



Figure 1. Frederic E. Church, *The Heart of the Andes*, 1859.



Figure 2. Robert S. Duncanson, *Land of the Lotus Eaters*, 1861.

Joseph Ketner made the relevant connection, here, between Church's *The Heart of the Andes* and Duncanson's *paradisiacal paradox* in *Land of the Lotus Eaters*:

“The Cincinnati response echoed the tremendous praise the painting had already received in other cities. Church's mountainous, tropical landscape was expansive in conception and panoramic in size, containing a broad range of geological formation and exotic fauna. The painting was indicative of a shift among some artists toward exploring new territories and attempting to portray the vast expanse of the sublime wilderness that Americans assumed was their domain through Manifest Destiny. Duncanson certainly saw Church's great picture and, like the rest of the country, was overwhelmed by it. The painting reenergized him, and almost immediately he began painting a tropical landscape similar in size and conception. Inspired, Duncanson sought a historical theme in English Romantic literature. Again, he chose a paradisiacal subject, Alfred Lord Tennyson's 1832 poem “The Lotus Eaters.” These twin sources laid the foundation for the largest and most elaborate painting of his career.” (Joseph D. Ketner II, *The Emergence of the African-American Artist, Robert S. Duncanson (1821-1872)*, University of Missouri Press, 1994, p. 90.)

1- HOW DO YOU SOLVE DUNCANSON'S PARADISIACAL PARADOX?

By following Church's inspiration, Duncanson had gone further than simply applying his principle of paradoxical composition; he had also incorporated Leonardo da Vinci's principle of non-linear field perspective, as opposed to linear central perspective. For example, as a measure to ward off the British Ruskin empiricists of his day, Duncanson had tacked on the wall of his Cincinnati studio, for all visitors to see, a flyer which contained his guiding principle:

“The mere imitation of the form and colors of nature is not art, however perfect the resemblance. True art is the development of the sentiments and principles of the human soul – natural objects being the medium of illustration.”

In other words, landscapes do not represent natural sceneries; they are essentially states of mind and emotions, and this Leonardo principle was demonstrated quite beautifully in *Land of the Lotus Eaters*. By choosing slavery as the axiomatic subject of change for his painting, Duncanson, addressed the Civil War question in an extraordinarily subtle and ironic manner, because the war had not even begun when he started his painting. Ketner made the point: “As an African-American living on the border of slavery, Duncanson was consumed with the current political dilemma. In response, he returned to a historical subject and commented on the current civic strife

with the creation of his most ambitious historical landscape, *Land of the Lotus Eaters* (1861).” (Joseph Ketner, Op. Cit., p. 84).

After viewing Church’s *The Heart of the Andes*, Duncanson stated: “I have made up my mind to paint a great picture.” This declaration had true Promethean substance to it, because, throughout the 1850’s, American artists such as Church and Bierstadt had succeeded in going beyond European history paintings by using the polemical Socratic method of provoking the spectator into participating in the creative process of the artist. However, no other American artist had ever gone where Duncanson was about to go. The Hudson River School painters had created a unique form of American Art whose purpose was to provoke a change in the state of mind of the spectator, but none of them had dared go against public opinion in such a truthful and beautiful manner as Duncanson did. What Duncanson decided to do was to go directly against entertainment as the accepted form of oligarchical art.

As Frederick Schiller warned his students during his Jena lectures on *Universal History*, a true artist always has to choose between doing “studies for bread” and doing “studies for truth.” Since the truthfulness of universal change itself had become the creative motivation of the Hudson River School, Duncanson chose to take that risk in a very unique way. Moreover, Duncanson’s situation was even more risky than that of other artists because of his social status as a black man. Therefore, he had to muster double the courage in any cultural undertaking. As Ketner put it: “It was bold for an African-American artist to aspire to such a high stature in the white art world. And he did so with determination.” (Ketner, Op. Cit., p. 112.) And I might add, he did so, with a masterful understanding of the revolutionary Leonardo and Church method of classical artistic composition.

