

Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide

a journal of nineteenth-century visual culture

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“The admiration one feels for something strange and uncanny”: Impressionism, Symbolism, and Edward Steichen’s Submissions to the 1905 London Photographic Salon

Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide 15, no. 1 (Spring 2016)

Citation: Kurt E. Rahmlow, “The admiration one feels for something strange and uncanny”: Impressionism, Symbolism, and Edward Steichen’s Submissions to the 1905 London Photographic Salon,” *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 15, no. 1 (Spring 2016), <http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/spring16/rahmlow-on-impressionism-symbolism-steichen-1905-london-photographic-salon>.

Published by: [Association of Historians of Nineteenth-Century Art](#)

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Abstract:

This article reconsiders the role that Symbolist art and literature played in Edward Steichen’s polemics at the height of the pictorial phase of his career as a photographer. It examines Impressionist photographic theory, in particular as it was articulated by the British members of the Linked Ring Brotherhood, and compares that aesthetic to the artistic project developed in Steichen’s submissions to the Linked Ring’s Photographic Salon in London in 1905. Through references to American visual culture, to Auguste Rodin, and more obliquely, to the writings of Charles Baudelaire, Steichen’s submissions suggest that Symbolism played a central part in the photographer’s efforts to define and champion a specifically American brand of pictorial photography in the first decade of the 20th century.

"The admiration one feels for something strange and uncanny": Impressionism, Symbolism, and Edward Steichen's Submissions to the 1905 London Photographic Salon

by Kurt E. Rahmlow

In August 1904, Alfred Horsley Hinton (1863–1908), editor of the British periodical *Amateur Photographer* and a founding member of the London-based art photography club the Brotherhood of the Linked Ring (hereafter Linked Ring), wrote to Alfred Stieglitz (1864–1946) to critique recent photographs by Edward Steichen (1879–1973). In the note, Hinton remarks,

I admire Steichen's work for myself but it is the admiration one feels for something strange and uncanny—I can't think that such work is healthy or would *in this country* have a beneficial influence. Many, nay most, of his things were very well exhibited to his fellow artists in his studio. [But] I still hanker after that in Art which shall make men kind, generous, noble and make them good citizens. I see no reason why the artist should . . . despise his surroundings and be continually yearning.^[1]

In its nationalistic tone, Hinton's backhanded compliment is typical of the rhetoric treating art photography in the 1890s and early 1900s. Photographers from around Europe and North America were deeply concerned with identifying the characteristics of their national schools. Steichen himself had contributed to the trend, both by participating in F. Holland Day's London exhibition of "The New School of American Photography" (1900) and by defiantly defending that show against its British detractors in his essay "British Photography from an American Point of View" (1900).^[2] Indeed, this Made-in-America label, whether proffered figuratively in his photographs (through allusive imagery) or trumpeted in his essays (with brash Yankee candor), became a central feature of Steichen's approach to presenting both himself and his work. The trope had proven particularly useful to the artist in Britain, where he had encountered an established Secession movement within photography, yet where he nevertheless had succeeded in making a name for himself through provocation.

At the same time, Hinton's criticism underscores an aspect of Steichen's pictorial project that has been consistently undervalued in the existing scholarship—namely, its pointedly Symbolist tone. In his own day, a handful of critics aligned Steichen's pictorial work with Symbolism in other media, and in recent decades, studies have recognized the parallel. However, few observers seem to have fully appreciated the specifically polemical function of Symbolism for the young artist.^[3] In an essay from 2008, Ronald Gedrim acknowledges the Symbolist character of Steichen's pictorial photographs, but he questions its significance, arguing that "Steichen's relationship with Symbolism was intuitive," and concluding that "despite his attraction to [Maurice] Maeterlinck's writings, he had little idea of what Symbolism meant in regard to visual art."^[4] The artist may certainly have struggled to articulate a clear understanding of a form that was, in itself, aligned more closely with suggestion than delineation, that privileged intuitive forms of knowledge, and that cultivated an aura of mystery. Nevertheless, Symbolism had frequently served a polemical function—Miklós Szabolcsi notes that, in literature, it had operated effectively as "a weapon with which to strike a blow at conservatism and traditionalism in poetry and in society alike."^[5] Considering the prints that Steichen chose to exhibit in England in the first decade of the 20th century, it

appears that Symbolism played a similar role for the photographer. Hinton seems to have agreed, implying that the “strange and uncanny” spirit of Steichen’s work and its suggestion of “yearning” were defining characteristics of the young American’s oeuvre. Moreover, Hinton felt that the tone of these works held important, and far reaching, implications—ones that were, at once, philosophical, social, and even (in the reference to “good” citizenship) political.

In this regard, then, Hinton’s objection is telling. He was no stranger to photographic experimentation. Hinton was a vocal and permissive advocate for pictorial photography (figs. 1, 2), defending, for instance, the judicious use of “auxiliary” or “alien methods” of improving upon flawed or uninspired photographic plates during the printing process. In his own work, he made use of combination printing techniques, and there is evidence suggesting he altered his negatives with a pencil. [6] Moreover, by 1904, chief members of the Linked Ring, a group whose name was synonymous with pictorial photography in Britain, had long since embraced what many termed photographic Impressionism. [7] Regarding the techniques promoted and practiced by both Hinton and his British Impressionist brethren within the Linked Ring, Steichen’s work was not radically different. As Hinton suggests, the contrast had to do with the tone of the works produced, as well as with their implied goals. Of course, as Richard Schiff has notably argued, it is difficult to determine just where Impressionism and Symbolism begin and end, but as Hinton’s remarks indicate, critics at the time perceived important differences between the two approaches. [8] It will be the purpose of this paper to outline those points of differentiation and to emphasize the strategic value of those visual cues in Steichen’s early exhibition practice. This essay will examine Steichen’s work at the height of his pictorial period by focusing on his contributions to the Linked Ring’s 1905 Photographic Salon in London. It will argue that this group of works, taken together, can be read as a provocative response to Hinton’s critique of the previous year—one that asserts an American perspective, but that conspicuously incorporates Continental Symbolist subjects, rendering them in a recognizably Symbolist tone. Although it is difficult to identify all of Steichen’s 1905 submissions with absolute certainty, the titles listed in the printed catalog—such as *In Memoriam: R.S.* (presumably the photograph known today as *In Memoriam*; fig. 3) and *Mother and Child—Spring* (possibly the work reproduced in *Camera Work* in 1906 as *Mother and Child—Sunlight*; fig. 4)—hint at Symbolist themes. [9] Yet three works attracted particular attention in that group, and for good reason: they seem to have been designated to do so. Reviewers repeatedly singled out the virtuoso large-format, multi-layered gum-bichromate prints of the Flatiron Building in New York (listed in the catalogue as *Flatiron—Evening*; fig. 5) and a moonlit Long Island landscape (listed as *The Pond—Moonrise*; fig. 6), as well as a previously exhibited, and already well-known, composite portrait of Auguste Rodin (listed as *Rodin—Le Penseur*; fig. 7). It is this trio of ambitious contributions that articulate the artist’s polemical agenda most concisely. The first, with its allusions to the work of Alfred Stieglitz, as well as to a daringly modern architectural design (the Flatiron Building in New York), announces the emergence of a national school and signals a polemical tone. The portrait of Rodin invokes a significant Continental precursor and hints at an established philosophy of art making (more specifically, Symbolism); the nocturnal landscape offers an example of how the project might be realized anew through the re-interpretation of Impressionist subject matter in American pictorial photography. However, before exploring what one might term Steichen’s polemical Symbolism, it will be necessary to establish the characteristics that British critics and photographers introduced to identify Impressionist work.

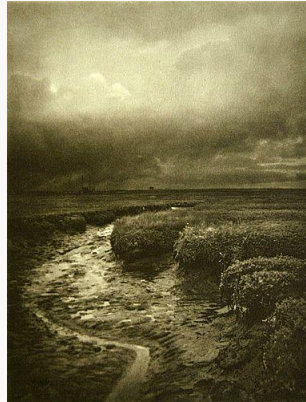


Fig. 1, Alfred Horsley Hinton, *Gathering Weather*, *Die Kunst in der Photographie* 2 (1898): plate 3. [\[larger image\]](#)



Fig. 2, Alfred Horsley Hinton, *Requiem*, *Practical Pictorial Photography*, vol. 1 (London: Hazell, Watson, and Viney, 1898): 4. [\[larger image\]](#)



Fig. 3, Edward Steichen, *In Memoriam*, *Camera Work*, *Steichen Supplement* (April 1906): 19. [\[larger image\]](#)



Fig. 4, Edward Steichen, *Mother and Child—Sunlight*, *Camera Work*, no. 14 (April 1906): 53. [\[larger image\]](#)

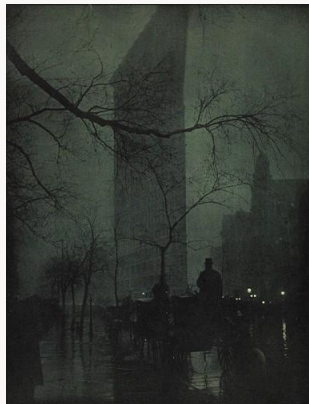


Fig. 5, Edward Steichen, *The Flatiron—Evening*, *Camera Work*, no. 14 (April 1906): 31. [\[larger image\]](#)



Fig. 6, Edward Steichen, *Moonlight: The Pond*, *Camera Work*, no. 14 (April 1906): 11. [\[larger image\]](#)



Fig. 7, Edward Steichen, *Rodin—Le Penseur*, *Camera Work*, no. 11 (July 1905): 35. [\[larger image\]](#)

The Aesthetics of Impressionist Photography in Britain

Although the British members of the Linked Ring were united in their desire to promote and pursue art photography, opinions varied as to the best means of achieving those ends. Margaret Harker notes that, while certain artists adopted more clearly idiosyncratic measures, the membership of the Linked Ring tended to fall into two broadly defined categories: the Purists and the Impressionists. The former believed in the sanctity of the photographic process—certain attempts to manipulate or transform the image might be acceptable, as long as the photographer made use of exclusively photographic means.^[10] The work of the Impressionists was popularly thought to be defined by an all-over diffusion, a deliberately out-of-focus technique that emulated the broken brushwork associated with Impressionist painting—hence this material was sardonically characterized by more conservative critics as “fuzzygraphs.”^[11] This stereotype notwithstanding, the apologists for Impressionism discussed the style in more philosophical terms. Harker contrasts the two factions within the Linked Ring by suggesting an essentially oppositional grounding: the Purists felt the artist was obliged to observe a “truth to nature” approach, whereas the Impressionists advocated “truth to the ideal.” To be sure, this characterization accounts for determining, and contrasting, points of emphasis. It is important to recognize, though, that both the Purists and the Impressionists emphasized the necessity of observing nature^[12] (and, as Brian Liddy notes, British Pictorial photographers overwhelmingly tended to interpret nature literally, favoring landscape views in their efforts to promote and develop art photography).^[13] The essential differentiating principle is that, while the Impressionists insisted that there be an objective basis for their art, to paraphrase Émile Zola’s maxim, they also insisted that it be filtered through the temperament, or the personal vision, of the individual artist, while they stipulated that the photographer should be free to use whatever means necessary to realize this composite view.^[14] For certain artists, this combination of principles was not purely aesthetic: it afforded their work real-world (that is, social and political) consequence.

The attitudes that structured this position appeared in the earliest apologies for photographic Impressionism. George Davison (1854–1930), another founding member of the Linked Ring, attempted to define the approach in 1890 when he spoke to the Society of Arts on “Impressionism in Photography” and when a discussion of the event appeared in the organization’s official publication, the *Journal of the Society of Arts*, along with a transcription of

Davison's lecture.^[15] In the transcribed edition, Davison defends the all-over soft-focus technique that would come to be the hallmark of Impressionist photography, suggesting that, in certain instances, "the effect on the mind is best gained by general diffusion," but the author presents that technique merely as one possible approach, rather than as an essential determinant of the style.^[16] Meanwhile, the majority of the essay concerns itself with defining Impressionism more broadly and justifying it as an approach to art making.

