was feared by those who
didn’t ascribe to it.

Starting in the late nineteenth century and then with increasing intensity in
the early twentieth, the rise of female assertiveness and power and increased
tolerance of and openness about homosexuality together represented an assault on
the traditional male power and value system which had always, up until the turn of
the twentieth century, laid at the crux of mainstream self-identity, on both an
individual and a national level, in American culture. Theodore Roosevelt’s strong,
demonstrably and definitively masculine persona appealed to all those who hoped
to revert back to a past era when, as David Pugh put it, “men were men.” Ironically,
Roosevelt’s effeminate former image and the fact that the “roughrider” persona that
supported his cult of personality was, although he had done much to reinforce it
since his embarrassing early days in the New York State Assembly, at its roots
nothing more than a strategic political invention, speaks powerfully to the
ultimately artificial nature of the idea of manhood that the majority of straight
bourgeois whites in the early twentieth century held very dear indeed.

\textsuperscript{136} Testi, “The Gender of Reform Politics: Theodore Roosevelt and the Culture of Masculinity,” 1515.
The intersections between Roosevelt, traditional masculinity, and art can be more clearly illustrated by examining his review of the Armory Show published in *Outlook* soon after the exhibition’s end, in late March, 1913. In the article, Roosevelt praises the American work in the show at the expense of European modernism, suggesting that Cubist works were “repellent from every standpoint” and that “change may mean... retrogression instead of development.”

By critiquing such work, Roosevelt further demonstrated his status as a staunch defender of both traditionalism and the quality of American art in comparison to European work while also suggesting that traditional American art should be appreciated by the sort of traditionally masculine American man whose demeanor he embodied through his “roughrider” personality.

It is useful and important to return to the Armory Show here. Not only does the Armory Show have a particular importance to Bellows’ style in his 1913 Monhegan work but it also represents an important moment in the evolution of the visual depiction of new modes of masculinity, and thus its potential influence on Bellows’ own representations of men in its aftermath must be analyzed.

The movement away from nineteenth-century conceptions of masculinity in the early twentieth century that occurred throughout much of American culture was slow to appear in the art world. This is not exactly surprising – to the white heterosexual male-controlled cultural mainstream of late nineteenth and early twentieth century America, infringements upon traditional conceptions of

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masculinity were hardly a thing to be celebrated. In point of fact, before the Armory Show injected avant-garde ideals and forms into the American art scene, relatively few depictions of non-traditional masculinity existed in the United States' visual culture. However, in the wake of the show, as modernism grew in prominence in the United States, so, too, did the capacity for visually representing non-traditional men. In fact, it has been noted before that the avant-garde art exhibited in the Armory Show allowed some American artists, as art historian James Smalls writes, “to express individualized homosexual identities in works of art” when they had never been able to before. Some artists were inspired by the homosexual codes employed by Wilde and other authors while others, including Duchamp and, later, Charles Demuth, used homosexuality as a tool to “deliberately shock and outrage their conformist middle-class audiences.”

The radical nature of Duchamp’s work exhibited in the Armory Show, and the direct and symbolic importance of the work of Duchamp and others in influencing George Bellows’ work in the wake of the exhibition, can be better understood when examining the backlash that his *Nude Descending a Staircase (No. 2)*, which is commonly interpreted to depict a prostitute in a brothel, attracted in the American press and with the American viewing public. Of course, much of the controversy was provoked by the painting’s stylistic and formal qualities. Interestingly, however, in the Armory Show Duchamp’s painting was sandwiched between “a simulation of an inhabitable building to its left and a sacrosanct family group to its right,” which led it to be interpreted, as art historian Francis Naumann wrote, as an “Assault on

traditional family values, one that threatened to subvert [regular Americans’] vision of the world and change it forever.”

Roosevelt, in his Armory Show review, even went so far as to unfavorably compare the painting to a Navajo rug from his bathroom. Interestingly, Bellows not only noticed, but in fact took a significant interest in the painting. Much as he never let his interest in modern art styles overcome his realist roots, Bellows also never permitted the new gender roles asserted by some avant-garde European art to change his own views. As his biographer Charles Morgan wrote, “He would never tolerate derogation of the serious experimenters,” although he also never allowed their “new gospels...[to] engulf him.”

Although Bellows appreciated the groundbreaking nature of Duchamp’s work on a formal level, this does not mean that he agreed with all of the ideologies it represented.

Although *Nude Descending a Staircase (No. 2)* does not feature a male subject, another, somewhat similar Duchamp work exhibited in the same gallery, *Sad Young Man on a Train*, a Duchamp self-portrait, did (Figure 28). Of course, its subject is not quite as transparently inflammatory as that of *Nude Descending a Staircase (No. 2)*, but *Sad Young Man on a Train* does depict a nude man who appears to be both

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140 In favorably comparing a Native American decorative artwork to European modernist painting, Roosevelt declared himself as a proud proponent of both American rather than European art (and cultural production more largely) and older artistic forms rather than new, modern ones. Roosevelt, “A Layman’s Views of an Art Exhibition,” 719.

141 Morgan, *George Bellows: Painter of America*, 165.

motionless and emotionally unstable. These traits certainly do not conform to images of traditional masculinity in American culture, and the contrast is further heightened when the possibility that Duchamp is depicting himself masturbating in the picture is considered. Although no one accused *Sad Young Man on a Train* of being “an assault on traditional family values... that threatened to subvert [regular Americans’] vision of the world and change it forever,” the young man in the painting is a far cry from typical non-avant-garde representations of manhood. Whereas others (like Bellows) depicted men who possessed strength, stamina, self-reliance, and industriousness, the sad young man on the train is weak, needy, and stagnant, all traits which seem effeminate in comparison to the powerful, proactive men of, say, a Homer canvas. Furthermore, if the suggestion that Duchamp is depicting himself masturbating in this picture is true, then the frank, self-indulgent sexuality of the picture also sets it in opposition with the traditional characterizations of masculinity typically observed in American art up until this point, wherein sexuality is implicit in the power and strength of heterosexual white men but virtually never explicit.

Unsurprisingly, *Sad Young Man on a Train* was hardly the only work at the Armory Show to defy traditional modes of masculine representation – several Cézanne lithographs featuring nude male bathers (which represent a homosocial scene), and, interestingly, the American sculptor Arthur Lee’s frank depiction of

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143 Although such a distinction can be somewhat difficult to make when considering Duchamp’s style during this period, the painting later known as *Sad Young Man on a Train* was in fact simply called *Nude* in 1913. Naumann, “‘An Explosion in a Shingle Factory’: Marcel Duchamp’s *Nude Descending a Staircase (No. 2)*,” 204.

144 Taylor, “Marcel Duchamp and Portraiture,” 110.
black male sexuality in his statue, *The Ethiopian*, were also included in the show, alongside numerous examples of foreign artwork which presented visions of masculinity that mesh poorly with a traditional American one, even if they would have been significantly more acceptable within their native societal context (with which Bellows, as someone with a minimal art education who had never travelled abroad, would not have been as familiar as many of his peers) (Figures 29 and 30). 

Henri de Toulouse Lautrec’s color lithograph, *Le Divan Japonais*, which prominently features an old, effete, dandified, effeminate male member of the French bourgeoisie, serves as an instructive case in point (Figure 31). These examples, the many others in the show, and the break with Academic tradition that the infusion of avant-garde styles that the Armory Show caused in the United States all encouraged deviations from traditional American methods of depicting of men – as we have already noted, it allowed artists “to express individualized homosexual identities in works of art,” and yet it also allowed even more artists to depict men in ways that were, if not entirely homosexual or effeminate, at least less clearly and demonstrably hypermasculine than before.

Bellows would have been repeatedly exposed to all of this art as an organizer of, participant in, and visitor to the Armory Show. Of course, as we have already mentioned, the degree to which his art later in 1913 can be considered a reaction to what he saw in the show is a matter for debate. However, we can at the very least

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145 Suffice it to say that the depiction of black male sexuality is a subject with its own complex history. Despite the racial complications that would have surrounded the exhibition of a sculpture such as Lee’s in the 1910s, *The Ethiopian* remains a bold assertion of male sexuality, which clashes with traditional American presentations of masculinity and makes viewing it something of a homosocial experience.
assert that Bellows would have been exposed to a number of representations of non-traditional male sexuality while organizing, participating in, and viewing the Armory Show, and, having seen works such as those described above, his reassertion of traditional heterosexual masculinity in *The Big Dory* through the lens of the American visual and literary archetype of the hardy New England mariner takes on a new level of significance – the presence of a traditionally male figure in his picture seems more topical and arguably more important to the meaning of the painting as a whole in light of this evidence regarding the months in Bellows’ life that directly preceded its production, regardless of whether or not Bellows was purposefully seeking to reassert such an obviously traditional, heterosexual vision of American manliness or set that vision in opposition to more modern ideas about male self-conception. Even if the traditional masculinity asserted in *The Big Dory* was not a specific reaction against the more feminized, less obviously masculine depictions of men that he would have encountered at the Armory Show (such as those discussed above), it can at the very least be considered a continuation of the older tradition of depicting men exuding strength, self-reliance, humility, and industriousness and also a reaction against the rise of “feminization” in American society in the early twentieth century. This reassertion of traditional masculinity by Bellows is a more powerful statement in light of the artist’s encounters with other methods of male representation in the Armory Show than it would be without such context.

