

**Canadian girls in London:
negotiating home and away in the British World at the turn of the twentieth
century**

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August 2011

A thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the ways in which Canadian women artists who lived as expatriates in Britain managed multiple and often competing ideas about home in their writing and artwork in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Focusing on a small group of professional, white, English-Canadian painters, including Emily Carr, Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes, Mary Alexandra Bell Eastlake, Helen McNicoll, and Frances Jones, I reveal links between Canada and the greater British Empire that have tended to be lost in nationalist art history narratives. Though well-known and respected during their lifetimes as successful professional artists who pursued international careers, Canadian women of the pre-WWI period have since been almost exclusively studied through the narrow lens of the ideology of separate spheres. Without dismissing the very real restrictions that women did face because of their gender, I maintain that this distinction between public and private neglects the colonial context in which white Canadian women lived and worked. Indeed, the nineteenth-century cult of middle-class domesticity and the era of high imperialism went hand in hand: “home,” the personal space of the family, and “home,” the social space of a nation, were twinned in the discourse of empire, both signifying a bounded, secure, and racialized space of belonging, safely separate from the outside world. Indeed, the maintenance of this strict division between “home” and “away” was one of the structuring fictions of imperialism. By insisting on the importance of a consideration of the specificity of the experience of artists like Carr, Forbes, Eastlake, McNicoll and Jones as not just women, but as *white* women, and even more specifically, as white women working within the context of British imperialism, my work pushes at the boundaries of the now well-established framework of white feminist art history, which has overwhelmingly tended to shy away from questions of race and empire. Through an examination of primary sources such as letters, travel diaries, autobiographies, and sketchbooks, and a close analysis of visual representations of motherhood, domestic interiors, and literary and historical subjects, I argue that both senses of home were met with a deep ambivalence, that the boundaries between home and away were permeable, and that the global public and domestic private were, in fact, intertwined and mutually constitutive. By dismantling these boundaries and examining the networks that stretched across the Atlantic and throughout the English-speaking world, I situate Carr, Forbes, Eastlake, McNicoll, and Jones within the context of what has come to be called the “British World.”

Résumé

Cette thèse examine les façons dont les femmes artistes canadiennes, en tant qu'expatriées en Grande-Bretagne, traitaient des idées multiples et souvent contradictoires du foyer au cours de leurs écrits et de leurs œuvres d'art vers la fin du XIX^e et au début du XX^e siècle. En visant un petit groupe de peintres, anglo-canadiennes de race blanche, telles qu'Emily Carr, Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes, Mary Alexandra Bell Eastlake, Helen McNicoll, et Frances Jones, je révèle des liens entre le Canada et l'Empire britannique qui ont eu tendance à se perdre dans les récits nationalistes d'histoire de l'art. Bien que ces artistes soient reconnues et respectées au cours de leur vie en tant qu'artistes professionnelles accomplies ayant poursuivi des carrières internationales, ces femmes canadiennes de la pré-période de la Première Guerre mondiale furent depuis étudiées presque exclusivement par le biais d'un prisme idéologique étroit, soit deux sphères distinctes. En tenant compte des restrictions réelles que posait leur statut de femme à cette époque, je maintiens que cette distinction publique et privée néglige le contexte colonial dans lequel ces femmes ont vécu et ont travaillé. En effet, le culte de la domesticité de la classe moyenne au XIX^e siècle et l'ère d'impérialisme élevé étaient de concert: le 'foyer,' espace personnel de la famille et le 'foyer' en tant qu'espace social d'une nation furent jumelés dans le discours d'empire, donnant lieu à un sentiment d'appartenance délimité, sécurisant et racialisé, à l'abri du monde externe. Certes, la division distincte entre *le foyer* et *l'extérieur* fut l'une des structures fictives de l'impérialisme. En insistant sur l'importance d'examiner la spécificité de l'expérience de ces artistes, non seulement en tant que femmes, mais femmes *blanches* et plus particulièrement en tant que femmes œuvrant dans un contexte d'impérialisme britannique, mon travail pousse à la limite de l'encadrement, désormais bien établi en histoire de l'art des féministes blanches, qui a eu tendance à se détourner des questions de race et de l'empire. En puisant les sources primaires telles que les lettres, les carnets de voyages, les autobiographies et les cahiers de croquis et en effectuant une analyse minutieuse des représentations visuelles de la maternité, des intérieurs domestiques, et des sujets littéraires et historiques, je soutiens que les deux sens du terme 'foyer' ont fait l'objet d'une profonde ambivalence, les frontières entre le foyer et l'extérieur étaient perméables, et que le secteur public et celui de la vie domestique privée étaient de fait intimement liés et mutuellement constitutifs. En démantelant ces frontières et en examinant les réseaux à travers l'Atlantique et le monde anglophone, je situe donc Carr, Forbes, Eastlake, McNicoll, et Jones dans un contexte maintenant connu comme le 'monde britannique.'

Acknowledgments

This dissertation was written with the generous support of the Fonds québécois de recherche sur la société et culture, the Social Sciences and Research Council of Canada, the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, the Max Stern-McCord Museum of Canadian History Fellowship, the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada, and the McGill Faculty of Arts. I would also like to thank the archivists and other staff at the various institutions where I conducted research, particularly Janice Anderson at the Canadian Women Artists History Initiative, who was always quick to answer emails and invite me to visit the excellent archives, the staff at the British Columbia Archives, who patiently let me browse my way through Emily Carr's sketchbooks well past closing time during a whirlwind trip to Victoria, and the helpful staff at the St. Ives Archive and Trust, who were so welcoming to this Canadian girl in Britain.

I have had the happy opportunity to present several sections of this dissertation at a number of conferences over the years, and I am grateful to the audience members and to my fellow speakers for their very valuable feedback. I would also like to thank the students in the classes I have taught at McGill, whose incredibly smart questions and discussions have pushed me in new directions.

The Department of Art History and Communication Studies has been my home for many years now, and I cannot imagine a more collegial atmosphere in which to grow as a scholar. I would like to express my gratitude to Susana Machado and Maureen Coote, have always ready with any answers I needed. I would also like to thank Dr. Mary Hunter, who has always been extra encouraging, and Dr. Angela Vanhaelen, who has been a wonderful mentor. I have appreciated her guidance at every step of the way. I am also extremely grateful to my supervisor Dr. Charmaine Nelson, for her inspirational work and for her dedicated support of my own. Her enthusiastic guidance and intellectual insight have been invaluable.

Many friends have contributed in many different ways over the course of this dissertation, and I have appreciated their patience and support. I would especially like to thank Anuradha Gobin, Inhye Kang, and Sonia del Re, both for their friendship and for their last minute editing. I would also like to single out Shona Steele, who provided me with a home away from home during my research trips, and Ray Reynolds and Chantal Forgues, with whom who have shared more dinners and more bottles of wine than I can count. And a special thanks to my favourite kitty, who has helped in his own way as a diligent supervisor, comforting stress toy, and stubborn paperweight.

Finally, I would like to express my love and thanks to my brother, Nick Burton, and to my parents, Joan and Bob Burton. Their unconditional support and encouragement has made this possible and I cannot thank them enough. I am very lucky to have such a terrific family – this dissertation is dedicated to them.

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Conclusion

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A note on names, spelling, and abbreviations

One significant challenge in researching and writing about female artists in the pre-WWI period is the difficulty in tracing their names, given that women artists changed or altered their signatures when they married. In some cases, artists exhibited under different names at different times in their careers, making them difficult for reviewers both now and then to keep track of. In this dissertation, I generally adhere to the modern conventions for naming the artists under study, with 2 exceptions. First, I use Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes (who, in addition to that name, exhibited as Elizabeth Armstrong, Elizabeth Adela Armstrong, Elizabeth Forbes, Elizabeth Adela Armstrong Forbes, Elizabeth Stanhope Forbes, and Mrs. Stanhope Forbes) throughout the body of the dissertation, except in the chapter dedicated to her work, where I make a distinction between the unmarried Elizabeth Armstrong and the married Elizabeth Forbes. Second, although Frances Jones Bannerman tends now to be popularly known by that name, I use Frances Jones throughout, because the work under discussion here was painted before her marriage and exhibited under that name.

I have kept all spelling and grammar found in archival sources as is, except where clarification was needed. Emily Carr, in particular, was a rather “creative” speller, and any mistakes or deviations in her texts are her own.

Frequently used abbreviations

Art Association of Montreal (Montreal, QC)	AAM
Art Gallery of Greater Victoria (Victoria, BC)	AGGV
Art Gallery of Ontario (Toronto, ON)	AGO
Art Gallery of Nova Scotia (Halifax, NS)	AGNS
British Columbia Archives (Victoria, BC)	BCA
National Gallery of Canada (Ottawa, ON)	NGC
New English Art Club (London, UK)	NEAC
Penlee House and Gallery (Penzance, UK)	PHG
Royal Academy (London, UK)	RA
Royal Canadian Academy (Ottawa, ON)	RCA
Royal Society of British Artists (London, UK)	RBA
Society of Women Artists (London, UK)	SWA
Tate Archive (London, UK)	TGA
Women’s Rest Tour Association (Boston, MA)	WRTA

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Figure 93. Edmund Tarbell, *Across the Room*, 1899. Oil on canvas, 63.5 x 76.5 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC

Figure 94. Helen McNicoll, *The Victorian Dress*, c. 1914. Oil on canvas, 107.1 x 91.7 cm. Art Gallery of Hamilton, Hamilton, ON. Reproduced in Luckyj, Natalie.

Helen McNicoll: A Canadian Impressionist. Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1999, 65.

Figure 95. Helen McNicoll, *The Victorian Dress*, c. 1914. Oil on canvas, 108.8 x 94.5 cm. McCord Museum of Canadian History, Montreal, QC.

Figure 96. “Miss McNicoll and a Corner of her Studio.” From “Miss McNicoll Now a Member of Royal Art Society,” *Montreal Daily Star*, April 2, 1913.

Figure 97. François-Hubert Drouais, *Madame de Pompadour at her Tambour Frame*, 1763-4. Oil on canvas, 217 x 156.8 cm. National Gallery, London.

Figure 98. Edwyn Llewellyn, “This is Allowed to Vote,” 1907. Postcard. Bodleian Library, Oxford. Tickner, Lisa. *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign, 1907-1914*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1987, 37.

Figure 99. Henrietta Briggs-Wall, *American Woman and her Political Peers*, 1893. Poster. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Figure 100. Edouard Manet, *Dans le jardin d’hiver / Dans la serre*, 1879. Oil on canvas, 115 x 150 cm. Nationalgalerie, Berlin.

Figure 101. Frances Jones, *Harry in the Morning Room*, c. 1886. Oil on canvas, 30.4 x 40.6 cm. Estate of Anne Frances Joudrey. Reproduced in O’Neill, Mora Dianne, and Caroline Stone. *Two Artists Time Forgot / Deux artistes oubliées par l’histoire: Frances Jones (Bannerman) and Margaret Campbell MacPherson*. Halifax: Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, 2006, 19.

Figure 102. J.J.J. Tissot. *In the Conservatory*, c. 1875-78. Oil on canvas, 38.1 x 50.8 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Figure 103. Louise Abbéma. *Déjeuner dans la serre*, 1877. Oil on canvas, 119 x 308 cm. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Pau.

Figure 104. Photograph of Sophie Pemberton, 1904. Pemberton family fonds, British Columbia Archives, Victoria, BC.

Figure 105. Photograph of Sophie Pemberton, 1905. Pemberton family fonds, British Columbia Archives, Victoria, BC.

Figure 106. Photograph of Sophie Pemberton, n.d. Pemberton family fonds, British Columbia Archives, Victoria, BC.

Figure 107. Sophie Pemberton, Sketches of Killachy Castle, Kilkenny, Ireland, 1910. Letter from Sophie Pemberton to the Pemberton family, May 6, 1910. Ada Beaven Fonds, British Columbia Archives, Victoria, BC.

Introduction: Leaving Home

I. Introduction

On the 30th of July, 1910, Canadian artist Emily Carr (1871-1945) arrived at the Quebec City offices of the Canadian Pacific Railway company in a rage: her luggage had been lost, a final insult after a difficult three-week cross-country journey from her hometown of Victoria, British Columbia. A full account of the incident is given by the artist in an unpublished illustrated diary entitled “Sister and I from Victoria to London: Memoirs of Ods and Ends.”¹ Having first “collapsed in black despair” upon the discovery that her things had been “neither been *seen* nor *heard* of,” Carr set out to interrogate those responsible for her misery. The results were unsatisfactory:

We determined on a personal investigation of that CPR baggage room there was only a weak-legged sickly youth in charge but neither sister’s pleading nor my threats, produced that trunk, finally when I had reduced him to a state of writhing terror, I extracted the intelligence “It went aboard the boat sailing yesterday” *Why* it so eagerly took to sea by it’s lonely, he, nor we, nor nobody knew. And heaping maledictions upon his sandy head and on all CPR officials in general, we marched from the office to the nearest laundry.

The accompanying illustration is almost violent (fig. 1): Emily, red-faced, reaches out in anger and shakes her umbrella at the hapless CPR worker cowering behind the service counter, as her older sister Alice sits despondently on a pile of luggage that does not include the trunk that is already on its way to Liverpool. The anecdote is both amusing and demonstrative of the level of independence and assertiveness required of women travellers like Emily and Alice, revealing a type

¹ “Sister and I from Victoria to London: Memoirs of Ods and Ends” is held in the British Columbia Archives in Victoria, BC (Emily Carr fonds, BCA).

of woman quite contrary to the stereotypical Victorian and Edwardian “angel in the house.” In what way might Carr’s physical leaving of home also have made possible a leaving behind of traditional ideological understandings of home?

The artist (fig. 2) was *en route* to Paris by way of London when she was waylaid in Quebec City. Having previously spent five years in Britain, this was to be Carr’s second (and final) transatlantic voyage. She was hardly the first Canadian woman artist to go abroad in pursuit of personal and professional opportunities unavailable in her colonial homeland. A decade earlier, Helen McNicoll (1879-1915) (fig. 3) left her Montreal home for London’s Slade School of Art; by that time, fellow Montrealer Mary Alexandra Bell (later Eastlake) (1864-1915) (fig. 4) had already found her way to Paris, and eventually, also to Britain. Both women travelled extensively from their adopted home base, even as they continued to maintain links with the developing Canadian art world. Seemingly less attached to their homeland were their predecessors Ontarian Elizabeth Armstrong (later Forbes) (1859-1912) (fig. 5) and Haligonian Frances Jones (later Bannerman) (1855-1944) (fig. 6), who each settled in Britain in the 1870s and 80s, and never returned to Canada on a permanent basis. These five women were among the many North American artists who made the long trek across the Atlantic over the course of the final decades of the nineteenth century and early years of the twentieth.

Britain was a logical destination for each woman, given the colonial links between the two nations. Though coming from points across Canada, Carr, Forbes, Eastlake, McNicoll, and Jones were all of white, Protestant, British

descent, and all conceived of the transatlantic trip as a colonial pilgrimage – a return “home” to the land of their parents and grandparents. The transnational mobility of these women within the context of the British Empire provides a framework for a new examination of their lives and work that runs counter to traditional assumptions about nineteenth- and early twentieth-century women artists as being exclusively focused on domestic themes, whether because they were “naturally” inclined to them, or because they were socially confined to the private sphere, and therefore limited in their choice of subject matter. Looking at women who were decidedly *away* from home provides an opportunity to examine the precariousness of the boundaries between home and away, a multivalent binary that provided the ideological foundation of the British World in the decades surrounding the turn of the twentieth century. How did Canadian women working in Britain physically, intellectually, and artistically negotiate this divide between home and away? How did they manage multiple and often competing ideas about home, and understand their frequently changing relationship to it?

Though well known and well respected in their own lifetimes, Canadian women artists of the pre-World War I period are not today household names in Canada or elsewhere. Attention to Canadian women has long lagged behind that given to their British or American colleagues, and has until recently been composed almost exclusively of recuperative biographical studies and surveys that attempt to formulate a new female canon.² A comparative explosion in

² For example, Dorothy Farr and Natalie Luckyj, *From Women's Eyes: Women Painters in Canada* (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 1975); Natalie Luckyj, *From Visions to Victories: Ten Canadian Women Artists, 1914-1945* (London, ON: London Regional Art Gallery, 1983); A.K. Prakash, *Independent Spirit: Early Canadian Women Artists* (Toronto: Firefly, 2008);

popular and critical interest in Canadian women artists has occurred over the last decade. Of the women under examination here, exhibitions and accompanying catalogues have been dedicated to McNicoll (AGO, 1999), Forbes (PHG, 2000), and Jones (AGNS, 2006).³ McNicoll's work was also the subject of an important article by art historian Kristina Huneault, a text that provides an excellent model for critical scholarship on not only McNicoll, but on historical Canadian women artists more generally.⁴ Eastlake unfortunately continues to be relatively neglected, receiving only a single small commercial exhibition in recent years (Masters Gallery, Calgary, 2007).⁵ The exception that proves the rule, Carr's popularity remains steadily high: the last decade has seen a major exhibition and catalogue (NGC, 2006), a lengthy study of the artist's First Nations subjects by art historian Gerta Moray, and the release of new editions of her published works by publishers Douglas and McIntyre.⁶ Nevertheless, the vast majority of work on Carr focuses on the artist's later career, to the exclusion of her early years abroad. Together with recent work on Mary Hiester Reid, Florence Carlyle, Harriet Ford, Frances Anne Hopkins, and Laura Muntz Lyall, these studies make up the

Maria Tippet, *By a Lady: Celebrating Three Centuries of Art by Canadian Women* (Toronto: Penguin, 1992); Esther Trépanier, *Femmes artistes du XXe siècle au Québec: oeuvres du Musée National des Beaux-Arts du Québec* (Québec: Musée National des Beaux-Arts du Québec, 2010).

³ Natalie Luckyj, *Helen McNicoll: A Canadian Impressionist* (Toronto: AGO, 1999); Judith Cook and Melissa Hardie, *Singing from the Walls: The Life and Art of Elizabeth Forbes* (Clifton, Bristol: Sansom and Company, 2000); Mora Dianne O'Neill and Caroline Stone, *Two Artists Time Forgot / Deux artistes oubliées par l'histoire: Frances Jones (Bannerman) and Margaret Campbell MacPherson* (Halifax: AGNS, 2006).

⁴ Kristina Huneault, "Impressions of Difference: The Painted Canvases of Helen McNicoll," *Art History* 27, no. 2 (April 2004): 212-49.

⁵ A.K. Prakash, *Mary Bell Eastlake (1864-1951)* (Calgary: Masters Gallery, 2007).

