

of qualities" that set him apart, not those accidents he shared "with other gentlemen of his day."²⁷ In such sentiments Greenough showed himself in complete agreement with Canova, who had given Napoleon an entirely nude ideal body in the first decade of the century, and with an older French contemporary, David d'Angers, who modeled a fully clothed *Jefferson*, but nevertheless claimed that even the "foot of a distinguished being has in no way the same form as the foot of a common being"; from the merest fragment we should be able to tell that the original was of a god or hero. "The form of the nude indicates perfectly the morality of the person represented, if the artist has understood that the exterior form of the body expresses very well the moral state of the man."²⁸ From this point of view nudity could not be exclusively the condition of pagan gods. The dignity of the new democratic and imperial gods—Washington and Napoleon—equally required it. And Greenough was consciously presenting Washington as the American demigod, "a conductor between God and Man."²⁹

That, however, placed him even beyond his identity as the Father, in which supremely human capacity Americans had come to worship him. The cult of Washington was more popular and less exalted in feeling than the religion of Beauty. Only those who belonged to the religion, like Tuckerman and Jarves, could see the ideal beauty of Washington's nude breast. It inspired Tuckerman to prayerful verse, and Jarves saw in it a prophecy of the future. Although Greenough had set a unique standard of excellence in this "godlike form" of the "nation's cherished 'father,'" wrote Jarves, it was unfortunately true that by 1864 American sculpture had been "seduced into the facile path of realism by the national bias to the material and practical." But a "new, strong life" was "fast coming upon us," he hopefully went on, sounding like Whitman in the preface to *Leaves of Grass* of nine years earlier. As Americans began to "dignify" their lives with "great ideas and heroic deeds," they would "rise to the level of [Greenough's] sympathies and knowledge," as represented in his heroic and heroically achieved *Washington*.³⁰

ORPHEUS IN AMERICA

*The sun of Art which glowed in Rome, may rise
To equal splendour in our Western skies.*

—Rembrandt Peale

Apollo may be seen driving his chariot of the sun westward on one side of the chair in which Greenough's Jupiter-Washington sits. Yet this God of Art was to make relatively few appearances as himself in America. One of Samuel F. B. Morse's student efforts praised by Benjamin West was a *Judgment of Jupiter* (1815; Yale) in which the father of the gods, sitting in his Phidian pose and attended by his eagle, orders the mortal maiden Marpissa to choose between her human hero Idas and Jupiter's divine son Apollo. Apollo reverses the stance he assumes on the Belvedere, and all four figures appear to be inanimate marionette reductions of appropriate antique statues. This painting found no purchaser even in Boston.¹ Allston and Greenough, we recall, simply transformed the *Apollo* into Christian angels, and late in the century in Rome Franklin Simmons followed their example with his *Angel of*

the Resurrection—a work said to be of "incomparable beauty and power . . . all flame and force of the utmost exaltation."²

Apollo's alert, proud stance and carriage were also to be seen in less obviously divine figures, the new mythical images of the West: the Pioneer—J. Q. A. Ward's *Simon Kenton*; the *Minute Man* of the novice Daniel Chester French, who in 1874 carefully drew the legs of the *Apollo Belvedere* at the Boston Athenaeum before proceeding with his first great work,³ and the Indian Chief—the *Massasoit* (1922) of Cyrus Dallin, who surprisingly had initiated his student work in Paris in the late 1880s with an *Apollo and Hyacinthus*. The Pioneer, Minute Man, and Indian Chief were successful syntheses of the ideal image with the new national mythology. But William Sydney Mount's witty scene entitled *The Painter's Triumph* (1838; Pennsylvania Academy) indicates the choice that more usually had to be made. It shows a craggy farmer reacting with delight to a painting we cannot see (it might be of his own sharp-featured face), while on the wall the artist's drawing of the *Apollo Belvedere's* head—as disdainful as Winckelmann and Byron thought it—looks the other way. But the third figure is the painter himself, raising his palette instead of a bow as he strikes a triumphantly Apollonian pose and shares his client's simple joy in verisimilitude. Like Marpissa in Morse's painting, the American artist had to choose Idas, not Apollo, unless he found like Whitman that they were one and the same.

There was, however, Apollo's son, Orpheus. Orpheus was the divine Apollo in human form, with an allegorical significance more limited and accessible. The chief episode of his life—his attempt to recover his bride, Eurydice, from Hades—was altogether more appealing than any of the acts of Apollo. A prophet-poet, the founder of a mystical religion of Nature that had puritanic as well as Dionysiac interpretations; the supreme musician, capable with his beautiful harmonies of taming beasts and stopping stones in flight; devoted monogamist, famed for his human courage and grief such as Apollo never knew—Orpheus became the most popular American "god" of the new religion of Beauty, as Diana was the most popular goddess. The details of his post-Underworld misogyny (his "aversion to Venus and nuptial joys," in Vergil's words), his homoeroticism, and his final dismemberment by the enraged women of Thrace did not need to be recalled, any more than did Diana's vindictive cruelty.

The first of the American *Orpheuses* (fig. 152), created by Thomas Crawford between 1839 and 1843, was welcomed to America as a singularly appropriate conveyer of the Greek ideal of beauty from Rome to the West. Its way was paved by the American consul in Rome, George Washington Greene, and by the young patrician and future senator, Charles Sumner, both of whom had watched its realization in Crawford's Roman studio. Even before its arrival, Margaret Fuller gave it an interpretation that incorporated it into Transcendentalism's symbolic systems and demonstrated its modern and American relevance. Afterward, other writers found their own ways of making it at home, and other artists discovered the appeal of Orpheus for themselves.