It may seem instructive to consider the images of labor that Bellows would have encountered in the Armory Show and what influence these works may have
exerted on his artistic production in the months that followed the exhibition.

However, when it comes to the labor inherent in *The Big Dory*, Bellows was by and large content to mimic his many American predecessors that had already tackled the topic of the Maine fisherman, and seemingly required no further instruction from European artists.\(^{146}\) This is particularly true because many of the European artists who we might associate with images of labor were not included in the show – Jean-François Millet, Ford Madox Brown and others of their ilk belonged to an earlier time in European art, just as the American masters that Bellows’ pictures echoed in their depiction of work were of an earlier era, and the Europeans in the Armory Show were, as one might expect, preoccupied by “modern” rather than “traditional” subjects, resulting in many more scenes of leisure than labor.\(^{147}\)

Of particular importance to our quest to parse the meaning of masculinity in *The Big Dory* is the fact that in terms of its presentation of male figures, *The Big Dory* is far from an aberration within Bellows’ oeuvre – in fact, the assertion of traditional masculinity is a prominent theme in both Bellows’ artistic production and his personal life. That Bellows was understood to be a particularly masculine man by virtually all who met him becomes quite clear when studying his letters and biography. Much of this characterization sprang from Bellows’ physical stature and his incredible success as an athlete. Photographs abound of Bellows as a member of

\(^{146}\) Interestingly, despite the importance of labor to male identity in nineteenth-century America, the tradition of depicting labor in the visual arts was significantly less robust in the United States than it was in France and Britain during the century. There is no major figure to equate with Jean-François Millet, no single seminal image to compare to Ford Madox Brown’s *Work*. In fact, a great number of nineteenth-century American scenes of labor surround the two archetypes we have already mentioned: the cowboy and the sailor, as well as the farmer.

\(^{147}\) The exhibition checklist for the show is included in Kushner and Orcutt, *The Armory Show at 100: Modernism and Revolution*, 464-70.
various football, basketball, and baseball teams, and Bellows makes reference to his enjoyment of these various sports in his writings (Figure 32). He described a baseball game that took place on Monhegan in an August 1911 letter to his wife Emma in clearly positive terms, suggesting that it was a welcome respite from painting and calling it “great fun.” Bellows even depicted a number of sports in his work, including baseball, football, polo, golf, tennis, and, most famously, boxing.

Furthermore, Bellows not only participated in activities typically associated with masculinity, but also seemed to consciously define his own identity along such terms. A particularly telling moment is when Bellows describes a campus tradition a few days after arriving on campus at Ohio State as a freshman. Bellows, writing home to his parents, says that, “The Freshmen beat the Sophmores [sic] in the class “Rush” this year, last Friday about 500 students [tried] to push a can into the other fellows’ goal. It’s a great sight and I was in the middle, right where Theodore Roosevelt would have me.” This game of “Rush” is not only another form of athletic competition that Bellows participated in and enjoyed, but also, quite clearly, an opportunity for him to demonstrate his manhood – fighting in the middle of the melee is, as Bellows says, “where Theodore Roosevelt would have me.” In other words, it is where a manly man, or a follower of Roosevelt’s “strenuous life” philosophy would be. Bellows takes pride in associating himself with Roosevelt and the mode of masculine comportment Roosevelt then represented (much as he still does today). This suggests that Bellows himself sought to carefully construct this

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148 George Bellows, *Letter to Emma Bellows, August 20, 1911 (Sunday Night)*.
149 George Bellows, *Letter to Maw and Paw, October 9, 1901*, Box 1, Folder 6, Bellows Papers, Amherst College Archives and Special Collections, Amherst, MA.
masculine persona through his actions and comportment, just as Roosevelt did. Even if Bellows never suffered being labelled “Oscar Wilde” like Roosevelt was, he was still an artist, and he to great care in crafting and monitoring a traditionally masculine persona at least partially in the mold of his presidential hero.

The idea of a great mass of male bodies working in concert to “push” towards a single goal would seem to have a particular importance in light of the image and theme under discussion here.\textsuperscript{150} By considering the possible relationship between the game of “Rush” that Bellows participated in and \textit{The Big Dory}, we can surmise that Bellows’ “Letter to Maw and Paw” not only reveals the young artist’s penchant for participating in athletic activities and his esteem for Theodore Roosevelt, but also his admiration for the act (and the resultant visual image) of men performing physical work in the pursuit of common ends, an appreciation which is evident in \textit{The Big Dory}.

Although Bellows eschewed pursuing professional sports after college in order to become a painter, he continued to establish himself as a traditionally masculine man throughout the remainder of his life, not only by continuing to play and maintaining a close interest in various sports but also by becoming a family man.\textsuperscript{151} Bellows’ later masculine character is revealed somewhat in the language he uses when writing or speaking. Bellows’ letters often employ masculine-coded

\textsuperscript{150} On one hand, it seems farfetched to suggest that a college ritual Bellows participated in as a freshman in 1901 might have had a direct or even indirect influence on a painting he produced 12 years later and hundreds of miles away, in what would seem to be a more-or-less unrelated situation. On the other hand, the similarities between the “Rush” game Bellows described in his letter home and the action presented in \textit{The Big Dory} are difficult to ignore.

\textsuperscript{151} Mention and discussion of Bellows’ decision to pursue art rather than sport is in: Morgan, \textit{George Bellows: Painter of America}, 34-5.
words like “beaut” and “bully.” In a letter to Emma Bellows a few years after her husband’s death, Bellows’ friend and colleague Leon Kroll describes his tendency to call out certain works as “top-knotchers” or “Ace-high,” phrases which have similarly masculine implications about their author. As linguist Mary Ritchie Key writes, “strong words belong to men.” The fight for power is at the crux of definitively male diction, and Bellows’ words, which emphasize power and competitiveness (that is to say the fight for power or predominance), reinforce his masculine persona from a written standpoint by demonstrating an assertiveness and confidence on the part of their writer. Words and phrases such as “bully,” “Ace-high,” and “top-knotchers” all belong to a competitive lexicon, and thus proclaim their author’s familiarity with and penchant for writing in a prototypically masculine style.

Most importantly, however, Bellows’ masculinity was borne out in his work. Kroll echoes the words of many others when he writes that, “The painting of George Bellows is a definite and beautiful portrait of himself...There is in his work a loving

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153 The word “top-notch,” a “first-rate person or thing.” is also very much a male slang term of its era, having first appeared in 1902. "top, n.1". OED Online. March 2014. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/203331?redirectedFrom=top-notch (accessed May 12, 2014). These terms are used by Kroll in: Letter to Emma Bellows, April 14, 1929, Box 3, Folder 7, Bellows Papers, Amherst College Archives and Special Collections, Amherst, MA.

appreciation of his contact with life and of the work of fine artists before him.”  

*The Big Dory* serves as a fitting example of the ways in which the “beautiful portrait[s] of himself” that Bellows made reflected his masculinity. The clear and definitive sense of the masculine inherent in *The Big Dory* is significant to its subject and the immense tradition of painting that it falls into. That Bellows sought to imitate the work of predecessors in this genre of depicting the Maine coast through the lens of the strong, industrious mariner is clearly demonstrated by both the visual qualities of the picture he produced and Bellows’ affection for Winslow Homer, his foremost predecessor in this artistic vein. However, ultimately *The Big Dory* provides but a single particularly apt example of a trend that pervades Bellows’ career: the depiction of traditional masculinity.  

A 1925 Boston Arts Club press release touting an upcoming exhibition including Bellows’ work labels him a “Strong armed painter… one who has got something to say and says it forcefully like a man.” Bellows’ were “Works of distinction, dignity, serenity, virile, vital – with grip and thrust.” This masculinity was also conflated with the perceived American qualities of Bellows’ work: it was, what “one expects from a young virile country, confident and glorying in its strength. It is what is expected from America.” The perception of Bellows in the direct aftermath of his death was that he was an uncommonly manly man who imbued the art he produced with his personal qualities. Both art and artist were

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155 Kroll, *Letter to Emma Bellows, April 14, 1929.*  
156 Boston Arts Club, *Strong Armed Painters.*
understood to be clearly and definitively masculine, and this masculinity was thought to be a particularly American trait.