⁶ Charles Hill et al., *Emily Carr: New Perspectives on a Canadian Icon* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2006); Gerta Moray, *Unsettling Encounters: First Nations Imagery in the Art of Emily Carr* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006).

foundation of modern critical scholarship on Canadian women artists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁷

Many of these studies have understandably focused extensively on the question of gender, and the limited possibilities available to professional women artists in this period, looking especially at the extent to which these artists and their work did or did not conform to the ideals of Victorian femininity and domesticity. Framed around the concept of home, this dissertation extends this interest by situating it within the wider, colonial context in which Canadian women lived and worked. After all, the cult of middle-class domesticity and the era of high imperialism went hand in hand: “home,” the personal space of the family, and “home,” the social space of the nation, were twinned in the discourse of empire, both signifying a bounded, secure, and racialized space of belonging that was safely separate from the threat of the outside world. Indeed, the maintenance of this strict division between “home” and “away” – a divide that rhetorically encompasses “private/public,” “metropole/colony,” and “local/foreign” in different contexts – was one of the structuring fictions of imperialism. Through an examination of primary sources such as letters, travel

⁷ Susan Butlin, *The Practice of Her Profession: Florence Carlyle, Canadian Painter in the Age of Impressionism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009); Brian Foss and Janice Anderson, *Quiet Harmony: The Art of Mary Hiester Reid* (Toronto: AGO, 2000); *Harriet Ford* (Hamilton: Art Gallery of Hamilton, 2001); Kristina Huneault, “Placing Frances Anne Hopkins: A British-Born Artist in Colonial Canada,” in *Local/Global: Women Artists in the Nineteenth Century*, eds. Deborah Cherry and Janice Helland (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 179-99; Elizabeth Mulley, “Madonna, Mother, Death, and Child: Laura Muntz Lyall and the Representation of Maternity,” *RACAR* 25, no. 1-2 (1998): 84-93; Joan Murray, *Florence Carlyle: Against All Odds* (London, ON: Museum London, 2004). A large number of MA and PhD theses have also contributed significantly to this body of scholarship; several of these are referenced throughout this dissertation. A forthcoming collection of essays edited by Kristina Huneault and Janice Anderson promises to expand this burgeoning field in exciting new directions (*Rethinking Professionalism: Essays on Women and Art in Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, forthcoming 2012)).

diaries, autobiographies, and sketchbooks, and close visual analyses of representations of motherhood, domestic interiors, and literary and historical subjects, I show that both senses of home were met by travelling women like Carr, Forbes, Eastlake, McNicoll, and Jones with a deep ambivalence, that the boundaries between home and away were permeable, and that the national or imperial and the private, domestic “homes” were, in fact, intertwined and mutually constitutive.

II. Domesticity and the Colonial Context

“Home sweet home.” “Home is where the heart is.” “There’s no place like home.” “Home” seems an almost-too suggestive concept on which to base an academic study: too sentimental, too personal, too private. There is a strong tendency to romanticize “home” as a safe, stable, unchanging site that is cloistered away from its enemy: the “real world.” In its idealized state, “home” is that which is regretfully left, nostalgically longed for, and hopefully returned to. These connotations apply equally well to “home” in its private, familial context, and to “home” in its social or geographic sense – “hometown” or “homeland” evoke the same feelings as “childhood home” or “family home.” In both cases, “home” implies a sense of belonging and unity: a bounded, secure, homogenous space that is set in opposition to a threatening outside.

However common or cliché today, neither understanding of home is a timeless or universal concept. Rather, each evolved in tandem with the other over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Nations have long been

accepted as essentially modern creations; domesticity, too, is now understood as a specifically Western “invention of the modern age.”⁸ Together with the spread of Enlightenment ideas about privacy and the individual, the appearance of modern domesticity has traditionally been attributed to the rise of a middle-class capitalist market economy that took the father outside of the home to work, and left the mother at leisure inside of it as a signifier of the family’s prosperity. In this context, the “home/away” binary is a distinction between private and public. The development of this gendered model – essentially, that there existed (or should exist) a sharp divide between the private, feminine sphere of the home and the public, masculine sphere of politics and economics – has come to be called the ideology of “separate spheres.” This model has overwhelmingly tended to frame scholarship on women in the nineteenth century, whether to explain women’s apparent absence from the public sphere, to justify the popularity of domestic and maternal subjects for female cultural producers, or to use as a point of comparison to elevate a small number of exceptional women who did enter the public sphere against all odds.⁹

⁸ Christopher Reed, introduction to *Not at Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1996), 7.

⁹ The body of literature that examines women’s history through the lens of separate spheres is vast. Foundational texts in the British and North American contexts include: Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: Woman’s Sphere in New England, 1780-1865* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (London: Hutchison, 1987); Catherine Hall, *White, Male, and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992); Linda Kerber, “Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman’s Place: The Rhetoric of Women’s History,” *Journal of American History* 75, no. 1 (June 1988): 9-39; Mary Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Amanda Vickery, “Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women’s History,” *Historical Journal* 36, no. 3 (1993): 383-414; Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860,” *American Quarterly* 12, no. 2 (1966): 151-74; Janet Wolff, “The Invisible Flâneuse: Women and the Literature of Modernity,” *Theory, Culture, Society* 2, no. 3 (1985): 37-46.

Although proponents of the separate spheres ideal positioned it as a universal experience, the understanding of home as an idyllic sanctuary from the working world was an essentially masculine one, given that women's work was specifically located *within* the home.¹⁰ Furthermore, this cloistered private home was an exclusively white, middle-class ideal – many working-class women and women of colour had to work outside the home to provide for their families, after all. It was also an ideal that, as literary scholar Anne McClintock notes, was paradoxically only made possible by “outside” forces present inside the home in the particular form of working-class and non-white women's labour as maids, housekeepers, cooks, wet nurses, and so on.¹¹ Other scholars have further demonstrated that the home was not necessarily a safe, secure place for everyone at all times. bell hooks and Toni Morrison, for example, have influentially pointed out that the legacies of slavery and that institution's invasions into private life meant that “home” signified very differently to black slaves than to white slave owners.¹² Ultimately, the ideological insistence on home as a separate sphere functioned to elevate white, middle-class domesticity as the only correct lifestyle, and to simultaneously de-legitimize other options as immoral and/or uncivilized, whether these were middle- and working-class white women working outside the

Groundbreaking art historical studies include Lynda Nead, *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988) and Griselda Pollock, “Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity,” in *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism, and the Histories of Art* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 50-90.

¹⁰ Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling, *Home* (London: Routledge, 2005), 15-16; Doreen Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 166-67.

¹¹ Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (London: Routledge, 1995), 164-65. For art historical discussions of this paradox, see Kristina Huneault, *Difficult Subjects: Working Women and Visual Culture, Britain 1880-1914* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002) and Charmaine Nelson, *Representing the Black Female Subject in Western Art* (New York: Routledge, 2010), Chapter 2.

¹² Massey, 166.

home, or non-white and/or non-western household structures that fell outside the “ideal” model. In this respect, the cult of separate spheres was both a powerful means of circumventing the threat of increasingly unsettled gender roles, and an effective way of securing class and racial hegemony.¹³

The separate spheres model was mirrored on a wider social level in the context of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century imperialism by an insistence on a strict division between the heart of an empire and its peripheries: this is “home/away” reconfigured as metropole and colony, or more simply, as local and foreign. Perhaps the best-known example of this kind of thinking is the widespread phenomenon labelled most influentially by postcolonial scholar Edward Said as “Orientalism.” Said describes Orientalism as a set of Western discourses (visual, textual, political, medical, and legal, among others) that systematically invented an East – the “Orient” – as the “Other” of the Western world. Orientalist thinking is precluded on the belief of a firm distinction between “here” and “there,” “us” and “them,” “self” and “other,” and furthermore, on a hierarchical positioning of these pairings.¹⁴ If Said’s pioneering work has since been made more complex than a simple dichotomy between a monolithic West and a homogenized East, the strict ideological division of home and away that he describes can be clearly seen as the backbone of the majority of colonial and racial discourses of the period. The concern that those boundaries might be blurred was at the heart of contemporary fears surrounding miscegenation, immigration to Europe and North America from the colonies, and any number of

¹³ Bailey Van Hook, *Angels of Art: Women and Art in American Society, 1876-1914* (University Park: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 141.

¹⁴ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 25th anniversary ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 2003).

other social and cultural anxieties, even if (or perhaps especially because), like separate spheres, these theoretical divisions did not hold up in practice.

Like the domestic sphere, this broader sense of home is likewise consistently positioned as a universal and inclusive experience. “Homeland,” for example, has particular resonances to this effect that can be mobilized politically to give a sense of collective belonging, personal investment, security, homogeneity, and a natural genealogy or history for the group in question.¹⁵ However, by setting itself off as distinct from the (often nebulously defined) “foreign,” it is clear that this sense of home is as exclusionary as it is inclusive. Furthermore, it can hardly be said that everyone experiences a homeland in an equal way. The persistent imagining of the national homeland as feminine in the nineteenth century, for example, is rather ironic given that women themselves could not be full citizens of these political entities. Likewise, racial and ethnic difference also undermine the myth of collective belonging to a homeland. In nineteenth-century colonial Canada, for instance, First Nations peoples, though indigenous, were systematically made to be *not at home*, both metaphorically in terms of citizenship, and quite literally, through forced dispossession and relocation.¹⁶

The rhetorical insistence on a division between these interconnected “homes” and their respective “aways,” was, as geographer Doreen Massey notes, not only an expression of “spatial control,” but also an attempt at “social control

¹⁵ Blunt and Dowling, 169-71.

¹⁶ Ibid., 174-75.

of identity.”¹⁷ namely, a preservation of white, middle-class norms of class, gender, and racial stratification. And yet, the popularity and virulence of these discourses was itself a response to an increasing sense that those spheres were anything but separate. At the turn of the twentieth century, the supposedly secure borders of both home and homeland were perceived as being under attack: from immigration, from the overreach of empire, and from women abandoning the home in favour of education, politics, and the professions, to name just a few of the most prominent sources of social anxiety. However strongly nineteenth-century advocates insisted that the private home was to be kept distinct from the outside world, and the national home separate from those areas outside its borders, this was an impossible goal. Indeed, even if the *fin-de-siècle* was a time of particularly heightened anxiety about the insecurity of these borders, home, like all places, has always been open and constituted as much from its diverse relationships with the outside world as it is constructed from a unified inside. Massey has suggested that an understanding of home as shifting and relational might destabilize the sense of universality attributed to home, and enable an understanding of it as a socially- and historically-specific phenomenon; for her, all places

include relations which stretch beyond – the global as part of what constitutes the local, the outside as part of the inside. Such a view of place challenges any possibility of claims to internal histories or to timeless identities. The identities of place are always unfixed, contested and multiple. And the particularity of any place is, in these terms, constructed not by placing boundaries around it and defining its identity through counter-position to the other which lies beyond, but precisely (in part)

¹⁷ Massey, 179.

through the specificity of the mix of links and interconnections to that 'beyond.' Places viewed in this way are open and porous.¹⁸

Home, in this conception, is not a stable, universal entity, but a shifting system of internal and external relations which all individuals experience differently depending on their own unique set of personal identifications.

Moreover, there were, even to contemporary observers, clear links between these two levels of home, putting the boundaries between home and away in further jeopardy. Geographers Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling, for example, have described the connections between home and homeland as

a double movement between the domestic home and the nation and/or empire beyond: not only have the wider spatial imaginaries of nation and empire been reproduced and recast within the domestic sphere, but the material and imaginative geographies of home and family have also been central in underpinning and articulating the wider nation and/or empire. In other words, home-spaces and home-making practices are intimately bound together over a range of scales, and are closely shaped by the exercise of power and resistance and by what is imagined as 'foreign' or unhomely.¹⁹

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the two senses of home were much too tightly linked, both in metaphor and in practice, to be severed from one another: to protect and secure one was to protect and secure the other.

Perhaps the best example of the ways in which the metaphor of the private home mapped onto the wider world is the consistent perception of empire as a tightly linked family unit, a theme that will re-appear throughout this dissertation in different contexts. Britain, as the heart of the Empire, was frequently imagined

¹⁸ Ibid., 5. For further discussion of home as unfixed and porous, see Chapter 7 of Massey's *Space, Place, and Gender*. For a consideration of how these ideas might be applied to nineteenth-century feminist art history, see Deborah Cherry and Janice Helland, "Local Places/Global Spaces: New Narratives of Women's Art in the Nineteenth Century," in *Local/Global: Women Artists in the Nineteenth Century*, eds. Deborah Cherry and Janice Helland (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 1-14.

¹⁹ Blunt and Dowling, 188.

as a benevolent maternal figure – the “mother country” caring for her dependents. Like children, her colonies might be rebellious and in need of strict supervision, or loyal and obedient like Canada, that “sensible eldest-child of empire.”²⁰ This was a metaphor maintained not only by the metropole, but by the colonies themselves: the Canadian women who went to Britain discussed in Chapter 1, for instance, conceived of themselves as daughters returning home; their “mother,” Queen Victoria, would be there to welcome them back into the familial fold. In Chapter 2, we will see how this imperial family invented a genealogy for itself, while in Chapters 3 and 4, we will encounter women who linked themselves to other women from across the Empire as sisters, mothers, and daughters. In more literal terms, marriage between Canadian women and British men – Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes, Mary Bell Eastlake, and Frances Jones all married English artists – was perceived as an important way to secure personal and political links between the two countries.²¹ The deployment of the imperial family metaphor functioned to give the impression of natural, organic connections between metropole and colony that existed in a logical lineage, thereby concealing the inherently unequal and exploitative racial, gender, and class relations that lay at the heart of the colonial enterprise.²²

²⁰ Cecilia Morgan, “‘A Choke of Emotion, a Great Heart-Leap:’ English-Canadian Tourists in Britain, 1880s-1914,” *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 39, no. 77 (2006): 22.

²¹ Cecilia Morgan, ‘*A Happy Holiday: English Canadians and Transatlantic Tourism, 1870-1930*’ (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 217-220. See also Eva-Marie Kröller, *Canadian Travellers in Europe, 1851-1900* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), 89-97 on Canadian travellers’ understandings of the imperial family metaphor and their place within it.

²² McClintock, 357-58; Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose, introduction to *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 27.

On the other hand, empire also constructed the home from the outside, not only in terms of helping to shape the spaces and policies of the imperial metropole, but by extending its influence into the most private spaces of the home as well. A number of scholars have shown the myriad ways in which the empire affected the home on the level of the everyday, personal, and domestic,²³ ranging from changes to architectural design and city planning, seen in the need for the boarding houses discussed in Chapter 1, for example, to the bedtime stories read to children examined in Chapter 2. As examined in Chapter 3, metropolitan motherhood and private home life were bestowed with a new significance in response to the needs of the empire and nation. Trends in home decoration and design, discussed in Chapter 4, were also enormously influenced by imperial trade and commerce. In very basic ways then, the home was re-made by the empire just as surely as the empire was constructed around the model of the home. However, caution is needed to discuss these exchanges, as historian Catherine Hall has pointed out: the links between home and away were “not neutral, not simply a chain of connection. The relations between colony and metropole were relations of power. More significantly, they were relations which were mutually constitutive, in which both colonizer and colonized were made. That mutual constitution was hierarchical: each was party to the making of the other, but the colonizer always exercised authority over the colonized.”²⁴

²³ Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism* is a foundational text in this regard, examining the impact of empire on metropolitan culture (New York: Vintage, 1993); texts that have followed this line of thinking are cited throughout this dissertation. A counter-argument that downplays the impact of the colonies on British culture is offered by Bernard Porter in *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

²⁴ Catherine Hall, *Civilizing Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the British Imagination, 1830-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 8.

Without dismissing or diminishing the very real power nationalist, imperialist, and domestic ideologies held (and continue to hold), this dissertation explores the many ways in which the multi-level binary between home and away that so successfully structured the British World in the nineteenth-century was in fact precarious, permeable, and unstable. White women from the colonies like Carr, Forbes, Eastlake, McNicoll, and Jones provide ideal subjects through which to explore these issues, because of the rather precarious position they themselves occupied within this system. As professional women artists, they transgressed the public/private divide regularly. As travellers, they themselves acted as valued links between metropole and colony. And yet, as white colonial subjects living in Britain, they also straddled an increasingly unclear border between the familiar “local” and the exotic “foreigner.” This dissertation looks at the various ways in which Canadian women artists slipped – sometimes smoothly, sometimes with difficulty – between these levels of home, and negotiated the divide between home and away.

III. Whiteness and the British World

Such a project reveals close links between Canada and the greater British Empire that existed in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but which have typically since been lost in nationalist art history narratives. In the decades prior to World War I, the art worlds of North America, Britain, and Europe were closer than ever before, brought together by technological innovations in communications and travel, a booming economy, increased art journalism, and a

changing art market. The resulting disintegration of national schools in favour of international styles that extended across the Western world is a phenomenon that clearly does not submit easily to strict geographical borders.²⁵ While Carr, Forbes, Eastlake, McNicoll, and Jones can all rightfully be called “Canadian artists” based on the place of their births, whether we can accurately call the works under examination in this dissertation “Canadian art” is a much more difficult question. Indeed, of the many images discussed in the chapters that follow, only one represents an identifiably Canadian subject – Jones’s 1883 painting *In the Conservatory* (and it was specifically intended for a foreign audience) (fig. 90).

These nationalist labels are to a certain extent, I argue, not useful in a discussion of art produced in the context of nineteenth-century imperialism. In this respect, I follow art historians like Geoff Quilley and Kay Dian Kriz, who have argued of an earlier period that “to historicize British or French art in the reductive geographical terms of the British Isles or continental France is, therefore, profoundly to misunderstand the eighteenth-century concepts of Englishness, Britishness, or Frenchness that applied (albeit differently nuanced) to

²⁵ Very little work has been done on expatriate artists or transatlantic influences in Canada, especially in contrast to the considerable body of scholarship that exists on American expatriate painters in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the transatlantic artistic exchanges they inspired. That work has primarily focused on the experiences of a few well-known individual American artists (J.A.M. Whistler, John Singer Sargent, and Mary Cassatt, for example) and on the presence of American artists in certain popular places (Paris, Spain, and Venice have all received special attention). Broader studies of the phenomenon include Charmaine Nelson, *The Color of Stone: Sculpting the Black Female Subject in Nineteenth-Century America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007); Kirsten Swinth, *Painting Professionals: Women Artists and the Development of Modern American Art, 1870-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Van Hook; and a variety of exhibition catalogues dedicated to the subject, including Laura Felleman Fattal and Carol Salus, *Out of Context: American Artists Abroad* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004); Michael Quick, *American Expatriate Painters of the Late Nineteenth Century* (Dayton, OH: Dayton Art Institute, 1976); Holly Pinto Savinetti, *American Artists Abroad: The European Experience in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Nassau County Museum of Fine Art, 1985); David Sellin, *Americans in Brittany and Normandy, 1860-1910* (Phoenix: Phoenix Art Museum, 1982).

the wider Atlantic world as much as to the metropolis.”²⁶ As will become clear, Canadian women of the pre-WWI period did not identify exclusively as Canadian *or* British, but alternated between the two depending on the context, and often did so strategically depending on what was convenient or beneficial to them personally and professionally. They just as frequently identified as both. As such, I adopt a methodological framework that takes into account these slippery boundaries and acknowledges the ways in which these artists and their work operated within networks that stretched across the Atlantic and throughout the English-speaking world, thereby (re-)situating Canadian art history in the context of what has come to be called the “British World.”