Thomas Cole had inspired Duncanson in his early period; however, clearly, Duncanson surpassed his predecessor’s didactic form of moralizing through allegories. Duncanson reached for a higher principle of expression by reinventing the function of metaphor in the plastic art domain. This meant that the new plastic use of the metaphor was required to revive a moment of past history that could effectively reflect in the minds of his contemporary observer, the truth of what had to be changed in the present, in order to determine a better future. Duncanson was consciously painting the universal idea of the difference between man and animal, in the simultaneity of eternity. Therefore, his generosity was not guided from the past, but from the future. This was an extremely important subject to address in that specific period of American history, both socially and politically, because it was during the 1860’s and 70’s that the most decisive efforts to eradicate the African slave trade had also been organized in Europe, especially around the efforts the French political leadership of Jules Ferry, and Charles Freycinet in collaboration with African Bishop, Charles Lavigerie, in French North Africa. This was also the difficulty that Ketner was pointing at when he reported:

“After the period of intense creativity and productivity, from 1857 through 1859, Duncanson must have confronted an impasse of unknown dimensions, perhaps due to personal social, or political problems. Indicative of this difficulty

is the fact that no major landscape paintings can be dated from the year 1860. Duncanson's latent artistic energy was not reignited until, in November, Frederic Edwin Church opened an elaborate display of his huge South American masterpiece *The Heart of the Andes* (1859) at the Pike's Opera House in Cincinnati." (Ketner, Op. Cit., p. 89.)

This was the critical moment when Duncanson discovered how to address the future of mankind and the mission he had to undertake in order to shape it. It was the polemical method of Church, with respect to the spectator and the universal quality of enthusiasm of his "heroic landscape" that pulled Duncanson out of the rut and provided him with the necessary inspiration to successfully fulfill his project of shaping the future culture of America. Duncanson had applied the principle of universal history that Frederick Schiller had advocated in his Jena lectures. For Schiller, Universal History does not proceed from the past down to the present, but in the other direction, from the present up to the past. What the question of Universal History comes down to is the reversal of the ordinary course of generating historical events: changes in human history do not come from the past, but from the future. For example, nothing in past history can explain the American Revolution. The characteristics of a higher manifold do not exist in the past, and, therefore, cannot proceed from a previous lower manifold. So, the question is: how do you select a past historical event, prompted from the future, in order to change the present? That was Duncanson's question. In that sense, Universal History is nothing but the domain of changing the present course of events by means of what LaRouche had identified as the causal function of time reversal. This time reversal function is how Duncanson's historical mission got to be chosen and determined. He was looking only and uniquely toward the future, because that was where the solution to his problem was.

Once that future ideal of man and of society had taken hold of him, then, Duncanson looked for something in the past that would be suitable for the necessary cultural change he was attempting to realize in the present. He found the perfect paradox for the spectator to grapple with, and to solve: the 1823 poem by Tennyson, *The Lotos-Eaters*, in which was described the scene where, in Homer's *Odyssey*, Ulysses' men had been seduced into artificial bliss and made captive of an imaginary and artificial paradise. That was the most effective polemical metaphor that Duncanson could ever find for a great picture. It had the universal historical character that was required to reflect on the historical significance of the American Revolutionary War, a contemporary poem that reflected the complacency of warriors after a Greek war effort, and the slavery issue over which the British Empire was about to wage another war against the United States, in the hope of destroying that country's very existence. From the vantage point of that historical specificity, Duncanson had dressed his *paradisiacal paradox* with a cultural mantle that exhibited several deep penetrating folds which are now necessary to look into.

The first fold was found in Tennyson's poem, which reads, partly, as follows:

The Lotos- Eaters

[...] “A land of streams! Some, like a downward smoke,
Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn did go;
And some thro’ wavering lights and shadows broke,
Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below.
They saw the gleaming river seaward flow
From the inner land; far off, three mountaintops,
Three silent pinnacles of aged snow,
Stood sunset flushed; and dewed with showery drops,
Up-clomb the shadowy pine above the woven copse.”

The charmed sunset lingered low adown
In the red West; through mountain clefs the dale
Was seen far inland, and the yellow down
Bordered with palm, and many a winding vale
And meadow, set with slender galingale.
A land where all things always seemed the same!
And round about the keel with faces pale,
Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,
The mild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters came.” [...]