During his first years in Rome Crawford envisioned extensive exploitations of the mythological world. A series of the seven greatest poets would have begun with Apollo. He also intended to make engravings of nothing less than "the whole of



Fig. 152. Thomas Crawford. *Orpheus*. 1839. Marble. 174.5 × 91.4 × 130.8 cm. Courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Gift of Cornelius C., III, and Emily Vermeule.

Ovid," so that customers could choose what they wished him to execute in marble. A bas-relief of six hundred figures showing a *Festa of Ceres* was also projected. All these plans reflect the direct influence of Thorwaldsen, who liked to create related works, and whose vast bas-relief of *The Triumph of Alexander* was considered by Crawford the "great work of modern times."⁴ We have already seen the apprentice sculptor's dependency on his master in *Venus as Shepherdess* (after Thorwaldsen) (fig. 72) and *Hebe and Ganymede* (fig. 134). An early plan to sculpt *The Winds* was supplanted by an *Apotheosis of Washington*, which in turn was abandoned for a relief illustrating Anacreon's Ode no. 72 (1842; Boston Athenaeum).⁵ This work is nothing but a belated addition to an erotic series Thorwaldsen had created twenty years before in homage to the convivial Greek poet of bisexual love. Crawford's figure of the aged Anacreon was copied almost directly from Thorwaldsen's profile adaptation of an antique statue of Anacreon. But in Ode no. 72 (assembled in Moore's translation from two fragments) the American found one in which the poet simply urges a "virgin, wild and young" to dance to the music of his lyre—a less suggestive lyric than, for example, "Love's Night-walk" (Ode no. 3), which inspired Thorwaldsen's rain-dampened pubescent Amor being warmed and dried by Anacreon as he pricks the old man with his dart. Moreover, the phallic thyrsus and capacious jug of wine that frame the lyre in both of Thorwaldsen's designs—indicating the inspirations for Anacreon's songs—were reduced in Crawford's work to a chastely slim pitcher (probably full of water).

Yet, even though he lacked the assurance with which Canova and Thorwaldsen, as children of the eighteenth century, had been able to celebrate Greek eroticism in white marble without jeopardizing their reputation as Christian sculptors, the uneducated Crawford's interest in myth as integral to a sculptor's intellectual equipment seems to have been genuine, as he read industriously in translations of the Greek poets. Of the lost or unfinished works listed by his biographers, one-third are from classical mythology (twice as many as those of Christian subjects): Apollo, Diana, Ceres, Flora, Vesta, Psyche (in groups with Cupid, Jupiter, and a Bacchante), Cupid (several times, but never with Venus), Mercury, Hercules, Io, Euterpe, Paris, centaurs, and even a Bacchante-as-Autumn (his first life-size work) and a nymph and satyr. Of the relatively few mythological works that were finished and have survived, however, all except the fine *Flora* of 1853 (Newark) were completed before the *Orpheus*. From all this aspiration, only *Orpheus* emerged as an original and convincing achievement and made a personal statement.

The work was conceived after more than three years of arduous study and apprenticeship in Rome, during which time Crawford had drawn from the antique statues of the Capitoline and Vatican, from live nudes at the French Academy, and from corpses in the mortuary. His image of Orpheus entering the Underworld was executed with the passionate self-projection of someone who had written home concerning his move to Italy, "I know I am venturing much, it is what few have dared to do."⁶ The subject was taken from the tenth book of the *Metamorphoses* and the fourth *Georgic* of Vergil, although in Charles Sumner's promotional article, which was adapted for the official Athenaeum exhibition program, only Vergil—"the sweetest poet of antiquity"—was cited as the source, supplemented by a passage from the less-known Renaissance poet Poliziano.⁷ Crawford wrote to his

sister that he showed the moment when Orpheus, having tamed the monstrous Cerberus with the music of his lyre, "rushes triumphantly through the gates of hell."⁸ There was neither an antique nor a modern model for this scene; Crawford's choice was intended to be original and personal, and it was significant as a precedent both in what it included and what it avoided. The lyre—Apollo's gift—and the three-headed monster Cerberus (unfortunately comical both in his anatomy and in his music-induced sleep) together convey the allegorical theme of music's power over chaotic nature. This alone would be Orpheus's chief meaning in most later American works. The specific pose of Crawford's hero makes the work popularly appealing on even simpler grounds, since it is readily readable as a universal image that could be called *Searching*, without recourse to myth. Those who know the story can find further satisfaction in recognizing the lover rushing into the Underworld to recover his bride. Crawford "has presented the rare husband at the moment of entering hell," Catherine Maria Sedgwick wrote rather pointedly after viewing the statue in Rome.⁹ Like most Americans after him, Crawford preferred the image of the young and hopeful Orpheus over the grief-stricken man. Canova's early *Orfeo* is the antithesis of Crawford's: it shows the hero in a tortured baroque twist of the torso as he realizes that his backward look has lost him Eurydice forever. Crawford's preferred moment is that of initial success and high expectation.

But Crawford was not interested simply in his theme. As we by now realize, for most so-called literary sculptors (Story being exceptional), the theme is really a means to the true end. This subject, Crawford said, was "admirably adapted to the display of every manly beauty" and would be "clear of all extravagance in the movement, . . . as nearly as possible in the spirit of the ancient masters."¹⁰ In choosing a partially draped figure in motion, however, he has doubly distinguished his work from that of his modern master, Thorwaldsen, whose ideal male figures are persistently reposeful and always totally nude. In providing Orpheus with a cape Crawford obscured his nudity from the rear, but also fell into the danger of imitating the extravagantly swirling cloaks of Bernini's school. This, he particularly remarked, he would avoid by imitation of the gracefully flowing folds of antique drapery, such as falls from the left arm of the *Apollo Belvedere*.