A challenge to the traditional disciplinary separation between “national” and “imperial” histories and art histories, a model of study called the “British World,” like the similar “English-Speaking,” “Anglo-American,” and “Atlantic” worlds (each with its own set of inclusions and exclusions), instead presupposes an understanding of sites and their histories as a dynamic and flexible system of (often unequal) political, economic, social, and cultural connections. In recent years, scholars have done much to integrate imperial and national history in the British context, insisting that what happened “at home” cannot be divorced from what happened “out there.”²⁷ Surprisingly however, Britain’s nineteenth-century

²⁶ Geoff Quilley and Kay Dian Kriz, introduction to *An Economy of Colour: Visual Culture and the Atlantic World, 1660-1830* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 6.

²⁷ For example, David Armitage and Michael Braddick, eds., *The British Atlantic World* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002); C.A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780-1830* (London: Longman, 1989); Carl Bridge and Kent Fedorowich, eds., *The British World: Diaspora, Culture, and Identity* (London: Frank Cass, 2003); Peter A. Coclanis, “Atlantic World or Atlantic/World,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 63, no. 4 (October 2006): 725-42; Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, eds., *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*

white settler colonies and dominions (Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa) have continued to receive short shrift, not receiving the same amount of scholarly attention as India or the United States, for example, to the ways in which the connections between metropole and colony played out.²⁸

In response, a recent push has been made by historians such as Nancy Christie, Phillip Buckner, and R. Douglas Francis to situate Canada within this interconnected system: as neither a “mini-Britain,” nor as a country completely divorced from the history of imperialism.²⁹ As these scholars have argued,

(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Hall, *Civilizing Subjects*; Catherine Hall, ed. *Cultures of Empire: Colonizers in Britain and the Empire in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); Hall and Rose, Elisabeth Mancke and Carole Shammas, eds., *The Creation of the British Atlantic World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005); J.G.A. Pocock, *The Discovery of Islands* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); J.G.A. Pocock, “The Limits and Divisions of British History: In Search of the Unknown Subject,” *American History Review* 87, no. 2 (April 1982): 311-36; Kathleen Wilson, ed., *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and Empire, 1660-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire, and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2003).

Similar surveys of British art history include the essays in Quilley and Kriz and in Tim Barringer, Geoff Quilley, and Douglas Fordham, eds., *Art and the British Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).

²⁸ Phillip Buckner and R. Douglas Francis, introduction to *Canada and the British World: Culture, Migration, and Identity* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006), 5; Angela Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London: Australian Women, Colonialism, and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 10. See also Katie Pickles’s excellent recent essay on the possibilities and limitations of writing transnational history in the context of the white settler colonies (“Transnational History and Cultural Cringe: Some Issues for Consideration in New Zealand, Australia, and Canada,” *History Compass* 9, no. 9 [September 2011]: 657-73).

For studies that deal with the specificity of the settler colonies within the wider context of the British Empire, see Annie E. Coombes, ed., *Rethinking Settler Colonialism: History and Memory in Australia, Canada, Aotearoa New Zealand, and South Africa* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006); Lynette Russell, *Colonial Frontiers: Indigenous-European Encounters in Settler Colonies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001); Daiva Stasiulis and Nira Yuval-Davis, eds., *Unsettling Settler Societies: Articulations of Gender, Race, Ethnicity, and Class* (London: Sage, 1995).

²⁹ Phillip Buckner, ed., *Canada and the End of Empire* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2005); Buckner and Francis, eds., *Canada and the British World*; Phillip Buckner and R. Douglas Francis, eds., *Rediscovering the British World* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2005); Nancy Christie, ed., *Transatlantic Subjects: Ideas, Institutions, and Social Experience in Post-Revolutionary British North America* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2008). Seminal studies of Canada’s relationship to the British Empire in this period also include Carl Berger, *Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism: 1867-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970) and Allan Greer and Ian Radforth, eds., *Colonial*

Canadian history (and art history) has, as of the 1960s, tended to be written in a teleological fashion, narrating the trajectory of an emerging nation that strove to separate itself from its colonial parent. As Buckner points out, this type of historical writing not only glorifies this nascent nationalism by focusing on moments when Canada rebelled against or distinguished itself in relation to Britain (for example, the Upper and Lower Canada Rebellions of 1837-38, Confederation, WWI),³⁰ but also “reflects the desire of Canadians to gloss over the part they played in the making of the British Empire, both in the extension of British authority over the upper half of the North American continent and in the support they gave to the extension of British authority in other parts of the globe.”³¹ Given its precarious status in the later nineteenth century as a new nation that was itself pursuing colonizing activities within its borders, and yet still tightly linked to Britain, Canada was in a rather unique position to simultaneously occupy both poles of home and away, and is therefore well-placed to challenge any firm division between national and imperial history.

My understanding of a flexibly defined British World has been equally influenced by postcolonial and critical geographical theories of space and place. The work of Mary Louise Pratt and Homi K. Bhabha is particularly notable in its refusal to adhere to strictly defined spaces and identities. Each argues for the permeability of margins and the importance of examining the liminal sites where

Leviathan: State Formation in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992).

³⁰ Buckner, introduction to *Canada and the End of Empire*, 1-4.

³¹ Ibid., 3. Historian Daniel Gorman comments that the tendency of settler colonies to emphasize a nationalist narrative and de-emphasize the role they played in the greater empire is evident in the historical tendencies of the settler colonies or dominions in general, but singles out Canada as being particularly guilty of this tendency (*Imperial Citizenship: Empire and the Question of Belonging* [Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006], 12-13).

cultures meet, combine, and produce hybrids: for Pratt, a “contact zone;” for Bhabha, an “in-between space.”³² Likewise, the theoretizations of space proposed by scholars in diverse disciplines such as Paul Gilroy, Joseph Roach, Antonio Benítez-Rojo, and Irit Rogoff (among others) depend not on strict spatial borders and boundaries, but, as the latter describes, “an alternative set of relations between subjects and places – an alternative set of relations in which it is not scientific knowledge of the national categories of the state which determine both belonging and unbelonging, but rather linked sets of political insights, memories, subjectivities, projections of fantasmic desires and great long chains of sliding signifiers.”³³ In short, each argues, it was a much more nebulous set of social, cultural, economic, linguistic, class, racial, and other identifications that acted to bind people of distant and diverse locations (and to exclude others). By these standards, a “British World” signifies a different entity than the British Empire. It might include, for example, the United States, which in the later nineteenth century was attempting to reclaim its British heritage in response to an influx of non-British immigration.³⁴ Conversely, it might exclude a colony or group technically under political control of the British, but which did not acknowledge or seek out a cultural Britishness.

³² Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992); Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1993); Homi K. Bhabha, “Narrating the Nation,” in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), 1-7.

³³ Irit Rogoff, *Terra Infirma: Geography’s Visual Culture* (London: Routledge, 2000), 7. See also Antonio Benítez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*, trans. James E. Maraniss (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996); Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

³⁴ See especially Alex Zwerdling, *Improvised Europeans: American Literary Expatriates and the Siege of London* (New York: Basic Books, 1998).

To what extent is it possible to consider the “British World” a British diaspora, or perhaps what postcolonial scholar Radhika Mohanram has proposed, a “white diaspora”?³⁵ “English Canada,” after all, also included people of Scottish, Welsh, and Irish descent, not to mention a diversity of religions, levels of wealth, and political identifications; it nevertheless identified itself as a collective community. Whiteness was the link that tied this heterogenous, geographically distant population together, acting simultaneously as a way to unite a group based on racial identity, and to distinguish (and indeed, to elevate) it from competing social groups. In Canada, the latter included not only First Nations, black, and Asian populations, but French Canadians and other European immigrants as well. If the English, Scots, Welsh, and Irish distinguished between themselves (and the latter was in an especially precarious position here), they also consistently marked themselves off as separate from everyone else.³⁶ In essence, as film studies scholar and queer theory pioneer Richard Dyer notes, whiteness was one means by which colonial subjects could “assert[...] a common British identity without having to become English.”³⁷ Although the colonization project has not typically been understood as the active construction of a white and/or British diaspora, at root it did consist of a specific social group leaving home and forming new communities that were linked to one another and to the original site. It would certainly be problematic to refer to this colonizing movement as a

³⁵ Radhika Mohanram, *Imperial White: Race, Diaspora, and the British Empire* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), xiv. On the concept of a British diaspora, see also the essays in Bridge and Fedorowich and Buckner and Francis, introduction to *Canada and the British World*, 6.

³⁶ Katie Pickles, *Female Imperialism and National Identity: Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 37-8; Kröller, 23.

³⁷ Richard Dyer, *White* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 19.

diaspora without acknowledging that unlike the creation of other diasporas (African or Jewish, for example), this migration was not (for the most part) forced. However, the lack of examination of this movement in terms of what it meant for the spread of whiteness and Britishness is a lack of acknowledgment that white Britons were in fact a specific racial group and not simply the norm. This lack of acknowledgment has, as Mohanram argues, “resulted in the white subject’s right to movement, a naturalization of their bodies, with a simultaneous marking and excess of scrutiny of black bodies.”³⁸

The previous paragraph links whiteness and British heritage intentionally. “Whiteness” is used here to not only indicate a certain skin colour, but also a particular set of physical, social, and behavioural markers as well. In later nineteenth-century Britain and its colonies, to be white was to be healthy and tall and strong. It was to be heterosexual and capable of reproduction. It was to be rational, controlled, contained, and moderate in all aspects of life. Above all, it was associated with a certain level of social progress: to be white was to be civilized. By insisting on the importance of a consideration of the specificity of the experience of artists like Carr, Forbes, Eastlake, McNicoll and Jones as not just women, but as *white* women, and even more specifically, as white women working within the context of British imperialism, my work pushes at the boundaries of the now well-established framework of white feminist art history, which has overwhelmingly tended to shy away from questions of race and empire. Dyer points out that to study “race” or “racial imagery” has, for a long time, meant to study non-white subjects, leaving whiteness as an invisible, universal

³⁸ Mohanram, xxi.

norm.³⁹ To make *white* subjects a target of study is therefore to dislodge them from the privileged status of merely being *subjects*. A new or expanded methodology is necessary to accurately examine these women and the complex circumstances in which they lived and worked. Such an approach admittedly runs the risk of merely re-inscribing conventional power relations and re-situating white subjects at the centre of discourse, while relegating non-white subjects to the margins once more: as Mohanram has noted, frequently,

ethnicized and minoritized whites are examined in their relationship to other whites and not to other non-white groups. Black subjects are peripheral to these analyses, but absolutely central to the *comprehension* of them. Underpinning these works is the understanding that whites can become whites only by not being blacks. Blackness functions as the residual effect, the spoor of this upward mobility within modernity.⁴⁰

Indeed, even as I argue in the following pages that white Canadian women artists who travelled to Britain did not always sit comfortably within the contemporary boundaries of whiteness, it must be acknowledged first and foremost that theirs remained a position of considerable privilege. This is nowhere more evident than in the sheer absence of black, First Nations, and other non-white women artists making that trip abroad.

In its attentiveness to whiteness as a concept and category that is in need of deconstruction, my project draws on and contributes to a diverse and growing body of scholarship that has come to be called “critical white studies.”⁴¹

Beginning in the 1990s, American labour historians such as David Roediger and

³⁹ Dyer, 1.

⁴⁰ Mohanram, xvi. As she points out, when the shifting definition of whiteness is used synonymously with class mobility, “the fact remains that there is no such solution for black bodies” (xvii).

⁴¹ Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, eds. *Critical White Studies: Looking Behind the Mirror* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997).

Theodore Allen took up the study of the ways in which class and whiteness intersect, revealing the historical and social variability of the definition of “white.”⁴² Following in their steps, others have examined this shifting nature of whiteness in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; scholars like Matthew Frye Jacobson, Noel Ignatiev, Karen Brodtkin, and Thomas Guglielmo have examined how Irish, Jewish, and Italian immigrants to the United States, for example, were gradually incorporated into the “white race” over the course of this period depending on when and if it was politically or socially expedient.⁴³ Historians like Alexander Saxton and Gail Bederman have looked closely at the ways in which whiteness, class, gender, and culture intersected more broadly in nineteenth-century America,⁴⁴ while Mariana Valverde and Adele Perry have done parallel work north of the border, examining the specificity of whiteness and its relationship to class and empire in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Canada.⁴⁵ These explorations of the changing meanings of “white” not only

⁴² Theodore Allen, *The Invention of the White Race* (London: Verso, 1994); David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 1991).

⁴³ Karen Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998); Thomas Guglielmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Colour: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

⁴⁴ Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Alexander Saxton, *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic: Class Politics and Mass Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Verso, 1990).

⁴⁵ Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849-1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000); Mariana Valverde, “When the Mother of the Race is Free: Race, Reproduction, and Sexuality in First-Wave Feminism,” in *Gender Conflicts: New Essays in Women’s History*, eds. Franca Iacovetta and Mariana Valverde (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 3-26; Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991).

provide a more nuanced understanding of social and cultural history, but function to challenge the supposed invisibility and universality of whiteness.

Unfortunately, art history as a discipline has been much slower to look at whiteness as a subject of interest. Dyer's seminal book *White* (1997) was instrumental in exploring the role that visual culture plays in the construction of whiteness, and the impact of that book has been seen in several recent studies. In addition to multiple examinations of contemporary art in relation to questions of whiteness, a small group of scholars led by Angela Rosenthal, Martin A. Berger, and Shawn Michelle Smith have looked at the visual construction of whiteness in such diverse areas as eighteenth-century British portraiture, American genre and landscape subjects and the male nudes of Thomas Eakins, and early American photography respectively.⁴⁶ The authors in question examine whiteness in relation to questions of biology, eugenics, national identity, and both femininity and masculinity, among other things. In this way, each provides an important model of scholarship for the historical study of whiteness and representation by effectively demonstrating the diverse ways in which images construct racial

⁴⁶ See, for example, Angela Rosenthal, "Visceral Culture: Blushing and the Legibility of Whiteness in Eighteenth-Century British Portraiture," *Art History* 27, no. 4 (September 2004): 563-92; Martin A. Berger, *Sight Unseen: Whiteness and American Visual Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Martin A. Berger, *Man-Made: Thomas Eakins and the Construction of Gilded Age Manhood* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Shawn Michelle Smith, *American Archives: Gender, Race and Class in Visual Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

On whiteness and contemporary art, see David Batchelor, *Chromophobia* (London: Reaktion Books, 2000); Maurice Berger, ed. *White: Whiteness and Race in Contemporary Art* (Baltimore: University of Maryland Press, 2004); Tyler Stallings, *Whiteness: A Wayward Construction* (Laguna Beach, CA: Laguna Art Museum and Fellows of Contemporary Art, 2003), and the special section of the 2001 volume of *Art Journal* dedicated to the subject, which includes essays by Maurice Berger and Adrian Piper ("Blinded by the White: Special Section on Whiteness and Contemporary Art," *Art Journal* 60, no. 4 [Winter 2001]: 38-67).

On the general importance of considering race as a fundamental part of any subject or artist's identity, see Nelson, *The Color of Stone* and Griselda Pollock, *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art's Histories* (London: Routledge, 1999).

identity on multiple levels, even when the subject of the image is white (or, indeed, in the case of Berger, even when there is no human subject represented).

Equally influential to my own study have been the interventions of critical race and critical whiteness scholars into feminist scholarship. Writers of diverse backgrounds such as Hazel Carby, bell hooks, Chandra Mohanty, Toni Morrison, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak have been instrumental in drawing attention to the deficiencies of traditional white feminist scholarship: in essence, they argue, although mainstream feminist discourse tends to frequently adopt a universal outlook that attempts to unite women on the basis of their shared gender, it fails to speak appropriately to the experiences of women of colour. Moreover, it does not always acknowledge the position of privilege that white women occupied in the particular nexus of power relations that hooks has famously called a “white supremacist capitalist patriarchy,” a term that, for her, brings together race, class, and gender in a system of connected hierarchies.⁴⁷

Applying the lessons of their colleagues to critical whiteness studies, scholars such as Ruth Frankenberg and Vron Ware have insisted on the importance of looking at the specificities of white femininity and white feminism

⁴⁷ A small selection of the many groundbreaking works of these scholars includes Hazel V. Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); bell hooks, *Ain't I A Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (Boston: South End Press, 1981); Chandra Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses,” *Feminist Review* 30 (Autumn 1988): 61-88; Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271-314; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Three Women’s Texts and a Critique of Imperialism,” *Critical Inquiry* 12, no. 1 (Autumn 1985): 243-261.

in both contemporary and historical contexts.⁴⁸ In the years since the publication of their pioneering work in the early 1990s, the field has been bolstered by a growing number of studies that explore the intersection of gender, class, race, and imperialism in varying contexts.⁴⁹ Such an insistence reveals that which is so often lost in traditional feminist scholarship on white British women in the nineteenth century, namely, the uncomfortable truth that, as Anne McClintock states, “the rationed privileges of race all too often put white women in positions of decided – if borrowed – power, not only over colonized women but also over colonized men. As such, white women were not the hapless onlookers of empire but were ambiguously complicit both as colonizers and colonized, privileged and restricted, acted upon and acting.”⁵⁰ While white feminist art history has (rightfully) elevated the achievements of white women artists like Carr, Forbes, Eastlake, McNicoll, and Jones in the context of the patriarchal society of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it has largely ignored the position of racial and imperial privilege from which these achievements were made possible. That their artwork contributed to the construction and maintenance of colonial power systems will be a recurring theme throughout this dissertation.

⁴⁸ Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Vron Ware, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism, and History* (London: Verso, 1992).