Davison begins by relating Impressionist painting to the "scientific" spirit of its era. For Davison, the modern epoch was characterized by a dedication to objectivity, to measurement, to reason. Blind faith, the deliberate cultivation of mystery, intuition, purely emotional responses, mysticism, "irrational authority," and "worship" of the "supernatural"—concepts that were hallmarks of Symbolism in literature and art, as it happens—were foreign to the age. In Davison's view, this emphasis upon observation and rational inquiry offered demonstrable and weighty implications. Specifically, the positivist era enjoyed ethical and political advantages. It was distinguished by an inherently "nobler wonder," and it was a context in which liberty flourished: "freedom of thought" continued to guard the citizens of modernity against "tyranny." Davison uses the last term more specifically to describe recent trends in the arts, but in the context of his other remarks, the word nevertheless implies a broader description of the social and political circumstances in which Impressionism emerged. In this model, intellectual freedom inevitably ensured more material freedoms.^[17] Impressionist art, then—and Impressionist photography, more specifically—was significant because Impressionism, as a general approach, realized the spirit of the era. Academic forms of art making had depended on "set modes' and conventional treatments" imposed by "previous great names and works"—that is, by the minds and achievements distinctive of other epochs. By contrast, Impressionism had developed "under the influence of the materialistic tendency of the [modern] age," and so it was based on "a close observation of natural appearances." The emphasis on positivist values freed it from the restrictions imposed by custom. It had been "affected by the freer spirit" that Davison believed characterized the modern epoch, mustering, in the process, a "revolt against conventionalism."^[18] As suggested here by the reference to rebellion, a political vocabulary shapes Davison's discussion of aesthetics—traditional approaches constituted chains; innovation approximated revolution.

Although it was clearly a result of the privileging of observation, this rebellion was equally founded, in Davison's model, upon the avant-garde celebration of individuality. In other words, Impressionism permitted, even required, a personal interpretation of nature. Davison refers to "the acquisition of artistic facts by observation and experience." Images must be based on nature, but they must also be rendered artistically, an effect that, Davison implies, is indebted to "experience"—all the artist has personally felt, undergone, or merely encountered previous to that moment. In a later passage specifying how a photographer might go about mastering the medium, the author clarifies the remark: "This is no question of months, but a matter of years, before a man can hope to see clearly what it is he wishes to express and move freely in expressing his impression."^[19] The experience of a lifetime conditions the artistic expression of the moment, and each artist's unique store of knowledge insures the distinctive and personal character of the resulting image. As scholars have noted, the emphasis on individuality of expression and personal style was by no means unusual. Pictorial practitioners frequently invoked these terms in the photography-as-art debate at the turn of the century.^[20] But Davison's discussion also makes it clear that this unique vision can only be realized when the photographer has mastered, and is permitted to use, the various techniques at his

disposal. It is imperative that an art photographer be able to “move freely in expressing his impression.” Davison adds that the ultimate value of a work cannot depend upon a “mere formula of fuzziness.”^[21] In the final analysis, Davison defines Impressionist photography as an approach that encompasses both the faithful observation of nature and the personal interpretation of that experience through the skillful application of the various processes and techniques available.^[22] In its privileging of observation, it reflects the positivist spirit of the era, but to the degree that it realizes an individual vision, and to the extent that it permits experimentation and personal choice in creating the image, it exemplifies the political ideologies characteristic of modern European societies—the Impressionist photographer both acquires the ability and claims the right to “move freely” in creating a work. This last point would become a central concern for the author, who would take up a leadership role in leftist politics in the final decades of his life. In 1913, his open affiliation with “anarchistic communism” would spur George Eastman to demand that Davison resign from the board of directors of Eastman Kodak.^[23]

For his part, while Hinton neither openly embraced the Impressionist label nor advocated for Impressionism as such, the characterization would have been apt, considering his critical and theoretical writing. Hinton celebrated Impressionist photographers in print, and in 1905, an author for *The Camera and Darkroom* offhandedly referred to Hinton as “an extremist in his Impressionistic views.”^[24] Hinton articulated those views most fully in 1898 with the publication of his two-volume treatise *Practical Pictorial Photography*, a how-to manual for would-be art photographers, but he developed key elements of his conception in essays on “naturalism in photography,” “individuality,” and “methods of control.” Taken as a group, these texts do much to associate the author with photographic Impressionism. To put it another way, whether or not he adopted the term as a categorical designation, Hinton’s pictorialism was essentially synonymous with his (and Davison’s) Impressionism.

Hinton’s discussions reiterate and extend many of the principles that structured Davison’s argument. For the most part, Hinton eschews the historical determinism upon which Davison founds his apology. Nevertheless, Hinton affirms Davison’s positivist stance in his insistence that “art—that is, in our case, pictorial representation—employs *the image of concrete things to create abstract ideas*.”^[25] Hinton felt compelled to remind his readers of the inherently representational, objective basis of good pictorial work. In this context, Hinton considers the implications of manipulating the image during printing. He recognizes that the approach could jeopardize the vital link between the image and observed reality, but he concludes that even an extreme instance might be permissible, as long as the resulting picture has some more generalized basis in observation. He writes, “In such a picture the artist may depart from actual fact, from what *actually was*, so long as he does not exceed what *might have been*.”^[26] Hinton’s pictorial photography, like Davison’s Impressionism, had its basis in a positivist worldview.

Hinton further echoes Davison both by privileging the concept of the impression and by causally linking it to individual interpretation. The artist’s impression figures throughout *Practical Pictorial Photography*, playing a central role in Hinton’s attempts to define his subject, and it is generally intertwined with the idiosyncratic. In the opening pages of his treatise, he writes, “In a pictorial representation a personal and individual impression of a scene is all that is aimed at.”^[27] In developing this point of emphasis, Hinton repeatedly attacks the conventional application of any approach to picture making in his writings—the very sort of

doggedness that had given rise to the vitriolic condemnations of formulaic “fuzzygraphs.” Like Davison, Hinton defends a soft-focus technique as one possible means of producing art photography. He even accommodates the “suppression of focus altogether,” when employed appropriately, making specific reference to the use of a pinhole camera—a tool that Davison famously took up in 1890 in his own Impressionist work (fig. 8).^[28] Yet he insists that “no absolute rule can be laid down” for the use of soft focus—other than personal judgment: “It is entirely a matter to be determined by *the effect it is desired to give* and how the individual considers the effect is best secured.”^[29] For Hinton, the soft-focus technique can be the means by which an artist might most effectively present a “general outline” or a “portrayal of the chief items only.” And he argues that an impression may be best suggested when the photographer “omit[s] the details.”^[30] Hinton urges his reader to strive to create a single, unifying effect in an image. Although one means of creating the desired effect could be soft focus, other uses of focus, including sharp and detailed focus, as well as of framing and lighting, should come into play, as necessary.^[31] He concludes, “We may omit or we may exaggerate any portions if in so doing we can the better gain our end,” reassuring the reader that “Art does not try to copy or imitate Nature.”^[32] On the contrary, art is what results when a photographer skillfully interprets observed reality in an individual manner, making appropriate use of the appropriate tools under the appropriate circumstances.



Fig. 8, George Davison, *The Onion Field*, *Camera Work*, no. 18 (April 1907): 5. [\[larger image\]](#)

Hinton does not invoke politics as consistently as Davison does, yet a comparable inflection emerges from his insistence upon individual artistic freedom, particularly when considered in light of the communal model of artistic reception that structures his discussion. As with Davison's Impressionism, the ultimate objective of Hinton's pictorial photography is to foster community. The appeal of the photographic impression is based on “the sensation and feeling which it creates”—more specifically, the relative strength of a photograph results from its ability to provide for the spectator a “sensation of pleasure.” This experience could emerge during the apprehension of natural beauty, in particular as it suggests health and fecundity. As an example, Hinton conjures for the reader “the gladness of the summer sunshine sparkling in the tree-tops, glinting on the water full of life, richness, abundance, calling from out the cool shadows the summer breeze which rustles and bends the corn, then stilling it again, stifling it in a warm embrace as it passes into the shimmering distance.” Or visual pleasure could be an effect of the values implied by an image. And here Hinton references the ideals (by turns sentimental and heroic) that were commonly credited with shaping and nourishing the social

body in Victorian England: "Yet again one's sympathies may be stirred by the suggestion of more homely scenes, sorrow or suffering, noble sacrifices, or great deeds." In fact, it is the social bond inherent in Hinton's aesthetic that serves as the ultimate goal of art making. For Hinton, well-crafted pictures bridge the distance between individuals—art functions as a form of communication, but it also forges a link by cultivating empathy. He writes, "The Motive, then, in all pictorial work is to convey some thought or idea or sensation by means of a chosen subject," reiterating, "It may be that some scene in nature awakens some emotion, and we then endeavour to depict that particular scene and the objects it contains in such a way as to work upon the imagination of those who see our picture, so as to create in them the same feelings; or it may be that we first desire to give expression to certain sensations and then choose a subject which will best convey those feelings—in either case the motive is the same."^[33] The final result of quality work is a shared experience, and therefore a common understanding, between creator and viewer. Impressionist photography for Hinton, as for Davison, is a means of creating and maintaining a community—one that fosters health and well-being; one that values beauty, nobility, and self-sacrifice; and one that exists as free individuals linked voluntarily by the bond of fellow-feeling and a shared perspective. In short, like Davison, Hinton had faith in positivist observation, and in an art of representation, yet he also asserted the value of individual freedom. Hinton's Impressionist theory negotiates a balance between the objective and the subjective. In the event, it suggests an important relation between art and lived reality—it implies that the end of art is, and should be, to contribute to the health and well-being of society. It is impossible to create an edifying, socially responsible art if that art denies its relationship to (and its responsibility to) the real. Steichen's aesthetic, as Hinton understood it, was chiefly *aesthetic*. It emphasized the subjective to the point at which it sacrificed its all-important relation to the social. As such, it was not, as Hinton remarked to Stieglitz, "healthy."^[34]

From Impressionism to Symbolism—Fin-de-Siècle Perspectives

The arguments upon which Hinton based his critique had long since been established—indeed, they had been developed by some of the earliest critics of Impressionism, and they continued to inform Symbolist art theory at the turn of the century. Shiff has contended that the subjective emphasis within Symbolist art of the 1890s had already emerged within Impressionist work of the 1870s and 1880s. He writes, "We easily lose sight of the fact that artists, critics, and theorists of the nineteenth century associated expressive, subjective content with impressionist art from its very inception. . . . Subjectivity did not mark the chronological end of impressionism, but was instead one of its initial, defining features."^[35] While this is certainly accurate, it is also clear that, from Jules Castagnary (1830–88)—who regularly critiqued the new painting throughout the 1860s and who reviewed the so-called First Impressionist Exhibition in 1874—to Davison and Hinton, critics and theorists of Impressionist art, in its various forms, understood there to be an important point of differentiation between Impressionism and the approach to art making that is more consistent with Symbolism. In his 1874 essay, Castagnary locates the Impressionists within the tradition of academic "idealism," characterizing their contribution not as authentic innovation, based on a new "doctrine," but as an exaggeration of a previously developed technique—the lack of finish first introduced by Corot and Courbet.^[36] Nevertheless, the author does foresee the possibility of a more radical departure inherent in their work. Writing nearly two decades before the appearance of Aurier's landmark discussion of Symbolism in painting, Castagnary nevertheless anticipates the advent of Symbolism, predicting that a group of Impressionists would push the subjective aspect of their art to extremes. He believed that the best artists among the group would come to

recognize that technique should not be determined by dogma—like Davison and Hinton, he insists that artists should freely and skillfully adopt the approach that is appropriate to their subject. Yet he believed that certain painters would nevertheless commit the error of insistently practicing and exaggerating their technique: “Others who, neglecting to reflect and learn, will have pursued the impression to excess.” The result would be “romanticism without restraint, where nature is nothing more than an excuse for dreaming, and where the imagination becomes powerless to formulate anything other than personal and subjective fantasies, . . . without control and without the verification possible in reality.”^[37] For Castagnary, an avowed positivist, it was the vital relation to material existence that grounded Impressionism. The new art allowed for individual interpretation, and Castagnary perceived a certain freedom inherent in that process—indeed, the critic embraces that potential for liberation—nevertheless, he also insists that when art becomes too individual, it misses its connection to a shared experience; it loses its significance and becomes mere “dreaming.”