Duncanson projected this narrative onto his contemporary political situation of the United States. The scene depicted Ulysses being welcomed by the natives bearing their narcotic lotus flowers. When the Greek sailors ate those blissful plants, they all became intoxicated and never wanted to leave such a paradise. They had cut themselves from their past because they had forgotten their future. Ten days after their victory of the Trojan War, the patriotic soldiers had become forgetful about their purpose for returning to Greece. Their original civilizing purpose had been lost. In fact, by representing this paradisiacal landscape, as a false escape from the reality of patriotic duty, Duncanson was intervening against the political complacency that the American South had found itself in, just prior to the Civil War.

Duncanson had made the decision to work with only this future purpose in mind. If the future of America were not the only focus to be fixated on, and if he were to be unsuccessful in reviving the original intent of the American Revolution through this artistic form, then, there would no longer be an America. If the Southern aristocratic outlook were to prevail, then the United States would lose its unity of purpose and would be destroyed.



Figure 3. Robert S. Duncanson, *Land of the Lotus Eaters*, 1861. Detail of Ulysses' sailors accepting the blissful plants.

The second fold included a series of revealing soft lights and late afternoon shadows creating dream-like waves of monochromatic reddish slow moving rhythms across the canvas, ironizing over the sleepy mood of Tennyson's verse, and resonating in rounded brush strokes much like the onomatopoeic series of "s" and "f" sounds, that the British poet used to sedate his reader with. Thus, "rolling a slumberous sheet of foam. They saw the gleaming river seaward flow." The effect of the Duncanson picture, however, is not an imitation of the poem, but an ironic inversion of it. The effect is very similar to the effect of Rembrandt's famous *Aristotle contemplating the Bust of Homer*, which Lyn had often identified as *The Bust of Homer contemplating Aristotle*.

The blindness of Tennyson's "mild-eyed melancholy" state of stupor suddenly surges as an insight for the benefit of the spectator's mind's eye scrutinizing Duncanson's landscape: if sedation were what Tennyson had in mind to impose on his unsuspecting reader, sedation was not what Duncanson had intended for his observer. It was the opposite. This is not the manipulative Aristotelian method of imitation; this is the Socratic method of discovering thyself. Here, Duncanson showed his total disagreement with Thomas Cole's suggestion of using art as a "...veil of tender beauty over the asperities of life." Duncanson had made the decision to use art as a truthful creative process, which could only be realized when the spectator discovered how to solve his *paradisiacal paradox*.

Ketner identified Duncanson's moment of keen irony in a third fold which expressed the historical specificity of the American Civil War, when he stated:

“Begun in December of 1860, when the Civil War seemed imminent, and completed in May 1861, after the commencement of the hostilities, the painting depicts white soldiers resting on the banks of a river in a tropical landscape while being served by a train of dark-complexioned natives. The tropical landscape can be equated with the South, where slaves wait on their masters, the soldiers. The narcotic-induced apathy of Ulysses’ soldiers reflects a contemporary criticism that the South had grown complacent and dependent on slave labor to support its economy and luxurious standard of living. Behind the veil of the romantic charm of exotic paradisiacal scenery, Duncanson decried the life-style of the slaveholding society and predicted a decade of war and a decade of recovery for the nation at a crossroad.” (Ketner, Op. Cit., p. 91.)

To show you how the infinitesimal angle of that third fold reflects two incompatible opposite views, depending on whether each one is perceived from an American or a British angle, consider that, while American patriots viewed Duncanson’s painting as a powerful statement in the spirit of national unification of Manifest Destiny, the British aristocracy viewed the same picture as a romantic yearning for an American earthly paradise, and a defense of slave ownership. The difference here, if the incursion into a different domain may be permitted, is like the Pythagorean difference between an incommensurable number and a rational number, such as it might appear in a 3,4,5 right angle triangle. The hypotenuse 5, of such a triangle whose two right angle sides are respectively 3 and 4, looks like a rational integer, but it is not. As a number, 5 is an incommensurable algebraic number!