⁴⁹ To scratch the surface: Antoinette Burton, ed., *Gender, Sexuality, and Colonial Modernities* (London: Routledge, 1999); Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1885* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel, eds., *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992); Claire Midgley, ed., *Gender and Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998); Sara Mills, *Gender and Colonial Space* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005) and a large number of other studies cited elsewhere in this thesis.

⁵⁰ McClintock, 6.

As suggested by McClintock, white women were situated at a particularly complex nexus of issues with regard to gender, race, and empire. On one hand, white British women were placed on a pedestal as the most valuable members of white society. Given their reproductive capacities – and therefore, their responsibility for the future “purity” of the white race – they were also the most in need of protection from “contamination.” On the other hand, this value, and the heightened social position it bestowed, can also be seen as a response to acute anxieties about the susceptibility of white women to that “contamination.” After all, “femininity” is traditionally understood as being characterized by traits that are in direct opposition to those traits that signified proper whiteness: the feminine is emotional, rather than rational; open and permeable rather than contained; and naturally primitive rather than civilized. In short, Mohanram argues, “what made the British woman the innermost, the purest, was precisely that *she was also the boundary*, the space of dilution, making the outer into an inner. At the very moment the British woman played the role of the essential and constitutive of Britishness, she undermined it by showing her potential/ability to contaminate it.”⁵¹ These intersections between whiteness and gender – both femininity and masculinity – will be explored in further detail in Chapter 2.

White women from the colonies found themselves in an even more precarious position. Canadian women have been seen as less confined to the leisurely world of the domestic sphere than their British peers because of the physical and economic necessities of settlement, and simultaneously, as even more limited to the performance of a certain stereotype of respectable femininity

⁵¹ Mohanram, 34 and Chapter 2. See also Dyer, Chapter 5, on the ideal of white femininity.

because of the ideological necessities of colonization.⁵² Though white women in the colonies frequently served as active agents of imperial power in their roles as teachers, missionaries, and “civil housekeepers,” they were first and foremost signs and symbols of the strength and reach of the Empire. The arrival of white women and the subsequent establishment of the relationships and spaces they required to maintain feminine respectability served as an indication that a certain level of civilization had been achieved by that colony.⁵³ Again, white femininity is here defined not only through physical appearance (though it was certainly that as well), but also through a certain set of behaviours and relationships deemed “civilized:” primarily, heterosexual marriage between a white man and a white woman, childbearing, and childrearing, all taking place within the confines of a safe, well-organized home. The links between whiteness and the performance of domesticity form the basis for Chapters 3 and 4.

And yet, as we shall see in Chapter 1, Canadian women (and white colonial women more generally) were not always clearly or unproblematically included in these definitions of whiteness and civility. Even as their whiteness accorded them a privileged position in the imperial hierarchy, as Canadians, they were always themselves both colonizers and colonized, and their civilized, white

⁵² For work on Canadian women and constructions of femininity within the colonial context that does not focus extensively on race, see, for example, Misao Dean, *Practising Femininity: Domestic Realism and the Performance of Gender in Early Canadian Fiction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998); Marian Fowler, *The Embroidered Tent: Five Gentlewomen in Early Canada* (Toronto: Anansi, 1982); Carole Gerson, “Wild Colonial Girls: New Women of the Empire, 1880-1901,” *Journal of Commonwealth and Postcolonial Studies* 3, no. 2 (Fall 1995): 61-78; Susan Jackel, ed. *A Flannel Shirt and Liberty: British Emigrant Gentlewomen in the Canadian West, 1880-1914* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1982).

⁵³ On white femininity in Canada in the context of the colonial project, see Perry (especially Chapters 6 and 7); Jennifer Henderson, *Settler Feminism and Race Making in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003); Pickles; Myra Rutherdale, *Women and the White Man’s God: Gender and Race in the Canadian Mission Field* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2002).

femininity was at risk simply by virtue of their “New World” origins and the proximity to non-white populations that these origins implied. In this respect, an examination of the experiences of white colonial women like Carr, Forbes, Eastlake, McNicoll, and Jones provides an important opportunity to deconstruct the invisibility and normativity of whiteness simply because their own sense of whiteness was in such flux. To paraphrase Bhabha, Canadian women may have been “white” in comparison to the First Nations women and men with whom they shared Canadian soil, but they frequently found themselves dismissed as “not quite” while abroad in London and its environs.⁵⁴ Even tied together by the powerful marker of whiteness then, “The ‘British world’ did not always or unambiguously foster ‘we’.”⁵⁵

IV. Parameters of the study

The five women under examination here shared many similarities and just as many differences. They came from across Canada, from Halifax to Vancouver Island, but all were of white, British, Protestant descent. Some were decidedly of the colonial elite (Helen McNicoll’s father was the Vice-President of CP Rail; Frances Jones’s, the Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia), others from more uncertain origins (Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes’s and Mary Bell Eastlake’s fathers were both civil servants who moved their families frequently; Emily Carr was orphaned before she came of age). Some married (Forbes, Eastlake, and Jones all married English artists they met while abroad), while others formed lifelong

⁵⁴ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 89.

⁵⁵ Morgan, “A Choke of Emotion,” 42.

partnerships with other women (McNicoll) or struck out on their own (famously, Carr). They each worked in a different style, including Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, and Pre-Raphaelitism (and sometimes, all of the above and more), but all exhibited at the most prominent institutions of their day, including the Paris Salon, the Royal Academy, the New English Art Club, the Royal Society of British Artists, the Art Association of Montreal, and the Royal Canadian Academy (to name just a few).

A number of pragmatic difficulties are inherent to a study of little-known artists – particularly those who travelled so widely. There are no individual central archives to consult; indeed, with the exception of Emily Carr, there are often very few textual primary sources at all. Artists' work can be equally hard to find, given that it frequently remains in private collections. In the cases of Forbes, Eastlake, McNicoll, and Jones, both archives and works are scattered across two continents (three, in the case of latter, whose work is also included in New Zealand collections).⁵⁶ Given these limitations, this dissertation generally emphasizes how the images themselves might have functioned in the contexts in which they were created, rather than on what each artist's personal feelings or intentions were with regard to their work. I proceed in four chapters, each examining a different artist (or set of artists) and a different question about the ways in which she negotiated the interlocking levels of home and away within the

⁵⁶ Of particular note here is the work of the Canadian Women Artists History Initiative, led by Kristina Huneault and Janice Anderson, and headquartered in the Department of Art History at Concordia University in Montreal, QC. In addition to digitizing exhibition reviews and compiling bibliographies for a large number of women, CWAHI has done the critical work of bringing together resources on historical Canadian women artists in a central location. The collection includes artist files for all of the women under study here.

context of the British Empire. While Chapters 1 and 2 both examine the experiences of Canadian women in England and the strategies they adopted in order to feel “at home” in the heart of the empire, Chapters 3 and 4 look more closely at the ways in which various connections between the private home and the imperial project appeared in their artwork.

I begin with an account of Emily Carr’s experience as what her contemporary Sara Jeannette Duncan called “A Canadian Girl in London.”⁵⁷ Though known today as the quintessentially Canadian artist, Carr in fact spent five years in London and its environs, from 1899-1904. Considering her work in conjunction with that of a number of other Canadian expatriates and travellers, this first chapter also serves as a broader survey of the issues that Canadian women expatriates faced while in the imperial metropolis. As the heart of the empire to which Canada belonged, London was a natural choice for expatriation; once far away from home and the close supervision of family and friends, women accessed not only an advanced art world, but all of the pleasures and perils of the modern city. Of particular interest are the artist’s autobiography *Growing Pains*, published posthumously in 1946, and her unpublished “London Student Sojourn,” a bound collection of twenty-one colour illustrations, each accompanied by a short poem, created by the artist while in London. Carr’s writing and artwork reveal that she occupied a surprisingly mobile position within the city – a privileged position accorded her by virtue of her white, Protestant, English ancestry. Her status as a tourist from a settler colony “returning” to England gave

⁵⁷ Sara Jeanette Duncan, *Cousin Cinderella: A Canadian Girl in London* (New York: Macmillan, 1908).

her the license, and indeed the expectation, to be curious about, to explore, and to comment on her surroundings. And this she did, both recording her impressions of the crowded streets, shops, and theatres that have traditionally constituted the geography of modernity, and extending this map into marginal spaces like the boarding house. However, Carr and her countrywomen occupied only a liminal space within this city, often dismissed by their English peers as un-modern, uncivilized colonials. As such, I argue that Canadian women's experiences in London are frequently fraught with ambivalence: while recognizing themselves as imperial subjects who had the right to feel "at home" in the capital city, they also registered significant cultural differences that played a role in constructing, maintaining, and often destabilizing their ideas about gender, class, race, and national identity.

In the second chapter, I focus on a very different illustrated book. Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes's elaborately illustrated *King Arthur's Wood*, a retelling of "The Tale of Sir Gareth of Orkeney" from Sir Thomas Malory's fifteenth-century *Le Morte Darthur*, immediately confirmed its author-illustrator's prominent position in the British art world when it was published in 1904. As a deliberate engagement with an explicitly British subject (Arthurian legend) and a quintessentially British style (Pre-Raphaelitism), I argue that the book participated in contemporary debates surrounding both the British Empire and British art. In the nineteenth century, the medieval past referenced in the content and style of *King Arthur's Wood* was prized as a time when class, gender, and racial roles were stable, and elevated in comparison to the alarming social confusion of the

fin-de-siècle present. This appeal to a collective memory of an Anglo-Saxon foundation mythology was a powerful means of uniting a diverse public under a shared heritage of white Britishness. Significantly, *King Arthur's Wood* was a decided shift from the production of her earlier career. Before settling in the Cornish art colony of Newlyn after her marriage to the English artist Stanhope Forbes, Forbes had led a rather international life. In addition to Canada and London, the artist had spent significant periods of time in New York, Munich, the Netherlands, and France. In London, she joined a group of equally cosmopolitan artists, led by fellow North American expatriate J.A.M. Whistler, who were believed by contemporaries to be particularly *anti*-British in their artistic outlook. In view of this early tenuous position within the imperial metropole, I argue, *King Arthur's Wood* functions as a statement of the colonial artist's own claim to being at home in Britain and in the British art world.

I next tackle that most stereotypical genre of nineteenth-century "feminine art" by looking at Mary Bell Eastlake's representations of motherhood, a subject the artist returned to frequently over the course of a long career that included extensive travel not only throughout Britain and the Continent, but also to New Zealand, Tahiti, Thailand, the Philippines, China, Hong Kong, and Japan. In her mobility, Eastlake joins a number of other nineteenth-century "lady travellers" who acted quite contrarily to what was expected of them as middle-class white women. However, this challenge to late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century gender norms was made possible at least partly through the position of racial and imperial privilege they occupied, and, in Eastlake's case, through the

contemporary politics of “maternalism.” Eastlake was, of course, far from the only artist to tackle the subject of maternity in the decades surrounding the turn of the twentieth century, nor were artists by any means the only ones interested in mothers and children at this time. Indeed, the discourse of “happy motherhood” to which her work contributed was virtually omnipresent – so much so that its historical specificity is now nearly invisible and the close, loving relationships depicted by artists like Eastlake are now popularly seen as reflecting a timeless and universal bond. Through an examination of the artist’s representations of both “modern Madonnas” and “Madonnas of the tropics,” however, I argue that this vision of maternity was in fact a Western invention of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and directly related to contemporary beliefs and anxieties about gender, class, race, and empire.

Finally, I return to the conventional understanding of home as a private, feminine sanctuary separate from the outside world through a close analysis of two images: Helen McNicoll’s *The Chintz Sofa* (1913) and Frances Jones’s *In the Conservatory* (1883). Both paintings are Impressionist renderings of female figures in interior spaces absorbed in an activity traditionally coded as “feminine,” and appear on first glance to uphold the ideology of separate spheres. On closer look however, these representations of domestic space reveal their creators’ active participation in public, global networks of politics and commodity consumption within the context of the British Empire. Drawing on recent trends in “thing theory” and material culture studies, I argue that objects evident in the painted interiors – namely, the tropical plants and the eponymous chintz sofa – enable

connections between cultures and enact new kinds of space. Seen in this light, both images reflect a space that is both physically and imaginatively liminal, and as such, betray the precariousness and permeability of the firm division between home and away. Understanding the home as a hybrid space, an intimate version of a “contact zone,” I argue that cross-cultural encounters are constructed, made evident, and ultimately neutralized in these paintings and in the interiors they represent.

My study covers a period that begins in the early 1880s and ends rather abruptly with the outbreak of World War I in 1914. Surrounding the *fin-de-siècle*, these decades were a time of rapid social and political change, particularly for women, and in terms of travel and imperialism. Given the upheaval on all of these fronts, “home,” in all of its senses, was understandably in a state of flux and a magnet for various social anxieties. In this short time span, technological innovations and a booming economy made global travel faster, more pleasant, and more accessible than ever, before the war made the leading of a cosmopolitan lifestyle impossible. The 1880s also kicked off the “Scramble for Africa,” spurring heightened political and economic rivalries within Europe that reflected the overseas European competition to partition Africa and its resources, and which ultimately boiled over in 1914. Moreover, this period was also one of significant change in Canada. In the decades following Confederation in 1867, the newly christened Dominion of Canada was forced to re-negotiate its relationship to Britain and to the rest of the British World. One notable change was the shift from being colonized to being colonizers, a new reputation and responsibility that

was perhaps most evident in the enactment of the Indian Act in 1876. In both Britain and Canada, the fight for women's suffrage dominated public political discourse alongside these colonial debates, and an increasing number of middle-class women entered the professions, including as artists. Indeed, these decades were a period of major gains for white women in the art world, in both Europe and North America: by the turn of the century, women had won the long fight to study at the Royal Academy in London and the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, and were exhibiting alongside their male colleagues at all of the most preeminent institutions of the day. These advances were also halted with the outbreak of war, which tore public attention away from women's rights and caused society to turn a critical eye to the "overly-feminized" society from which the war had been wrought. WWI thus forms a logical end point for this study, though it would perhaps have come to a natural end at that time even without upheaval in Europe. By 1915, Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes and Helen McNicoll had both passed away at prematurely young ages. Frances Jones had been struck by rheumatoid arthritis, and could no longer paint. Emily Carr had returned to Victoria, having failed to get her career off the ground in London and Vancouver; she spent the war years and much of the 1920s running a boarding house before she was so famously "discovered" by the Group of Seven. Only Mary Bell Eastlake continued to work as an artist through the tumultuous teens, painting and exhibiting widely up until her death in 1951.

V. From Victoria to London

We will begin our examination of home with a brief glimpse at one artist's experience leaving it. Emily Carr's "Sister and I from Victoria to London" provides an effective point from which to launch into a discussion of Canadian women's experiences away from home. An account of the artist's journey from her hometown Victoria, the illustrated diary chronicles the pleasures and travails – and usually more of the latter – experienced by Emily and her older sister Alice *en route* to London in 1910. Composed of forty-six pen and ink drawings, each accompanied by a written description of the action contained within, the book provides a rare visual account of cross-country and transatlantic travel in the early twentieth century.

Why look at expatriates and travellers? Through their mobility, women like Carr, Forbes, Eastlake, McNicoll, and Jones not only transgressed the boundary between home and away, but acted as links that held the two in tension. It is now a well-told story that transatlantic travel increased by leaps and bounds in the decades prior to World War I. The advent of rail and steamship travel, together with the growth of a middle-class in possession of a new level of disposable income to enjoy it, meant that more North American men and women were crossing the Atlantic for work, education, and pleasure than ever before.⁵⁸ A

⁵⁸ Useful studies of transatlantic travel in this period include Terry Caesar, *Forgiving the Boundaries: Home as Abroad in American Travel* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995); Rhea Foster Dulles, *Americans Abroad: Two Centuries of European Travel* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1964); Kröller; Harvey Levenstein, *Seductive Journey: American Tourists in France from Jefferson to the Jazz Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Morgan, *A Happy Holiday*; Morgan, "A Choke of Emotion;" Christopher Mulvey, *Transatlantic Manners: Social Patterns in Nineteenth-Century Anglo-American Travel Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Christopher Mulvey, *Anglo-American Landscapes: A Study of Nineteenth-Century American Travel Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Mary Suzanne Schriber, *Writing Home: American Women Abroad, 1830-1920* (Charlottesville:

number of scholars have recently focused their attention on the particularities of travel from the colonies to the metropolis – a route that historian Antoinette Burton has called “the voyage in.”⁵⁹ Uncoincidentally, North American transatlantic travel grew in popularity at the very time that Canada and the United States faced new challenges to their nascent national identities: the social effects of expansion westward, a changing relationship with indigenous populations, and especially increased immigration from new and different countries meant that the British cultural foundation of each was becoming rather shaky. A desire for travel to Britain was a popular response to these challenges as a means of shoring up white cultural identity and claiming one’s heritage, and therefore seen as a critical tool for connecting the British World.⁶⁰

A number of authors have described the act of transatlantic travel (and tourism more generally) as the performance of a ritual. The experience of travel is always already prescribed to a certain extent: routes and destinations are planned ahead of time, and personal responses are always mediated through the experiences of the thousands who have gone before.⁶¹ This was particularly true for North American travellers going to Britain, a voyage that, as will be discussed further in Chapter 1, was frequently conceived of as a kind of secular pilgrimage.

University of Virginia Press, 1997); William Stowe, *Going Abroad: European Travel in Nineteenth Century American Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

⁵⁹ Antoinette Burton, *At the Heart of Empire: Indians and the Colonial Encounter in Late Victorian Britain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 3. See also Inderpal Grewal, *Home and Harem: Nation, Gender, Empire, and the Cultures of Travel* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996); Morgan, *A Happy Holiday*; Morgan, “A Choke of Emotion;” Neil Parsons, *King Khama, Emperor Joe, and the Great White Queen: Victorian Britain through African Eyes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Rozina Visram, *Ayahs, Lascars, and Princes: The History of Indians in Britain, 1700-1947* (London: Pluto, 1986); Woollacott.

⁶⁰ Kröller, 26-7; Morgan, *A Happy Holiday*, 109-15; Schriber, 20-1.

⁶¹ For instance, Schriber, 16-17; Stowe, 18-19.

Travel books like Carr's – what William Stowe has called the "liturgy" of travel⁶² – not only describe to their audiences the physical journey undertaken, but the emotional journey as well.

In this respect, "Sister and I from Victoria to London" might be described as highly generic. Carr covers all of the most popular themes of travel literature: the farewell scene, her impressions of the various hotels, trains, and ships she passes through, homesickness, seasickness, problems with language differences, problems with locals, problems with fellow travellers, and as we have already seen, problems with the service industry. The artist also adopts a conventional voice in her writing: anecdotal, authoritative, sometimes awestruck, and more frequently dismissive. The accompanying illustrations – straightforward sketches in pen and ink, and fairly monochromatic in shades of yellow, blue, and black – echo this voice in terms of both content and style. The effect of this simplicity is an impression that the images are accurate, documentary recordings of the artist's experiences, if also heightened for comedic effect.