In one of his "Letters from Rome" published in the *Knickerbocker*, George Washington Greene expressed full appreciation of the statue's narrative interest, but wrote at even greater length of the harmonies and symmetries of Orpheus's physical form. Its "beauties" had to be "of a different order" from those of the *Apollo*; while Orpheus was "endued" with "as large a portion of the divine spirit as ever was granted to mortal man," yet he was "the slave of human passions." Thus his beauty should be as near as possible to the "perfection" of the Greek divinities, "but still distinguished from it, by clear and definite lines." Greene obviously perceived Crawford's Orpheus as the representative Anglo-American young gentleman from a college preparatory school: "The frame is neither powerful, nor slight, but that well balanced medium, which belongs to health, and a perfect command of all the physical powers. His strength is not that of the arena, nor the bone and sinew of daily toil, but such as must gain by healthful exercise in the sunlight and open air. . . . The development of the muscles is carried just far enough." Greene also explained to Americans that sculpture was inevitably classical—the Greeks having

invented the "language" and provided "an appropriate term for every idea, a form of expression for every shade of thought, an ideal beauty for all the varieties of intellectual and physical power. . . . How different the beauty of the Apollo [is] from that of the Gladiator!"¹¹ Orpheus was the mean between these extremes of divine refinement and animal physicality. In him the beauty of Apollo was moderated to human (yet heroic) proportion, just as Apollo's divine genius was adapted to the experiences and needs of humans in a natural world. Crawford, in fact, stated that only the presence of Cerberus made it possible to distinguish his Orpheus from an Apollo, since "the attributes of lyre and wreath" belong to both.¹²

Although Orpheus's pose recalls that of certain antique running athletes, his body is a smaller version of the *Apollo Belvedere's*, both in its flat triangular chest with very slight separation of thorax from abdomen, and in smooth modeling of the limbs with little indication of tendons, sinews, or veins. In all this it adheres perfectly to what Winckelmann described as appropriate to the divine body, as opposed to the human. Thus the criticism of the sculptor-historian Lorado Taft early in this century—that *Orpheus*, while "well-proportioned," has an "effeminate and characterless" head and an unarticulated body "smoothed over" with "slight regard for anatomy"—merely echoes the criticism of the *Apollo Belvedere* that had by then become commonplace.¹³ The masculine types with highly articulated musculature that Taft preferred had been lamented as vulgarly realistic by Jarves when they had started appearing sixty years earlier. To the painter Thomas Hicks in 1859, Crawford's *Orpheus* had been "heroic manhood inspired by Genius," and to the young Charles Sumner in 1843, he possessed—like all Crawford's works—the "heaven-descended" air, "simple, chaste, firm, and expressive," of the ancients and of their modern successors Canova and Thorwaldsen, to whom now could be added, according to foreigners in Rome, Crawford the American. The *Orpheus* proved that "an American may rival Phidias," said an Englishman, adding, "How such a man can emerge from your back woods into the eternal city I cannot imagine." Sumner quoted such remarks at length, claiming that "the best judges" compared the *Orpheus* with the *Apollo*. A *Knickerbocker* note in 1841 reported that Thorwaldsen "esteems Crawford as his successor."¹⁴ When Thorwaldsen died in 1844, just as Crawford's fame was born with his *Orpheus*, the continuity of the ancient ideal and its westward transmigration seemed assured.

Appropriate as his *Orpheus* was, both as aesthetic demigod nature-tamer and as gentlemanly physical type, to serve as the vehicle for transferring the Greek ideal of beauty to America, Crawford had one worry about his reception: in spite of his cloak, he was nude. Crawford hoped that the beauty of Orpheus would itself be the strongest argument against "the breeches and cock'd hat taste for sculpture," for he meant his musician to be "an advocate for the beauty and purity of nature." Although he provided Orpheus with a small fig leaf, he feared the "maudlin fastidiousness" of "Sunday School mistresses" who would surely propose to make a shirt for him, just as the "old ladies" of Boston had offered diapers for Greenough's *Chaunting Cherubs*. "Many a hearty laugh have I heard in Europe at the expense of these dames and their tailoring specimens." Nevertheless, he could proudly say that "old Thorwaldsen has seen it and is satisfied." And Crawford had dreamed of an even higher approval. One night, when his clay model had first taken its shape in his

studio, he wrote to his sister that he saw it lit up occasionally in the dark corner of his studio by flashes of lightning. "This inanimate creation of mine" seemed to start to life, and the aspiring sculptor recalled the story of how Phidias had asked for a sign of approval for his Jove and saw it in the lightning. "Were we living in that age, or were ours the religion of the Greeks, I too might interpret the sign in my favor."¹⁵

For the present his own age seemed adequately receptive, and the priests of its new religion of Beauty were interpreting all signs in his favor. Sumner and Greene, with an enthusiasm engendered by watching the *Orpheus's* long gestation in Crawford's Roman studio, enlisted the aid of all the classicists of Boston—Felton, Everett, Ticknor, Longfellow, Hillard, and Allston—in preparing one of the warmest welcomes a work of art ever received in America. In the spring of 1844 it was unveiled in a building especially built for it on the grounds of the Boston Athenaeum, where it drew appreciative crowds. Nothing Crawford did was ever more acclaimed than this ideal image of beauty, courage, triumph, and eager expectation. In March 1858, four months after the sculptor had died famous, rich, and full of commissions, Hawthorne visited his studio in Rome and concluded that neither had he ever made anything better. Surveying all the works left behind, Hawthorne thought them mostly "common-places in marble and plaster, such as we should not tolerate on a printed page." Among them were certain other characters of American mythology: the ludicrously histrionic and dwarfish *Expulsion of Adam and Eve* (Boston Athenaeum) and the monumental *Equestrian Washington* for Richmond ("a very foolish and illogical piece of work"). Hawthorne then recalled seeing the *Orpheus* "long ago" in Boston. Crawford's premature death, he thought, had deprived the world of nothing of value; he had already "done his best, and done it early in life."¹⁶