This may serve as an example for identifying the crucial difference between the oligarchical hereditary principle of no change, and the Republican time reversal principle of change. The point is that in history, nothing significant, that is axiomatic, ever changes from the past to the future, but always from the future to the past. The same process seems to apply to mathematical magnitudes: algebraic numbers cannot be derived from rational integers, but rational integers may be derived from the higher algebraic domain. Similarly, algebraic numbers can be derived from the transcendental domain, but not the other way around. Again, the difference is incommensurable and the numbers can be generated from one direction, but not from the other. The idea is to see how this also applies to the domain of classical artistic composition as a dynamic form of expressing Universal History. Thus, the question: what is the characteristic function of classical artistic composition that makes it possible for a change to be generated only from the future, as opposed to other types of changes that can only be generated from the past?

Let’s take this analogy. The change between an ellipse and a circle is not of the same order as the change between living and non-living processes. However, both of these types of incommensurable changes are measurable by proportionality. So, the idea is to discover what differences emerge between them when they are considered from the vantage point of the principle of proportionality in Universal History. And so, by discovering such differences, one should be able to discover what must be taken into account for generating them. Again, if we take the differences in axiomatic change

between rational, algebraic, and transcendental numbers, for instance: are such differences of the same domain of incommensurability as the differences of change between the a-biotic, biotic, and cognitive phase spaces of our physical universe? In the domain of artistic composition, the question is analog: are *The Heart of the Andes* and *Land of the Lotus Eaters* of the same order of incommensurability? Are there different types of artistic incommensurability, as there exist different types of mathematical incommensurability? These are only a few of the questions that this work of Duncanson raised.

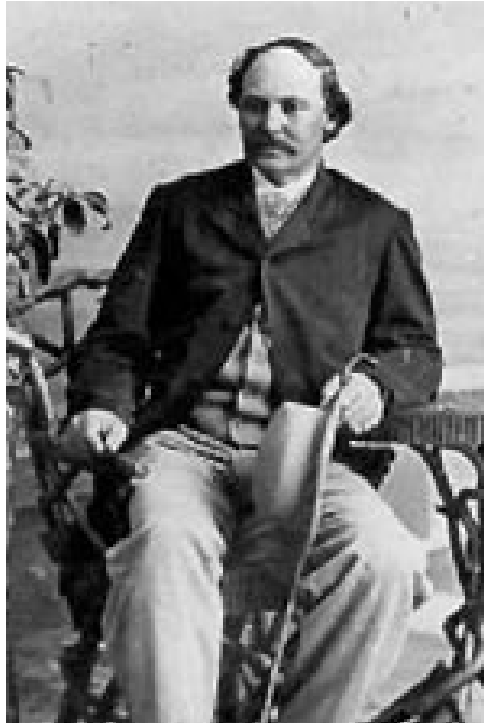


Figure 4. Robert Scott Duncanson, 1864.

Duncanson's panoramic view captured the same time-spatial expanse as Church's "great picture" did; with a mirror image of snow-capped mountains in the background, a river slowly cascading down to a tropical middle ground, and a calm basin slowly flowing toward the sea in the foreground. These a-biospheric and biospheric domains reflect the same universal physical principle of artistic composition that Church had captured with respect to the noospheric Cosmos of Humboldt. However, Duncanson's treatment of the Greek classical irony, through the prism of Tennyson's poem, took over the scenery and became the dominating noospheric aspect as opposed to the more discrete noospheric function of the Church painting. Duncanson had nature wear the mantle of a very unique metaphor refracting a political crisis of world historical magnitude, while Church did not use such a powerful metaphor. Nevertheless, even if the noospheric *paradisiacal paradox* of the *Land of the Lotus Eaters* overwhelmed the scenery and purposefully took over the entire attention of the spectator, it portends to the

same sublime quality of Manifest Destiny that is reflected in both paintings. That was also the reason why Duncanson wanted to further follow Church in his footsteps by having his *Land of the Lotus Eaters* tour the United States, Canada, and England; just as Church had circulated *The Heart of the Andes* for the past year-and-a-half in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. Thus, Duncanson considered the two great pictures as if they belonged to the same order of incommensurability.