Her account begins, as travel literature tends to do, with a description of her parting from friends and family – "a body guard of sniffing faithfuls" – and an illustration that shows the artist and her sister hugging and kissing their pets goodbye (fig. 7). From Victoria, her route takes her by train through Alberta, the Prairies, and finally to Quebec, where the sisters boarded the ship to Liverpool. Throughout, Carr's narrative is populated with colourful characters (figs. 8-11). An artist, met in a hotel in Lake Louise, is imposingly built, authoritative, and dismissive in expression. The "manageress" of an inn in Calgary sits at her desk

⁶² Stowe, 29.

with her back to the viewer, her hair tied up in a prim bun; Carr notes that she is busy studying a book of sermons. A new mother dotes cloyingly over her baby, for which the artist has no patience. Onboard ship, a “highly irritating and noxious” official who takes pleasure in “spy-cattling and ordering people round” is “venomously detested by all.” These diverse personalities are each conveyed with just a few lines and reduced to little more than types.

Carr’s general misanthropy comes across frequently, and she does not mince words (or brushstrokes) when she is displeased; her only real affection appears when she talks about her dog Billie. Accompanying the dramatic description of the “paroxysms of woe” she felt while suffering from seasickness, for example, is an illustration of the artist’s fellow afflicted sitting unhappily on deck, huddled together on “rotten row” with heads bowed, bodies covered in long coats and shawls, and faces that reflect their misery (fig. 12). Even before boarding, Carr faced challenges to her patience: “Banff is a beastly hole,” she pronounces; the train ride to Calgary, “unspeakably wretched.” Much of her ire is directed toward her fellow passengers. Two particularly vivid anecdotes reveal to the frequent traveller how little has changed in the last hundred years. In the first, the Carr sisters attempt to sleep on a long train ride while an indiscreet couple nestle too close for comfort in front of them, and a man steals their peaches behind (fig. 13). In the second, the theme of undesirable travel companions continues with a picture of a train car full of crying children (fig. 14). With just a few sketched heads, Carr captures the discomforts of travel and the variety of people that it throws you into contact with, for good or for ill.

The unlucky CPR agent tasked with locating Carr's luggage was hardly the only service person to succumb to the artist's wrath. On only the second day of her journey, when a hotel ceiling collapses on her head, Carr must confront the hotel manager (fig. 15). In a now familiar tone, she writes, "I tackled the manager myself knowing how velvet soft sister would let him down. In fact I had the night watchman still on duty go up and extract him from his bed, he appeared dour and surley, but in about fifteen minutes, we boarded our train leaving a very meek and wilted manager and with a rectified bill in our pockets." The illustration accompanying the entry shows the artist standing stoutly, face to face with a man who towers over her by more than a head. Her shoulders are set squarely, her chin jutting out in reproach of the manager who looks down, clasping his hands ashamedly. Her sister, head down, eyes closed, carries the luggage behind Emily, looking embarrassed by the latter's forwardness. Having learned her lesson, the artist is more careful about choosing her rooms at a later Medicine Hat hotel: the illustration shows the artist, her nose to the ground, smelling a spot on the floor from which she believes a bad smell to be emanating, while her sister looks on, exasperated once again. Unsatisfied, the next illustration shows the sisters trailing after a man downtrodden with their bags and personal objects, going from room to room in search of a suitable resting place (only, as the narrative tells us, to end up in the very first one they had rejected) (fig. 16).

More than amusing anecdotes, Carr's stories clearly reveal the trials and tribulations of women travelling alone, and the threat to respectable white femininity risked by independent travel (made especially evident by the prim and

proper Alice's disapproval of her sister's actions). They moreover also "offer us glimpses of the relationships and structures of power in which tourists were embedded, most notably those of class, but also of gender, ethnicity and race, and empire and nation."⁶³ Indeed, it is the service workers of Quebec who receive the bulk of Emily's wrath: upon arrival in that city, for example, the "torpid stupidity" of French cab drivers disillusioned the sisters, opening eyes that had been once "dreamy with romance" about the town. Later, frustrated by her inability to understand the French-speaking family with whom she is staying when they try to give her a glass of water before bed, Emily asks for "enough water to drown the entire French-speaking population of Quebec." The general annoyance Carr shows everyone she meets over the course of her trip is common in travel accounts; like other writers, however, her encounters with people of other ethnicities and the working classes are generally treated as nuisances rather than genuinely problematic. While her gender may have put her at a disadvantage in terms of freedom of mobility, the artist's whiteness and relatively privileged class status allowed her to comfortably dominate the workers she encounters. Furthermore, by putting herself in the position of power in these relationships throughout her narrative, it is possible for Carr to adopt an air of authority, wisdom, and worldliness for her audience.⁶⁴

However, historian Cecilia Morgan also notes the potential for subversion of this class dynamic. After all, tourists were dependent on their service industry acquaintances for help, advice, and so on. In one image representing a journey by

⁶³ Morgan, *A Happy Holiday*, 33.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 53-57.

carriage in the Rockies, Carr hints at the potential for danger for women travelling who must put themselves into the care of male strangers (fig. 17). She describes the scene: “sister billie and I are on the box seat with the driver, the hills are precipitious, and the driver commands sister to lend a foot on the break.” The drawing shows the two ladies again dwarfed by their male counterpart: next to the exaggerated size of the driver, Alice is comically tiny and delicate looking. Carr tells her reader to “mark their feet side by each” and indeed, the two feet, one enormous, one tiny and almost touching form an interesting focus of the picture, while Emily sits to the side, smiling. The discrepancy between their sizes makes clear the potential vulnerability of women travelling without male accompaniment.

Could, Morgan asks, drivers, hotel managers, and railway workers take advantage of the system and turn it to their own ends?⁶⁵ Carr would certainly think so. Perhaps the most revealing section of her narrative is a series of seven illustrations describing her run-in with one “Job Jewy, Dealer in Antiques” in Quebec City. Setting off to “do” Quebec by shopping, she buys what she believes to be an antique French pewter tea set in the aforementioned antique shop. The accompanying illustration shows the store sign stating the above name and title, and a shop window that masks a vague shadowy figure within its depths (fig. 18). The name ascribed to the shopkeeper makes the Jewish stereotype activated by Carr very clear. The Carr sisters, smugly proud of their bargaining skills – Emily brags that they possessed “that peculiarly self-satisfied feminine expression, significant of having made a *shrewd* bargain” – go back to their rented room to

⁶⁵ Ibid., *A Happy Holiday*, 56-57.

polish it, only to find that the inscription reads “Stirling electroplate Sheffield.” Although she chalks the experience up to there being “a lot to learn in life” and demands that her sister forget it ever happened, Emily continues to rail against the antique dealer’s fraud for another two entries (never mind that she herself intended to be dishonest to her friends at home about the origins of the tea set, planning to tell them it was a family heirloom). But while she can complain to her diary, there is nothing to be done in terms of legal repercussions or financial reimbursement: because the ladies are already on their way out of Quebec, the dealer, able to work the tourist industry to his advantage, gets away with it.

Other illustrations and stories in “Sister and I...” reveal still more about Carr’s class and gender anxiety. This appears most strongly in the artist’s representation of and commentary on her own body and that of her sister – a recurrent theme throughout the series. Though an earlier photograph of all five Carr sisters shows that the physical difference between Emily (on the lower right, with a shawl) and Alice (seated next to Emily, in black) was not, at least at that time, extreme (fig. 19),⁶⁶ in the artist’s drawings, the sisters are contrasted much more strongly. In one pointed example, the image is divided in two (fig. 20), with the two figures with their backs to one another going into separate restaurants: her sister enters a door marked “herb dinners,” while Emily’s door is marked “Good square meals” (rather clearly revealing the artist’s views on vegetarianism). The sisters’ bodies seem to reflect their meal choices: Alice is thin and dainty, while “all-round eater” Emily is big and sturdy. Their accessories echo their bodies as

⁶⁶ Emily was the youngest of five sisters; Alice, the next youngest. The other sisters pictured are Elizabeth, Edith, and Clara. Emily also had a younger brother, Dick, who died at a young age.

well: a big hat and big umbrella for Emily and small ones for Alice, suggesting a feminine delicacy that extends right down to her tiny shoes and creating a contrast between the sturdy, solid, down to earth sister and the prim, proper, and constantly exasperated sister. Furthermore, most of the other women who appear throughout the book are represented as similar to her sister: tall, thin, tightly bound hair, thin silhouettes (recall the manageress and mother, for example). Carr's stocky body, round face and frequently messy hair set her apart from the rest of the women she meets, and she is always pictured with her oversized black umbrella and a large hat, even indoors, giving the artist the distinct air of eccentricity.

The image of the artist as unstylish and unwomanly persists throughout the diary (and indeed throughout her London work as a whole, as we shall see). Anxieties about her clothing, accessories, and body type appear to be constantly on her mind; she is particularly insecure about measuring up to feminine fashion standards. She takes more than a hint of pleasure in describing and illustrating her sister's fall on a train platform, "tearing a fearful gash in her new travelling costume, the pride of her heart and the envy of mine all the trip." It is only on a glacier in the Rockies that she experiences one moment away from worry, recording that the scenery "has such effect upon us that we cease to fret upon the antique cut of our garments, caring not that we have neither 'umbrella' hats nor 'hobble' skirts which are at present in vogue."

Even as she is dismissive of Alice's taste in umbrellas – "I favour the large, useful plebian variety and she, the small useless, ornamental variety highly

patrician,” she reports – Carr seems constantly anxious about her own performance of an appropriate middle-class femininity. This is especially true of her time on ship; clearly the loss of her trunk was a disturbing incident for the artist for a more significant reason than the frustrating incompetence of the train company. One anecdote deserves to be quoted at length:

And now came time to embark on the Empress of Ireland for Liverpool all our warm and sea faring clothes were in our lost trunk. Sister after much fitting and refitting got a Quebecian coat, but I stoutly refused to follow her example, feeling that, the CPR have lost my clothes, and that I will in a way *even up* on CPR by embarking on their vessel looking dowdy and ill dressed. I did buy a rug for the deck in which I intended to swathe myself and forlornly promenade ~~the deck~~, a spectacle of reproach to them. “At least” prayed sister, “for my sake have your linen duster washed it *is* so spotty”. I humoured her in this, and the wretched thing shrunk so immoderately, it was barely more than an eaton jacket; and I was obliged to carry my arms at right angles, and indeed my discomfiture was so great I took to my bed but my miseries apparently made no impression on the CPR whatever.

The illustration shows the two sisters contrasted once again (fig. 21); while her sister admires her neat silhouette in a hand mirror, clearly pleased by her new coat, Emily struggles in the background with an ill-fitting jacket, looking lumpy and awkward.

Alice was not unreasonable to fret about their clothing on board.

Considerable amounts of ink were spilled in guidebooks giving advice to women on how to dress for a transatlantic voyage. A tourist guide published by Boston’s Women’s Rest Tour Association exhorts its readers to dress well, explaining “If you occupy on the steamer anything above the position of absolute invalid, you will be assisting, much of the time, at a sort of mild festivity, and, unless entirely lacking in the natural feminine desire to look your best, you will then deeply

regret masquerading as a guy,” and further encouraging the tourist to think about sprucing up the “new, stout, plain and pretty dress”⁶⁷ recommended for ship travel by the Association with accessories like kerchiefs, scarves, and especially nice shoes, which will be “conspicuous objects when one arranges herself in a steamer chair.”⁶⁸ Travel writer Mary Cadwalader Jones, too, contributes commentary that is apt to leave the reader anxious about whether she is up to snuff:

On some of the very fashionable [ships] women are now said to dress almost as much as if they were at home, but that certainly seems unnecessary. Heroines in novels are always described as bewitchingly lovely at sea, but to more ordinary mortals it is decidedly trying. Unless the hair curls naturally as tightly as a water-spaniel’s, it is blown into straight wisps, and a few days on deck will usually give a liberal coat of sunburn to the complexion. Girls on their first voyage often look as if the steamer had carried them off from the dock by mistake; but, on the other hand, old travellers who keep old clothes for the ocean are apt to have the air of pauper emigrants; while one sometimes sees a despondent soul who gives up the struggle in despair and makes occasional visits to the deck in a large cloak worn over a dressing-gown.⁶⁹

While amusing to the contemporary reader, guidebook instructions on how to dress and Carr’s evident anxiety over her appearance reveal the extent to which women were required to maintain a certain level of respectable middle- or upper-class white femininity while onboard ship, and while travelling in general. The artist’s threat to embarrass the CPR was essentially a threat to look unfeminine on their boat, thereby ruining the illusion that ship travel was a proper, civilized experience for white women. It was, as Jones suggests, inappropriate for a middle-class white woman to resemble a “pauper emigrant.”

⁶⁷ Women’s Rest Tour Association, *A Summer in England, with a Continental Supplement: A Handbook for the Use of American Women*, 5th ed. (Boston: A.J. Ochs and Company, 1900), 9.

⁶⁸ WRTA, 11.

⁶⁹ Mary Cadwalader Jones, *European Travel for Women: Notes and Suggestions* (New York: Macmillan, 1900), 52-53.

This was a potent threat given that the ship was frequently conceived of as a kind of liminal space, and the transatlantic voyage as a kind of ritual passing where everyday social norms did not apply. Though certainly segregated, the ship was believed to be a potential site of class and race confusion. Not everyone onboard was there for tourist pleasure, after all: some passengers were immigrating or emigrating, while for others, the ship was a place of work. People in steerage and in the labour spaces of the boat were in fact recommended tourist sights for first- and second-class passengers, and this contact within the close confines of the ship, could lead to class mixing that would be frowned upon on land.⁷⁰ After one of these sight-seeing forays to steerage, for example, Canadian writer Maria Lauder's fictional travel party takes up the cause of a dying Irish girl, moving her out of her bunk to care for her before she is finally given a burial at sea. These events are described by the narrator in an overly sentimental tone that fetishizes the working-class Irish girl.⁷¹ On the other hand, these cross-cultural encounters also allowed first- and second-class passengers to distinguish themselves as a distinct group. Whether using Irish immigrants and the men and women who worked on the ship as tourist spectacles, or through the blackface minstrel shows that Morgan describes as the most popular shipboard entertainments, the ship was "a space in which white identity was reinforced."⁷²

As documented in "Sister and I..." the liminal experience of travel clearly provided the opportunity for Emily Carr to think through traditional ideas about

⁷⁰ Levenstein, 127-28; Morgan, *A Happy Holiday*, 38-39; Woollacott, 24-27.

⁷¹ Maria Elise Turner Lauder, *Evergreen Leaves, Being Notes from My Travel Book, by 'Toofie'* (Toronto: Belford Brothers, 1877), 25-28.

⁷² Morgan, *A Happy Holiday*, 44.

the performance of gender, class, and race. Going “away” threw the norms of “home” and what it meant to be “at home” into stark relief. “In the act of freeing themselves physically from geographical constraints,” literary scholar Mary Suzanne Schriber argues, travel provided women with the opportunity to “free themselves from less tangible ideological boundaries hemming them in.”⁷³ Carr’s time in London would occasion even more serious challenges to the artist’s identity. While the heart of the empire offered professional opportunities and the glamour of a modern metropolis to a colonial “returning home,” Canadian women soon found that they were not always welcomed with open arms. Nevertheless, Carr’s final story and illustration is her most optimistic (fig. 22). After a chase around Liverpool, the sisters are happily reunited with their luggage at long last. They tour the city for fun, where Emily buys an African grey parrot, and finally hop on the train to London, “arriv[ing] that night in the world’s metropolis: past trials forgot, and ready to tackle the future ones.”

⁷³ Schriber, 8.

Chapter 1

Not a London lady? Emily Carr's British homecoming

I. Introduction

It was an uncanny flower with a pouchy body as big as a pigeon's egg. It was yellow, splotched with brown-red. At the top it had a five-point purple crown. Live little veins of red laced its pouchy body. Not only was it unusual, there was mystery in its dull glowing, too, some queerness almost sinister, very, very un-English ...

We put the orchid in a vase by itself. In my room I had other flowers but this one stood aloof like a stranger in a crowd whose language he does not understand. It grew a little larger; its pouch bulged pouchier; it poised its crown a little more erect. When it was mature, entirely complete, it stayed so, not altering, not fading, week after week till six were past. A tremendously dignified, regal bloom. Everyone who looked at it seemed impelled to reverence, as though the orchid was a little more than flower.

In the dark one night the orchid abruptly died. Died completely as it had lived. Died like the finish of a bird's song. In the morning it was shriveled to a wisp. Hokey took it away. There was a black, forlorn miss on my bedside table.

Suddenly I imagined that I understood what had been the link between the strange flower and me. Both of us were thoroughly un-English.

Emily Carr, *Pause: A Sketchbook*.¹

A decade before embarking on the transatlantic voyage that would inspire "Sister and I from Victoria to London," Emily Carr took her first trip overseas. Convinced by visiting artists who called the West Coast "crude, unpaintable" and claimed that a European education was a professional necessity,² the artist left Victoria, British Columbia in 1899 at the late age of 28 to enroll at London's Westminster School of Art. She spent the following five years in England, based first in the capital, and subsequently in the rural artist colonies of St. Ives and

¹ Emily Carr, *Pause: A Sketchbook* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2007), 58-59.

² Emily Carr, *Growing Pains: The Autobiography of Emily Carr* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2005), 106-7.

Bushey, before illness demanded a retreat to the East Anglia Sanatorium and, ultimately, home to Victoria. Carr's rather ambivalent description of the orchid that brightened her room during her eighteen-month sanatorium stay – bright, colourful, and exciting to see, but also uncanny, mysterious, queer, “almost sinister” – functions equally well as a summary of her experience as a white colonial woman living as an expatriate in the heart of the British Empire. Published posthumously in *Pause*, a short collection of stories, poems, and illustrations chronicling that sad final stage of her time abroad, the passage reveals that the plant did initially grow, flower, and mature; that Carr did, for a time at least, thrive in her new environment. The excerpt also, however, captures the negative side of the foreign experience in London: the orchid is “aloof,” like a “stranger in a crowd whose language he does not understand.” Eventually, the plant stops thriving and dies, just as Carr was ultimately forced to remove herself from the British capital. The artist makes the link between the flower and herself explicit in her final line: both were “thoroughly un-English.”

