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Review of *In the Remington Moment* by Stephen Tatum

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In the Remington Moment. By Stephen Tatum. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010. xviii + 252 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$55.00.

Stephen Tatum's study is motivated by two objectives. One is to read Remington's painterly gestures in the light of their production. His second takes up a question Brian Dippie posed a decade ago when reflecting on the lack of critical and academic respect that dogs western art. Can the work of an artist like Remington—nostalgic even in his time—be considered as more than a relic in ours? Might it still have an affecting presence a century after Remington's passing? Tatum's book is a palpable affirmation.

Tatum examines four nocturnes completed late in Remington's career. Influenced by recent projects such as *Frederic Remington: The Color of Night* (2003), edited by Nancy Anderson, Tatum traces thematic contours across Remington's career; he engages the illustrator's struggle for artistic recognition; and he shows the artist grappling with the emergent attention to the medium as the world

of his subject succumbed to modernity. Each painting receives a chapter-length treatment and is identified with one of the classical elements to give the book a mythopoetic shape. Each chapter, divided into four or five subsections, suggests a fourfold approach: to treat the social and biographical details that bear on a particular painting; to offer a close, formalist analysis of the painting-as-text; to suggest broader continuities a painting might share with other aspects of Remington's work, or the work of other artists of his day; and to amplify these components in a symbolic interpretation, one faintly influenced by poststructural psychoanalysis.

The "moment" metaphor that threads through the book suggests Stuart Hall's encoding and decoding model commonly applied in media studies. In Tatum's hands, it allows him to move between discussions of Remington's moment of production, the narrative moments conveyed in the paintings themselves, and the various moments of their reception from Remington's time to ours. Tatum extends this metaphor to the ritualistic and performative: particular paintings are often liminal or "threshold" moments, rituals or mimetic reenactments that draw a viewer into a rite of passage, the betwixt and between states that mark and celebrate the edges separating day and night, animal and human, life and death.

Tatum writes in a layered, painterly way. Often starting from discursive examples (short fiction, Remington's prose, or scholarly sources from Georg Simmel to Jean-Louis Schefer), he builds the complexity of his interpretation through the resonance of particular phrases. It is the translucence between layers, signaled by phrases like "which is to say," that lets the reader experience Tatum's and even Remington's thinking. This style of writing allows Tatum to note common indictments directed at western art—its representational values, its nostalgia, its imperial and gendered gaze in treating First Nations peoples and wildlife subjects—as he confronts or rides around them.

Two qualities of Remington's paintings hold Tatum's attention: their value as alle-

gories of looking, and their rendering of the artist's "western American thanatopsis" that let Remington negotiate "the hard truth of ceaseless change and transformation." A reader may disagree with how Tatum deploys visual evidence to support an interpretation, but not before conceding that Remington's paintings are able to stand up to, even call for, sustained, contemporary critical engagement.

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