The response of the Cincinnati newspapers to *Land of the Lotus Eaters* implicitly recognized that fact and was the best response that any artist could hope for from a newspaper. In its advertisement for the exhibition of the painting, the *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer* wrote that it was “one of the finest pictures that R. S. Duncanson, the artist, has yet produced” and that it was “beyond question a chef d’oeuvre of art.” The Duncanson painting was displayed at the same Pike’s Opera House where Church’s *The Heart of the Andes* had been displayed, a year earlier. The impact of both Church and Duncanson, had successively had on Cincinnati art lovers was a landmark in this American Cultural Revolution. There was no negative coverage in all of the Cincinnati newspapers. The most significant coverage was the *Daily Cincinnati Gazette*, which reported:

“ Mr. Duncanson has long enjoyed the enviable reputation of being the best landscape painter in the West, and his latest effort cannot fail to raise him still higher in the estimation of the art loving public. He has not only wooed, but won his favorite muse, and now finds ample repayment for the labor of a lifetime, in the achievement of a more brilliant success than has attended most of his compeers. It did not escape the notice of the public that *Land of the Lotus Eaters* was drawn directly from Church’s *The Heart of the Andes*, which had taken the city by storm only a year earlier.” [...] “And the *Enquirer*, also relating to *The Heart of the Andes*, exhorted the public to come back, because ‘Duncanson’s *Land of the Lotus-Eaters* should not be allowed to leave the city without an inspection by those who were so enthusiastic in their praise of the former picture.’” (Ketner, Op. Cit., p. 92.)

Duncanson’s plan was to have *Land of the Lotus Eaters* be accompanied on this tour by another of his “great pictures”, *Western Tornado*, (1861), which provided a dramatic contrast to the first. Duncanson’s idea was to shake the viewer out of his complacency and bring him to recognizing the two contrasting views of the Civil War conflict: the paradox of the slave-owner gentile southern gentry and the violence of war. However, for reasons that have not been made public, the intention of Duncanson appears to have failed to be properly recognized. Ketner noted: “As opposed to the paradisiacal prophecy of *Lotus Eaters*, *Western Tornado* was painted during the heat of the war and represents the mass destruction that accompanies war. Unfortunately, the critics and press did not recognize the political significance of this pair of paintings, missing the African-American’s veiled commentary on the brutality of slavery and war.” (Ketner, Op. Cit., p. 93) On the other hand, it is possible that the critics did see the significance of Duncanson’s revolutionary treatment only too well, and chose not to acknowledge its axiomatic significance. This first negative reaction was carrying the warning foreshadow of another more significant and darker cloud.

2- THE DISCOVERY THAT KEPT DUNCANSON OUT OF TORONTO.

After exhibiting the two “great pictures” in Cincinnati during June of 1861, Duncanson then brought his two “great pictures” to Toronto, Canada, and exhibited them in a downtown studio where, as Bierstadt and Church had done in their New York City studio, he charged 25 cents for admission. There should have been enough cultural interest, there, to make the exhibition a success among the Canadian population. This was for Duncanson an opportunity to test his newly created polemical method on a foreign audience, and to evaluate their cultural appreciation. However, Ketner reported something about an “accidental circumstance,” which he did not identify, and which resulted in the fact that not a single review appeared in the Toronto newspapers inviting the public to the exhibition. Very few people turned up, and the exhibition was a disaster. What happened? Why did the Toronto media ignore Duncanson?

Perhaps the political intervention of Duncanson on British territory may have caused too much of a sting for the British oligarchy that controlled Canada to contend with. But why? What was so outrageous in that painting that the Toronto British oligarchy did not wish to make public? Since Toronto was also a known center of anti-Union activities during the American Civil War, they might have remembered that Duncanson had also been financed by the American abolitionist Congressman, Nicholas Longworth, who had commissioned him to paint a series of eight murals in his Cincinnati Belmont mansion before sending him to study Art in Europe through the sponsorship of the Anti Slavery League, in 1854. As a matter of fact, a number of Cincinnati abolitionists such as Professor Richard Sutton Rust I, and Congressman Longworth, of whom Duncanson made portraits, were financially supporting Duncanson’s courageous international itinerary and polemical artistic revolution. This was a rare occurrence where *art for bread* and *art for truth* was made to coincide. So, with this added intelligence, there is a need, here, to look back a little deeper into the first fold of the *paradisiacal paradox* mantle.