While Paris has deservedly received the lion's share of scholarly attention to the subject of North American artists studying abroad, Carr was by no means an outlier in her decision to go to London. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a large number of Canadian women artists relocated to that city in pursuit of personal and professional opportunities unavailable to them in their colonial country of birth; many never returned to Canada on a permanent basis. As the heart of an empire that was unparalleled in population and area, London was the natural destination of choice for men and women from across the

globe who counted themselves members of the British World. Travel to the imperial capital was understood as an effective means of solidifying political and economic connections between the disparate areas of that entity; it did so by encouraging strong personal ties between colony and metropole. For colonial tourists, travel to Britain was about more than the pleasures of sightseeing: it also enticingly offered the possibility of locating one's ancestral roots and, as one tourist guidebook advertised, of being "among a kindred people."³ "Kindred people," of course, suggests the limitation of this practice to white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestants of British heritage (and moreover, to those who could afford the undertaking). Thus conceived of as a kind of ritual homecoming – a re-integration into the familial fold of the Empire – a trip to London was socially acceptable, even expected, for a young white Canadian woman, and often encouraged as a kind of finishing school for the potentially rough-around-the-edges colonial girl. Assured by their families, friends, and tourist guides that while "England may not actually be 'home' to the younger civilizations which are its offshoots ... 'it contains all the title-deeds,'"⁴ Canadian women set out on a secular pilgrimage when they stepped onto the boat in Montreal, Quebec City, or Halifax, leaving one home to look for another.

Abroad and far away from the close supervision of family and friends, Emily Carr found in London not only a significantly more advanced art world

³ Women's Rest Tour Association, *A Summer in England, with a Continental Supplement: A Handbook for the Use of American Women*. 5th ed. (Boston: A.J. Ochs and Company, 1900), 6-7. For surveys of Canadian travel to Europe in the pre-WWI period, see especially Cecilia Morgan, *'A Happy Holiday: 'English Canadians and Transatlantic Tourism, 1870-1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008) and Eva-Marie Kröller, *Canadian Travellers in Europe, 1851-1900* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987).

⁴ WRTA, 6-7.

than existed in Canada at the turn of the twentieth century, but a taste of modern urban life, with all of its pleasures and perils. The artist's evocative descriptions of her "solitary pokings round the great city"⁵ reveal the extent to which she inhabited the public spaces of London, contradicting the traditional narrative of women's absence from the modern city. As a white colonial tourist, Carr was in fact actively encouraged to freely explore her new surroundings, and to make social and professional connections that would strengthen the bond between Canada and its colonial parent. And yet, Canadian women were situated insecurely within these networks, and often dismissed by their English peers as "uncivilized" or "colonial." These were labels that not only challenged the legitimacy of their claim to belonging in London, but also called into question the relative standards of their femininity, class, and whiteness. As such, Canadian women's impressions of the imperial metropolis were most often marked by the same ambivalence that characterizes Carr's description of her orchid: while recognizing themselves as British subjects who had the right to call themselves at home in the physical and social public spaces of the city, they also encountered significant resistance to that goal, and were forced to re-think their own and Canada's position in the British World.

Given this precarious position, Emily Carr's experience of the capital city was rather conflicted. Looking at the artist's work in conjunction with that of other Canadian expatriate women artists like Florence Carlyle and Sophie Pemberton, and that of Canadian writers such as Sara Jeannette Duncan, Kit Coleman, Emily Murphy, and Maria Lauder, it is clear that Carr's outlook is in

⁵ Carr, *Growing Pains*, 178.

line with the attitudes of the large number of Canadian women who made the homecoming trip to London. Even so, very little attention has been devoted to the five years she spent in England. Although the artist has received a great deal of critical and popular notice, scholars have tended to situate her exclusively within the Canadian context; indeed, she is frequently held up as the quintessential Canadian artist. The narrative of an eccentric woman who rejected the social and artistic norms of old-fashioned Victoria in favour of modernism and an independent life in the bush has evolved into a (partly self-created) mythology that looms large over any discussion of the artist's work.⁶ This myth leaves little room for a consideration of a traditional academic education pursued outside of the country to which she is so strongly affiliated. However, the artist herself provides an extensive report on her time abroad, in both written and visual form. In addition to the lengthy account included in her popular autobiography *Growing Pains* (published posthumously in 1946), Carr recorded her impressions of her adopted city in a volume she entitled "London Student Sojourn," one of several

⁶ The story of Emily Carr's life has been told ably elsewhere. Significant biographies of the artist include Paula Blanchard, *The Life of Emily Carr* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1987); Doris Shadbolt, *Emily Carr* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1990); Doris Shadbolt, *The Art of Emily Carr* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, and Company, 1979); Maria Tippet, *Emily Carr: A Biography* (Toronto: Anansi, 2006); Sharyn Rohlfen Udall, *Carr, O'Keeffe, Kahlo: Places of Their Own* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000). More personal accounts of the artist's life have been written by Carr's friend and fellow artist Edythe Hembroff-Schleicher: *Emily Carr: The Untold Story* (Saanichton, BC: Hancock House, 1978) and *M.E.: A Portrait of Emily Carr* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, and Company, 1969). The most recent major exhibition of Carr's work was held at the NGC in 2006; the accompanying catalogue is Charles Hill et al., *Emily Carr: New Perspectives on a Canadian Icon* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2006).

A notable contribution to an understanding of the creation of the Carr myth is Stephanie Kirkwood Walker's study of the artist, a useful text that provides not another biography, but an examination of the ways in which Carr's life and personality have been constructed for contemporary audiences by her biographers (including Carr herself) (*This Woman in Particular: Contexts for the Biographical Image of Emily Carr* [Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1996]). Recently, Gerta Moray has also acknowledged the mythologizing tendency in Carr scholarship with a discussion of how previous literature and exhibitions have created the artist's current reputation (Gerta Moray, *Unsettling Encounters: First Nations Imagery in the Art of Emily Carr* [Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006], 2-19).

collections of illustrations she completed while abroad. If *Growing Pains*, written and published late in the artist's career, offers a frequently derogatory view of London, "London Student Sojourn" paints a rather different picture.⁷

"London Student Sojourn" is a relatively large, bound set of twenty-one colour watercolours, each accompanied by a short typed poem. Each simple, graphic image takes up a full page, and is set against a background of dark paper, allowing the bright colours to jump off the page; together, the series provides a rare and valuable visual account of a young woman living independently in a major metropolis at the turn of the twentieth century. Unfolding through a sequence of third-person vignettes, the poems and illustrations focus on the

⁷ With the exception of *Pause* (1953, re-published 2007), which is in the collection of the McMichael Canadian Art Collection (Kleinburg, ON), Carr's sketchbooks from her British period are now located in the British Columbia Archives (Emily Carr fonds, BCA) and have not been published. In addition to "London Student Sojourn," these include "Sister and I from Victoria to London," "The Olsson Student," and sketchbooks from her time in St. Ives and Bushey. A small selection of images from these books were included in the catalogue of the 2006 NGC exhibition and are discussed briefly by Johanne Lamoureux in her essay for that text ("The Other French Modernity of Emily Carr," in *Emily Carr: New Perspectives on a Canadian Icon* [Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2006], 51-53).

Instead, scholars and popular audiences have tended to privilege the memories the artist records in *Growing Pains*, refusing to see Carr's time in London as a significant period in her life and artistic development. However, the context in which Carr's impressions of London were written makes this tactic problematic. Written at the end of her life, the autobiography follows a traditionally modernist narrative about the artist as an isolated genius who discovers modern art and self-expression within herself, as opposed to through formal training and official institutions. It is perhaps unsurprising then that she gives no credit to her academic training in London (even going as far as apparently destroying most of the works she produced during this period). When scholars have mentioned her period in London, most have taken the artist at her word and accepted her description of the city and its art schools as dull and old-fashioned as fact, most devoting little attention to her time in Britain. The artist's 1910-11 trip to France has fared slightly better in terms of scholarship: see Lamoureux and Ian Thom, *Emily Carr in France* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1991).

The dismissal of Carr's time in England may have also had a nationalist cause. Carr's major supporters during her later life and after her death included Lawren Harris (of the Group of Seven) and Ira Dilworth (whom she met when he was regional director of the CBC); both men acted as trustees of her estate upon her death and were involved in the publication and editing of her numerous books (Shadbolt, *The Art of Emily Carr*, 12-13). Both men, and Carr herself, were well-served by positioning themselves as uniquely Canadian figures in the mid-century climate of emergent Canadian nationalism in culture and the arts, marked most notably by the Massey Commission, which was initiated in 1949, three years after *Growing Pains* was first published.

artist's experience in a crowded London boarding house. The book does not include representations of the streets, cafés, and theatres that have become the accepted signs of public modernity; nor, however, does it depict the intimate private sphere of the modern bourgeois woman. Carr's boarding house is an alternative, but equally modern site: an in-between space that is neither fully private nor public. As such, the illustrations and poems of "London Student Sojourn" provide an effective framework for an exploration of the artist's own liminal position in the heart of empire, and an examination of the ways in which she and other Canadian women navigated the unclear line between local and foreigner: between being at home and being away from home.

II. Borders and borders

The preface to "London Student Sojourn" calls for any lonely, homesick student to find her way to Mrs. Dodds' boarding house, a large establishment in the West End neighbourhood of Bloomsbury that catered specifically to students. There, Carr warns, she may not find glamour ("‘Tis not luxury and ease / ‘Tis but living in a squeeze"), but will find a place to call her home away from home. After disappointing experiences at her first two lodgings – the first, "smeared by [the] smug gentility" of roommates and a house mother who disparaged her Canadian upbringing; the next, run by a drunk and frequently inappropriate landlady⁸ – the artist was happy to find Mrs. Dodds' boarding house clean, welcoming, and its proprietor friendly and eager to take responsibility for her

⁸ Carr, *Growing Pains*, 118-120 and 145-49.

foreign customers' time in London.⁹ Carr's struggle to find good housing was not rare. For women arriving in a foreign city only to be faced with what must have appeared to be innumerable options and obstacles, finding appropriate accommodations was often the first and most daunting task at hand. In *Studying Art Abroad*, a handbook for North American women art students, May Alcott acknowledges this intimidating project by dedicating a considerable portion of her tourist guide to advice on the safest and most convenient locations and types of housing, noting that London's enormous size made a visitor's choices in that city particularly important.¹⁰ In addition to recommending Carr's eventual Bloomsbury destination, Alcott also advises her readers to seek out shared flats and boarding houses (rather than hotels), specifically because of the way in which they merge the public and private spheres by enabling essential public social connections for solitary women new to the city within the confines of a safe and respectable space.¹¹

The boarding house was an interesting choice of subject for Carr. Varied in size and services offered, the boarding house was an essentially modern space, the product of social and economic change in the decades following the Industrial Revolution and the migration of workers from the countryside to the city that it

⁹ Ibid., 159.

¹⁰ May Alcott, *Studying Art Abroad, and How to do it Cheaply* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1879), 43. The author also includes advice for lodging in Paris and Rome; for her advice on housing in London, see 19-21. May Alcott was herself an artist, best known for her illustrations for the first edition of her sister Louisa's 1868 novel *Little Women* (and for being the inspiration for that story's Amy).

¹¹ Ibid., 21. Other tourist guides also recommend the boarding house for these same reasons (Mary Cadwalader Jones, *European Travel for Women: Notes and Suggestions* [New York: Macmillan, 1900], 98-102; WRTA, 17-18).

Like Carr, Helen McNicoll also settled in Bloomsbury; the social and political significance of the Bloomsbury address is further considered in Chapter 4 of this thesis. Alcott also recommends the Chelsea and Kensington neighbourhoods where Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes, Sophie Pemberton, and Florence Carlyle (among others) lived while in London.

occasioned. British boarding houses further increased in number in the second half of the nineteenth century, when the entrance of middle-class women into the professional world made safe, affordable, and respectable accommodations for independent women a necessity and an early feminist rallying cause. In contrast to the traditional imagined geographies of modernity however, the boarding house refuses any stable boundary between public and private space. In this respect, the boarding house joined other institutions such as military barracks, orphanages, workhouses, and hospitals as modern sites that were impossible to categorize by conventional standards.¹² Such spaces were frequently a target for social anxiety, as historian Leonore Davidoff explains, not only because lodgers “tended to be the ‘semi-autonomous young persons’ who have always made authorities anxious,”¹³ but because the types of relationships these spaces encouraged were perceived to contribute to the breakdown of the bourgeois family structure by introducing monetary transactions to the private household.¹⁴ “If family relationships became commercialized,” she writes,

there would be no way of maintaining the careful façade of strict sexual divisions and, by extension, no way of enforcing sex and age hierarchies. For both men and women, the fear was that all the vaunted domestic felicities might not in reality stand up to the temptations of being able to live in situations where cash could buy most, if not all, of the ‘comforts of home,’ without assuming the long-term obligations and emotional entanglements of marriage and domesticity.¹⁵

¹² Leonore Davidoff, “The Separation of Home and Work? Landladies and Lodgers in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century England,” in *Worlds Between: Historical Perspectives on Gender and Class* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 162.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 163.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 154-59.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 156.

In short, men and women could now pay to replicate the relationships they were meant to experience in the private family home, thus avoiding any need for those “real” attachments, and therefore threatening the delicate balance of a social system based entirely on a certain ideal of home.

Historian Angela Woollacott elaborates on Davidoff’s point with specific reference to the experience of colonial women in her extremely valuable study of Australian women in London; like Alcott, she argues that boarding houses were significant sites because they functioned as “oases of private and semiprivate space that facilitated women’s negotiation of the city and the public world.”¹⁶ Carr’s visual representations of boarding house life consistently capture this lack of a firm border between the public and private spheres. On one level, “London Student Sojourn” reveals the very physical blurring of these boundaries (figs. 23-26). Each scene is set indoors, in a large room filled with beds and dressers. The composition of each image gives the initial impression of a tightly closed-off, private space: the dark background of the sketchbook page gives the figures a shallow stage on which to perform their actions, while the curtains present in every vignette that divide the large room into each girl’s personal “cubicle” only increase the sense of a cloistered space. However, the viewer is not left with the feeling that this is an intimate, private sphere; to the contrary, the space depicted – while still resolutely feminized – is notable for its utter lack of privacy. Girls’ heads pop out and peek over the cubicle curtains, breaching these efforts made toward creating private space. Chaotic scenes filled with bodies in action occupy

¹⁶ Angela Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London: Australian Women, Colonialism, and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 68. See also 83-88.

the shallow stage sets: girls get dressed and undressed, girls compete for wall space to hang their clothes and mirror space to do their hair, and girls clean their room, their clothes, and their boots. Often clad only in white chemises and stockings, with hair in disheveled ponytails, and depicted both while primping and preening for a night out and while sick in bed, the women of the boarding house live out their most private moments in the public sight of their fellow boarders and for the benefit of the viewers of Carr's sketchbook. Notably, the women being represented in varying stages of public undress are, like Carr herself, "respectable" middle-class students. Even sleep is not a completely private act at Mrs. Dodds' establishment, as one vignette makes clear (fig. 27): one girl wakes up surrounded by shoes, mirrors, pillows, and Emily's ubiquitous umbrella – objects, the accompanying poem explains, thrown at her during the night as punishment for the crime of talking in her sleep and keeping her friends awake.

Socially, too, the boarding house provided an intermediary space. Approaching London with a sense of returning home, Canadian women were often sent abroad armed with suitcases bursting with the names and addresses of long-lost relatives and letters of introduction to even the most tenuous of acquaintances. Though the family members, friends, and neighbours providing the list of contacts were no doubt well intentioned, these lists and letters were not always very useful in helping to solidify their owners' position in British society. Emily Carr, for example, destroyed her collection of suggested targets after

finding the first few overwhelmingly disappointing.¹⁷ The protagonists of Sara Jeanette Duncan's 1908 novel *Cousin Cinderella: A Canadian Girl in London* do the same, suggesting that Carr's was not an unusual response.¹⁸ Even prepared in advance then, Canadian women were forced to negotiate social networks on their own; the relationships enabled by the boarding house, and in similar "in-between" spaces such as clubs and associations, were key to foreign women's social and professional success in their new home.

Confirming Victorian moralists' worst fears, Carr clearly reveals that the personal relationships facilitated by the boarding house were indeed its primary appeal. In addition to a room in which to sleep, boarding houses frequently offered communal meals and other social activities. Brought together by their lodgings, women talked and laughed, bonded and argued, made late-night snacks, had parties, and collectively avoided the dismal Sunday night dinners.¹⁹ The artist chronicles these pleasures in "London Student Sojourn," following the women of Mrs. Dodds' as they gossip amongst themselves, do their hair, and get into mischief. Carr also acknowledges that this experience is unique to boarding house life, writing in one poem, for example:

Marylebone clock strikes ten,
The students' work is done,
To our neat little beds,
With their cheery red spreads,
We troop up one by one.
Ah! this is the cosy time
That the private-room girl does not ken,
The gossip and chatter, the noise and the clatter

¹⁷ Carr, *Growing Pains*, 124-27.

¹⁸ Sara Jeanette Duncan, *Cousin Cinderella: A Canadian Girl in London* (New York: Macmillan, 1908), 66-68.

¹⁹ Carr, *Growing Pains*, 193-94.

Of a cubicle-room just then!

The artist clearly notes the social benefit enjoyed by boarding house residents in contrast to the lonely “private-room girl.”

The final vignette (fig. 28) depicts a group of five young women sharing Christmas tea, their closeness indicated by the cozy composition of the bodies, sitting on a bed in the intimate space of a cubicle. One girl has her hand on another’s shoulder as the five eat sweets and drink from steaming cups of tea. In addition to being a charming depiction of boarding house life, Carr’s illustration is also legible as a representation of one of a variety of formal and informal relationships that Canadian women drew upon to establish their position within the imperial metropolis, and which blurred the line between private and public life. Artists frequently lived with other artists, creating a dynamic that crossed private and public lines by bringing professional “shop talk” and criticism home with them, and the sociability of the roommate relationship back into the studio.

As historian Kristen Swinth asserts of American women artists working in Paris,

women operated in a world of women, creating female professional networks based on shared living and shared study. Friendship, conversation, and information formed the currency of this network, seamlessly integrating everyday life and professional aspirations.²⁰

²⁰ Kirsten Swinth, *Painting Professionals: Women Artists and the Development of Modern American Art, 1870-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 52. See also 55-57. On the importance of friendships as an important element of women artists’ professionalization in the British context, see especially Deborah Cherry, *Painting Women: Victorian Women Artists* (London: Routledge, 1993), 45-52 and Janice Helland, *Professional Women Painters in Nineteenth-Century Scotland: Commitment, Friendship, Pleasure* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000). In the context of the Canadian art world, the network created a generation later by the women who became known as the Beaver Hall Group in Montreal is an important example of this overlap between personal and professional relationships. See Barbara Meadowcroft, *Painting Friends: The Beaver Hall Women Painters* (Montreal: Véhicule Press, 1999) and Evelyn Walters, *The Women of Beaver Hall: Canadian Modernist Painters* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2005).