That "best," however, had been gratefully heralded. Margaret Fuller was among those caught up in the preparatory publicity for the arrival of *Orpheus* in Boston. Evidently having seen the engraving of Crawford's early drawing of the work in the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* in May 1843 that accompanied Sumner's erudite commentary, she meditated on its relevance for "our own day and country." Struck by the coincidence of "the American, in his garret in Rome, making choice of this subject" while some of his countrymen "here at home" showed "such ambition to represent the character, by calling their prose and verse "'Orphic sayings'—'Orphics,'" she thought Orpheus must have special significance. She herself had reluctantly published Bronson Alcott's "Orphics" in the first issue of the *Dial* in 1840. Nothing had subjected that journal to greater ridicule, and Fuller now plainly stated that the "Orphic" poets had not "shown that musical apprehension of the progress of Nature through her ascending gradations which entitled them" to use the hero's name. In fact "their attempts are frigid, though sometimes grand; in their strain we are not warmed by the fire which fertilized the soil of Greece." Yet Orpheus himself is still relevant: "He understood nature. . . . He told her secrets in the form of hymns, Nature as seen in the mind of God. His soul went forth toward all things, yet could remain sternly faithful to a chosen type of excellence. Seeking what he loved, he feared not death nor hell; neither could any shape of dread daunt his faith in the power of the celestial harmony that filled his soul."

Orpheus was then something more than Greene's gentleman with genius, he was

a Transcendentalist. And the Transcendentalists were the avant-garde of America. "Reading" Crawford's sculpture, Fuller felt that it, more than the "Orphics," had caught "the state of things in this country." It showed "the seer at the moment when he was obliged with his hand to shade his eyes," a theme for which Fuller then composed a sonnet which begins "Each Orpheus must to the depths descend, / For only thus the Poet can be wise." The harmonizing, unifying, solacing, and transforming duties of the self-sacrificing poet-musician-lover were successively versified, with the conclusion that "If he already sees what he must do, / Well may he shade his eyes from the far-shining view." Fuller missed the point of the pose (Orpheus shades his eyes to see down into darkness), but she was well on her way to her own point, adapted from Sir Francis Bacon's contrast between Ulysses and Orpheus in relation to the Sirens. The "voluptuous song" of the Sirens was so enticing that Ulysses—knowing his own weakness—had had himself bound to the mast so that he might hear and understand the song without succumbing to it. "But Orpheus passed unfettered, so absorbed in singing hymns to the gods that he could not even hear those sounds of degrading enchantment." The perfection of Man, claimed Fuller, would arrive when men, like Crawford's Orpheus, unflinchingly faced their heroic challenge and, like Bacon's Orpheus, found in their ecstatic activity their resistance to the degradations of the flesh. Then in a brilliant (if somewhat confused) reversal Fuller found an application more particular to herself and to all women: "the time is come when Eurydice is to call for an Orpheus, rather than Orpheus for Eurydice." Claiming that the "idea of Man" had already been realized, "however imperfectly," more than that of Woman, Fuller yet evidently meant that Eurydice could through her own development be the instrument of an even greater freedom for Man. Facing the "far-shining" view of what lay before her, Woman would come to realize her potentialities for love, courage, and self-redemptive action. She could then summon Man from his own particular Hell.¹⁷

Fuller's highly idiosyncratic reading of Crawford's *Orpheus* seems to have stirred no responses. Others were content to see him as "The eternal type of constancy," as expressed by Dr. Parsons in his elegy on Crawford, "The Sculptor's Funeral":

Keen Orpheus, with his eyes
Fixed deep in ruddy hell,
Seeking amid those lurid skies
The wife he loved so well. . . .
Thou marble husband! might there be
More of flesh and blood like thee!

Parsons identified Crawford himself with Orpheus and declared that his body should have remained in the only place worthy of him:

Lay him with Raphael, unto whom
Was granted Rome's most lasting tomb;
For many a lustre, many an aeon,
He might sleep well in the Pantheon,
Deep in the sacred city's womb,
The smoke and splendor and the stir of Rome.¹⁸

The clergyman Samuel Osgood, to the contrary, emphasized the Western identity of Crawford, and an American meaning for his *Orpheus*, when he delivered an address before the New-York Historical Society in 1875 in honor of the gift to that institution of Crawford's *Indian Chief*. Pointing out that the third centenary of the death of Michelangelo was being celebrated just as the United States prepared for its first centennial, Osgood observed that Crawford's *America* atop the Capitol held out a fairer promise than Michelangelo's dome of St. Peter's in Rome, and his *Washington* in Richmond had a far nobler subject than the Medici commemorated in Michelangelo's tombs in Florence. Both Michelangelo and Raphael had made antiliberal uses of their art, whereas Crawford was the ally of liberty. Now America could play the role of the Roman Daughter and "give back the tide of life to her parent" in art, Italy.