This is because, like Davison and Hinton, Castagnary alleges a profound link between art and politics. Philip Nord notes that many of the early apologists for Impressionism in France were political dissidents who wrote for the republican press and who used the new painting to further the cause of democracy. Impressionist painting may no longer appear particularly rebellious. However, in the contexts of the Second Empire of the late 1860s and the reactionary “Moral Order” government of Marshal MacMahon of the middle 1870s, the emphasis on innovative technique and ordinary modern subjects, coupled with a secessionist exhibition strategy, clearly signaled a dissident, pro-democracy stance.^[38] Of course, not every republican critic defended the new painting, and neither was every Impressionist a staunch and vocal republican. It is also worth noting that even the movement’s apologists found reason to critique the new school at times. Nevertheless, Impressionists turned to the republican press for publicity and support throughout the 1870s. In their turn, republican critics read artistic rebellion in political terms and developed a specifically politicized language in their discussions of Impressionist painting and exhibition practices.^[39] Castagnary, for instance, opens his 1874 review with a conspicuously anachronistic reference, dating his column not to “April,” as readers might have expected, but to “Floréal,” the eighth month of the year in the French Revolutionary calendar. Castagnary then suggests that artistic diversity had long served as an indication of political freedom—he ticks off the major movements, from Neoclassicism and Romanticism to Naturalism, that had emerged since the Revolution, as if the Revolution had opened the way to artistic innovation. The critic stipulates that his overarching goal is to assess the relative health of “the creative capacity of France,” that “bubbling spring, which since the Revolution emerged from the very innards of [the French] people.”^[40] In short, what underlies Castagnary’s review is the belief that art was reflective of, and conditioned by, political order, as well as the belief that the artistic health of France served as an indicator of the overall state of the French social body. From the beginning, then, and despite the recognition that Impressionist art involved a degree of interpretation, advocates and practitioners of Impressionism asserted an all-important, essentially positivist basis in objective, shared reality. This basis made the new art relevant; it rendered Impressionism wholesome to society, and it endowed Impressionist art with real importance. The painter or photographer who would push the subjective element to extremes would rob the new art of its social and political relevance, even potentially rendering it harmful.^[41]

By contrast, it is this very emphasis on subjective experience that characterizes much of the discourse treating Symbolism, both in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. Michelle

Facos identifies two sets within Symbolist art—the “pessimistic” artists bent on “self-expression” and the “optimistic” practitioners invested in “reform.” She notes that both categories can be further subdivided into “introverts” and “extroverts.”^[42] This compellingly inclusive model notwithstanding, it is oftentimes the introverted pessimists whom critics invoke when discussing the approach. In an 1893 essay entitled “What Is Modern Art—Symbolism,” Frans von Schéele attempts to define the style using Arnold Böcklin’s (1827–1901) painting *The Silence of the Forest* (fig. 9) as a touchstone. In the process, he excludes all but Facos’s pessimistic introverts. He writes, “The figures express no clear thought, they only stand for something which the artist ‘meant’. The object of the painting is to create a sensation of something strange and ‘other worldly’ in the spectator; to manifest to him the loneliness, the stillness, and ‘strangeness’ of the heart of the forest; to give him a ‘forest feeling’. An allegory manifests a thought; a symbol makes visible a feeling.”^[43] Although Facos aligns the Symbolist project with the unconventional—that is, the formally innovative—communication of “ideas” (a deliberately inclusive term, and one that allows for more analytically based content), Schéele narrows the focus, underscoring, to the exclusion of all else, the intimation of the ineffable. The Symbolist message, in this model, is felt; it is not processed cognitively. In a catalogue dating from 1979, Charles Eldredge reiterates the argument—clarifying, in the process, the terms of the discussion. He insists that “our usual tools of formal analysis are frustrated by the highly subjective iconography and individual technique which characterise Symbolist [work].” He therefore concludes, “It is only on the basis of their subjects, or more precisely their attitudes toward their subjects, and their mood . . . that these artists show any group coherence.” It is thus that the Symbolists articulate “their common reaction against what they saw as the dominant materialist, naturalist and determinist ethos of the epoch” and shape their “escapes from the tyranny of Fact.”^[44] It is not merely the invocation of emotion that qualifies a work as Symbolist. After all, Davison, Hinton, and Castagnary all allowed for a certain element of subjectivity in the process of interpretation. On the contrary, it is the immoderate emphasis upon mood and the particular tone that gives rise to the decisive inconsistency. That mood—with its stress on magic and mystery (on fantastic, ineffable, intuitive forms of knowledge) and a brooding sensibility—is incompatible with the essentially extroverted, positivist worldview that impressionist artists and critics identified at the core of their approach. Ultimately, the problem with Symbolist art was that its introverted, pessimistic focus denied the community-building, democratic potential of art making.



Fig. 9, Arnold Böcklin, *The Silence of the Forest*, 1885. Oil on wood. National Museum in Poznań, Poland.

[\[larger image\]](#)

Edward Steichen—Impressionist or Symbolist?

Like Hinton, Steichen tended to avoid openly identifying with particular artistic styles, and Penelope Niven insists that he had little knowledge of, or interest in, artistic movements *as* movements in his pictorial days.^[45] Still, as a young man, the artist adopted what was generally considered to be impressionist photographic technique, and he took a strong interest in impressionist painting. As a teenager in Milwaukee, he advocated soft-focus technique to his friends at the Milwaukee Art Students' League, terming it an index of "artistic" merit (fig. 10).^[46] Meanwhile, he identified Claude Monet as an especially significant influence, remarking, "As I read [about him in Milwaukee], it seemed to me that he worked on canvas the way I tried to work with a camera." Monet offered up a model, if only by analogy, and he helped the younger man to conceptualize his approach to image making. When he visited France, Steichen took the opportunity to view Monet's paintings at the Musée du Luxembourg, reporting that they "stirred" him more than any other works on display.^[47] Looking back on his pictorial work later in life, Steichen himself would go so far as to label his pictures with the term, concluding that he "was an 'impressionist' without knowing it."^[48] These factors have encouraged observers to apply the label in a similar fashion. A reviewer of the Philadelphia Photographic Salon of 1899, where Steichen first showed his work in a juried exhibition, used the label in describing the young artist's contributions, though not in a flattering context.^[49] Nevertheless, based on his own descriptions, it appears that Steichen's aesthetic was less characteristic of Impressionist than Symbolist models.



Fig. 10, Edward Steichen, *The Pool*, *Camera Work*, no. 2 (April 1903): 7. [\[larger image\]](#)

The point of differentiation is apparent in the artist's descriptions. To begin with, he emphasizes the importance of the emotional state that each photograph suggests—in his autobiography, he explains that he preferred to shoot his subjects in dim light or in mist, remarking, “Under those conditions the woods had moods, and the moods aroused emotional reactions that I tried to render in photographs.”^[50] This sustained attention to emotion endowed the artist with a degree of mastery. Steichen insists, “By 1898 I was more or less in control of the rendering of . . . moods and moments.” However, the artist was chiefly interested in capturing what he referred to as specifically “romantic” effects. He writes, “During those teenage years . . . I was coming to realize that the real magician was light itself—mysterious and ever-changing light with its accompanying shadows rich and full of mystery.”^[51] According to Steichen's own characterization, the essence of his work was this note of brooding—of enigmatic melancholy. It is in the introverted, expressive nature of these images that Steichen diverged from Impressionist aesthetics. The distinction was not insignificant, particularly in the eyes of the Impressionist wing of the Linked Ring.

Steichen's Submissions to the 1905 London Photographic Salon—The Flatiron Building and American Cultural Identity

Despite the salon limit of ten works by any single photographer, Steichen seems to have attempted to provoke the British members of the Ring by submitting eleven prints to the Photographic Salon in 1905.^[52] That confrontational note was also signaled in pictorial terms. Steichen's contributions seem to have been deliberately conceived to assert a specifically American, Symbolist approach. Ulrich Pohlmann insists that F. Holland Day's (1864–1933) *New School of American Photography* exhibition in London in 1900 offered "an impressive first demonstration" of the impact that Symbolism had begun to have on pictorial aesthetics, and he notes that it was not in European or English work, but in North American prints, that Symbolism became most consistently influential.^[53] Perhaps this is why Steichen's submissions reflect the belief that photographic Symbolism was most closely linked to American pictorial work, particularly in the British viewer's mind. The three eye-catching centerpieces of the group, a trio of ambitious colored prints, taken together, articulate the artist's polemical agenda. The first of these, Steichen's large, moody gum-bichromate photograph of the Flatiron Building, assigns a national identity to the project.

To begin with, the work invokes a specific geographical locale. Sadakichi Hartmann (1867–1944), a flamboyant critic and an advocate of both Symbolism and, for a time, Edward Steichen, published a "Plea for the Picturesqueness of New York" in *Camera Notes* in 1900. The piece casts the city as the material expression of the modern age, suggesting that it would be treated most advantageously by the photographer.^[54] Hartmann presents New York as "lacking [that] . . . which makes European cities so interesting to the sightseer and artist"—namely, "monuments of past glory," "cathedral spires," and "historic edifices." Yet he insists on its viability as a subject for artists, primarily because of "effects which the eye has not yet got used to, nor discovered and applied in painting and literature." To Hartmann, New York represented a "new realm" for art—that is, "modern life," "the spirit of to-day," a subject that would permit artists to "create, and not merely to revive."^[55] Nevertheless, he warns that its potential could only be realized with "a good share of courage and patience."^[56] To Hartmann, the city offered a novel and promising prospect, a subject free of the constraints typically imposed by representational tradition, a new frontier that would require a heroic effort upon which to capitalize.^[57]

More particularly, the Flatiron building signified in its day as an icon of both innovative technology and Yankee daring. An ambitious and unusual structure, the edifice was one of the tallest in the city, made possible by the development of motorized elevators and steel-frame construction. Moreover, it offered a ready metaphor for its own innovative character—built in the first years of the new century and sized to fit an impossibly narrow triangle of land, which one observer likened to "a stingy piece of pie," it resembled the prow of a ship surging forward. In October 1902, *The Architectural Record* declared it "quite the most notorious thing in New York," asserting that it garnered "more attention than all the other buildings now going up put together."^[58] In 1905, the popular *Munsey's Magazine* launched its July issue with a frankly chauvinistic (and deliberately overstated) essay by Edgar Saltus that details the view from the uppermost floors. Saltus casts the building as clear evidence of American superiority over classical tradition. The structure encourages the author to conclude that "if humanity sprang from gorillas, from humanity gods shall proceed." The Olympic gods, for their part, "would be

perplexed to see how mortals have exceeded them." Technology trumps divinity—as well as the enduring traditions inspired by the ancients. If they should encounter the structure, the gods of antiquity would "recall the Titans with whom once they warred, and slink to their sacred seas outfaced." To Saltus, the achievement is both material and cultural, and it attests to American superiority on both counts. In part, this is because it suggests a quintessentially American attitude. He remarks, "Its front is lifted to the future. On the past its back is turned. Of what has gone before it is American in its unconcern."^[59] Writing several years earlier, Stieglitz offered the observation in the form of an oft-repeated simile, remarking, "It appeared to be moving toward me like the bow of a monster ocean steamer—a picture of a new America still in the making." Stieglitz even prefigures the historical analysis appearing in *Munsey's Magazine*, insisting, "The Flat Iron is to the United States what the Parthenon was to Greece."^[60] Not surprisingly, Hartmann took the opportunity to praise the structure, likewise invoking the nautical symbolism, but shamelessly inflating it in the process: "It is a building without a main facade, resembling more than anything else the prow of a giant man-of-war. And we would not be astonished in the least, if the whole triangular block would suddenly begin to move northward through the crowd of pedestrians and traffic of our two leading thoroughfares, which would break like the waves of the ocean on the huge prow-line angle." The image of a passenger steamer assumes, here, a more martial tone, emerging instead as the front end of a warship, surging along the streets of the metropolis, aggressively disrupting the daily affairs of New Yorkers as it passes. For Hartmann, the Flatiron was a symbol of progress—both technological and aesthetic. Indeed, because the building was innovative structurally, it offered "the possibility of architectural originality." It embodied a new sort of modern beauty, which "as if guided by a magic hand, weaves its network over rivers and straight into the air with scientific precision."^[61] The building signified at multiple levels, then—it stood in for American innovation in both technology and aesthetics.

Despite its innovative character, or rather because of it, the structure was extremely controversial. The Flatiron had more than its share of detractors. To begin with, the very nickname "Flatiron" was derisive. The edifice was formally named the Fuller Building, yet it was only rarely referenced as such. Contemporaries would most typically hear, or see, it discussed using its unofficial designation, particularly in the popular press. Peter Conrad writes, "Its [nickname] announced a meager utilitarianism," explaining, "One habit of aesthetic critics of New York in this period was to belittle its buildings by associating them with cosmetic or culinary utensils."^[62] In this instance, because of its triangular configuration, the structure was likened to an ordinary domestic tool, an instrument that, when heated, could be used to perform the emphatically banal task of smoothing fabric. Stieglitz's father was more inclined to be blunt. Parroting the judgment passed by a multitude of aesthetically conservative, if casual, observers, he simply pronounced it "ugly."^[63] Not to be outdone, professional critics got their licks in by fashioning more colorful descriptions. A writer for *The Architectural Record* compared the profile of the structure to "a huge screen, a vast theatrical 'wing,' which conceivably rests upon Titanic castors and is meant to be pushed about, instead of being rooted to the spot." And he likened the narrow, windowed leading edge of the structure to a "mere bird-cage," noting that it permitted only enough space for "one . . . roll-top desk," archly wondering, "But suppose [the tenant] needed a bookcase?"^[64] Because of the largely negative response among aesthetically conservative observers, authors considered the building to be fair game, and because of its idiosyncratic design, the structure made easy work for humorists.