The more profound irony of *Land of the Lotus Eaters*, and possibly discovered by the British in Toronto, was that Duncanson had turned Tennyson’s poem completely on its head. Lord Tennyson had been a very serious and pompous British racist when he wrote:

“And round about the keel with faces pale,
Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,
The mild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters came.”

There was nothing “melancholic” about Duncanson’s polemical approach against slavery. Indeed, it probably did not escape anyone among the British aristocracy of

Toronto that the content of Tennyson's poem, which was quoted in the exhibition flyer, was totally racist and pro-slavery. Witness the following admission, a few verses below:

And sweet it was to dream of fatherland,
Of child, and wife, and slave; but evermore
Most weary seemed the sea, weary the oar,
Weary the wandering fields of barren foam.
Then some one said, 'We will return no more';
And all at once they sang, "Our island home"; [...]

Since it was the British-run slave trade that was the source of the tragic American strategic situation, and every top Canadian leader knew that quite well, Duncanson had chosen Tennyson precisely for that polemical reason. It was also the reason why he wanted to travel to Canada and to England and raise the consciousness of people with his "great pictures." Duncanson had successfully turned Tennyson's racist poem to his advantage and to the advantage of the black people from America and from around the world. Duncanson had Tennyson boxed in. The British probably read Duncanson's message as saying: "Come and see the larger than life-size-truth about Tennyson for only 25 cents!"

However, as a result of this probable British-Canadian oligarchical intervention, Duncanson was forced to cancel his trip to England, and left his two "great pictures" in Canada, where they remained hidden for three years. Back in his Cincinnati studio, Duncanson started to work on a third "great picture" *Prairie Fire* (1862), which he was planning to tour Europe with, but which had also mysteriously disappeared and has remained unseen to this day. Duncanson's *Land of the Lotus Eaters* later became featured in Montreal with Church's *The Heart of the Andes* in the photographic portfolio of the Canadian artist and photographer, William Notman.

It is worth noting that Duncanson enjoyed intervening to force the British aristocracy out in the open, including the duchess of Sutherland, who had been given a painting of Duncanson's, and who had gone as far as disguising herself as an anti-slavery activist. In 1863, however, Montreal art lovers gave Duncanson a tremendous reception, so much so that the artist decided to live there, for a period of two years, during which time, his influence was so strong that he was able to assist in the creation of a Canadian landscape school, with followers such as the two Canadian artists, C. J. Way and John A. Fraser. In 1865, Duncanson finally departed for the British Isles with his great pictures, as he had originally planned, and traveled in the company of two Canadian artists, Allan Edson and C. J. Way.

Duncanson first toured *Lotus Eaters*, *Western Tornado*, and his *Ottawa River, Chaudieres Falls*, in Dublin, then in Glasgow. In early 1866, he presented his "great pictures" to the London population, where the critics gave it an excellent review. One London review stated: "America has long maintained supremacy in landscape art; perhaps, indeed, its landscape artists surpass those of England: certainly we have no

painter who can equal the works of Church; and we are not exaggerating if we affirm that the production under notice may compete with any of the modern British school. Certainly... this painting (*Land of the Lotus Eaters*) may rank among the most delicious that Art has ever given us, but is also wrought with the skill of a master in all of its details.” (*Art Journal*, (London), 1865, and 1868.) The Promethean qualifier “wrought with the skill of a master” did not go unnoticed, and Duncanson was very happy with the London response. He had succeeded in realizing his most-cherished dream; that of replicating the Church polemical method of classical artistic composition, and of having it recognized in England, Canada, as well as in the United States. But there remained one last giant step to take in order for Duncanson to solve the *paradisiacal paradox*.