Nowhere was this more evident than in the *Orpheus*. Osgood recalled that in George Washington Greene's commemorative discourse upon Crawford in 1857, he had said that while serving as American consul in Rome he had thought of the *Orpheus* as an image of Italy itself, "looking . . . into the underworld, and, like him, vainly trying to recall its cherished past, that lost Eurydice." But Crawford himself was also the American *Orpheus*, the emissary of the "Land of Hope" to the "Land of Memory," wishing to raise the dead in "Italy, that mausoleum of humanity." Crawford's vigorously youthful image contrasted with the "sterility" Osgood had observed in the work of the contemporary Italian Tenerani. Like Goethe, Crawford brought gothic blood to the classic ideal and thus settled "the question that sculpture is a modern art": It "allows the modern inward life to show itself with the antique strengths of form. Orpheus is a Greek and a Christian too, and he faces toward the Shades of Erebus with limbs trained in the palaestra and with a soul illuminated by the light that is not of this world. This work is a prophecy of our coming literature as well as art." Crawford had shown that the American alternatives need not be "spindly pietism" or "muscle and materialism"; "body and soul go together." At the moment of the gold rush to the west, Crawford's *Orpheus* had brought "some conspicuous help from the land of art to give America her true beauty before the world, and to lift her above the materialism that threatened her life."¹⁹

Whether for such reasons and with such effects or not, Orpheus continued to attract American artists over the next century, more than any other classical subject except Diana. From Rimmer and Story to the abstractions of Mary Callery (1951) and Richard Lippold (1962), at least twenty artists (including several immigrants) created over two dozen *Orpheuses*. During the same period Swiss, Swedish, German, Italian, and Polish sculptors, along with painters, poets, and filmmakers, were, of course, also attracted to the Orpheus theme, all with more or less seriousness and even grimness of symbolic intent. But I have found no American severed heads of Orpheus, lying upon his lyre, such as exist in French art. American thematic emphases, which naturally affect the treatment of this particular masculine form, are primarily three: the tamer of nature, the faithful lover, and the ecstatic musician. Consequently, works consist of nude-male-with-wild-animal or nude-male-with-female groups, or the isolated expressive figure. We may briefly consider the

first two groups, and look more particularly at two of the inspired musicians, created by sculptors for whom the experience of Rome predominated over Parisian training and whose other studies of the male nude serve to define their achievement of a golden mean in the Orpheus-Apollo type.

The first group really begins not with Orpheus, Apollo's son, but with Apollo's musical challenger, the audacious satyr Marsyas, whom Apollo eventually flayed alive. As painted in 1876 by Elihu Vedder in Rome (the first of three versions),²⁰ Vedder's *Young Marsyas* (fig. 153) may be seen as this artist's typically satyr-ic placement of himself at an angle to the Apollonian academic ideal. That ideal had been represented by his friend Frederick Leighton's early and misbegotten *The Triumph of Music* (1855-56), a much-publicized heroic image of Orpheus (playing a modern violin) for which Leighton's other friends, including Robert Browning and Harriet Hosmer, had had great hopes.²¹ Vedder, in competitive contrast, created his Marsyas as an unequivocal satyr by giving him a goat's body from the waist down. Squatting on the ground, Marsyas plays his long pipes to a crowd of attentive hares. He is himself half-animal.

Vedder's *Marsyas*, it has been suggested,²² may have been one influence—along with Gérôme—upon the *Orpheus* painted in 1890 by George de Forest Brush (fig. 154). It constituted a diversion from his French production of beautifully proportioned seminude American Indians before he turned to his next specialty (as a resident of Florence), neo-Renaissance *tondi* of his madonnalike wife and their children. Brush's *Orpheus*, seated upon the ground and clothed only in a laurel wreath and sandals, differs from Vedder's *Marsyas* in showing some loyalty to the academic ideal, yet his model has been painted with enough fidelity to make this Orpheus seem—in spite of his Roman nose—both primitive (hardly different from a musical Indian) and contemporary—rather tough looking, in fact. He strums with a dreamy and rather melancholy air upon a magnificent lyre that rises from his groin, while four charmed hares gaze up into his face. One thinks of Whitman's Messiah, who was both "hankering, gross" and "mystical, nude." In any case Brush's rabbit tamer was imagined not as the carrier of civilization but simply as the mystically natural man, one version of the Transcendentalist ideal. Yet the painting also conveys the amusement of a sophisticated artist depicting a merely instinctual brute—an attitude that would be further evident three decades later in the "classical" paintings of Bryson Burroughs, including his own *Young Orpheus*.

Two sculptors who envisioned Orpheus as the animal charmer were not satisfied with the relatively unsculpturesque forms of hares. John Gregory and Albert T. Stewart chose leopards and panthers (or at least panther cubs). John Gregory conceived the idea of his first *Orpheus* while a student at the American Academy in Rome in 1912-15. The lyricism of his several *Orpheuses* was initially restrained by the contingencies of geometrical design, since Gregory, like Manship before him, was influenced more by Archaic Greek work than by the Hellenistic icons that attracted earlier generations. By 1941 Gregory's realization of the concept had been substantially modified from the relieflike work of 1918, and a more muscular, mature, and monumental Orpheus controlled the behavior of two beasts rather than one (fig. 155). Yet the rigidity of frontal and profile composition—especially awkward in dancing panthers—remained,²³ and so far as an idea penetrated the form, it

Fig. 153. Elihu Vedder. *Young Marsyas Charming the Hares* (destroyed). ca. 1876. Oil on canvas. Photo from Archives of American Art.