And yet, despite its recent construction, and Hartmann's assertions notwithstanding, the Flatiron did possess a history within artistic presentation. In the ensuing decades, the avant-garde would take a recurring interest in the structure. Within two years, it would be painted by Ashcan School artists John Sloan and Ernest Lawson (fig. 11), and by the end of the teens, it would be treated by such diverse figures as the American Impressionist Childe Hassam and the French Cubist Albert Gleizes. Moreover, fellow American pictorial photographer Alvin Langdon Coburn would shoot the building in 1909, returning to the subject in 1911 (fig. 12). In 1905, though, Steichen would have been most sensitive to a single notable precursor. The Flatiron had already featured in American pictorial photography in 1903, when Stieglitz, the founder and leader of America's own association of art photographers, the Photo-Secession, had shot the building during a snowfall and reproduced that image in *Camera Work* (fig. 13), alongside Hartmann's essay and a poem by Hartmann on the subject.^[65] As a consequence, by the time Steichen treated the building, it had already been coded; the literature treating American art photography had established it not only as an emblem of technological and aesthetic daring, but as a symbol of the American "school," even of the Photo-Secession itself. Perhaps this explains the similarities between the pictures under discussion. Steichen's composition offers a veritable homage to Stieglitz's photograph. In both images, the building is framed to suggest the nautical metaphor—that is, it appears as the prow of a ship, moving toward the viewer, at nearly the same angle. And in both works, the structure seems to materialize in the midst of atmospheric diffusion—the result of swirling snow in the former case, the effect of an evening mist in the latter. Moreover, in classic avant-garde emulation of Japanese woodcuts, each photograph positions the looming central motif behind a screen of tree branches arranged in the foreground.^[66] Steichen even mimics Stieglitz's use of figures to indicate scale. In the earlier work, two isolated silhouettes are only just visible in the wintry conditions, while in Steichen's photo, the darkened torsos of cab drivers echo one another in the foreground.



Fig. 11, John Sloan, *Dust Storm, Fifth Avenue*, 1906. Oil on canvas. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

[\[larger image\]](#)

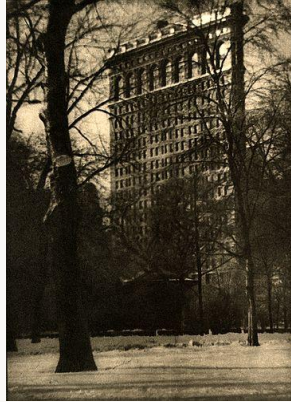


Fig. 12, Alvin Langdon Coburn, *The Flat-Iron Building, New York City, New York* (New York: Brentano's, 1910): n.p. [\[larger image\]](#)



Fig. 13, Alfred Stieglitz, *The Flatiron*, *Camera Work*, no. 4 (October 1903): 49. [\[larger image\]](#)

Steichen's Flatiron submission signified in a number of ways in 1905. The building, as subject matter, signaled modernity, aesthetic innovation, and an unmistakably American context, but it also served as an emblem of aesthetic controversy. At the same time, in its clear compositional allusions to a well-known photographic precursor, Steichen's picture indicated an allegiance to the Photo-Secession. Steichen underscored the point by treating his subject in an unusual large-format printing (19 5/8" x 15 5/16"), using rich layers of gum-bichromate (tinted yellow, blue, and green) over a first platinum printing, assuring that the picture would be noticed immediately, even in a crowded room, in an era during which a true color photographic process had yet to be introduced. It would thus have trumpeted, immediately and unambiguously, the artist's national allegiance, his rhetorical purpose, and his artistic affiliation.^[67]

Steichen's Submissions to the 1905 London Photographic Salon—Rodin, Baudelaire, and Continental Symbolism

Meanwhile, two other inclusions, taken together, indicate an affiliation with a very different context. The first of these, Steichen's composite portrait of Rodin, was not a new photograph.

Steichen had created it in 1902, and it had been reproduced in several publications, including the July 1905 edition of *Camera Work*.^[68] More to the point, perhaps, it seems to have been exhibited at the London Photographic Salon the previous year (1904), receiving considerable attention—in fact, it had been singled out, albeit with some reservation, by Frederick H. Evans, a prominent Link, in his review of the exhibition.^[69] The decision, then, to submit it again in 1905 is a curious one. The photograph had certainly achieved an impressive degree of notoriety—a circumstance that in itself warranted the curtain call—but it also suggested a precedent. Steichen venerated the sculptor, whose *Balzac* he had seen reproduced in a Milwaukee newspaper, along with an article detailing the work's scandalous reception (Émile Zola and the Société des Gens de Lettres, which had commissioned the work in 1891, had publicly rejected it when it was unveiled at the Salon de la Société Nationale in 1898). In fact, Steichen's first trip to Paris was partially motivated by Rodin's presence there. After meeting the sculptor in 1901, Steichen obtained permission to return and photograph him, and for the duration of his stay in the French capital, Steichen regularly spent his Saturdays in Rodin's studio. The experience would prove formative. Gedrim refers to Rodin as “one of two surrogate fathers in Steichen's life,” and Penelope Niven attributes this distinction to the sculptor's public successes: “It would be impossible to quantify the influence of such a charismatic master on the seminal work of an ambitious young artist. Long before they met, Rodin had been for Steichen a celebrated, venerated artist and a very public great man.”^[70] Nevertheless, it is important, in this instance, to remember Rodin's history of controversy. For many, Rodin remained the quintessential rebellious genius, a polarizing visionary who shocked and outraged viewers of conventional taste, while producing daringly innovative works that were celebrated by more progressive audiences. This was true in England as it was in France, though by 1905, Rodin's British audience had become increasingly distinguished. Claudine Mitchell argues that, by virtue of his very nationality, Rodin signified free thinking to a British audience. She insists that, when combined with the particulars of the sculptor's career, “the [British viewer's] encounter with Rodin opened a space for an illusion of freedom that enabled the projects of self-realization at the intersection of the biographical, the social and the political.”^[71] As late as 1902, the artist's work had provoked controversy in England, as when his *Saint John the Baptist* was presented to the Victoria and Albert Museum, prompting one observer to protest that “every tradition of art derived from the Greek and Italian masters . . . is set at naught in the French sculptor's work,” adding that its public display could incite impressionable youngsters to produce similarly “revolting monstrosities.” And yet that work had been funded by subscription, the list of contributors ranging from artists and art critics to politicians, bankers, and industrialists.^[72] Indeed, after 1900, the sculptor's British patrons had come to include a number of influential, dedicated, and distinguished collectors.^[73] In Britain, then, Rodin had truly come to merit the paradoxical moniker of avant-garde master—a title that, by definition, denotes a precarious balance of daring and success.

Name-dropping aside, however, Steichen's photograph also gestures toward a specific artistic project. Rodin develops that philosophy most extensively in a series of interviews that was published in 1911 by the art critic Paul Gsell (1870–1947). In the course of these interviews, the sculptor repeatedly presents artistic creation in terms that clash with Impressionist values. Rodin describes the artist as a visionary, a mystic, whose “emotions make him aware of the inner truths that lie beneath appearances”^[74] and who intuits the “spiritual state” of his subject. He emphatically rejects the positivist fascination with the observed “surface,” in favor of works that operate more suggestively.^[75] This leads him to assert an interdisciplinary conception of art making. Admitting “I don't take kindly to ‘no trespassing’ signs,” he remarks,

“painting, sculpture, literature, music are closer to one another than is generally believed.”^[76] The sculptor is quick to acknowledge that each art form has unique potentials and limitations. He recognizes, for instance, that literature, in its dependence upon language, has an advantage in “juggling abstractions.”^[77] Nevertheless, he insists that the role of visual art will always be to free the imagination and offer an opportunity for it to “wander according to its fancy,” so that emotion might “expand indefinitely.”^[78] He concludes, “Everything is idea, everything is symbol.”^[79] To illustrate his point, Rodin launches into a rich series of descriptions treating a range of artistic genres and masterpieces. He observes, “In the silhouette of trees, in the indentation of a horizon, great landscape painters like Ruysdael, Cuyp, Corot, Théodore Rousseau sensed thoughts, smiling or serious, daring or discouraged, peaceful or anguished, that were in tune with the disposition of their spirit.” He concludes, “There is no living organism, no inert object, no cloud in the sky, no green sprout in the meadow that does not entrust him with the secret of an immense power hidden in all things.”^[80] The image of the artist as a veritable medium, brimming with emotion, in touch with a spirit or consciousness that animates the natural world, revives the very superstitions that Davison derided, as well as the “romanticism without restraint” that Castagnary specifically cautioned against, in which the natural world becomes “an excuse for dreaming,” the fodder for “subjective fantasies.” As if motivated by a perverse desire to fulfill Castagnary’s nightmare to the letter, Rodin clarifies by remarking, “When the artist represents the Universe as he imagines it, he formulates his own dreams. In nature, he celebrates his own soul.” In short, Rodin advocates the sort of work that Impressionist artists and critics actively discouraged. Rodin aligns beauty with the ineffable, insisting that “mystery” is the “atmosphere in which very beautiful works of art bathe,” even declaring that “every masterpiece has this mysterious characteristic.”^[81] Despite his belief that artists begin by studying nature, and despite his insistence that he took pains himself to render it with exactitude, Rodin consistently emphasizes the importance of the “strange and uncanny” and “continually yearning” qualities that Hinton attacks in Steichen’s photographs. The gesture creates, of the artist, not Davison’s practically minded public servant fostering democracy, but a sort of theocrat—a prophet, as well as an authoritarian leader: “He [becomes], as Dante said of Virgil, ‘their guide, their lord, and their master.’”^[82]

Yet Rodin’s remarks also suggest a more subtle association within Symbolist aesthetic theory—they practically echo the terms introduced by Charles Baudelaire (1821–67) in his influential sonnet “Correspondances.”^[83] Baudelaire’s status as a Symbolist has long been, and continues to be, contested.^[84] Nevertheless, in his 1886 manifesto of Symbolist literature, Jean Moréas credits Baudelaire as “the genuine precursor of the present-day movement,”^[85] and as Margaret Mein observes, “the *Correspondances* have long been recognised as the respect *par excellence* in which Baudelaire anticipates French Symbolism and indeed much of Modern French poetry.”^[86] The same might be said of Symbolist French art. Like Rodin, Baudelaire disapproves of “no trespassing” signs. The poem links diverse art forms in a celebration of sensuality. As a consequence, Baudelaire’s model provides a theoretical foundation for practicing artists, as well as for novelists, poets, and even musicians. The reason the poem could influence across disciplines is that it advocates an aesthetic based on the cognition of sensory stimuli, rather than upon a medium-specific technique—one founded on an irrational, quasi-mystical method of association that supersedes intellectual analysis. Patrick Meadows describes this phenomenon, more commonly known as synesthesia, as “a form of synthetic insight,” a “subjective experience during which stimulation of one sensory channel induces perception in another.”^[87] Hence Baudelaire observes that “perfumes, sounds, and colors respond to one another,” so that “some perfumes” may seem “sweet as the sound of oboes,

green as pastures.”[88] The process of composition, then, should ideally be an intuitive one—one that may thereby give rise to illogical forms of knowledge. Indeed, like Rodin, Baudelaire presents the artist, broadly defined, as a visionary, even a sort of priest, for whom “Nature is a temple in which living pillars / Sometimes emit confused words,” and who negotiates “forests of symbols / That observe him with familiar glances.” In its allusion to the calligraphic forms of trees, as well as in its depiction of an animated nature and its attendance to a specifically spiritual order of experience, the passage seems to have been the basis for Rodin’s observations on landscape-based art. And like Rodin, for whom visual art should ideally liberate the imagination, Baudelaire tantalizes the reader by hinting at experiences “having the expanse of things infinite,” which “sing of the flight of spirit and the senses.” Finally, for both the sculptor and the poet, an essential element of art is mystery. Baudelaire’s poet/artist experiences nature, ideally, as “confused words” and tangled “forests of symbols,” perceiving sensory stimuli as “long echoes that mingle in the distance.”[89] Meaningful knowledge reaches the artist in a form that, ultimately, cannot be understood, except as the irrational, the infinite, the enigmatic.