In addition to providing what must have been a heartening atmosphere for women feeling far from home then, the boarding house was also a space that allowed women to begin to make public social and professional connections in a safe and comfortable environment.

Carr details several of these close relationships: the most prominent “character” in “London Student Sojourn” is a young woman named “Kindal,” whom she consistently represents with a teasing but obvious affection. Kindal also appears as a constant companion in *Growing Pains*, where she is joined by two English girls Carr calls “Wattie” and “Crummie,” both of whom she met during the course of her art studies and lived with at different times, thereby blurring the lines between the artist’s professional life and the domestic sphere.²¹ Through these women, Carr made her entrance into British society. With Kindal, she explored London’s streets; with Wattie, she travelled to Scotland and Cambridge. Crummie, with whom she is initially shy, brings her home to her well-connected upper-class family; indeed, the artist initially retreats there when she is ill in her later years in England.

Carr also obliquely mentions friendships with two artists from her hometown who had preceded her to London; Maria Tippet identifies these women as Sophie Pemberton and Teresa Wylde, both of whom had studied alongside Carr in their early years in Victoria. Though Carr notes (erroneously) that Pemberton had already left art school in London for marriage when the former arrived in London in 1899, she mentions that she and Wylde met and

²¹ “Wattie” has been identified as Alice Watts, “Crummie” as Mildred Crompton-Roberts. “Kindal’s” identity is uncertain (Tippet, 37-40).

travelled together on several occasions.²² In searching out fellow Canadians while away from home, Carr was far from unique. While in London, Pemberton had herself shared a studio with Toronto native Sydney Strickland Tully, while Ontarians Florence Carlyle and Laura Muntz Lyall shared an apartment and studio in New York City. Mary Bell Eastlake and fellow Montrealer Margaret Houghton shared a studio, took classes, and travelled together in France.²³ These friendships not only provided Canadian women with important professional networks, they also functioned to create emotional ties between women from diverse areas of Canada and from the greater British World, thereby strengthening imperial bonds.

Pemberton reveals something of the overlap between personal and professional life, and the resulting intensity of the relationships that developed in the close quarters of boarding houses and studios in letters to her sister Ada, written while she was attending the Académie Julian in Paris. The artist's first letters detail an intimate closeness among the women with whom she lived and worked; this closeness, however, soon turns to malicious gossip and bitter feuds. Her later missives tell of girls who purposely neglect to give her messages from the studio when she is sick, who gossip about her, and who call her names. One letter specifically attributes her roommate troubles to her success at school. She

²² Carr, *Growing Pains*, 171; Emily Carr, *This and That* (Victoria: Ti-Jean Press, 2007), 105-7; Tippet, 17 and 41. Pemberton had, in fact, moved on from London, but to the Parisian Académie Julian, not marriage. Though she may not have had much contact with Carr while in London, it was friendship with Pemberton that was partly responsible for altering the trajectory of Carr's career and reputation twenty-five years later when the former introduced art critic Harold Mortimer Lamb to Carr's work. Lamb, in turn, pointed it out to Eric Brown at the National Gallery (Shadbolt, *The Art of Emily Carr*, 52).

²³ Susan Butlin, *The Practice of Her Profession: Florence Carlyle, Canadian Painter in the Age of Impressionism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), 62.

mentions that her teacher Julian tells her that if it were possible, she would be “assassinated from jealousy” after she wins two prizes; indeed, she says, a once-close friend is now snubbing her and “would not even say good morning so now she may go to the Diable for what I care.”²⁴ Clearly personal and professional boundaries have disappeared. Though the artist later self-congratulatorily reports that Julian’s wife told another friend of Sophie’s problems that “after all, when one has talent, is young and attractive one must expect and get accustomed to that sort of fighting,” it is clear that she was bothered by the situation.²⁵ Clearly, the intensity of such complex relationships could swing both ways, with both good and bad experiences more keenly felt when the participants, isolated with only each other for comfort, lived, worked, and studied together.

In addition to friendship with their peers, Canadian women sought close relationships with older women who acted as mentors in both personal and professional matters. Like those enabled within the space of the boarding house, these relationships dissolved the boundaries between private and professional life, and frequently created strong connections throughout the British World, both in terms of connecting British and Canadian women, and by connecting Canadians to one another while abroad. Art historian Deborah Cherry has proposed a model of “matronage” as one useful way of conceptualizing these relationships. This dynamic between young artists and their older acquaintances extended beyond a

²⁴ Sophie Pemberton to Ada Pemberton Beaven, Feb. 27, year unknown. Ada Beaven fonds, BCA.

²⁵ Sophie Pemberton to Ada Pemberton Beaven, date unknown. Ada Beaven fonds, BCA. Sophie herself was not immune from brattiness: she informs her sister on one occasion that a certain girl “is easily settled when she begins any nonsense with jealousy. Shake her well and kiss her afterwards and I am going to do the same with Mlle. Jouvin if she begins it again only I shall have to be particularly fit that day, for Mlle. Jouvin is big and square” (Sophie Pemberton to Ada Pemberton Beaven, date unknown. Ada Beaven fonds, BCA).

professional arrangement of women purchasing other women's work to include more personal connotations of support, guidance, and guardianship.²⁶ The idea captures some of the complexity of these relationships, and illuminates the ways in which women's private and public interests frequently merged.

Examples of these relationships abound. Carr's memories of London, for example, are littered with mentions of a "Mrs. Radcliffe."²⁷ Mrs. Radcliffe clearly filled a maternal role for the artist: she takes the foreign girl under her wing by including her in weekly afternoon teas and dinners, bringing her to church, and introducing her to a new circle of friends. Having previously lived in Canada, she was also an important link between the Old and New Worlds for Carr, and helped to initiate the Canadian artist into English society by teaching her the social norms and behaviours expected in her adopted home.²⁸ Florence Carlyle had a similar relationship with Lady Hariot Georgina Dufferin after the latter viewed the artist's work at the Paris Salon of 1893. This connection was noted with great interest across the Atlantic: Dufferin, who was the wife of the British ambassador to France at the time of their meeting, had previously lived in Canada when her husband served as Governor General for the colony and, as an amateur painter

²⁶ Cherry points to diverse examples of matrons of women's work in the British context, including a number of upper- and middle-class women art collectors (including Queen Victoria herself) who focused their attentions on the generation of professional women who came of age in the mid-nineteenth century, as well as women's schools, colleges, and social groups who made it a point to support women artists (102-4).

An excellent example of the type of relationships Canadian women sought in London can also be found in an earlier generation of North American women sculptors who looked to American actress Charlotte Cushman to establish themselves in Rome in the mid-nineteenth century. Cushman provided logistical help and emotional support to expatriate women, in addition to professional assistance. See Charmaine Nelson, *The Color of Stone: Sculpting the Black Female Subject in Nineteenth-Century America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 10.

²⁷ Mrs. Radcliffe has been identified as Marion Redden (Tippett, 38).

²⁸ Carr, *Growing Pains*, 134-37.

herself, had recorded her time in Canada in paintings and sketches.²⁹ Lady Dufferin, with her interest in art and Canadian artists, was a valuable resource for Carlyle, providing the young colonial woman with an entrée into high society in both Britain and Continental Europe, and a direct link to a network of potential patrons and critics to which she would not have otherwise had access.

Canadian women also looked to their art studios for older female role models. Pemberton's letters, for example, reveal the artist's very close relationship with Amélie Beaury-Saurel, the wife of Rodolphe Julian, founder of the Académie Julian. A painter about twenty years her senior, "Mdme. J," as Sophie calls her, visits her, writes to her every day, takes care of her when she becomes ill, and gives critiques and advice on her work. A constant presence in her letters, the younger artist writes of her admiration and affection for her mentor: "I am head over heels in love with Mdme J."³⁰ Carr, too, looked to her teacher's wife for guidance. The artist's later period of study in France in 1910-1911 has generally been accepted as the genesis of her move towards modernist style; while there, Carr studied with several noted artists, but attributed the modern shift in her work to the wife of English painter Harry Gibb, writing, "Strange to say, it was Mrs. Gibb who threw light on many things about the 'New Art' for me. She was not a painter but she followed the modern movement closely. I was braver at approaching her than her husband with questions."³¹ Carr

²⁹ Butlin, 54-55.

³⁰ Sophie Pemberton to Ada Pemberton Beaven, date unknown. Ada Beaven fonds, BCA.

³¹ Carr, *Growing Pains*, 263-64.

also valued her relationship with New Zealand artist Frances Hodgkins, with whom she studied in Brittany during her time in France.³²

Notably, Hodgkins had herself experienced this type of relationship with another Canadian artist a decade earlier. Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes filled this matron role for a number of young women artists working in the rural art colonies of Cornwall in the first decade of the twentieth century. Hodgkins wrote to her sister in 1902 that she was overcome by the elder artist's work and thrilled to be asked to tea:

I am at Mrs. Forbes's feet – she wins one with the strength of her colour and design – tho' I don't want to be influenced by her – merely seeing her work helps one ... *Her* work was magnificent – much better than her husband's ... they sing with colour and light and brilliancy – no one can touch her. She is head and shoulders above them all down here or in fact England.³³

In this way, Forbes played a critical role in the success of the school she co-founded with her husband in 1899. The Newlyn School of Painting catered primarily to young female students who were serious about pursuing artistic careers. In addition to teaching classes, giving criticism, and deciding on models and subjects, Forbes also found lodgings for women and girls coming from long distances, hosted social events for them, and acted as companion and mentor to her young charges.³⁴ For her popularity among students like Hodgkins (as well as

³² Ibid., 274-75.

³³ Quoted in Judith Cook and Melissa Hardie, *Singing from the Walls: The Life and Art of Elizabeth Forbes* (Clifton, Bristol: Sansom and Company, 2000), 136.

³⁴ Gladys Crozier, "The Newlyn School of Painting," *Girls' Realm*, November 1904. Many Canadian women were among those who studied and worked in Newlyn and nearby St. Ives during the period when Forbes was resident and teaching there, including Eastlake (in Cornwall in 1889 and from 1893 to 1898), McNicoll (1905-6 and 1910-11), and Carr herself, who attended school in St. Ives in 1901-02. Though there is no concrete evidence, it is reasonable to assume that at least some of them would have known Forbes, or at least known of her work.

her considerable success as an artist in her own right), Forbes earned the nickname “The Queen of Newlyn.”³⁵

These female matron and mentor relationships were important for women, who may have encountered difficulties in building close relationships with their (usually male) teachers. The influence of teacher over the student, which for men was seen as straightforward and expected, was for women students frequently conceived of in terms of a kind of seduction. Carr herself perpetuates this idea, disdaining the girls in her classes who “adored their stuck-up autocratic art masters.”³⁶ She would not, presumably, have approved of Florence Carlyle, who describes one critique she experienced in almost sexual terms. In a silent studio, she writes, the master enters and begins his critique by adding to the canvas,

throwing into the work such warm palpitating life, such spontaneous action, such nameless beauty of technique, that a moan of appreciation bursts unconsciously from the almost breathless group around him, and others beside myself have felt the tears slipping down their cheeks, a silent tribute to his greatness.³⁷

After, the studio is once again quiet, with “quivering nerves.” Kristen Swinth argues that this stereotype encouraged women to develop alternative understandings of the student-teacher relationship: the teacher as father figure, or family friend, for example.³⁸ That women like Pemberton and Carr turned to their teacher’s wives as mother-figures and entry points into the informal social circles that so often formed the basis of the art world is unsurprising in this context.

³⁵ “The Queen of Newlyn,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, March 28, 1912.

³⁶ Carr, *Growing Pains*, 138.

³⁷ Florence Carlyle, “Student Life in Paris as Told by the Late Florence Carlyle,” *Woodstock Sentinel-Review*, February 10, 1936.

³⁸ Swinth, 45-49.

Other women drew on actual family relationships to establish themselves in public. Carlyle, for example, deployed the name of her esteemed great-uncle Thomas Carlyle to improve her professional reputation in England. From the beginning of her career, the artist took advantage of her connections: in addition to several portraits of the man himself, she painted her father in the same pose J.A.M. Whistler used for his well-known portrayal of her uncle, *Arrangement in Grey and Black, Number 2* (1871-72, Glasgow Museum and Art Gallery), thus linking her family visually to a man they may never have in fact met.³⁹ Once abroad, Carlyle relied on her family name to enhance her own status, donating a representation of the elder Carlyle's birthplace in Scotland to the new London museum dedicated to the man, taking lodgings next to Carlyle Square, providing illustrations for a book about Carlyle's London home, and publicly discussing her uncle in an interview with the London magazine *The Gentlewoman*.⁴⁰ The artist's strategy was relatively successful: she received publicity at the exact time she was attempting to set up her London studio practice. Indeed, the artist's hometown newspaper wrote proudly that she "received marked attention from eminent people in the social, literary and artistic world due to her being an object of interest there as a relative of the Sage of Chelsea."⁴¹ Carlyle's strategic use of personal family relationships to enhance her own professional reputation clearly reveals the importance of these informal associations and relationships and the impossibility of separating private from public.

³⁹ Joan Murray, *Florence Carlyle: Against All Odds* (London, ON: Museum London and Woodstock Art Gallery, 2004), 19.

⁴⁰ Butlin, 68; Murray, 71.

⁴¹ Quoted in Butlin, 58.

Likewise, many Canadian women married or formed domestic partnerships with English artists, through which they gained access to distinctly English (rather than merely expatriate) social and professional circles. This was understood to be beneficial not only on personal and professional levels, but political ones as well. Unlike American girls, who were stereotyped as overly flirtatious and grasping for titles,⁴² Canadian women abroad were encouraged by imperialist-leaning families and politicians to find British husbands; indeed, marriage was seen as a way to bind colony and metropole more closely together.⁴³ The celebration of marriage as a useful tool of empire is seen most clearly in Duncan's *Cousin Cinderella*, in which the Canadian heroine and a British aristocrat fall in love and marry; the novel is as much about the relationship between Canada and Britain as it is about the relationship between the characters. It was within this context that Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes, Mary Bell Eastlake, and Frances Jones all married English artists. Furthermore, these were not only romantic relationships and imperial connections, but also creative and business partnerships that challenged the traditional model of nineteenth-century marriage.⁴⁴ Husband and wife shared studio and exhibition space, provided one

⁴² The eponymous protagonist of Henry James's *Daisy Miller* (1878) is the classic example. The "American girl" was a well-known stereotype that loomed large across the cultural imaginary of the Western tourist world. Caricatured as a big, brash, flirtatious, independent, and alternately obsessed with husband-seeking or overly manly, she was a prime source for satire, comedy and didactic literature. See Jane Gabin, *American Women in Gilded Age London: Expatriates Rediscovered* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2006), 10-12; Kröller, 74-76; Mary Suzanne Schriber, *Writing Home: American Women Abroad, 1830-1920* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1997), 33-34.

⁴³ Morgan, *A Happy Holiday*, 217-220. Woollacott argues that this was also the case for Australian women (150-151).

⁴⁴ Cherry, 32-44 and 50.

another with critiques, and frequently competed for critical attention. Clearly, personal and professional lives were closely intertwined.

It would be dishonest, of course, to ignore that while marriage may have had some professional benefits, it also frequently led to problems for women who chose to marry. Pemberton, for example, largely abandoned her professional practice after her marriage. Eastlake and Forbes faced the loss of their professional identities when they changed their maiden names and signatures. Emily Carr explained that she refused to marry for professional reasons, describing her refusal to the marriage proposal of her persistent suitor Martyn:

“I can’t marry you, Martyn. It would be wicked and cruel, because I don’t love you that way. Besides – my work.”
 “Hang work; I can support you. Love will grow.”
 “It is not support; it is not money or love; it’s the work itself. And, Martyn, while you are here, I am not doing my best. Go away, Martyn, please go away!”⁴⁵

Martyn’s final response before returning to Canada without a fiancée – “Always that detestable work!” – conveys a strong sense of Carr’s priorities.

The boarding house was not the only in-between space employed by Canadian women to get a foothold in the imperial metropolis and the British art world. Clubs and organizations served a similar spatial and social function within the fabric of the modern city: respectable semi-private spaces that women used strategically to enter the wider public sphere. Canadian women exhibited with and became active members of several of the most renowned professional British

⁴⁵ Carr, *Growing Pains*, 182. “Martyn” has been identified as Mayo Paddon; he proposed to Carr on several occasions. Carr, though here giving work as a reason for the rejection, was also at the time in love with an unidentified man in Victoria, who did not return her affections (Gerta Moray, “‘T’Other Emily:’ Emily Carr, the Modern Woman Artist and Dilemmas of Gender,” *RACAR* 26 [1999]: 88-89).

organizations of their day. Several, including Jones and Pemberton, exhibited at the prestigious, but conservative Royal Academy, while others, such as Eastlake, opted for the more avant-garde New English Art Club. Forbes, the most prominent Canadian-born artist working in Britain in the decades around the turn of the twentieth century, exhibited with both institutions and a wide array of others, in addition to being an elected member of several associations, including the Royal Watercolour Society, the Royal British Colonial Society of Artists, the Royal Society of Painter-Etchers, and the Grosvenor Gallery Pastel Society.

Women also formed and joined alternative associations as what art historian Clarissa Campbell Orr has called “strategies of response” to varying levels of official and unofficial exclusion to the aforementioned groups.⁴⁶ Early organizations such as the Society of Women Artists (founded in 1855 in London) were joined by institutions such as the Parisian Union des Femmes Peintres et Sculpteurs (founded in 1881), the Glasgow Society of Lady Artists (1883), the Edinburgh Ladies’ Art Club (1889), and the Women’s Art Association of Canada (1892), as well as the more overtly politically-oriented Artists’ Suffrage League (1907) and Suffrage Atelier (1909).⁴⁷ The Women’s International Art Club would

⁴⁶ Clarissa Campbell Orr, introduction to *Women in the Victorian Art World* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 18.