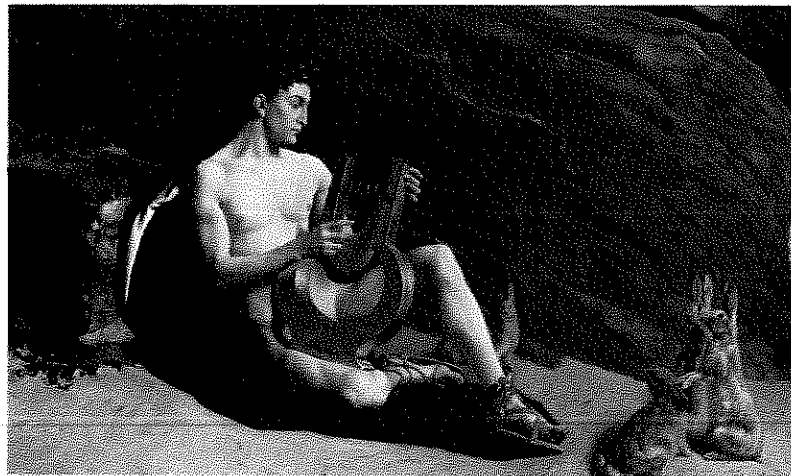
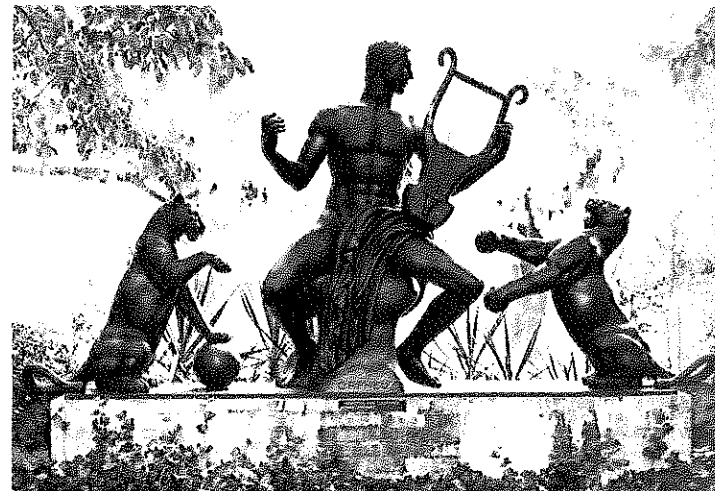


Fig. 154. George de Forest Brush. *Orpheus*. 1890. Oil on wood panel. 12 x 20". Collection of Jo Ann and Julian Ganz, Jr., Los Angeles.

Fig. 155. John Gregory. *Orpheus*. 1941. Bronze. H: 5'7". L: 9'7" at base. W: 1'6 3/4" at base. Brookgreen Gardens, South Carolina.



was that of a circus performer dangerously nude. The *Orpheus and Tiger* of Albert T. Stewart, a student of Manship's who eventually specialized in animals, is a statuette in which the musician's right-angled kneeling body merges with the ecstatically swooning couchant tiger against which he leans.²⁴

Among those who thought of Orpheus in relation to Eurydice was Manship himself, who turned to the theme twice, in 1927 and 1935. In 1954 he created an *Orpheus* alone. Like some of Gregory's versions (with equal reduction in power), Manship's are decorative statuettes, displaying symmetrical opposition of line, but not relating as narrative. *Eurydice* assumes the horizontal pose of a floating naiad, her arms and head raised in what may be either supplication or farewell, while *Orpheus* kneels on one leg and stretches the other behind him to create a long diagonal with his raised chest. He too looks upward like a Guido Reni saint and cuts short the gesture of his strumming arm to terminate the composition in a sharp vertical that echoes the horns of the lyre on the opposite side. Incoherence of subject is again the result of Manship's use of myth.

French-trained sculptors seem to have taken the relation between the lovers more seriously, finding it a challenge to genuinely expressive form. It was the subject of student work by Gutzon Borglum (still far from conceiving the colossal icons for Mount Rushmore's "Shrine of Democracy"), as it was for Bela Pratt. The forcible separation of the loving pair was theatrically interpreted by the Rinehart Scholar Joseph Maxwell Miller in the neobaroque style he learned in Paris under Verlet. A life-size *Orpheus and Eurydice* by Nathaniel Choate—amply embellished with oak branches, squirrels, and owls—is somewhat ambiguous: Orpheus is playing his lyre while a semirecumbent Eurydice may be arising from or falling back into her spectral existence.²⁵ But Americans generally left the tragic drama of reunion and separation to the French themselves, and Rodin in particular, who not only carved Orpheus and Eurydice emerging from the earth (literally from the rock) but also dared to show Orpheus in his fatal encounter with the Maenads. Coincidentally or not, immigrants to America preferred a happier Orpheus. Most notably, Jacques Lipchitz, the Paris-trained Lithuanian who came to America in 1941, called his work *The Joy of Orpheus* (1945), not "Orphée aux Enfers" or "Orphée Mort," like some of the fellow artists he left behind on a war-ravaged continent. Lipchitz wrote that the statuette expressed "the love of my wife," the two figures merging into the harp with grateful hands upraised.²⁶

William Rimmer seems to have been the first American after Crawford to conceive of Orpheus as an isolated figure. Uniquely among Bostonians, he declared that Crawford's statue was "one of the worst examples of modern art," since it typically failed to enhance "all male peculiarities" in the "masculine form." Yet in the next breath Rimmer condemned Ward's *Indian Hunter* for emphasizing "individual peculiarities" at the expense of the "ideal generalizations" required by "high art." In 1867 a British reporter who praised Rimmer's *Falling Gladiator* wrote that he was then "modelling, in the classic style, a full-length figure of ORPHEUS [singing against the Sirens], not unlike in conception to Raffaello's *Apollo contending with Marsyas*."²⁷ This work might have demonstrated Rimmer's attempt to resolve the two equally objectionable tendencies of Crawford and Ward, but its fate is unknown. An *Orpheus*, also unknown, is listed among the works of William Wetmore Story for 1883–84.