The “works of distinction” that make up Bellow’s oeuvre draw from a vast variety of subjects. In fact, Bellows’ career can be considered remarkable in that there seems to be no single unifying theme or subject to which he returned again and again, for picture after picture. Instead, Bellows painted all sorts of things – boxers, kids on the street, fishermen, soldiers at war, industrial workers, female nudes, family portraits, polo and tennis matches, busy cityscapes. However, although a portion of Bellows’ work had little to do with men, particularly near the end of his career, when he painted a slew of female portraits and nudes, the vast majority of it did, and what ties Bellows’ manifold depictions of men together is that they very often assert traditional conceptions of masculinity with clarity and confidence.157

This is not to say that Bellows’ depictions of masculinity are at all repetitive or static – rather, Bellows’ representations of men and manliness operate upon a spectrum appropriate to a body of work as various as his is. Different types of men are depicted with varying degrees of masculinity. To depict a man talking with a woman at a tennis match such as the figure in the left foreground of Tennis at Newport with the same sort of intensity, strength, and desperation that Bellows’ famous boxers, such as the fighters in Stag at Sharkey’s, exhibit would make little sense (Figures 33 and 34). However, the men of both of these images, and indeed

157 The nude as a subject also has its own particular masculine connotations. The painting of the female nude by a male painter lends itself to heterosexual voyeurism, while male nudes produced by male painters take on an air of homosexual voyeurism.
almost all of Bellows’ works which depict men, conform to certain norms about the male gender. Even Bellows’ least manly men, such as the well-dressed fellow speaking to a young woman at the tennis match depicted in *Tennis at Newport*, retain qualities which delineate them as clearly and obviously masculine, particularly when juxtaposed with the less traditionally-masculine or heterosexual men presented in Toulouse-Lautrec’s *Le Divan Japonais* or Cézanne’s nude male bathing scenes. Although he is not asserting his manly qualities in quite so forceful a way as Bellows’ boxers or the mariners of *The Big Dory*, the man in *Tennis at Newport* remains a clearly masculine man. He appears to be relatively tall and well-built, and is engaging a woman politely – there is nothing here that makes the man seem effeminate apart from his attention to his appearance. What is most important, however, is that even this figure is an outlier in Bellows’ canon – very rarely do we see men who are not engaged in purposeful action in a Bellows image. The other principal male figure in *Tennis at Newport* is the player standing at the net in the middleground who appears to have just hit a hearty and confident backhand and thus is engaging quite enthusiastically in the (in Bellows’ eyes) worthwhile pastime of athletic competition, which makes him seem both purposeful and masculine. Furthermore, even if tennis is a sport that is less associated with manliness than, say, football or baseball, it is a “strong armed” game nonetheless.¹⁵⁸

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¹⁵⁸ What makes this image even more striking are the women it presents. They are all pictures of femininity, and they sit, watch the match, and engage with their male companions quietly and somewhat shyly. Thus *Tennis at Newport* reinforces not just traditional masculinity, but rather traditional gender roles more generally. Women do not appear as often as men in Bellows’ work, but when they do, particularly in his portraits, they are virtually always traditionally feminine just as his men are typically traditionally masculine.
Most of Bellows’ pictures that include male subjects are not scenes of
decorous tennis matches – they are often violent, and show men achieving goals
with demonstrative purpose. *The Big Dory* is a fine example, as is *Stag at Sharkey’s*,
or Bellows’ football drawings (see *The Football Game*, or *Hold ‘em*), war pictures
(such as *The Germans Arrive*), cityscapes (like *New York*), or other pictures of the
Maine coast (such as *In a Rowboat* or *Builders of Ships*). These and countless other
pictures in Bellows’ canon present men in a straightforward, “traditional” way,
which essentially means that they fetishize certain characteristics and embrace
them as appropriate to the male gender. Not only are Bellows’ men typically young,
tall, and strapping, but they are also most often found in poses which serve as clear
indications of their purposefulness – they are, as in the case of the football drawings,
the boxing pictures, *The Germans Arrive*, other war images, and countless other
examples, often engaged in physical struggles with one another, just as *The Big Dory*
shows a communal struggle against nature. Bellows’ men are, as a general rule,
youthful, physically strong, durable, self-reliant, and industrious, although,
importantly, these traits are adjusted to each subject – the widespread masculinity
of Bellows’ pictures is not uniform or monolithic, but rather circumstantial. It has, in
fact, even been suggested by some art historians that some of Bellows’ works,
including his boxing pictures, showed, according to scholars such as Robert
Haywood, homosocial voyeurism, as they depicted an act of “homosexual desire
displaced, enacted, and re-repressed.”159 Some have even gone so far as to suggest

159 Robert Haywood, “George Bellows’ *Stag at Sharkey’s*: Boxing, Violence, and Male Identity,”
that his lithographs of public baths directly represented homosexual situations.\textsuperscript{160} However, regardless of what Bellows’ intent was when creating these particular images, the fact remains that Bellows’ characterization of the American man, while infused with youth in a way that some popular images of manly men (including many representations of aged fishermen) were not, remains predominantly heterosexual and “traditional.”

As Haywood points out in his discussion of Bellows’ boxers, “The boxer’s power over his own body and his attempt to exert power over another body were seen in the early 1900s as natural masculine preoccupations. Because masculinity was so closely connected to physical form, there was great anxiety centered in and around the male body.”\textsuperscript{161} Bellows’ work seems obsessed with male struggle – against one another, or the elements, or time. It is the omnipresence of this struggle in his work which gives his men their apparent purposefulness and, both in and of itself and as a component of the sense of intent inherent to many of Bellow’s male figures, this struggle is a significant contributor to the traditional masculinity that pervades the artist’s greater oeuvre. The idea of struggling is key to traditional masculinity – it is, of course, at the very core of the concept of labor, and it is also at the crux of the “Strenuous Life” philosophy that epitomized the hypermasculine persona affected by Theodore Roosevelt – as Roosevelt suggested in his autobiography, the experience of gaining manly characteristics, of “becoming a


\textsuperscript{161} Haywood, “George Bellows’ Stag at Sharkey’s: Boxing, Violence, and Male Identity,” 8.
man,” as the saying goes, had to be characterized by difficulty – by struggle. Roosevelt spoke of his own fight to overcome the physical and psychological weakness which characterized his youth, but he could just as easily been discussing one of George Bellows’ male figures. While Roosevelt had to overcome difficulties in order to become a man, he also (supposedly, at least) perpetually presented himself with new challenges as a means of continually reasserting that manliness. Bellows’ presentations of men in moments of difficulty are representations of individuals at the moment of their masculine triumph, when they proclaim, once again, their strength and virility in their defiance of the obstacle they have encountered. Some of Bellows’ men, such as the busy urbanites of New York, fight time, and others fight rocky shores beneath their boat, and many fight each other, but almost all of them fight resolutely against the very notion of effeminacy that so frightened heterosexual men in the early twentieth century.

It may be that examining Bellows’ boxing pictures provides the best means of understanding the importance of the theme of masculinity to the artists’ career. Although, unlike the act of pushing a large dory into the water, boxing requires an individual effort rather than a collective one, the high amount of interest in and scholarship about Bellows’ boxing pictures and their clear demonstration of masculine subjects engaging in a struggle mean that these paintings are useful tools for understanding masculinity in Bellows’ work more generally. Furthermore, although they represent but a thin slice of Bellows’ very wide subject range, they are

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also one of the few subjects that Bellows treated years apart, at vastly different points in his career, and thus they can help better understand how the theme of traditional masculinity is present throughout Bellows’ career. Bellows’ early boxing pictures, which were completed between 1907 and 1909 and include two of his best-known works, *Stag at Sharkey’s* and *Both Members of this Club*, are imbued with a raw vitality (Figure 35). The two fighters in each picture throw themselves against one another, engaging in a brutally physical encounter. Their forms are blurred, signifying both the speed and power of each man and their inseparability as two individuals whose decisions and actions are dependent on those of their counterpart. It is not surprising that some might perceive homosexuality in these pictures – they show, after all, two nearly-naked men, throwing themselves against one another while countless other men watch. But it is possible to interpret these pictures in another way, too. The struggle of these men against one another is also a testament to their strength, skill, fortitude, and toughness, and the value of sport – all qualities which fit within traditional conceptions of masculinity and which Bellows would likely have appreciated. They are, one might say, a celebration of man’s baser elements – the wildness that lies within us all.

1924’s *Dempsey and Firpo* is a very different picture, but is tied to these earlier works by their shared subject (Figure 36). Whereas *Stag at Sharkey’s* and *Both Members of This Club* show two men struggling on equal terms and are represented with painterly brushtrokes, *Dempsey and Firpo* depicts, quite clearly and starkly, one man’s triumph over another – Dempsey knocked, dramatically, through the ropes and into the crowd by an immense Firpo left hook. Although Firpo
would go on to lose that famous fight, the moment captured here remains an instant of victory and a testament to Firpo’s prowess as a boxer. As an image produced by Bellows just a few months before his untimely death in January of 1925, and almost two decades after he first painted boxers in works such as Stag at Sharkey’s and Both Members of This Club, it serves as a fitting example of masculinity’s role as a major theme in Bellows’ work that endured across both time and changes in the artist’s style.