To a striking degree, the third of Steichen’s eye-catching submissions—his large-format blue-green gum-bichromate print *The Pond—Moonrise*—gives visual form to both Rodin’s and Baudelaire’s words.[90] Admittedly, the photograph closely parallels the subject matter, blurred technique, and pastel tonality of Impressionist painting.[91] Despite these similarities, the picture nevertheless exemplifies the sort of work advocated by both Rodin and Baudelaire. It is unlikely that Steichen created *The Pond—Moonrise* in a self-conscious attempt to illustrate Baudelaire’s poem or give form to his project. The photographer does not discuss Baudelaire’s poetry as a source of personal or professional inspiration. By contrast, he does credit the Belgian Symbolist playwright and essayist Maurice Maeterlinck as a formative influence.[92] Yet the Maeterlinck texts that Steichen singles out in his autobiography—*The Treasure of the Humble* (1896) and *Wisdom and Destiny* (1898)—do not pertain in this instance; they are concerned almost exclusively with interpersonal relations. For instance, in the opening essay of *Treasure of the Humble*, entitled “Silence,” Maeterlinck argues, “If . . . we do not listen to the urgent commands of silence, invisible though they be, we shall have suffered an eternal loss that all the treasures of human wisdom cannot make good; for we shall have let slip the opportunity of listening to another soul.” And it concludes with the observation, “Is it not silence that determines and fixes the savour of love? . . . Who has not known those silent moments which separated the lips to reunite the souls?”[93] Maeterlinck’s optimistic and extroverted attention to human companionship, as well as his ecstatic tone, is entirely alien to Steichen’s picture, which is more evocative of isolation and melancholy.

Indeed, this may explain Steichen’s decision to include *Rodin—Le Penseur* alongside *The Pond—Moonrise*, since it aligns the photographer’s work with a different brand of Symbolism altogether. The portrait depicts Rodin sitting before his *Victor Hugo* and his *Thinker*, but Rodin had also been commissioned to sculpt a monument to Baudelaire in 1892. The final monument was never completed, though the artist did work up a portrait head that was identified by a visitor to the artist’s studio in 1899 and that the sculptor exhibited in his retrospective in 1900 (fig. 14).[94] In addition, around 1887, Paul Gallimard commissioned the artist to create illustrations for his personal, first-edition copy of *Les Fleurs du Mal* (fig. 15).[95] Edmond de Goncourt ridiculed “Rodin’s uneducated, laborer’s brain,” in which “Dante [became] a narrow, stupid religion, a fanaticism that exclude[d] admiration for the present.”[96] Yet other sources insist that Rodin was a passionate reader, and according to an

early biographer, T. H. Bartlett, he “always carri[e]d a book in his pocket.”^[97] More to the point, one critic described the sculptor as “intoxicated by” *Les Fleurs du Mal*,^[98] and several sources report seeing the text in Rodin’s studio.^[99] In 1887, the English critic Cosmo Monkhouse penned an appreciation of the *Gates of Hell* in which he reports that the artist himself termed the tortured figures on the right of the doors his “Fleurs du Mal,” adding, “and in spite of the severity of their motives they have decoratively [*sic*] somewhat of the shape and lightness of flowers.”^[100] Moreover, Raphaël Masson notes that the sculptor could, and did, recite Baudelaire’s poetry from memory—a fact that may explain why, as noted above, Rodin so nearly echoed the words of the poet in speaking to Gsell.^[101] It is apparent, then, that if Steichen had not read Baudelaire before going to France, he encountered the poet, in some form, in the company of the sculptor.



Fig. 14, Auguste Rodin, *Head of Baudelaire*, 1898; cast 1959. Bronze. Indiana University Art Museum, Bloomington. [\[larger image\]](#)

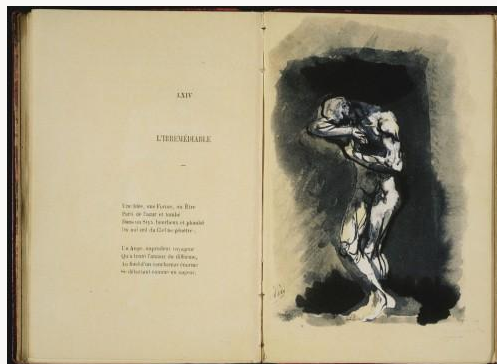


Fig. 15, Auguste Rodin, Drawing illustrating Charles Baudelaire’s *Les Fleurs du Mal*, *Vingt-sept poèmes des Fleurs du mal de Charles Baudelaire, illustrés de vingt-sept dessins de Rodin* (Paris: Société des Amis du Livre moderne, 1918): n.p. [\[larger image\]](#)

More to the point, the subject matter depicted in Steichen’s striking landscape view, as well as its mood, suggests intriguing parallels with “Correspondences.”^[102] The blurred glimpse of a stand of trees, only just illuminated from behind by the moon, the trunks crisscrossing in dark lines like an enigmatic inscription rendered in the strokes of a lost alphabet—these details

recall Rodin's description of landscape painting, his "silhouette of trees" and "indentation of a horizon." But they also bring to mind the "living pillars" of Baudelaire's temple and his "forest of symbols." The trees mirror themselves—literally corresponding to their own image—in the pond in the foreground. The moon, cresting the horizon, but largely concealed by it, appears to peer back at the viewer through a gap in the tree line, evoking Rodin's concept of a "great spirit . . . hidden in all things," as well as Baudelaire's animated nature, which can "observe . . . with familiar glances." Indeed, the impression of surveillance, coupled with the gloom of the nocturnal scene, combine to foster the aura of mystery that Rodin identifies as the essence of great art, and that predominates in Baudelaire's imagery—in his "confused words," in his "long echoes that mingle in the distance . . . Vast as the night and vast as light." Moreover, Baudelaire's suggestion, here, of a limitless natural space, somehow characterized both by darkness and intense illumination, calls to mind the very scene that Steichen renders in his photograph, with its open, empty foreground and its principal imagery visible only in the distance—the shadow of a darkened horizon punctuated by the dazzling arrival of the full moon. Finally, the descriptive approach to framing the scene, which conspicuously neglects to advance a substantive narrative, hints at a possible meaning without explicating or analyzing it, thereby giving visible form to Rodin's characterization of art as "symbol." It also suggests the sculptor's interest in evoking emotion and capturing the "spirit" of the subject, privileging the purely sensual over the rational. The final effect, then, approximates Baudelaire's "expanse of things infinite, / Such as amber, musk, benzoin, and incense, / that sing of the flight of spirit and the senses."[\[103\]](#)

Of course, any aesthetic relationship between Steichen, Baudelaire, and Rodin would be supremely ironic, considering the terms in which Rodin and Baudelaire discussed photography. Some of Rodin's best-known remarks on the medium are less than complimentary. And despite sitting for numerous photographic portraits himself, Baudelaire accused the medium of corrupting the fine arts, insisting, "But if it be allowed to encroach upon the domain of the impalpable and the imaginary, upon anything whose value depends solely upon the addition of something of a man's soul, then it will be so much the worse for us!"[\[104\]](#) And yet that seems to have been exactly what Steichen attempted in his picture. Steichen's photograph constitutes, in no uncertain terms, the kind of work that both Rodin and Baudelaire advocated, offering an irrational, enigmatic, even mystical vision, transforming the most mundane of landscapes into a spiritual and emotional appeal for the viewer's attention.

When Hinton encountered Steichen's submissions to the 1904 London Photographic Salon, he immediately recognized an approach that was, quite literally, foreign to that typically produced by the British members of the sponsoring organization, the Linked Ring, but which had become increasingly characteristic of the group's American members. In response, Hinton took the opportunity to register his objections with Stieglitz, the acknowledged leader of American pictorial photography. Hinton had a reputation for gratuitously provoking controversy, but as both a practitioner and an observer he had an accurate understanding of the kind of work that British photographers tended to produce, and he demonstrated remarkable insight regarding just how Steichen's work diverged from it. It was too American in spirit and too Symbolist in tone. As a consequence of the latter, it had become unhealthy; it failed to achieve, or even properly respect, the social and political potentials of art. Unsurprisingly, given Steichen's own proclivity to provoke controversy, the artist's submissions to the 1905 London Photographic Salon addressed those concerns directly. In

many ways, the 1905 submissions represent the apex of Steichen's pictorial work. Stylistically, they had much in common with Impressionism, both in painting and photography. In attitude, however, Steichen created images of a very different sort. When viewed in combination with *Rodin—Le Penseur*, *The Pond—Moonrise* clearly evokes a Continental Symbolist aesthetic. And yet, by referencing *The Flatiron*, the photographer identified his work with a specifically American approach to the medium. Provoked, no doubt, by Hinton's repeated admonishments, the young American seems to have assembled his most extravagantly eye-catching submissions to indicate his project in no uncertain terms—and to coerce, in the event, a reluctant "admiration" for the "strange and uncanny" character of American pictorial photography.

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Notes

A previous version of this project was presented at the ALMSD (Art, Literature, Music in Symbolism and Decadence) conference on "The Symbolist Movement: Its Origins and Its Consequences" in Monticello, IL, April 25–28, 2012. I would like to thank members of that audience for their feedback. I would also like to thank Craig Adcock, Kate Elliott, and Denise Baxter for reading and discussing this project at various stages. I am particularly grateful for research assistance provided by Samuel Duncan. Finally, I would like to offer thanks to Petra Chu for her insightful critiques and Robert Alvin Adler for his invaluable assistance in preparing this manuscript for publication.

All translations are by the author, unless otherwise indicated.

[1] Hinton's italics; Alfred Horsley Hinton to Alfred Stieglitz, August 4, 1904, Alfred Stieglitz Archive, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT. It should be noted that Hinton was essentially repeating remarks that he had offered previously, in print, in A. Horsley Hinton, "Is It Well?" *Camera Work*, no. 4 (October 1903): 41–44.

[2] See Edward Steichen, "British Photography from an American Point of View," *Amateur Photographer* 32 (November 1900): 343–45; Edward Steichen, "The American School," *Photogram* 8 (January 1901): 4–9; John C. Warburg, "A British Appreciation of American Work," *Photographic Times* 33, no. 3 (1901): 125–26; and Frederick H. Evans, "The Photographic Salon, London, 1904. As Seen Through English Eyes," *Camera Work*, no. 9 (January 1905): 39.

[3] See, for example, Sadakichi Hartmann, "Eduard J. Steichen, Painter-Photographer (1902)," in *Sadakichi Hartmann: Critical Modernist*, ed. Jane Calhoun Weaver (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 305. For examples of recent studies, see Dennis Longwell, *Steichen: The Master Prints, 1895–1914, The Symbolist Period* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1978); and Claire Christian Black, "Edward Steichen's *Rodin—Le Penseur*: The Rhetoric of a Photograph," *Cantor Arts Center Journal* 2, no. 2 (2000–2001): 47.

[4] Ronald J. Gedrim, "Peinture à la Lumière: 1898–1907," in *Edward Steichen: Lives in Photography*, ed. Todd Brandow and William A. Ewing (Minneapolis: Foundation for the Exhibition of Photography, 2008), 86. William Innes Homer, "Eduard Steichen as Painter and Photographer, 1897–1908," *American Art Journal* 6, no. 2 (1974): 46, 53, fails to recognize the connection to Symbolism altogether, relating his work, instead, to American tonalism and the painting of James Abbott McNeill Whistler. For more on Maeterlinck's possible influence, see Lucy Bowditch, "Eduard Steichen and Maurice Maeterlinck: The Symbolist Connection," *History of Photography* 17, no. 4 (Winter 1993): 334–42.

[5] Miklós Szabolcsi "On the Spread of Symbolism," in *The Symbolist Movement in the Literature of European Languages*, ed. Anna Balakian (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiado, 1982), 184.

[6] A. Horsley Hinton, "Methods of Control, and Their Influence on the Development of Artistic Photography," in *A Photographic Vision: Pictorial Photography, 1889–1923*, ed. Peter C. Bunnell (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, 1980), 54, 71; and Margaret Harker, *The Linked Ring: The Secession Movement in Photography in Britain, 1892–1910* (London: Heinemann, 1979), 153.

[7] Brian Liddy, "The Origins and Development of Pictorial Photography in Britain," in *Impressionist Camera: Pictorial Photography in Europe, 1888–1918*, ed. Patrick Daum, Francis Ribemont, and Phillip Prodger (New York: Merrell, 2006), 69.

[8] See Richard Shiff, *Cézanne and the End of Impressionism: A Study of the Theory, Technique, and Critical Evaluation of Modern Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), esp. 3–52.