In 1885 John Talbott Donoghue, during the first of his two extended sojourns in Rome, created a wholly nude life-size figure called *The Young Sophocles Leading the Chorus after the Battle of Salamis* (fig. 156), which survives. In form and effect an *Orpheus*, the open-mouthed Sophocles holds high the lyre which he has just strummed in an expansive gesture. The critic Charles DeKay acclaimed the work in his *Art Review* in 1887,²⁸ reporting how Donoghue, after brief study in Paris, had returned to his native Chicago, where he was discovered and encouraged by the itinerant Oscar Wilde, and following more study in Paris with Falguière, had gone to Rome and created his *Sophocles* after reading E. H. Plumptre's work on the great tragedian. DeKay, recalling that Crawford was also of Irish ancestry, asserted that Donoghue "repeats, but with greater force and far more education in art to start with," Crawford's American "triumphs." Drawing a parallel between Donoghue and his subject similar to that we perceived earlier between Crawford and Orpheus, he noted that the young Sophocles is shown in his first great public performance, when the Greek nation was in ascendancy. "For the young American sculptor to pitch on Sophocles at this moment in his career showed judgment and boldness; it augured well for his future, provided he was justified in feeling within himself the power to materialize so beautiful a conception."

Of course, all this "would be little" for a sculptor if history had not justified the nude form. Fortunately, as Winckelmann had also happily recalled,²⁹ Sophocles had been the first Greek youth to perform entirely naked before the public, and what is more (DeKay observed), he had fulfilled the "ideal of beauty in a country and an age that found more to admire in the masculine than the feminine." DeKay's analysis of the qualities of Donoghue's *Sophocles* remarkably parallels the remarks of those who had admired Crawford's *Orpheus*. Just as Sophocles represented a mean between the sublime rudeness of Aeschylus and the popular polish of Euripides, so his physical development was also intermediate: "The muscular fabric is beautifully a mean between the athlete and the boy. Those arms and legs are the product of callisthenics. . . . That spare trunk belongs to youth which has not taken on the rounded muscles of manhood. . . . Nothing hides the perfection of that frame which the Greeks worshipped to the verge of folly." It is a form "closely allied to life, yet ideal," the symmetrical possession of a youth who won prizes for both wrestling and music. Quoting Plumptre, DeKay states that Sophocles "appeared unclothed, like a young Apollo, to be seen in all his grace and strength . . . , one in whom the image of purity and modesty had not yet been defaced." One is reminded of Sumner's interpretation of Crawford's *Orpheus* as a youth whose education had been equally well rounded.

Donoghue's *Young Sophocles* won first prize at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, and the sculptor was invited by citizens of Boston to create a life-size portrait of their current American hero, the boxer John L. Sullivan—a type quite distinct from *Sophocles*, certainly, but a heroic athlete in both the Irish and the Roman traditions, although possibly without honors in music. In addition Donoghue created an exotically bejeweled nude *Venus*, which fairly completed his classical credentials and indicated that by the 1890s—the period of the so-called American Renaissance in art and architecture—a sculptor could imagine that nude beauty was its own excuse for being. Yet DeKay had felt constrained to conclude his



Fig. 156. John Donoghue. *The Young Sophocles*. 1885. Bronze. 92½". The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Rogers Fund, 1927.



Fig. 157. Charles Henry Niehaus. *The Scraper (Athlete Using Strigil)*. 1883. Bronze. Brookgreen Gardens, South Carolina.

article in 1887 with the hope that the Irish-American community or others would support Donoghue in his classical bias. But they did not, and Donoghue committed suicide in Chicago in 1903 at the age of fifty, leaving behind plaster models of works never realized in marble or bronze.³⁰

The most classical and the last of all the American *Orpheuses* with a Roman origin was the heroic standing *Orpheus* (twenty-three feet high) completed in 1922 by Charles Henry Niehaus for the monument to Francis Scott Key at Fort McHenry (Baltimore). One of the best of the several nineteenth-century sculptors from Cincinnati, Niehaus had worked in Rome in the 1880s, when his accomplished but anachronistic life-size studies of nude athletes had excited local interest. He took the subjects not from mythology, which had previously served as some excuse (however poor) for nudity, but from realistic antique statues in Rome: a recently unearthed boxer placing the *caestus* (a protective device for the wrist) on his arm (Museo Nazionale delle Terme), and another athlete using the strigil to scrape away

oil and dirt from his thigh (Vatican). Here not even ideality of conception (as with Jupiter-Washington) could be pleaded. Only "history"—not the recent revolutionary history claimed for Powers's *Greek Slave* but simply ancient common custom—justified a greater nudity than contemporary sports figures, even boxers, provided. That seems to have been enough. The heftily built *Scraper* (fig. 157) was displayed amid the Roman grandeur of the 1893 exposition in Chicago, where it must have appeared quite in its place. That both of Niehaus's athletes, in their preoccupation with their own activities, show no self-consciousness about their calmly natural display of superb physiques, probably helped. Their physical form is after all what interested Niehaus and still interests all viewers, who yet need suffer no bold-faced return of gaze, and may (if they wish) chatter about the exotic athletic artifacts, just as they had about Harriet Hosmer's little satyrs while looking at her fauns.

The third male nude surviving from Niehaus's Roman period is a potbellied *Pan* who is also thoroughly absorbed—in his piping and his dancing. No beauty, and an exotic in himself, he needed no diverting accessory. Equally intent on a totally different activity is the colossal *Driller*, which Niehaus made at the turn of the century for a monument to industry in Titusville, Pennsylvania. But this kneeling man—no fisher boy or shepherd boy nor even a youth taking a swim, but a mature worker driving a stake into rock—is totally nude. Only his clearly understood status as allegory—a mode of existence that had previously permitted occasional seminudity among gods and goddesses—makes his nakedness acceptable. Yet it does seem to remain nakedness, not nudity, for the image of a beautiful physical form in this sort of muscular exertion inevitably suggests absurdly dangerous exposure. Men at hard labor are not athletes, singers, or gods.