Bellows would also later revisit his time on the Maine coast. One of the most compelling of these images is 1923’s Fisherman’s Family, which was inspired by Bellows’ discovery of a photograph of a 1915 version of the work which had been destroyed (Figure 37). It is a self-portrait of Bellows and his family as a fisherman leaving work and walking away from the harbor with his wife and one of his two daughters. In the background we can see men at work sorting fish (a quotation of a 1914 Bellows painting, Tending the Lobster Traps, Early Morning) in front of a harbor framed by a large cliff behind it and a promontory to the right with a small house on it. This is, once again, Monhegan Island, told from a similar perspective as The Big Dory. On one hand, Bellows’ creation of the painting is a testament to the enduring interest that the Maine coast, and Monhegan Island, and the island’s harbor in particular, held for him. Not only did Bellows enjoy some of his most prolific periods while on the island and depicting its inhabitants, but he also felt

inspired to revisit the subject again years later, and even to depict himself as a fisherman and his family as a “fisherman’s family.” However, *Fisherman’s Family* also speaks to Bellows’ role as a painter and the interconnectedness present between the artist and his subject. Bellows clearly identifies with the fishermen of Monhegan and wishes to be like them – this is why he has cast himself as a member of their community in this picture, despite the fact that he was a tourist rather than a fisherman, and that the tourism industry had grown arguably more important to the island’s economy than the fishing and lobstering industries anyway. Bellows’ choice to represent himself as a Maine fisherman, one of the archetypes present in his oeuvre that is most clearly identified with traditional, nineteenth century modes of masculinity – with strength, stamina, self-reliance, and industriousness – is quite telling, and serves as a fitting demonstration of the importance and ubiquity of traditional masculinity within his work and of the significance of his Monhegan pictures, and especially *The Big Dory*, to this greater trend. Whereas *The Big Dory* serves as a particularly clear demonstration of the traditionalism and nostalgia present in Bellows’ work, *Fisherman’s Family* is an elaboration on this same theme which further ties the figure of the Maine fisherman to both the idea of the orthodox family and Bellows’ self-conception as a participant within this greater historical masculine tradition. Bellows represented such traditional masculinity through both his personal comportment and his art, and *Fisherman’s Family* serves as convincing evidence that, as Leon Kroll wrote to Emma Bellows, “The painting of George

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165 He is also representing his family at an earlier time, when his daughter was a child rather than a teenager, and thus is also harkening back to a familial past.
Bellows is a definite and beautiful portrait of himself,“ or, at the very least, what he
himself hoped and envisioned that self to be.
Section V

“American to the Core”: Bellows and Nationalism

Traditional masculinity can be seen as a significant contributor to one of the most dominant themes in the art historical criticism of George Bellows’ oeuvre - the identification of its perceived “American” qualities. Although the idea that a certain idea or characteristic can be more or less definitively “American” than another may be a relatively familiar one, before we can go about discussing the supposed “Americanism” of Bellows’ work it is important to explain what, exactly, this categorization means. “Americanism” can be defined as “attachment or allegiance to... the traditions, institutions, or national ideals of the United States.”

Interestingly, this definition recognizes the importance of precedence and history to the idea of American-ness, and the continual identification of the significance of the past, and of recognizing that past, appears as an undercurrent in many of the texts which link Bellows and Americanism. Although national identity is created continually, it is in a shared past (or “tradition,” as well as the “ideals” and “institutions” that were created in the past) that Americans has always sought and

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166 Which traditions, institutions, and ideals seem most profoundly “American” is constantly under flux. Naturally, and as we will discover, the traditions Bellows’ art played into were identifiable as uncommonly “American” during his own era (as well as others). "Americanism."
found markers of national identity. Thus, when Bellows and his art were singled out for their distinctive Americanism, their association with the American past (or, at least, modern constructions and conceptions of the American past) was also implicitly identified.

The evocation of Bellows’ body of work as an uncommonly American one began soon after his death in January of 1925. In a letter to Emma Bellows in March of that year, Bellows’ friend and fellow Robert Henri protégé Eugene Speicher asserted that, “[Bellows’] enthusiasms were peculiarly American and were charged with vitality, fresh air, and frankness.”167 It was only a few days later that the Boston Arts Club asserted that Bellows’ work was, “what is expected from America.”168 The famous New York art critic Royal Cortissoz called Bellows “American to the core.”169 Emma Bellows took care to copy down The Encyclopaedia Brittanica’s 1926 entry on her late husband, which stated that Bellows’ work had “a virility... that Americans like to call typically national.”170 Although no further explanation is offered by the encyclopedia, we can surmise that this characteristically American “virility” springs from Bellows’ masculine, “strong armed” paint handling, the omnipresence and overarching importance of traditionally masculine men within his work, and the

167 Speicher, Letter to Emma Bellows, March 4, 1925.
168 Boston Arts Club, Strong Armed Painters.
170 It seems fair to assume that this “Americanism” is was set in opposition with European forms by those critiquing Bellows’ work. The Encyclopaedia Brittanica, 12th ed., 1926, quoted in Emma Bellows, untitled note, n.d., Box 4, Folder 7, Bellows Papers, Amherst College Archives and Special Collections, Amherst, MA.
historical importance of white, heterosexual, nineteenth-century-style manhood to mainstream American self-conceptions that we have previously mentioned.  

The first major retrospective of Bellows’ work, a late 1925 exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, also focused on the quintessentially American qualities of Bellows’ oeuvre. As the catalogue for the exhibition suggested, Bellows was then understood as “the most characteristically ‘native’ of our painters... because his emotions, tastes, and personal qualities remained so purely and so completely American” during the same period that other artists were falling victim to European modernist influence, and these “American” aspects of his character were reflected in his art.  

1934’s *Index of Twentieth Century Artists* made an even stronger claim, arguing that “The outstanding trait of George Bellows was Americanism, a trait identified with his subject matter, his technique, and his training.”  

As a man, George Bellows seemed in many ways to be the embodiment of an American ideal. Some of this may be attributed to certain oft-cited details of his biography. As a Midwesterner from the rather non-cosmopolitan city of Columbus,

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171 A useful juxtaposition can be made between Bellows’ critical reception and that of John Singer Sargent, who, admittedly, was of a different generation than Bellows and had a European upbringing despite his American ancestry. Both homosexual and asexual understandings of Sargent and his work have been proposed, and he is consistently linked to Impressionism and other European movements rather than American art historical traditions, although the sexual subtexts of his works are hardly the only reason for such interpretations. However, despite the many differences between the two artists and the context surrounding their production of their respective oeuvres, the discrepancies between the reception of Sargent’s and Bellows’ work help further highlight the links between Bellows and “traditional” masculinity. Richard Ormond, “Sargent’s Art,” *John Singer Sargent*, exh.cat., ed. Elaine Kilmurray and Richard Ormond (London: Tate Gallery, 1998), 23-43, 24-25, 28-32, 35. Richard Ormond, “John Singer Sargent: A Biographical Sketch,” *John Singer Sargent*, exh.cat., ed. Elaine Kilmurray and Richard Ormond (London: Tate Gallery, 1998), 11-21, 14.  


173 John Shapley, ed., “George Wesley Bellows – Painter and Graver,” *The Index of Twentieth Century Artists* 1:6 (1934). It is important not to underestimate the importance of technique to the critical perception of Bellows and his work as masculine (and American) – in addition to the traditional masculinity of his personal comportment and biography, realist style, and subject matter, Bellows’ forceful paint handling also speaks to a powerful hand controlled by a masculine painter.
Ohio, it seems fair to suggest that Bellows would have been perceived to have hailed from an unimpeachably “American” place relatively free from foreign influence, and that this could have been a contributing factor to his perceived Americanism. Although Bellows was based in New York City for his entire career and he regularly summered elsewhere, including Maine, upstate New York, and California, in search of artistic inspiration, Bellows’ Ohioan origins are mentioned curiously often in critical texts on the artist, and above all those of his own era.174 Furthermore, as someone who had never left the United States for artistic instruction or any other purpose, Bellows’ art can be perceived as a wholly American product (even if such a characterization ignores the immense indebtedness all American culture, and in particular American art, owes to Europe). In general, there seems to be an assumption present in a great deal of Bellows scholarship (and particularly older criticism) that, “the roots of [Bellows’]... Americanism go much deeper [than his history as an artist]; this native quality was not consciously acquired – it was inherent.”175 Although the question of inherency is a difficult one to tackle, it seems fair to agree with the sentiment that Bellows considered himself genuine in his self-presentation as a man and artist – his personal letters paint the picture of a conservative, candid man rather than a cynical one. However, it is important to

174 In fact, it can be difficult to find texts discussing Bellows from his own lifetime and the first few decades afterwards that fail to mention his roots in Ohio. On one hand this is an important part of the artist’s biography, and yet on the other one can begin to wonder if there is a specific reason for which this fact is reiterated again and again. It seems fair to speculate that one explanation might be a desire to characterize his work as uncommonly “American,” above all because his artistic qualities are often deemed “inherent” and Americanism is a theme commonly identified with his work. One can also speculate upon the truthfulness of the characterization of Ohio that is implied by such analysis, but as in most things perception is more important than reality – Ohio was understood to be rural and purely American, and thus so, too was Bellows.

175 Shapley, “George Wesley Bellows – Painter and Graver.”
remember, too, that Americanism is nothing more nor less than a social construction of identity shared among citizens of the United States which is primarily predicated, as we have noted, on the perception of a largely original shared historical and cultural past, when in fact American culture can be best described as a pastiche of foreign (primarily European) and domestic influences. Thus, Americanism cannot be truly inherent – it would seem more prudent to suggest that the “inherency” of this trait within Bellows’ artistic persona is perhaps something more akin to a longstanding association or a profound affinity.

Although there are specific aspects of Bellows’ art and biography which have contributed to his identification as a particularly “American” painter and his art as an uncommonly “American” art, in order to understand the context and significance of such a label it would seem important to first recognize the visual qualities that typify quintessentially American images. However, like the idea of Americanism more generally, the visual vocabulary of Americanism is largely circumstantial, and, more than any other one thing, it is predicated on the idea of tradition, in terms of both style and subject.