[9] Linked Ring, *Catalogue of the Thirteenth Annual Exhibition of the Photographic Salon, 1905* (London: Linked Ring, 1905), 17.

[10] Harker, *Linked Ring*, 92–93.

[11] For a contemporary use of the term, see the lead essay in "Editorial Notes," *American Amateur Photographer* 18, no. 11 (1906), 505–6, in which the editors defend the regular inclusion of such works in their publication.

[12] Harker, *Linked Ring*, 92.

[13] Liddy, "Origins and Development of Pictorial Photography," 70. It should be noted that, in 1903, Hinton made more or less the same observation regarding the importance of landscape photography to British pictorial work. See A. Horsley Hinton, "Mr. Alexander Keighley.—An 'Impressionist' in Photography," *Magazine of Art* 28 (December 1903): 64. For a selection of images illustrating the diverse range of pictorial practice within the group, see Harker, *Linked Ring*.

[14] "Une oeuvre d'art est un coin de la création vu à travers un tempérament." Émile Zola, *Mes Haines: Causeries littéraires et artistiques; mon salon (1866), nouvelle édition* (Paris: G. Charpentier, 1879), 229.

[15] See George Davison, "5th Meeting: 'Impressionism in Photography,'" *Journal of the Society of Arts*, December 19, 1890. The December 19 edition of the journal reprints Davison's lecture on pages 65–74, and also includes some discussion of the argument (both in support of it and against it) by prominent members of the society; see pages 74 and 75, for instance.

[16] Davison, "Impressionism in Photography," 71.

[17] *Ibid.*, 65–66.

[18] *Ibid.*, 66.

[19] *Ibid.*, 73.

[20] See, for instance, Michelle Foa, "Textual Inhibitions: Photographic Criticism in Late Victorian Britain," *History of Photography* 36, no. 1 (2012): 33.

[21] Davison, "Impressionism in Photography," 73.

[22] Harker, *Linked Ring*, 31, writes that Davison's lecture essentially recapitulated P. H. Emerson's well-known discussion of naturalistic photography. However, I would suggest that this view oversimplifies the relationship between the two arguments. Although Davison's lecture was clearly indebted to his understanding of Naturalist painting, Davison's ideas diverged in several important respects from Emerson's discussions of the subject (as Emerson himself famously insisted—see Margaret Harker, "The Secession," *British Journal of Photography* 119, no. 49 [1972]: 1074). Moreover, the label Impressionism was crucial to Davison's case, rhetorically speaking. As noted above, it signaled a specifically avant-garde approach—one that was entirely contemporary, one that was antagonistic to convention, and one that privileged innovation. It was also a term that provoked controversy and drew attention, while it clearly signaled a departure from Emerson's approach.

[23] George Eastman to George Davison, June 25, 1912, quoted in Brian Coe, "George Davison: Impressionist—Anarchist," in *British Photography in the Nineteenth Century: The Fine Art Tradition*, ed. Mike Weaver (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 238. It should be noted that Davison had not vocalized those views by 1890, and it is not entirely clear what his political opinions were at that time. However, it is apparent that Davison had already begun to demonstrate a social consciousness and that he had linked that consciousness, to some degree, to photographic practice. By 1886, he had already taken an interest in the possible role that photography could play in educating the industrial laborers of London and raising their quality of life. See Coe, "George Davison," 216–17.

[24] See Hinton, "Mr. Alexander Keighley," 63–68; and J. W. Little, "Diffusion of Focus with an Anastigmat," *Camera and Darkroom* 8 (January–December 1905): 46.

[25] Hinton's emphasis; Alfred Horsley Hinton, *Practical Pictorial Photography, Part I* (London: Hazell, Watson, and Viney, 1898), 13.

[26] Hinton's emphasis; *ibid.*, 70.

[27] *Ibid.*, 8.

[28] Hinton, "Methods of Control," 73; and Hinton, *Practical Pictorial Photography*, 69.

[29] Hinton's emphasis; Hinton, *Practical Pictorial Photography*, 67.

[30] *Ibid.*, 7.

[31] *Ibid.*, 6–9.

[32] *Ibid.*, 9.

[33] *Ibid.*, 11–12. It is worth noting that Hinton is essentially extending Ruskin's discussion of the social function and the moral basis of beauty in *Modern Painters*. See John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, vol. 4, 2nd American ed. (New York: John Wiley, 1855). For a discussion of art and liberal politics in Victorian Britain, see Janice Carlisle, *Picturing Reform in Victorian Britain* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), esp. 1–26.

[34] Hinton, "Is It Well?" 41–44. Hinton would repeat the argument in the pages of *Camera Work* in 1903, launching a scathing critique of the "newer flights" of American pictorial photography, which he termed "selfish." Pitting the "tonic" of nature-loving, "robust" English Impressionism against "the gloom and the mystery" of the "fashionable" American "cult" of urbanism and Maeterlink, Hinton would plead for more artistic "socialism" in the face of autocracy and "intolerant esotericism."

[35] Richard Shiff, "The End of Impressionism," in *The New Painting, Impressionism, 1874–1886: An Exhibition Organized by the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco with the National Gallery of Art, Washington*, ed. Charles S. Moffett (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1986), 61.

[36] Jules Castagnary, "Exposition du Boulevard des Capucines: Les impressionistes," *Le Siècle*, April 29, 1874, 3, implies that the Impressionists were essentially honoring the "idéisme" of Cabanel and Gérôme ("l'objet de l'art ne change pas") and their "doctrines." Although he was a political dissenter, Castagnary was slightly conservative in his aesthetic tastes, preferring Courbet to Manet, for instance, and this clearly influences his critique of the new painting here. See John House, *Impressionism: Paint and Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 10–11.

[37] "Autres, qui, négligeant de réfléchir et d'apprendre, auront poursuivi l'impression à outrance"; "romantisme sans frein, où la nature n'est plus qu'un prétexte à rêveries, et où l'imagination devient impuissante à formuler autre chose que des fantaisies personnelles, subjectives, . . . parce qu'elles sont sans contrôle et sans vérification possible dans la réalité." Castagnary, "Exposition du Boulevard des Capucines," 3. Aurier's article appeared as G.-Albert Aurier, "Le Symbolisme en peinture: Paul Gauguin," *Mercure de France* 2 (March 1891): 155–64.

[38] Philip Nord, *Impressionists and Politics: Art and Democracy in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 6–7, 9.

[39] House, *Impressionism: Paint and Politics*, 10–11; and Nord, *Impressionists and Politics*, 9, 23, 22.

[40] "De savoir comment se gouverne la capacité productive de la France"; "cette source jaillissante, qui depuis la Révolution sort des entrailles de notre peuple." Castagnary, "Exposition du Boulevard des Capucines," 3. It is worth noting that *Le Siècle* had maintained a consistently pro-republican, dissenting voice throughout the 1860s and early 1870s. See Nord, *Impressionists and Politics*, 22–23.

[41] For a thorough discussion of how the dynamic would evolve in the ensuing decades, see Richard Thomson, *The Troubled Republic: Visual Culture and Social Debate in France, 1889–1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

[42] Michelle Facos, *Symbolist Art in Context* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 6.

[43] Frans von Schéele, "What Is Modern Art—Symbolism?" *Literary Digest* 7, no. 6 (June 10, 1893): 8 (148).

[44] Facos, *Symbolist Art in Context*, 7; and Charles C. Eldredge, *American Imagination and Symbolist Painting* (New York: Grey Art Gallery and Study Center, New York University, 1979), 15. For an earlier attempt to utilize specifically formal criteria in the definition of Symbolist aesthetics, see Robert Goldwater, *Symbolism* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1979), 9, which characterizes genuinely Symbolist work as an "expressive unit of form and meaning," in which the artist engages in formal experimentation to determine the ideal means of communicating the unique content of each work. Goldwater recognizes that, unfortunately, his definition eliminates much of what scholars speak of today as Symbolist art.

[45] Edward Steichen, *A Life in Photography* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1963), unpaginated, chap. 1; and Penelope Niven, *Steichen: A Biography* (New York: Clarkson Potter, 1997), 47.

[46] Steichen, *Life in Photography*, chap. 1.

[47] *Ibid.*, chap. 2. It should be noted that Monet's status as an Impressionist has been challenged in recent decades. See, for example, Richard Shiff and Jeanne Bouniort, "'Il faut que les yeux soient émus': impressionnisme et symbolisme vers 1891," *Revue de l'Art* 96 (1992): 24–30.

[48] Steichen, *Life in Photography*, chap. 1.

[49] Joseph T. Keiley, "The Salon: Its Purpose, Character and Lesson," *Camera Notes* 3, no. 3 (January 1900): 145.

[50] Steichen, *Life in Photography*, 3rd page after plate 2.

[51] *Ibid.*, chap. 1.

[52] Steichen had professed to be delighted at the prospect of mischief when twelve photographs were accepted the previous year. See Niven, *Steichen: A Biography*, 195. Because the Stieglitz contingent had boycotted the exhibition in 1903, the Linked Ring had agreed to let the Americans jury their own submissions, beginning in 1904. A committee in New York designated the works to be included in the exhibition and packed them off en masse to London. As a point of comparison, Davison and Hinton each exhibited three works that year. See Linked Ring, *Catalogue of the Thirteenth Annual Exhibition*.

[53] Ulrich Pohlmann, "The Dream of Beauty, or Truth Is Beauty, Beauty Truth: Photography and Symbolism, 1890–1914," in *Lost Paradise: Symbolist Europe*, ed. Jean Clair (Montreal: Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 1995), 432; and Ulrich Pohlmann, "Symbolism and Pictorialism: The Influence of Eugène Carrière's Painting on Art Photography Around 1900," in *Impressionist Camera: Pictorial Photography in Europe, 1888–1918*, ed. Patrick Daum, Francis Ribemont, and Phillip Prodger (New York: Merrell, 2006), 87.

[54] Hartmann and Steichen had, by 1905, permanently fallen out. See Niven, *Steichen: A Biography*, 196.

[55] Sadakichi Hartmann, "A Plea for the Picturesqueness of New York," in *The Valiant Knights of Daguerre: Selected Critical Essays on Photography and Profiles of Photographic Pioneers*, ed. Harry W. Lawton and George Knox (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 56.

[56] *Ibid.*, 57.

[57] As Douglas Tallack, *New York Sights: Visualizing Old and New New York* (New York: Berg, 2005), 23, notes, Hartmann's decision to rely upon the picturesque as an aesthetic category is a curious one, considering its historical resonance. To Hartmann's readers, the picturesque would have seemed more closely associated with previous centuries, rather than with new approaches to art making, and with Europe, rather than with the United States. Nevertheless, it is a classification that emphasizes juxtaposition and variety, even change. See William Gilpin, *Three Essays: On Picturesque Beauty; On Picturesque Travel; and On Sketching Landscape*, 2nd ed. (London: R. Blamire, 1794), 4, 6; and Uvedale Price, *An Essay on the Picturesque: As Compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful* (London: J. Robson, 1792), 61, 92. To be more precise, though, Hartmann seems to be using the term in its common parlance sense. Some of the scenes he proposes do, indeed, satisfy Gilpin's and Price's criteria, but, unlike Gilpin and Price, Hartmann is nevertheless comfortable equating picturesque effects with beautiful ones, and his ultimate standard is that a view make a "picture worthy of depiction." See Hartmann, "Plea for the Picturesqueness of New York," 58, 60, 63.

[58] Quoted in Grace M. Mayer, *Once Upon a City: New York from 1890–1910* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1958), 1.

[59] Edgar Saltus, "New York from the Flatiron," *Munsey's Magazine* 33, no. 4 (July 1905): 386–89, 390.

[60] Quoted in Thomas Bender, *The Unfinished City: New York and the Metropolitan Idea* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 42.

[61] Sadakichi Hartmann, "The 'Flat-Iron' Building—an Esthetical Dissertation," in Weaver, *Sadakichi Hartmann: Critical Modernist*, 140, 142–43.

[62] Peter Conrad, *The Art of the City: View and Versions of New York* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 77.

[63] Quoted *ibid.*

[64] Quoted in Mayer, *Once Upon a City*, 1.

[65] See *Camera Work*, no. 4 (October 1903), especially 36–40. The poem is also available as Sadakichi Hartmann, "To the 'Flat Iron,'" in Weaver, *Sadakichi Hartmann: Critical Modernist*, 145–46.