All these male nudes by Niehaus—even the *Pan* in his mythological character—were preparations for the *Orpheus* in Maryland (fig. 158), which, however, as an ideal figure has less muscular—but by no means effete—proportions. Chosen from over one hundred submissions to honor the author of the national anthem, Niehaus's *Orpheus* represents public acceptance of the heroic male nude as something more than an enigmatic allegory crouching beneath a cornice. Relief in fact was expressed that instead of another prosaic portrait of an unfamiliar figure, America had been given a beautiful symbol of "primitive music."³¹ In a classical *contrapposto*, Orpheus plucks the lyre held on one hip and gazes outward and slightly upward—perhaps at a banner in Aurora's early light. The Americanization of Orpheus was now final, eighty years after Crawford's image had sailed from Rome. Niehaus's version is closer to his Roman athletes and American laborer than to Crawford's Apollino and may even possess some spirit of the *Pan*. But—with no Cerberus, panther, or Eurydice in sight—he could pass as an American Apollo, for he seems to make a proud and conscious display of his Greek male beauty. He is at least unequivocally the demigod of music, and one suspects that surely he is singing not "The Star-Spangled Banner" but the drinking song from which Francis Scott Key adapted it, "To Anacreon in Heaven."

APOLLO IN BOSTON

A year before the Apollonian Orpheus was unveiled at Fort McHenry, Apollo as himself had appeared in the rotunda of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, not once



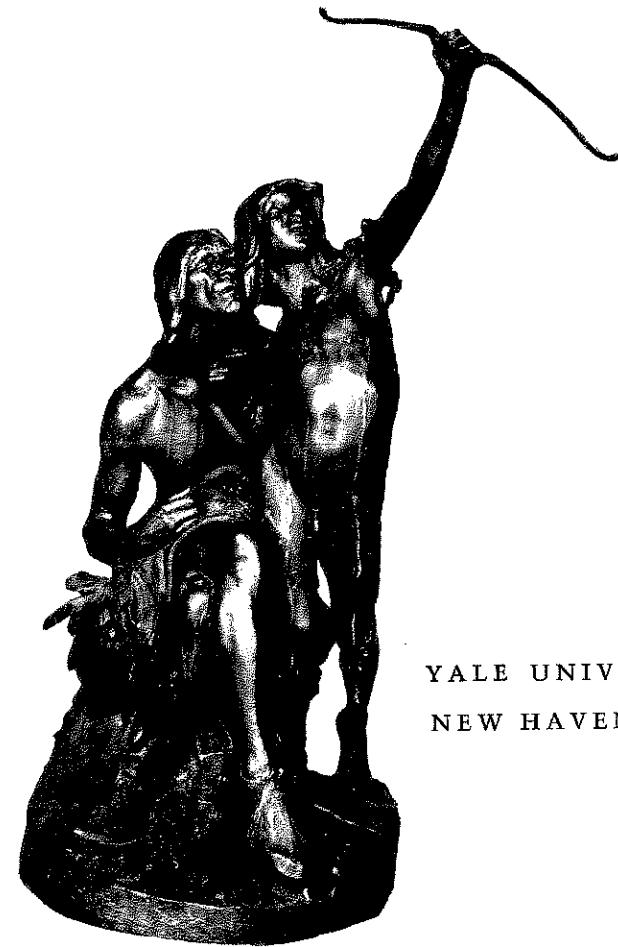
Fig. 158. Charles Henry Niehaus. *Orpheus and the Defenders of Baltimore: Francis Scott Key Monument*. 1922. H: 23'. Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine, Baltimore. Photo reprinted from National Sculpture Society Exhibition Catalogue, 1923.

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William L. Vance

AMERICA'S ROME

VOLUME ONE • CLASSICAL ROME



YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS
NEW HAVEN AND LONDON

Published with the assistance of the
Getty Grant Program

Title page illustration: Hermon Atkins MacNeil, *The Sun Vow*. Courtesy Art Institute of Chicago.

In an earlier version the essay on the Colosseum appeared in *Roman Images*, a volume of papers from the English Institute edited by Annabel Patterson and published by the Johns Hopkins University Press. An essay based on material in Chapter 5 appeared in *Augustan Age*.

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Designed by Jo Aerne and set in Trump type. Printed in the United States of America by Halliday Lithograph, West Hanover, Massachusetts.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Vance, William L.
America's Rome / William L. Vance.

p. cm. Includes bibliographies and indexes.
Contents: v. 1. Classical Rome — v. 2. Catholic and contemporary Rome.

ISBN 0-300-03670-1 (v. 1 : alk. paper). ISBN
0-300-04453-4 (v. 2 : alk. paper)

1. Arts, American—Italian influences. 2. Arts, Modern—19th century—United States. 3. Arts, Modern—20th century—United States. 4. Artists—Travel—Italy—Rome. 5. Art and literature—United States. 6. Rome (Italy) in art. 7. Rome (Italy)—Intellectual life—19th century. 8. Rome (Italy)—Intellectual life—20th century. I. Title.
NX503.7.V36 1989 88-20737
700'.973—dc19

The paper in this book meets the guidelines for permanence and durability of the Committee on Production Guidelines for Book Longevity of the Council on Library Resources.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Marisa DiVanno
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Gabriella Bovio Fanning
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Francesco Papa
Claudia Parolini
Robert Della Valle
Rodolfo Conti
Renzo and Dea Gallo
Anna and Pietro Calissano
Vincent Masucci
Nilo Checchi—
and to Charles

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