The conflation of tradition and Americanism can be clearly understood by examining the visual culture of New England. The association between the American northeast, the past, and nationalism makes The Big Dory stand out as uncommonly “American” when compared to works Bellows produced elsewhere. However, as art historians William Truettner and Roger Stein wrote, in “offer[ing] the past as a[n]… old-fashioned… and morally sound version of the present” New England images “are not alone,” suggesting that visual depictions of other American places can and do
offer an “old-fashioned... version of the present” also.\textsuperscript{176} In short, George Bellows’ art seemed American because it conformed to the traditionalist ideal central to the idea of Americanism during his era. This traditionalism is manifested stylistically in his art to a certain extent, but its most significant underpinning is Bellows’ continual assertion of masculinity both personally and through his art. Other artists failed to assert this masculinity as consistently or convincingly in their work and/or personal life, and thus were never characterized as “American” as persistently as Bellows was.\textsuperscript{177}

Interestingly, Bellows’ work also appealed to critics interested in modern styles and subjects. As Marianne Doezema noted, “Bellows... developed a public persona. His personal and professional associations, his demeanor and behavior, and, most important, his paintings all contributed to the image he presented... Bellows managed to chart a delicate course between resistance and accommodation” by largely adhering to tradition but defying it in appropriate measure, such that his “artistic statement provoked attention but seldom outright opposition” through “his flamboyant style, his coarse technique, and his frank, sometimes gritty... subjects” that still resulted in works whose collective “meaning was distinctly unrevolutionary”.\textsuperscript{178} Both he and his works reiterated the concept of

\textsuperscript{177}The most useful examples might be other artists we typically associate with Bellows, such as Robert Henri, John Sloan, and Rockwell Kent. Although they share a great deal with Bellows in terms of both style and subject, these men, whether because of their interest in less definitively American subjects or other reasons, did not assert masculinity as often or as directly in their work and did not have as many quintessentially American biographical traits as Bellows did and thus were not singled out for their "Americanism" as often as he was.
\textsuperscript{178}Doezema, \textit{George Bellows and Urban America}, 3-4.
Americanism despite their relatively “coarse” style and their portrayal of (supposedly) distinctively modern subjects.

As Doezema suggests, Bellows’ personality and actions were significant contributors to the perception of the painter as a quintessential American. Of course, an important factor underlying Bellows’ persona’s Americanism is his perceived masculinity – Bellows’ athletic interests and Rooseveltian vocabulary help paint a picture of the early twentieth century’s version of the all-American man. This is largely because white American males by and large continued to identify with traditional conceptions of masculinity during this era.\footnote{Pugh, \textit{Sons of Liberty: The Masculine Mind in Nineteenth-Century America}, 131-2.} No example of the correlation between the two can be more apt than their repeated association in writings on Bellows himself.

When the Boston Arts Club’s \textit{Strong Armed Painters} press release identified the distinctive qualities that quintessential Americans might represent (and that Bellows did represent), it noted that the United States was a “young virile country, confident and glorying in its strength,” and that Bellows was someone “who has something to say and says it forcefully like a man.”\footnote{Boston Arts Club, \textit{Strong Armed Painters}.} Leon Kroll, in his 1929 letter to Emma Bellows, followed his musings suggesting that Bellows possessed “A spirit which is peculiarly American” and that “He is sensitive in the way a fine American is sensitive” with reminiscences on Bellows’ peculiar, hypermasculine lexicon and the assertion that “He never degenerates into blushing timidity,” a statement which
praises Bellows for his forcefulness, an idea which hints at the theme of masculinity, although Kroll does not elaborate on the bases of this contention.\textsuperscript{181}

An important part of Bellows’ perceived Americanism is that he seemed particularly proud to be American and to be a member of the American art tradition, and he expended a great deal of effort in praising his American antecedents. However, Bellows was never in any way bombastic in his praise of Winslow Homer and the other American masters to whom he looked for inspiration. In fact, Bellows took quite a balanced view when considering the relative skill and importance of his American antecedents in comparison to foreign masters. As he wrote in a 1920 letter, “culture and the Fine Arts are not the special perogative [sic] of any race nation or institution... a fair quota of the genius[es] of the graphic arts... have been born in America... I believe in my own backyard along with other adventure.”\textsuperscript{182}

Bellows’ fairness towards the artistic virtuosity and impact of men of other nations and eras in no way lessened his admiration for American art. In a 1921 speech to the National Arts Club, Bellows contemplated the role of American art and artists on the world scene. Bellows asserted that, “I must testify to the profound importance of American artists... You will do well to appreciate the work of Homer, Ryder, and Thomas Eakins over and above most of the antique and foreign

\textsuperscript{181} Kroll, \textit{Letter to Emma Bellows, April 14, 1929}.
\textsuperscript{182} George Bellows, \textit{Letter to Miss Mary E. McCauley, September 20, 1920}, Box 1, Folder 9, Bellows Papers, Amherst College Archives and Special Collections, Amherst, MA. Bellows’ recognition of the possibility for artistic talent and inspiration in any nation is pro-American because there were many in the early twentieth century who had little time for American art, and thought America incapable of producing world-class modern artists. Here, Bellows seeks only to suggest that, even if the European tradition was formidable, that did not preclude Americans from artistic achievement. In other writings and speeches, he would go further in asserting the quality and importance of American art and artists.
masterpieces brought to this country for sale at large prices... They produce not American Art: but Art.”\textsuperscript{183} This statement implied that he found Homer and company to be the equal of European masters and asserted the importance of the American School within the greater context of Western art, which had traditionally privileged European art while ignoring or looking down on American work. Bellows attests to his admiration for American artists, and in particular Homer, again and again in his various writings, and so depicts himself as a clear advocate for American art history and the American art community. There was a reason, after all, that Bellows was asked to address The National Arts Club, and that he felt bound to assert the importance of American art to the club at all – evidently, not all of the Club’s members believed in its importance to the same extent that he did.

However, despite the usefulness that analyzing Bellows’ words, personal qualities, and biography can have when investigating the Americanism inherent in his intentions and impact as a painter, the artist’s work itself typically tells the story better than any outside evidence. Aside from the influence of Bellows’ personal traits on the perceived aesthetic qualities of his work, his artistic output is first and foremost “American” because of its formal aspects – Bellows, as a conceptual realist purportedly depicting the world around him as he experienced it, fit into an American tradition of realism rather than a European one of modernism and abstraction.\textsuperscript{184} Even if, as Barbara Weinberg, Doreen Bulger, and David Park Curry

\textsuperscript{183} Bellows, \textit{Speech to the National Arts Club}.

\textsuperscript{184} At the very least, this has been the popular and, for the most part, scholarly perception over the vast majority of the last century or so. Some scholarship, including H. Barbara Weinberg, et al., \textit{American Impressionism and Realism: The Painting of Modern Life, 1885-1915}, exh. cat. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1994), calls into question this relationship, instead positing that early twentieth-century realism found its roots in French and American Impressionism as well as realist
have suggested, late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American realism and impressionism share more than is often recognized, it is difficult to deny that early-twentieth century realism was much more the product of developments in American art since the nation’s founding than was impressionism, and it would have been understood as such by both critics and the public of the era.\textsuperscript{185} Ultimately, by participating in the realist tradition, Bellows augmented the perceived Americanism of his oeuvre.\textsuperscript{186}

Admittedly, as time passed, and in particular after 1913, avant-garde forms penetrated the American art scene more and more. However, it is difficult to deny that Americans consistently lagged behind European steps away from realism and predecessors. Others, such as Barbara Novak in her landmark volume, \textit{American Painting in the Nineteenth Century: Realism, Idealism, and the American Experience} (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1969), 218, have linked early twentieth century realism to German dark impressionism as well. However, in \textit{Picturing the City: Urban Vision and the Ashcan School}, Rebecca Zurier labels Bellows and his fellows in the Ashcan School as realists who produced work that tried to persuade its viewers of its representation of “reality” but who did so not by emphasizing details encouraging verisimilitude but rather by making their brushwork visible and evident despite the general recognizability of their forms. She suggests that their realist style is the product of brushwork that mimics techniques used in realist drawing rather than American Impressionism, and this seems like a more likely and convincing solution than those posited by Weinberg, Novak, and company, at least as it regards the Ashcan artists (9-11).

\textsuperscript{185} For more on the links between turn-of-the-century American realism and impressionism see: Weinberg et al., \textit{American Impressionism and Realism: The Painting of Modern Life, 1885-1915}, 3.
\textsuperscript{186} The significance of realism to the American art tradition is perhaps most obviously manifested in the work of Eakins and Homer, but it hardly begins or ends with these two figures – in fact, it can be traced back to the earliest important artists and artworks of the nascent United States, such as John Singleton Copley (Copley is defined as such in Novak, \textit{American Painting in the Nineteenth Century: Realism, Idealism, and the American Experience}, 15). American realism was manifested in the work of many of the nation’s most celebrated and important artists of the nineteenth century, including such figures as Thomas Cole and Albert Bierstadt, as well as notable marine painters, including Martin Johnson Heade, Fitz Henry Lane, and others. John Wilmerding, in \textit{A History of American Marine Painting} (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1968), provides an overview of this segment in the history of American marine art in chapters 10 and 11 (158-204), and examining this work can help us understand both the importance of realism to nineteenth-century American art history more generally and the legacy of the predecessors who inspired Homer and his followers to participate in the American seascape tradition. Most importantly, American realism, with the help of Homer, Eakins, and their contemporaries, persevered concurrently with the expansion of European modernism and the infiltration of modernist forms into American art in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, an invasion which is signaled by the work of the American Impressionists.
towards abstraction from the onset of Impressionism until at the very least after World War I, typically favoring realist and理想ist styles rather than modernist ones.\footnote{Novak, \textit{American Painting in the Nineteenth Century: Realism, Idealism, and the American Experience}, 217.} That realism, then, might become an identifiably American art idiom under such conditions is hardly surprising – after all, if an investigation of the history of American conceptions of national identity tells us anything, it is that Americans have been eager to reiterate what differentiates us from the rest of the world for virtually the entirety of our history as a nation.