[66] Katherine Hoffmann, *Stieglitz: A Beginning Light* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 199, notes that this is not the only instance in which Japanese compositional influences found their way into Stieglitz's photographs. For a discussion of how this technique might suggest a uniquely Japanese conception of space, see Ken-ichi Sasaki, "Perspectives East and West," *Contemporary Aesthetics* 11 (2013), accessed February 1, 2016, <http://www.contempaesthetics.org/newvolume/pages/article.php?articleID=670>.

[67] It is worth noting that color effects themselves were not unusual at the London Photographic Salon at this time. See F. J. M., "The Photographic Salon," *Speaker*, September 24, 1904, 590. However, Steichen's efforts in gum bichromate were repeatedly singled out over the years for their subtle, evocative illusionism.

[68] Niven, *Steichen: A Biography*, 128, 170; and Evans, "Photographic Salon, London, 1904," 38–39.

[69] The work that Steichen submitted in 1904 bore the same title as that submitted in 1905. Linked Ring, *Catalogue of the Twelfth Annual Exhibition of the Photographic Salon, 1904* (London: Linked Ring, 1904), 20. Also, see. Evans, "Photographic Salon, London, 1904," 39. Evans insisted that *Rodin—Le Penseur* was superior to the portrait of Richard Strauss that Steichen had submitted that year but inferior to the Rodin portrait Steichen exhibited in the salon of 1902. The work was also singled out by F. J. M., "Photographic Salon," 590—this time, in more enthusiastic terms.

[70] For a history of the Balzac project, see Jacques de Caso, "Rodin and the Cult of Balzac," *Burlington Magazine* 106, no. 735 (June 1964): 278–84; Steichen, *Life in Photography*, 1st, 4th, and 5th pages after plate 12; Gedrim, "Peinture à la Lumière," 87; and Niven, *Steichen: A Biography*, 110–11.

[71] Claudine Mitchell, "Introduction: Crossing Borders, Negotiating Culture," in *Rodin: The Zola of Sculpture*, ed. Claudine Mitchell (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 14.

[72] *Ibid.*, 8–9.

[73] For a listing of Rodin's British patrons and an overview of their changing character, see Anna Tahinci, "Private Patronage: Rodin and His Early British Collectors," in Mitchell, *Rodin: The Zola of Sculpture*, 95–117. Tahinci notes that Rodin's British patrons became wealthier and more politically powerful in the years after 1900.

[74] Auguste Rodin, *Art: Conversations with Paul Gsell*, trans. Jacques de Caso and Patricia B. Sanders (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 13.

[75] *Ibid.*, 12.

[76] *Ibid.*, 70.

[77] *Ibid.*, 71.

[78] *Ibid.*, 74.

[79] *Ibid.*, 75.

[80] *Ibid.*, 75–76.

[81] *Ibid.*, 82–83.

[82] *Ibid.*, 78.

[83] The link may seem ironic, considering Baudelaire's attack upon sculpture in his "Salon of 1846." See Charles Baudelaire, "Why Sculpture is Tiresome," in *Art in Paris, 1845–1862*, trans. and ed. Jonathan Mayne (New York: Phaidon, 1970), 111–13; the passage originally appeared in Charles Baudelaire, *Salon de 1846* (Paris: Michel Lévy frères, 1846). However, Stamos Metzidakis, "Baudelaire: Sculptor of Words," *Romantic Review* 89, no. 2 (March 1998): 207–18, notes that Baudelaire's attitude toward three-dimensional art changed over the course of the ensuing

decade. By the time he wrote his "Salon of 1859" and *Les Fleurs du Mal* (in which "Correspondances" appears) he began to conceive of sculpture as a "stylistic model" playing a "complementary, over-determining, albeit not primary, role in his view of poetic composition." See Metzidakis, "Sculptor of Words," 211.

[84] Lawrence Lerner, "Baudelaire," in *French Literature and Its Background*, vol. 4, *The Early Nineteenth Century*, ed. John Cruickshank (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 200, argues that based on rhetorical style, Baudelaire is clearly a Romantic. By contrast, Arthur G. Lehmann, *The Symbolist Aesthetic in France, 1885–1895* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1968), 18–19, insists that Baudelaire's work is part of the "spiritual ancestry" of Symbolism, which "claims to be pursuing the aims" of the mid-century poet.

[85] Jean Moréas, "Un Manifeste Littéraire: Le Symbolisme," *Supplément Littéraire, Le Figaro*, September 18, 1886, 150.

[86] Margaret Mein, "Baudelaire and Symbolism," *L'Esprit Créateur* 13 (Summer 1973): 154–65.

[87] Patrick Meadows, "Baudelaire's Syncretic Extensions of Synesthesia," *Symposium* 65, no. 2 (April 2011): 117. Meadows's essay offers a focused discussion of synesthesia in Baudelaire's work.

[88] Charles Baudelaire, "Correspondences," in *Symbolist Art Theories: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Henri Dorra (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 11. For a discussion of the importance of music in Baudelaire's aesthetics, see Joseph Acquisto, *French Symbolist Poetry and the Idea of Music* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate: 2006), 13–46.

[89] "La nature est un temple où de vivant piliers / Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles"; "des forêts de symboles / Qui l'observe avec des regards familiers"; "ayant l'expansion des choses infinies"; "qui chantent des transports de l'esprit et des sens"; "de longs échos qui de loin se confondent." Baudelaire, "Correspondences," 11.

[90] The negative of *The Pond, Moonrise* was printed several times—three versions survive. Steichen shot it while vacationing at the home of the art critic Charles Caffin in the late summer and early fall of 1904. Each print was unique, making use of a different combination of techniques and tones. The work under discussion was probably a gum-bichromate and ferro-prussiate over platinum print.

[91] While a truly viable color photographic method would not become commercially available until the appearance of the autochrome process in 1907, photographers had nevertheless managed to introduce color into their images using a range of approaches. One of these was to tint prints by hand using various materials, including, of course, brushes and paints. It should be noted that that Steichen did occasionally alter prints with a brush. According to the conservation department of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, one of the three extant printings of the *The Pond—Moonrise* has been treated with "white pigment, likely hand applied." See Sotheby's, *Important Photographs from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Including Works from the Gilman Paper Company Collection* (New York: Sotheby's, 2004), 25. However, in the bulk of his early colored work, Steichen created his stunning effects through the process of printing his negatives, using some combination of platinum, cyanotype, and multiple layers of tinted gums. As a result, his efforts tended to yield an all-over, unified, pastel tonality.

[92] Steichen, *Life in Photography*, chap. 2.

[93] Maurice Maeterlinck, *The Treasure of the Humble*, trans. Alfred Sutro (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1899), 5.

[94] For more on the history and significance of the *Monument to Victor Hugo* in Rodin's oeuvre, see Ruth Butler, Jeanine Parisier Plottel, and Jane Mayo Roos, *Rodin's Monument to Victor Hugo* (London: Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Foundation, 1998), esp. 44–116. For the story behind the Baudelaire portrait, see Albert E. Elsen, *Rodin's Art: The Rodin Collection of the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford University*, ed. Bernard Barryte (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 345–51.

[95] See Frederic V. Grunfeld, *Rodin: A Biography* (New York: Holt, 1987), 276–77. Rodin drew a number of these works directly onto the margins of Gallimard's text and inserted 5 others on separate sheets. Although Gallimard did not commission the drawings for publication, he nevertheless printed them in a limited edition with selected *Fleurs du Mal* poems in 1918. For an overview of works inspired by or otherwise related to Charles Baudelaire, see Musée Rodin, *Rodin et les écrivains de son temps: Sculptures, dessins, lettres, et livres du fonds Rodin* (Paris: Musée Rodin, 1976), 21–60.

[96] Quoted in Raphaël Masson, "Sources of Inspiration," in Raphaël Masson and Véronique Mattiussi, *Rodin*, trans. Deke Dusinberre (Paris: Flammarion and Musée-Rodin, 2004), 193.

[97] T. H. Bartlett, "August Rodin, Sculptor," in *Auguste Rodin: Readings on his Life and Work*, ed. Albert Elsen (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1965), 108.

[98] "Sous l'influence . . . du livre de Baudelaire"; "Il en paraissait enivré." Hugues Le Roux, *Portraits de Cire* (Paris: Lecène, Oudin et Cie, 1891), 212.

[99] Elsen, *Rodin's Art*, 350.

[100] Cosmo Monkhouse, "Cosmo Monkhouse: The Gates of Despair," in Mitchell, *Rodin: The Zola of Sculpture*, 44. The connection was not isolated in the critical literature: Bartlett, "August Rodin, Sculptor," 78–79, credits the poems of Baudelaire, and in particular *Les Fleurs du Mal*, with inspiring *The Gates of Hell* equally with Dante's *Inferno*, while in a long essay, appearing in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1902, the English poet and critic Arthur Symons, a visible proponent of Symbolist literature in Britain, similarly remarked that "[Rodin's] 'Gates of Hell' is a headlong flight and falling, in which all the agonies of a place of torment, which is Baudelaire's rather than Dante's, swarm in actual movement." See Arthur Symons, "Rodin," *Fortnightly Review* 71 (June 1902): 957–67; quoted in Claudine Mitchell, "Rodin and the Baudelairean Legacy: Arthur Symons on the Sculptor as Poet," in Mitchell, *Rodin: The Zola of Sculpture*, 77, 74. The association continued to receive the attention of scholars further into the twentieth century. See Albert E. Elsen, *"The Gates of Hell" by Auguste Rodin* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), esp. 92–138.

[101] Masson, "Sources of Inspiration," 193.

[102] For an alternate reading, see Joel Smith, *Edward Steichen: The Early Years* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 44n78, who suggests a connection to Ralph Waldo Emerson's poem "Waldeinsamkeit," or "Forest Solitude," and thereby to American Transcendentalism.

[103] Baudelaire, "Correspondences," 11.

[104] In a debate over how best to represent movement, Rodin tells Gsell, "It is the artist who tells the truth and photography that lies. For in reality, time does not stand still." Making specific reference to what he terms "scientific" images, he concludes, "And this is what condemns certain modern painters, who reproduce poses provided by high-speed photographs." Rodin, *Art*, 32. For Rodin, the best way to suggest movement is to communicate how it "feels"; objective measurement, to his mind, would never be the basis for great art making. See Rodin, *Art*, 32. Yet in a short piece written for *Camera Work* in 1908, the sculptor would publicly declare his conviction that photography "can create works of art," and he would proclaim "Steichen a very great artist." George Besson, "Pictorial Photography: A Series of Interviews," *Camera Work*, no. 24 (October 1908): 14. In point of fact, in the course of his lifetime, Rodin accumulated a vast collection of photographic prints, numbering nearly 7,000. Hélène Pinet, "Montrer est la question vitale: Rodin and Photography," in *Sculpture and Photography: Envisioning the Third Dimension*, ed. Geraldine A. Johnson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 68. For more on Rodin and photography, see Albert E. Elsen, *In Rodin's Studio: A Photographic Record of Sculpture in the Making* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980); Pinet, "Montrer est la question vitale," 68–85; and Charles Baudelaire, *Art in Paris, 1845–1862: Salons and Other Exhibitions Reviewed by Charles Baudelaire*, ed. and trans. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon, 1965), 154. For a discussion of Baudelaire's attitude toward photography in the context of his development as a critic, see Susan Blood, "Baudelaire Against Photography: An Allegory of Old Age," *MLN* 101, no. 4 (September 1986): 817–37.