While in England, Duncanson succeeded, through the good services of his Canadian photographer friend, William Notman, in arranging a visit with Alfred, Lord Tennyson himself, at his home on the Isle of Wight. Duncanson’s purpose was not aimed at a confrontation, but at attempting to have Tennyson resolve the *paradisiacal paradox* of artistic composition. This willful decision, in a different way, was the equivalent of Benjamin Banneker’s writing a letter to Thomas Jefferson, inviting him to free his own slaves. So, as Banneker did, Duncanson was not reacting from the past condition of slavery of his people, but from the future condition of freedom for universal man. However, there is a higher domain of resolution for this paradox.

By accomplishing this historical deed, Duncanson was restoring to the domain of plastic artistic composition a missing historical function, which had been, since the fifteenth century, performed by classical musical composition. Duncanson restored, with the inspiration of Church, the proper emotional bond that had always linked art to science since Leonardo da Vinci. Thus, once again, the plastic form of classical artistic composition played the role of a subsuming bridge between the artistic and scientific domains; a bridge that mathematics had, with the notable exceptions of Leibniz, Gauss, Riemann, and Einstein, failed to hold up properly with respect to physical science. This is the reason why, as Lyn always said, classical artistic composition must supercede mathematics in physics.

Addressing Duncanson as “one of his Canadian kinsmen,” since his father was a Scottish-Canadian, Tennyson explicitly went round about his black origin, and his American citizenship, to welcome him in his home, with a stiff upper lip and a polite remark as if to distance himself from the true intention of his painting: “Come whence it may,” said Tennyson, “your landscape is delightful; and though not quite my lotus land, is a land in which one loves to wander and linger.” (*Montreal Herald*, February 8, 1864.) His words were sedated and guttural, as if he had a lotus leaf caught in his throat. On the other hand, a Cincinnati abolitionist, Moncure D. Conway, who was with Duncanson in London at the time, sent back an article for the *Cincinnati Weekly Gazette* of November 24, 1865, in which he reported about Duncanson’s audience with Tennyson. Conway looked at the meeting from a different angle. He reported with the appropriate irony: “Think of a Negro sitting at the table of Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Tennyson, Lord and Lady of the Manor, and Mirror of Aristocracy, and so forth...”

Ketner concluded his report on the Duncanson tour of England by noting that all of his “great pictures” had disappeared into private European collections and were no longer accessible to the public at large. I must add that the world is, indeed, thankful for Ketner’s biography of Duncanson. Thanks to him, Duncanson was revived from more than a century of total obscurity. Ketner summarized the situation as follows:

“Only one of the “great pictures” that the artist took with him to England from Canada is currently known to reside in a European collection, *Land of the Lotus Eaters* (Collection of His Royal Majesty, the King of Sweden). *Western Forest* was also discovered in a European collection, and today has returned to its city of origin, having been acquired by a private collector in Cincinnati. The other seven-foot paintings – *Western Tornado* (1862), *Prairie Fire* (1863), *Niagara* (1863), and *Oenone* (1863) – remain unlocated and may still be extant, hidden in the private collections of Europe.” (Ketner, Op. Cit., p. 155.)

So, the reader should not wonder why Duncanson’s work is little or not known to him, today. The truth of the matter is that very few of Duncanson’s great works have been accessible to the public. Whether the decision to bury Duncanson was made in Toronto or in London is irrelevant, the British and other European oligarchies have done a very effective job at eradicating Duncanson from the map of the artistic world by chaining his works to the walls of their castle dungeons. They have given him the Promethean treatment by hiding his fire from the general population. No one goes to the British oligarchy and tells them, in their face, that Americans have better ideas than they have, and especially not on the subject of irony. The general reaction in the private Toronto and London clubs must have been: “How dare this American, and a black one at that, bring the fire of knowledge to the British people? By George! Doesn’t he know that we are the reincarnation of Olympian gods? ”

Be that as it may, in the end, it does not really matter what the British racists were thinking. Duncanson had demonstrated the superior method of American republican ideas with respect to classical artistic composition. He had shown that every human being was able to participate in the great work of immortality of the human species, that is, in the agapic work for the benefit of others. Thus, as long as there are courageous individuals like Robert Scott Duncanson who dare defy the arrogant Olympian Zeus, wherever he may be perched, and who challenge his oligarchical powers with the superior weapons of truth and beauty, then, the power of the classical American culture shall endure and true freedom shall ring.

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