However, Bellows’ style was not only apt for America more generally, but it also was specifically attuned to its time – Bellows himself admitted as much, saying in an interview that “Others paved the way, and I came at the psychological moment.”\footnote{Florence Barlow Ruthraff, “His Art Shows ‘The Big Intention,’” \textit{New York Telegraph}, April 2, 1911, magazine section, 2. Quoted in Doezema, \textit{George Bellows and Urban America}, 199.} As Marianne Doezema has written, “In many respects, Bellows’ way was... paved. By the 1900’s a vocal segment of the art public was weary of the ‘rosewater idealism’ employed by many nineteenth-century American artists, and Bellows’ “exuberantly spirited pictures” filled the demands of a nation clamoring for “an authentic American art.”\footnote{Doezema, \textit{George Bellows and Urban America}, 199.} This he and his peers in the Henri circle accomplished by circumscribing their changes within American artistic and cultural tradition. As Doezema suggests, “Their revolution, in other words... was waged within prescribed boundaries” which typically “conformed to established American values.”\footnote{Doezema, \textit{George Bellows and Urban America}, 196.} Ultimately, Bellows' work played into the American realist tradition of John Singleton Copley, Thomas Eakins, and others, but also perfectly filled a cultural
need of its time, and in so doing proclaimed itself as a topical yet timelessly American cultural product.

There is, however, another aspect of Bellows’ work which has had a particularly powerful impact on perceptions of its Americanism – the variety of the artist’s subject matter. In examining the length and breadth of the artist’s career, Bellows can begin to seem peculiarly American because he showed so many different aspects of American life, and in so doing captured particular, discrete moments in American history. As art historian Charles Brock wrote, “Bellows’ was an art of everything. It touched on many of the most important social and political issues and mass spectacles of the day, as well as on the intimacies of domestic life.”191 Poor and lavish, idyllic and terrifying, sick and healthy – the America of Bellows’ oeuvre showed a great many aspects of the American scene. Importantly, many, casual observers and scholars alike, fail to consider the work that Bellows produced outside of New York City when formulating ideas about the painter, even though Bellows also depicted scenes in Ohio, upstate New York, California, New Mexico, and, as we have seen, the Maine coast – and so Bellows’ work is geographically diverse as well. Contemporaries of Bellows “noted that in his work ‘attention is centralized on the one big idea of life.’”192 While this characterization might on the one hand speak to the perceived vitality inherent in the artist’s style, it could also be construed as a commentary on the variety of Bellows’ subject matter – a suggestion that, in depicting so many different things, Bellows cast a wide enough

net to have his body of work represent the collective modern American human experience itself.

However, Bellows’ work was not diverse in every possible way. It is notably racially homogenous, featuring very few non-white figures (with a notable exception being one of the pugilists in the famous boxing canvas *Both Members of This Club*), and this near-uniform whiteness has doubtless played a role in the perceived Americanism of his work – after all, as we mentioned earlier, “until quite recently, WASP males [have] dominated the political, social and economic affairs of this nation.”

Meanwhile, as we have already remarked, Bellows’ depiction of masculinity was quite limited as well. Bellows’ paintings are replete with figures exuding “traditional” conceptions of masculinity akin to those that were widely-held in American society in the nineteenth century. These particular modes of masculinity had also been conflated with American male self-identity for the vast majority of the nation’s history. That is to say that not only did most nineteenth-century white men, of varying social classes, tend to try to embody certain characteristics that were generally recognized as “masculine,” but that such masculinity was an essential part of the conception of their national identities as well. As David Pugh has suggested, “Americans have always envisioned their nation and the land as feminine, which is to say, something to be revered by men but also something to be defeated and controlled by them as a means of expressing their maleness, their autonomy, their

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Nineteenth-century, “traditional” masculinity had thus been connected to the American male’s understanding of his own American-ness for at least a hundred years before Bellows’ heyday in the 1910s and ’20s. As we have noted, the white men of Bellows’ pictures consistently embody such traditional masculinity, albeit to varying degrees and in different ways in different pictures. In so doing, these painted figures assert not only a traditional masculinity, but also an identifiably American quality which, when considered over the course of Bellows’ career as a whole, contributes significantly to the perception that his artistic output was marked by a characteristic Americanism.

The Big Dory provides a particularly clear example of how the American qualities of Bellows’ work operate. On one hand, alongside other works that Bellows produced on Monhegan and elsewhere on the Maine coast, it contributed to the variety of Bellows’ oeuvre which has proven key to the perception of the artist’s work as peculiarly American. More importantly, it is also a clear example of an artistic rendering of traditional masculinity – for a wealth of reasons already mentioned, its figures seem to exude the strength, stamina, self-reliance, and industriousness that we associate with customary definitions of American masculinity, which can in turn be tied to American male understandings of national

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194 Pugh, Sons of Liberty: The Masculine Mind in Nineteenth-Century America, xvii.
195 An important contributor to the linkage between “traditional” masculinity and Americanism has also long been the depiction of men in the American visual arts. Virtually all American artists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries conformed to traditional methods of representation of men, and so the American art tradition, as it continually contributed to American culture more largely and grew in stature on the world stage, was also perpetually associated with these traditional modes of masculinity.
identity. Furthermore, as a realist work, it is couched within what was often considered to be a definitively American artistic tradition.

However, it may be that the greatest reason why *The Big Dory* seems uncommonly American is its participation in the New England art tradition. The significance of this correlation can likely be tied to the importance of the New England region to America more largely – after all, “New England, by the end of the [nineteenth] century, claimed more convincingly than any other region to be the place where the acts and ideas that had engendered the United States had come into being and where living remnants of that authentic history still survived.”196 Julia Rosenbaum has traced the relationship between the art of the American Northeast and American self-conceptions at length. As she wrote, there was a “mania for the region of New England at the turn of the century... Between roughly 1890 and 1920 depictions of New England landscapes and New England figures flooded the American art scene.” Over time, such art “became identified with social values: self-reliance, order, and respect for heritage and tradition," and “Audiences hailed these images... for the ideals of community and nationhood projected by them."197

This was especially true of scenes of rural New England – there was a cultural shift towards valorizing the “active engagement and preservation of the world outdoors” in the late nineteenth century, and the incredible growth in the popularity of vacation spots in rural Maine during this era speaks to the significance

196 Robertson, "Perils of the Sea," 143.
of this trend, which “helped to sharpen a perception of the New England landscape as vital to the nation at large, an important spiritual resource.”

Perhaps even more important than the landscape to the association between New England and American identity is the seascape. Of course, this association between the seascape and American self-understanding is nothing new – as Roger Stein wrote in his landmark book, *Seascape and the American Imagination*, “The... seascape space has been linked to an imaginative conception of America since ancient times. ‘America’ was for centuries the unknown place beyond the vast sea,” and, in the time since (and even before) the American Revolution, Stein notes that the Atlantic Ocean has often symbolized the United States’ (and their colonial predecessors’) apprehension regarding America’s political, economic, and cultural role in the world and its relationship to its European forefathers. Rosenbaum has linked the effects of nineteenth-century landscapes and Homer’s shore scenes on the American psyche, while Bruce Robertson has asserted the correlation between the New England seascape and American identity much more directly. As Robertson suggests, Winslow Homer “reframed the idea of a heroic coast of New England,” and did so with so much success that “his images became inescapable for other artists, critics, and audiences,” leading to their immense cultural and artistic impact.

Through his pictures, Homer helped reify the archetype of the New England mariner

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198 The use of the word “spiritual” here only further underscores the importance of the outdoors to American self-conceptions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Rosenbaum, *Visions of Belonging: New England Art and the Making of American Identity*, 78, 111.
200 For more on the former of these two arguments, see: Rosenbaum, *Visions of Belonging: New England Art and the Making of American Identity*, 92.
that featured prominently in many of his scenes as “an image that was American in its hardiness, its certainty, its virtue, and its violence, but not in its diversity.”

The echoes of this image of the quintessentially American New England mariner can be seen quite clearly in *The Big Dory*, and the tactics Homer used in achieving the concretization of the figure of the mariner as a cultural archetype seem quite similar to Bellows’ own tactics as an artist. However, the affinity between the two artists can be seen as more fundamental than the mere fact that Bellows’ own Maine marine paintings are reminiscent of Homer’s.