Illustrations

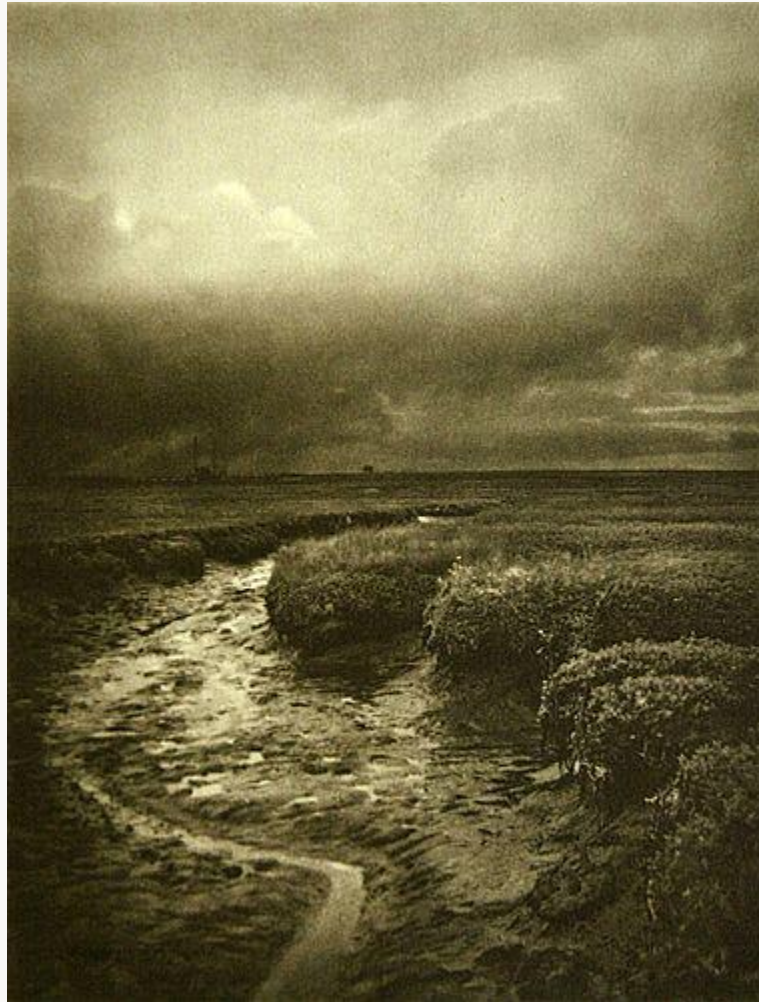


Fig. 1, Alfred Horsley Hinton, *Gathering Weather*, *Die Kunst in der Photographie* 2 (1898): plate 3.
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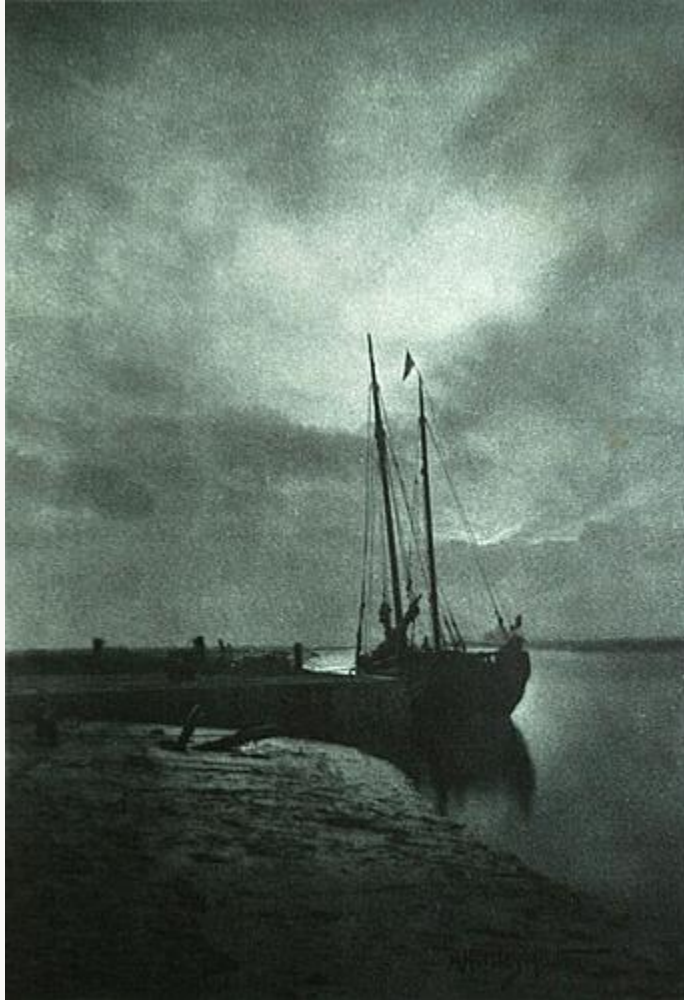


Fig. 2, Alfred Horsley Hinton, *Requiem*, *Practical Pictorial Photography*, vol. 1 (London: Hazell, Watson, and Viney, 1898): 4. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 3, Edward Steichen, *In Memoriam*, *Camera Work*, *Steichen Supplement* (April 1906): 19. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 4, Edward Steichen, *Mother and Child—Sunlight*, *Camera Work*, no. 14 (April 1906): 53. [\[return to text\]](#)

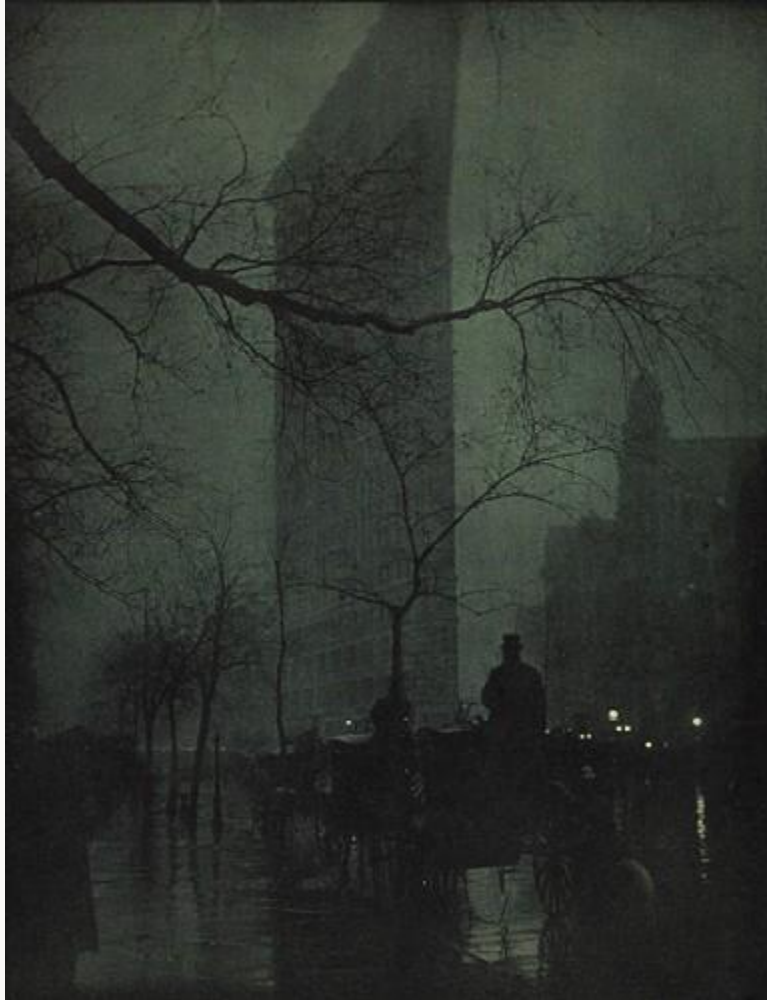


Fig. 5, Edward Steichen, *The Flatiron-Evening*, *Camera Work*, no. 14 (April 1906): 31. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 6, Edward Steichen, *Moonlight: The Pond*, *Camera Work*, no. 14 (April 1906): 11. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 7, Edward Steichen, *Rodin—Le Penseur*, *Camera Work*, no. 11 (July 1905): 85. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 8, George Davison, *The Onion Field*, *Camera Work*, no. 18 (April 1907): 5. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 9, Arnold Böcklin, *The Silence of the Forest*, 1885. Oil on wood. National Museum in Poznań, Poland.

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Fig. 10, Edward Steichen, *The Pool*, *Camera Work*, no. 2 (April 1903): 7. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 11, John Sloan, *Dust Storm, Fifth Avenue*, 1906. Oil on canvas. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. [\[return to text\]](#)

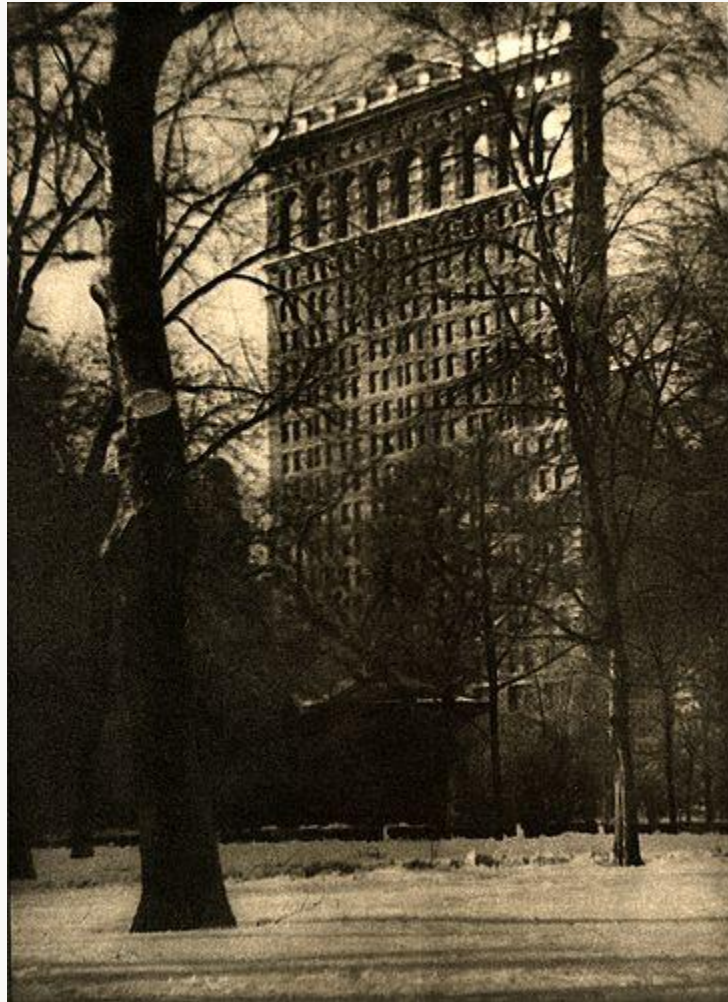


Fig. 12, Alvin Langdon Coburn, *The Flat-Iron Building, New York City, New York* (New York: Brentano's, 1910): n.p. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 13, Alfred Stieglitz, *The Flatiron*, *Camera Work*, no. 4 (October 1903): 49. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 14, Auguste Rodin, *Head of Baudelaire*, 1898; cast 1959. Bronze. Indiana University Art Museum, Bloomington. [\[return to text\]](#)

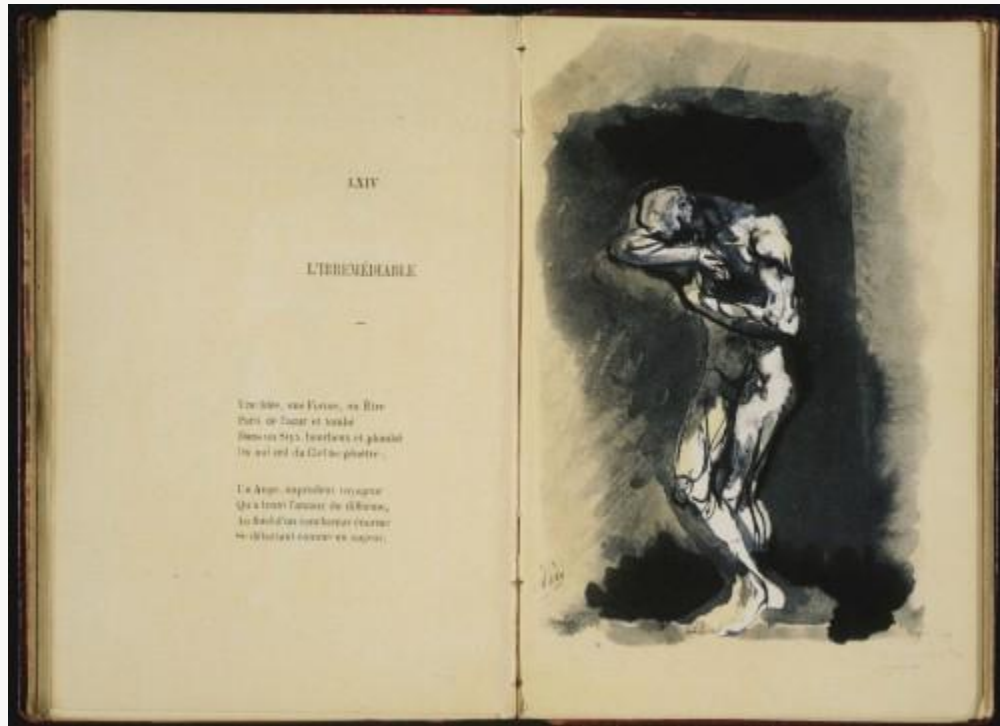


Fig. 15, Auguste Rodin, Drawing illustrating Charles Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal*, *Vingt-sept poèmes des Fleurs du mal de Charles Baudelaire, illustrés de vingt-sept dessins de Rodin* (Paris: Société des Amis du Livre moderne, 1918): n.p. [\[return to text\]](#)