An article written on Homer in *The Literary Digest* in 1910, before Bellows had ever visited Monhegan or painted a single seascape, suggests that Homer’s solitary lifestyle on the Maine coast had inspired “in his big, comprehensive work something that seems… entirely personal and entirely American. No one… can doubt that… [his works] are characteristically, spiritually, as well as physically, American,” but then goes on to state that there is “Something of Winslow Homer’s force… in the work of George Bellows… [It is] rough, frank, original, true.” Bellows, too, painted a certain picture of the Maine coast (and thus America) by emphasizing the traditionally masculine white male and exercising apparent obliviousness towards non-white, non-traditionally masculine men, just as Homer did when representing the Maine coast and Bellows himself already had, as *The Literary Digest* article suggests. Although *The Big Dory* is very different from a Homer picture in a number of important ways, including in terms of its style and cultural and personal context

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201 Robertson, "Perils of the Sea," 167.
of its production, it is ultimately a picture that shares a great deal with the seascapes that Winslow Homer and other artists used to personify the Maine coast in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Even today these same qualities present in *The Big Dory* can help us identify it as a quintessentially American picture, although that label is much more likely to be negative or sarcastic than it would have been 100 or 120 years ago. *The Big Dory* represents a continuation of a greater tradition of New England marine art, and in its adherence to the norms of representation of the northeastern American coast defined by Homer and other similarly-minded, if less celebrated, artists, it displays certain qualities, in terms of both style and subject matter, which have allowed its Americanism, with the help of its traditionalism, to echo well on into the 21st century.

If we are, then, to proclaim for once and for all that *The Big Dory* and Bellows’ work as a whole are definitively American, it is important to remember what that characterization truly means. The idea of Americanism is a social construct, a collective national recognition of certain qualities shared by American citizens and by which the United States’ culture is defined. Therefore, the concepts underlying Americanism need not necessarily be true – they only need to be accepted and recognized as such by the national cultural mainstream. Implicit in our recognition of Bellows’ interest in tradition, or the past, is the idea that his art does not fully represent the reality of the present as he experienced it. Rather, Bellows depicted

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This hardly disqualifies Bellows from being labelled a “realist” – not counting him as a realist because he painted what he *perceived to be* reality rather than what actually existed around him would be a significant step towards rendering the idea of realism meaningless. All “realist” artists show the world as they understand it, but what is important for our mission is that Bellows viewed the world with a traditional, white, heterosexual masculine mindset, and that this worldview was imbued in his pictures, causing both to resonate as uncommonly American.
the America of his era not as it was, but as he and others nostalgically perceived it to be, and his pictures are testaments to his efforts to recreate this traditionally-American worldview through the lens of fine art.

*The Big Dory* can, then, be understood as a picture which harbors certain associations that make it seem even more American than most Bellows pictures, and as such it can provide us with a window through which we can better glimpse the qualities which characterize Bellows' supposed “Americanism.” However, *The Big Dory*, and Bellows’ Maine pictures more generally, are but a part of a larger whole when it comes this sense of Americanism so often identified as inherent to Bellows’ oeuvre.

Many of these same qualities are reflected in other works by Bellows, and these similarities are what make *The Big Dory* a powerful and significant example when considering Bellows’ other works or his career as a whole. Take, for example *Forty-two Kids* (Figure 38), one of the urban paintings mentioned in Bellows’ obituary in the *New York Times*. Although, since it depicts children, it is not a scene of work, it still represents youthful vitality and masculinity as two of its defining themes. The boys and young men depicted in *Forty-two Kids* are lost in the joy of their pastime, and they are defining themselves in terms of their struggle with one another, physical tussles which recall Bellows’ boxing pictures. The difference between these works Cézanne’s lithographs of bathers is striking – while they share a similar subject, Cézanne’s men lack the youthful vitality and movement of Bellows' boys and are instead caught in a homosocial stagnancy which causes the viewer to admire their adult masculine forms in lieu of youthful roughhousing. *Forty-two Kids'*
story is told with the help of yet another novel subject depicted by Bellows through the lens of realism, and together these elements, but above all the youthful masculinity displayed by and growing within these boys and young men, come together as yet another installment in Bellows’ “peculiarly American” oeuvre.

As these and many other examples indicate, so plentiful are the factors which encourage the reading of Americanism in Bellows’ work that his collective artistic output appears to be a perfect storm, as it were, of “American” qualities. From details of Bellows’ biography, to perceptions of his personality and manner, to his general adherence to realist tenets, to his portrayal of traditional masculinity, to his adherence to a New England seascape tradition that was thought to be a particularly apt method of visually expressing American identity around the turn of the twentieth century and was led by a man who was considered by many to be America’s greatest and most nationally-characteristic artist, the work of George Bellows has always seemed to embody tradition, and thus America, from tenement to shining sea.
Conclusion

We have, by now, taken care to understand *The Big Dory* on a number of different levels, from the formal to the historical to the biographical. The potential number of spheres of influence of any carefully-constructed artistic image are many, and our inquiries into Bellows’ intentions and mindset when painting *The Big Dory* and his other Monhegan works have, hopefully, helped us better understand not only this painting, which is not unimportant in and of itself, but also this moment in Bellows’ career and in Monhegan, coastal Maine, and America’s cultural and artistic histories. This sort of investigation is important – firstly because concentrating on a single image allows us to better understand how the individual works which, discretely, make up Bellows’ larger career are conceived and carried out, one by one, and it is difficult to bring this sort of attention to bear on images on a consistent basis when attempting to discuss an artist’s career as a whole.

However, this sort of specific inquiry can also provide us with a jumping off point for more general study of an artist’s life and work. Although *The Big Dory* represents only one moment in Bellows’ remarkably diverse (if truncated) career, it also serves as a reflection of the evolution of Bellows’ artistic practice up until the early fall of 1913, and as an important precursor to his later work, including some of Bellows’ other images of the Maine coast as well as his renderings of countless other
subjects. That is to say that *The Big Dory* is a link in a single chain or arc which represents the progress of both time and Bellows’ personal and aesthetic outlook and artistic practice, and, although our understanding of Bellows’ oeuvre will not collapse if we ignore his work on Monhegan in the summer and fall of 1913, this period, and particularly *The Big Dory*, affords us the opportunity to better understand George Bellows’ artistic and personal character than we could otherwise, and so make observations about the artist and his work that might otherwise elude us.

Bellows’ Monhegan work follows a cultural tradition of representing Maine through the lens of the mariner, although this characterization appears to be at the expense of reality – by 1913, marine industries in Maine had been by and large surpassed in importance by a tourist trade which, ironically, played upon the reassertion of an idyllic past emphasizing the simplicity and humility of the lifestyle of local fishing and lobstering families and the heroic nature of their work. Bellows’ adherence to this tradition speaks to his reasons for going to Maine and the way in which he approached his artwork in relation to local history and context and his artistic and literary forebears in Maine.

However, *The Big Dory* also elucidates certain themes which permeate the length and breadth of Bellows’ career. The interest in American tradition demonstrated by Bellows’ representation of Monhegan through the lens of maritime work is only a microcosm of the artist’s greater interest in traditionalism, a concern which permeates his oeuvre. Marianne Doezema has suggested that the key to Bellows’ success as an artist was his ability to marry the traditional with the
modern, the old with the new, the comfortable and the accepted with the transgressive, and this certainly seems to be a compelling argument when considering the formal qualities and subject matter of Bellows’ work.\(^{204}\) However, in terms of his self-presentation (and, one would guess, self-conception) and the vision of American society that his pictures projected, Bellows was staunchly traditional. As we have discussed, both Bellows (through his behavior, self-presentation and biography) and his pictures (through their own visual qualities and their adherence to American artistic tradition) reinforced a conventional American white heterosexual masculine ideal, and we can understand Bellows’ continual assertion of this vision of masculinity as a major contributor, alongside other details of his art, persona, and biography, to the Americanism which grew to become his defining art historical characteristic.

We have mentioned that the topicality of Bellows’ work has often been cited as a contributing factor to such perceived Americanism. As John Wilmerding wrote in his introduction for *The Paintings of George Bellows*, Bellows “did embody a broad exuberance and self-confidence central... to the American character.”\(^{205}\) Other texts further emphasize the point that Wilmerding is hinting at here – that Bellows and his art seemed to exemplify a specific moment in the history of American culture. Of course, individual works by Bellows described countless disparate moments and places in American history. However, as we have noted, collectively his work can also been understood to have personified the zeitgeist of its time. Charles Brock's

\(^{204}\) Doezema, *George Bellows and Urban America*, 3-4, 196-7.

assertion that "Bellows’ art and personality matched the tenor of his time in capaciousness and liveliness… Bellows’ was an art of everything. It touched on many of the most important social and political issues… of the day" certainly seems to ring more or less true when examining Bellows’ persona and art and the criticism of his work.\textsuperscript{206}

On the other hand, the moment in American cultural history that Bellows was capturing was a fundamentally conflicted one. From an art or cultural historian’s perspective, it is easy to see the innovations of the first few decades of the twentieth century and thus think of this epoch as a time of great change or progress. However, culture has a way of changing gradually rather than suddenly or discretely. The 1910s, which comprise about half of Bellows’ career as a professional artist, including his 1913 trip to Monhegan and the creation of \textit{The Big Dory}, and also bore witness to important changes to the landscape of American art more largely, were a time of change in America, as the country found itself experiencing the new while still clinging steadfastly to the old. There is, within Bellows’ work, a juxtaposition of these two realms, one old, one new – the verisimilitudinous and the painterly, the traditional and the innovative, the legacy of the nineteenth century and the realities of the twentieth. George Bellows’ art captured the contradictions of this moment in cultural history, often through the lens of the complexities of his individual character, and the traditionalism of masculinity as Bellows often presented it, both personally and artistically, is key to our knowledge that Bellows was an artist who was aware of the present, as his style and subject matter indicate, but was even

\footnote{Brock, “George Bellows: An Unfinished Life,” 27.}
more keenly attuned to the past. Bellows’ work has been construed by Brock and others to be representative of the spirit of the era he inhabited, and this characterization is not entirely incorrect. However, in reality Bellows’ work revealed not only America as it was, but also America as the American cultural mainstream thought America to be, and central to that conception of identity was tradition, or, to put it more plainly, the past. It is both a testament to the fundamentality of such tradition to American culture and a credit to Bellows’ skill as a painter in crafting mildly-modern but predominantly-traditional scenes that his work never seemed “trite” or “sentimental,” but instead resonated as realistic and was lauded for its “energy” and “invention.”

Before his death, in the introduction for a book to be published about his work, Bellows wrote that “A work of art may be described as an arrangement or ordering of forces with the motive of stimulating the emotions and the receptivity of the mind to aesthetic impression and creation.” These words provide an interesting insight into Bellows’ artistic ideology near the end of his life and career. In his work, Bellows sought to manipulate color, line, and form in order to achieve an emotional effect and stimulate others into both creating new art and more profoundly understanding preexisting artistic forms. This attitude stands in stark contrast to Formalist understandings of art. As the Formalist artist and critic Roger Fry wrote, in “the classical work of art... nothing is for effect... [it is] an even,

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207 Crowninshield, George Bellows, 4.
208 George Bellows, Typescript of a Foreword for The Paintings of George Bellows (New York: Knopf, 1929), Box 4, Folder 2, Bellows Papers, Amherst College Archives and Special Collections, Amherst, MA. Note: As the date of publication suggests, the book was not published until several years after Bellows’ death.
impartial, contemplative realisation of what is essential – of the meaning which lies quite apart from the associated ideas and the use and wont of things of life.” By the mid-1920s such Formalist ideologies were a major force within the realm of art theory, and Bellows’ declaration of his belief in the importance of the effect of art on those who view it sets him in stark opposition from those like Fry who contended that art’s only importance was to investigate the “essential” nature of what it depicted.

Furthermore, the effect that Bellows’ quote describes is just that which he himself achieved in depicting American men – Bellows marshalled the images and forces that he saw in the world around him and used them to engender an aesthetic impression, namely the importance of traditional white heterosexual male identity to American history and self-understanding. At the end of the day, despite the mildly modernist formal qualities which characterize the artist’s non-illusionistic style, Bellows’ work, above all else, reiterated the centrality of the past to mainstream American self-understandings of the early-twentieth century – the circumspect artistic “revolution” that Marianne Doezema has suggested Bellows participated in was as much, if not more, a product of cultural perception, that is to say nostalgia, as it was historical reality.

Given the enigmatic nature of the evolution of George Bellows’ style over the course of his career, it might seem difficult to contend that George Bellows stepped off Monhegan Island at the end of October, 1913 as an appreciably different artist.

from the one who had arrived there for a second visit a few months earlier, in July. Although he had spent his summer and fall there with his nascent family and this period represents the most prolific stretch of his career, Bellows’ 1913 Monhegan work was not a turning point, because there are precious few ways in which his art, at any point in his career, permanently changes or evolves. The 125 paintings that Bellows produced during his four months on the island that year cannot fit within a neat understanding of the formal evolution of Bellows’ art because there is no such thing. However, what makes this work (and The Big Dory in particular) remarkable is that it asserts the importance of tradition to Bellows’ work more strongly than perhaps any other period in Bellows’ career. In the wake of the Armory Show, the time would appear to have been ripe for Bellows to begin to transition towards more modern subjects and styles, and Bellows’ output from that summer is not without mild experimentation in painterly brushwork and bright color.

However, by again and again depicting the sea and shore and, in the examples of The Big Dory and its two preparatory images, the industrious Maine fisherman, Bellows assured that even the period of mild formal experimentation that his 1913 Monhegan output represents would be strongly supported by tradition – in this case, the Homeric tradition of depicting sea, shore, and the American archetype of the humble mariner. When Bellows left the island that year, he would never concentrate his creative energies quite so fully on the triad of sea, shore, and sailor again, although he did revisit it at several points, as Fisherman’s Family and a 1922 illustration, the rather Homeric Alan Donn Puts to Sea, whose composition and subject curiously resemble those of The Big Dory, attest (Figure
39). In the months after leaving Monhegan Bellows also recognized that he had “got what I can out of the modern movement for fresh spontaneous pure color” and had “realize[d] that there are gross dangers in too much spontaneity and haste.” For Bellows, a less-experimental mode of realism was the preferred course, and his 1913 Monhegan work reiterates his status as an artist whose styles and subjects constantly hinted at the future but much more commonly and confidently asserted the past.

_The Big Dory_ is just one painting among many that Bellows produced, but its example provides us with an uncommonly useful perspective on his life, career, and artistic outlook. With the help of other artistic and historical evidence from Bellows’ life, career and era, we can understand how the strategies Bellows employed in _The Big Dory_ echo those he used in countless other works, and how these trends have affected the reception and understanding of his work in the time since his art first attracted critical attention and comment in the middle part of the first decade of the twentieth century. Bellows manipulated his two preliminary versions of _The Big Dory_ in order to emphasize the struggle of the mariners he depicted therein, and thus couched his image within a tradition of representation of the state of Maine through the lens of the iconic figure of the fisherman. The use of this archetype, which reasserts not only a specific visual tradition but also a traditional conception of masculinity, thus hints at the sense of tradition that is inherent to many Americans’ understandings of national identity. _The Big Dory_ exudes this traditionalism, and thus serves as an unusually apt example which helps us identify

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210 Bellows, _Letter to Professor Joseph Taylor, January 15, 1914_.

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how and where Bellows employed similar themes in other portions of his oeuvre and how the use of such strategies has affected his critical reception over time.

Ultimately, although Bellows was a participant in the modern movement and seemed keenly interested in the social and political realities of his own era, he was, like most of his white, bourgeois, heterosexual male peers in early twentieth-century New York society, more interested in glorifying America's artistic and cultural past than forging her future, and this aspect of the artist's career is eloquently demonstrated via *The Big Dory*'s example.
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Figure 4. George Bellows. *The Harbor, Monhegan Coast, Maine*. 1913. Oil on panel. 15 x 19.5 in. Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minneapolis, Minnesota.
Figure 5. Photographic portrait of Bellows ready to paint. c. 1911-13. Monhegan Museum, Monhegan, Maine.

Figure 6. *Fish Beach with Monhegan Harbor Behind.* c. 1895. Stereograph. Monhegan Museum, Monhegan, Maine.
Figure 7. *Dressing Fish, Monhegan Island, Maine.* 1930. Photographic postcard. Monhegan Museum, Monhegan, Maine.

Figure 8. George Bellows on Fish Beach with his daughter, Anne. c. 1913-14. Amherst College Archives and Special Collections, Amherst, Massachusetts.
Figure 9. Map of Monhegan with Surrounding Islands. 1999. Mapguide.
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Figure 12. Walter Lofthouse Dean. *On the Deep Sea*. 1901. Oil on canvas. 41.13 x 42.75 in. Farnsworth Art Museum, Rockland, Maine. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John Hill.
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Figure 22. *Fish House and Surf, Monhegan, Me.* 1907. Postcard. Monhegan Museum, Monhegan, Maine.
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Figure 24. George Bellows. *Vine Clad Shore – Monhegan Island*. 1913. Oil on canvas. 20 x 24 in. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC. Partial and promised gift of Mr. and Mrs. Martin E. Segal.
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Figure 27. George Bellows. *An Island in the Sea*. 1911. Oil on canvas. 34 ¼ x 44 3/8 in. Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, Ohio.
Figure 28. Marcel Duchamp. *Sad Young Man in a Train*. 1911. Oil on cardboard. 39.4 x 29.9 in. Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, Venice, Italy. Peggy Guggenheim Collection.


Figure 32. *Ohio State Baseball Team Photo*. 1902 or 1903. Photograph. Box 9, Folder 1, Bellows Papers, Amherst College Archives and Special Collections, Amherst, Massachusetts. Bellows is at right.
Figure 33. George Bellows. *Tennis at Newport*. 1920. Oil on canvas. 43 x 54 in. Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Baron U. Kidd.
Figure 34. George Bellows. *Stag at Sharkey’s*. 1909. Oil on canvas. 36 ¼ x 48 ¼ in. The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, Ohio. Hinman B. Hurlbut Collection.
Figure 35. George Bellows. *Both Members of This Club*. 1909. Oil on canvas. 45 ¼ x 63 3/16 in. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Chester Dale Collection.
Figure 37. George Bellows. *Fisherman’s Family*. 1923. Oil on canvas. 38 ½ x 48 ¾ in. Private collection.
Figure 38. George Bellows. *Forty-two Kids*. 1907. Oil on canvas. 42 x 60 ¼ in. Corcoran Gallery, Washington, DC. Museum purchase, William A. Clark Fund.

Grayscale Illustrations

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