⁴⁷ The histories and importance of these and other institutions have been recounted elsewhere. See, for example Cherry, 65-77; Tamar Garb, *Sisters of the Brush: Women’s Artistic Culture in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); Helland; several essays in Orr; Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign, 1907-1914* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1987). On North American women’s groups and networks, see Karen Blair, *The Torchbearers: Women and their Amateur Arts Associations in America, 1890-1930* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994); Maura Broadhurst, “Strategic spaces: towards a genealogy of women artists’ groups in Canada,” MA thesis, Concordia University, 1997; Kathleen Dowsett, “The Women’s Art Association of Canada and its designs on Canadian handicraft, 1898-1939,” MA thesis, Queen’s University, 1998; Heather Haskins, “Bending the rules: the Montreal branch of the Women’s Art Association of Canada, 1894-1900,” MA thesis, Concordia University, 1995; Swinth.

have especially appealed to Canadian women. Originally formed in 1898 by a group of foreign students who self-identified as “modern” as the Paris Art Club, the association was renamed the WIAC in 1900 when it shifted its focus to the London exhibition world.⁴⁸ Explicitly organized in order to introduce artists of diverse national origins and to encourage professional and personal links between them, the WIAC was an important resource for foreign artists in particular, and one which Canadian artists like Eastlake and Harriet Ford took advantage of during their time abroad.

Such groups provided important professional benefits to foreign women. While they have traditionally been viewed as operating within a cultural, rather than economic, sphere, art historian Janice Helland argues that they are perhaps best understood as descendents of trade guilds. Like guilds, most women’s professional art organizations – though frequently accused of amateurism – were exclusive to artists of a certain caliber. They also functioned in similar ways: women’s groups worked to establish and maintain standards for the profession in terms of education, exhibition, and sales, in addition to enabling mentorship and patronage opportunities. Perhaps most importantly, they provided a respectable space through which women could become visible professional, public figures.⁴⁹ This public exposure would have been a particularly appealing motive for the Canadian woman abroad, not just as a woman working in a male-dominated profession, but also as a foreigner attempting to break into a new market.

⁴⁸ Cherry, 76.

⁴⁹ Helland, 35-62; Swinth, 116-123.

The advantages of these groups went beyond the professional to the personal. Women's art associations emerged in the nineteenth century as part of a broader development of women's professional, social, and political clubs and societies. Though varied in size, focus, and composition, the popularity of these institutions indicates the existence of a collective desire for female communities of mutual interest, support, and ambition. Like boarding houses, they acted, as Woollacott describes, as respectable "beachheads for women in public, urban space and as a means of connection for women within a city, nationally, and globally."⁵⁰ The social networks enabled by such organizations were particularly important for foreign women. Clubs and societies provided women living independently far from home with a safe and stable physical site to meet, have social gatherings, use as an address, and eat – useful functions, considering the general instability of women's lives abroad and the general social restrictions caused by boarding house rules and too-small hotel rooms and apartments. Clubs and associations also facilitated introductions among women, helping to construct social and professional networks that benefited women alone in a foreign city.

Ultimately, the complex social networks created through boarding houses, personal relationships, and professional associations stretched beyond London's city limits. The personal and professional links created abroad followed women back home to Canada, helping to build connections between artists from different parts of the country and bonding them on the basis of the shared experiences of transatlantic travel, boarding house life, and European art education. More than simply straddling the border between private and public or personal and

⁵⁰ Woollacott, 116.

professional, these spaces and the relationships they engendered helped women to negotiate the barrier between home and away, and effectively contributed to the coalescence of the British World.⁵¹

III. The colonial *flâneuse*: at home in the modern metropolis

The happy camaraderie of boarding house life is interrupted only sporadically in “London Student Sojourn:” a spilled water jug here, an encounter with a mouse there. Conflicts between the women are also revealed: the girl who keeps her friends awake by talking in her sleep is joined by another – perhaps the artist herself? – who comes home “after / the hour for electric light,” disturbing “the silence and calm of night.” The accompanying drawing (fig. 29) depicts a woman entering the communal sleeping quarters, her bright red cape swishing around her as a candle lights her way to bed. Two heads poke out of their cubicle curtains to admonish the night owl, their mouths open mid-scold, while a fist-clenched arm being shaken indicates her owner’s vehemence. The illustration is notable not only for its look into boarding house life, but for its nod to a world outside the boarding house: one of late nights out in the city. Angela Woollacott has argued that foreign women’s “negotiation of the city’s streets was tied to their inhabiting of its interior spaces. White colonial women’s claims on the public places they consumed as urban spectators were directly linked to women’s

⁵¹ Swinth, 54-55; Bailey Van Hook, *Angels of Art: Women and Art in American Society, 1876-1914* (University Park: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 49. Cecilia Morgan, Angela Woollacott, Antoinette Burton, and Jane Gabin, among others, have explored the benefits of these types of groups for Canadian, Australian, Indian, and American women in England, respectively (Morgan, *A Happy Holiday*, 185-87; Woollacott, Chapters 3 and 4; Antoinette Burton, *At the Heart of the Empire: Indians and the Colonial Encounter in Late-Victorian Britain* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998]; Gabin, 13-15).

remaking of supposedly private, domestic spaces to facilitate their global travel and their modern ambitions.”⁵² In this way, Mrs. Dodds’ boarding house acted not only as a safe sanctuary for foreign women far from home and a means for them to begin to make important social and professional connections, but as an important point of access into the public spaces of *fin-de-siècle* London.

The female figure coming home late at night in “London Student Sojourn,” paired with Emily Carr’s recollections in *Growing Pains*, reveals a freedom of mobility that is perhaps surprising in its contrast to traditional assumptions about middle-class women’s lack of access to urban space. In recent years, scholars of various disciplines have heeded American historian Mary Ryan’s call to “go valiantly in search of women in public;”⁵³ in particular, a considerable amount of ink has been spilled debating the possibility of a *flâneuse*: the female counterpart of the bourgeois man-about-town. If early texts performed the valuable work of showing the ways in which nineteenth-century women experienced modern space in different and unequal ways, recently, scholars have looked to activities like politics, philanthropy, and shopping in an effort to re-insert middle-class women into the public spaces of the modern city.⁵⁴ Tourism

⁵² Woollacott, 71.

⁵³ Mary Ryan, *Women in Public: Between Banners and Ballots, 1825-1860* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1990), 4.

⁵⁴ For the seminal arguments against the possibility of the *flâneuse*, see Janet Wolff, “The Invisible *Flâneuse*: Women and the Literature of Modernity,” *Theory, Culture, Society* 2, no. 3 (1985): 37-46 and Griselda Pollock, “Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity,” in *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism, and the Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 1988), 50-90. Challenges to these texts are provided by (among others) Elizabeth Wilson, “The Invisible *Flâneur*,” *New Left Review* 1, no. 191 (January/February 1992): 90-110, Ryan, and more recently, the essays in Aruna D’Souza and Tom McDonough, eds., *The Invisible Flâneuse? Gender, Public Space, and Visual Culture in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006).

In the British context, scholars who have looked at the many roles women played in public life include Mica Nava, “Modernity’s Disavowal: Women, the City, and the Department

provided another important means through which women were physically present in the city, and the figure of the white female colonial tourist or expatriate serves as an excellent parallel to the Baudelairean archetype: a “colonial *flâneuse*.”⁵⁵

Far from keeping her from experiencing all that the city had to offer, Carr’s public mobility can be attributed specifically to her unstable position in the imperial metropole. White women from the settler colonies and the United States straddled the line between foreigner and citizen while in Britain, and frequently turned this flexible means of identification to their advantage. On one hand, in their roles as foreign tourists, they were allowed and in fact expected to be curious about their new surroundings, and were actively encouraged to explore the public spaces of the city, as well as all of its secret corners.⁵⁶ The authors of the popular Boston WRTA tourist guide, for example, position urban mobility as a particular privilege of the white, middle-class colonial expatriate or tourist: “the general rule for ‘knocking about’ is quite as it is at home. Go everywhere that you are a gentlewoman, and everywhere you will have gentle treatment. An American on the prowl has the physical freedom of the city and is an adorer more than welcome at shrines where natives never come.”⁵⁷ As colonials returning home (and well-prepared for the experience through guides, novels, and the stories of

Store,” in *Modern Times: Reflections on a Century of English Modernity*, eds. Mica Nava and Alan O’Shea (London: Routledge, 1996), 38-76; Deborah Epstein Nord, *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation, and the City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); Erika Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London’s West End* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Lynne Walker, “Vistas of Pleasure: Women Consumers of Urban Space in the West End of London, 1850-1900,” in *Women in the Victorian Art World*, ed. Clarissa Cambell Orr (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 70-85; and Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Delight in Late Victorian London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

⁵⁵ The phrase is Angela Woollacott’s, who looks at the idea only briefly (55 and 60-65).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁵⁷ WRTA, 33.

friends and family), Canadian women were confident in their belief that London belonged to them.

Even as they took advantage of their status as foreigners, tourists like Carr were only able to adopt this publicly-mobile position because of the privileged status of citizen that was accorded them by their British heritage and, in particular, by their whiteness. The latter allowed them to blend into the urban crowd without drawing notice to themselves, an opportunity denied colonial visitors from India for example, whose skin colour and clothing made them immediately recognizable as outsiders and therefore potentially subject to unwanted attention, as historian Antoinette Burton has shown.⁵⁸ The importance of Carr's whiteness and British heritage in allowing her to experience the city freely is made clear simply by the sheer absence of black, First Nations, and French-Canadian women artists making the "homecoming" trip to England.⁵⁹

Carr and other colonial visitors to the city were simultaneously awed and repulsed by their new surroundings. The artist's first impressions of the city were initially negative: arriving in midsummer, she records that London

stewed, incorporating the hot murk into her bricks all day and spitting it out at you at night. The streets were unbearable. Everyone who had got out of the city had got and were not missed. I used to wonder where any more population could have squeezed. Certainly if there were more people in London they would have to ration air for the sake of fairness.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Burton *At the Heart of the Empire*, 42-44; Antoinette Burton, "Making a Spectacle of Empire: Indian Travellers in *Fin-de-Siècle* London," *History Workshop Journal* 42 (1996): 130-32.

⁵⁹ First Nations poet and actress Pauline Johnson is one exception and provides a nice parallel to the women under consideration here. On First Nations presence in Europe over the course of this period more generally, see Kate Flint, *The Transatlantic Indian, 1776-1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009) and Cecilia Morgan, "'A Wigwam to Westminster': Performing Mohawk Identity in Imperial Britain, 1890s-1990s," *Gender and History* 15, no. 2 (August 2003): 319-41.

⁶⁰ Carr, *Growing Pains*, 118.

Her disappointed reaction is perhaps to be expected: colonial tourists and expatriates arrived in the capital believing that they already “knew” London. Traveller Emily Murphy, for example, says of seeing St. Paul’s Cathedral for the first time, “There is no need to be told that it is St. Paul’s. You have seen in a hundred times in your mind’s eye.”⁶¹ What colonial visitors hoped and expected to find was a contemporary equivalent to ancient Rome, a beautiful and prosperous city worthy of the modern world’s largest empire.⁶² But novels, newspapers and magazines, tourist guides, and the memories of family and friends created expectations that could not be matched by reality.⁶³ Carr joins many other Canadian women in their first impressions of the overwhelming size and intimidating chaos of the metropolis.⁶⁴

After some time, however, Carr overcame her initial apprehension and approached the city with a new confidence. The artist began her explorations of London in the tow of her older English friends Mrs. Radcliffe and Mrs. Denny, whom she describes as “always carr[ying] a little red *Baedeker* under her arm with the ‘sight’ we were ‘doing’ marked by a slip of paper.” Thus prepared with

⁶¹ Emily Murphy, *The Impressions of Janey Canuck Abroad* (Toronto: publisher unknown, 1902), 42. See also Kröller, 90.

⁶² In this respect, colonial visitors echoed contemporary local attitudes toward the city, which was increasingly seen as a problematic symbol: at once the thriving heart of the largest and most powerful empire in the world and the centre of its corruption and degeneracy. See Felix Driver and David Gilbert, “Heart of Empire? Landscape, Space, and Performance in Imperial London,” *Environment and Planning D: Space and Society* 16 (1998): 11; David Gilbert, “London in All Its Glory – or How to Enjoy London: Guidebook Representations of Imperial London,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 25, no. 3 (1999): 286; Walkowitz, 24-25.

⁶³ Indeed, the images contained within guidebooks actively worked to conceal the truth of the modern metropolis by illustrating the sights of the city with line drawings rather than photography well after the latter was popular. Drawings allowed the artist to edit out any undesirable elements and make the city legible; when photographs were used, they were most frequently small-scale vignettes or single subjects excised from a larger context (Gilbert, 290-91).

⁶⁴ For first hand accounts see, for example, Maria Elise Turner Lauder, *Evergreen Leaves, Being Notes from My Travel Book, by ‘Toofie’* (Toronto: Belford Brothers, 1877), 320-21 and Murphy, 45. See also Kröller, 109-115 and Morgan, *A Happy Holiday*, 162-65.

the necessary tourist tools, she continues, “We stood before the sight and read *Baedeker* and tried to memorize the date.”⁶⁵ In this manner, Carr saw St. Paul’s, Westminster Abbey, the Tower, the British Museum, the National Gallery, London Zoo, Kew Gardens, Madame Tussaud’s, and Albert Hall. Carr discusses her experiences at St. Paul’s and Westminster Abbey at length, echoing the importance accorded to them by tourist guides, which consistently describe them as the most significant attractions of the city.⁶⁶ While she finds the Abbey mired in history and too cluttered, she praises St. Paul’s as welcoming to all, “great, small, rich, and shabby.” The two major churches also become sites in which Carr stakes a claim to belonging within her new city. Like many a traveller before and since, the artist expresses a virulent *anti*-tourist attitude about these sites. She rails, for example, against the multitude of visitors that made Westminster Abbey “cheap,” and complains about those who only visited St. Paul’s to climb to the gallery around the dome as “a thing to do,” stating firmly that she “did not want to sight-see St. Paul’s.”⁶⁷ In so doing, she sets herself apart from this group of tourists as an “authentic” London native, and takes on the more authoritative voice of the local.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Carr, *Growing Pains*, 137. Maria Tippet identifies Mrs. Denny as Mrs. Mortimer (285).

⁶⁶ For example, Jones, 105-6; WRTA, 33-38.

⁶⁷ Carr, *Growing Pains*, 122-23.

⁶⁸ Of course, this attitude does not make Carr nearly as unique a visitor as she would like to claim: tourist guidebooks themselves profess a disapproval of such people, giving advice, for example, on when to go to avoid the crowds at Poet’s Corner at Westminster Abbey in order to have a more “authentic” experience. See James Buzard for a discussion of “anti-tourism” (*The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to Culture, 1800-1918* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993]).

Carr adopts this anti-tourist stance throughout her narrative. She is dismissive of Mrs. Denny's Baedeker-style sightseeing, valuing instead what she calls her "solitary wanderings," which she describes in an evocative passage:

I knew London well – not the formal sights only, but I knew her queer corners too ... London had instructed, amazed, inspired, disgusted me. The little corners that I had poked into by myself interested me most. My sight-showers would have gasped had they known the variety and quality of my solitary wanderings. It would have puzzled them that I should want to see such queernesses.

The orthodox sights I found wearing ... I took endless rides on bus-tops, above the crowd yet watching intently the throngs of humanity. I went into the slums of Whitechapel, Poplar, and Westminster and roamed the squalid crookedness of Seven Dials, which is London's bird-shop district, entering the dark stuffiness of the little shops to chirp with bird prisoners, their throats, glory-filled and unquenchable, swelled with song even in these foul captive dens. There was Paternoster Row too – the street of books, Lincoln Inn Fields – the world of Dickens, haunted by Dickens' houses, Dickens' characters, as St. Bartholomew's, Smithfield was haunted by smell of fire and the burning flesh of martyrs. From the 'gods' of the great theatres I saw Shakespeare's plays, cried over Martin Harvey in *The Only Way*, roared over *Charlie's Aunt*, saw Julia Neilson in *Nell Gwyn*. That play I saw first from the 'gods'; afterwards I saw it from stalls with swell friends from home. I liked it best from the 'gods,' distance dimmed the make-up, the sham. In the 'gods' it was vision and carried me away.

So, I looked at London from different sides, mostly hating it; cities did not sit on me comfortably. There were a few little tag ends that I loved, insignificant things that most Londoners scorned.⁶⁹

Carr's story reveals that she experienced a wide range of public spaces, from the exclusive theatre boxes of the West End to the chaotic slums of the Seven Dials district and the East End. Throughout, the artist's language echoes that of writers like Baudelaire: her "solitary wanderings" into "queer corners" and "tag ends," her detached observation of the "throngs of humanity," and her anonymous position "above the crowd" while remaining a part of it are all typical characteristics of the *flâneur*.

⁶⁹ Carr, *Growing Pains*, 191-92.

If this female freedom of mobility is surprising to the twenty-first century reader well versed in the ideology of separate spheres, it may not have been to Carr and her Canadian expatriate contemporaries. Indeed, the safety of London's streets was impressed upon female tourists in their guidebooks: Mary Cadwalader Jones, for example, states very simply that "There is no city in the world in which it is so easy for ladies to go about in the evening as London."⁷⁰ Advice to explore the city by omnibus is popular in guidebooks, and the activity is advertised to women as an exciting way to see the city.⁷¹ Carr enjoyed the possibilities for urban spectatorship offered by the omnibus, writing in another passage, "I climbed the curving little iron stairways at the backs of omnibuses and, seated above the people, rode and rode, watching the writhe of humanity below me."⁷² People-watching, too, was advised to middle-class women tourists as a not-to-be-missed activity.⁷³ In this respect, the white colonial female tourist provides an excellent parallel to art historian Griselda Pollock's characterization of the *flâneur* as "an exclusively masculine type" with the "privilege or freedom to move about the public arenas of the city observing but not interacting, consuming the sights through a controlling but rarely acknowledged gaze, directed as much at other people as at the goods for sale. The *flâneur* embodies the gaze of modernity which is both covetous and erotic."⁷⁴ Evidently, Canadian women like Carr not only experienced a freedom of mobility in public, but also the freedom to look –

⁷⁰ Jones, 113. See also, Alcott, 21-22; WRTA, 33. Cecilia Morgan has found that there is little difference between Canadian women's and men's accounts of their tourist experiences in European cities; in both, accounts of the dangers of London are rare (*A Happy Holiday*, 209-11).

⁷¹ Gilbert, 290-21; Jones 111-14; WRTA, 14 and 33.

⁷² Carr, *Growing Pains*, 121. Emily Murphy also extolled the virtues of the omnibus (13, 56).

⁷³ Jones, 108.

⁷⁴ Pollock, 67.

at their surroundings, at shop displays (the birds of Seven Dials, the books of Paternoster Row), and at other people – and moreover, to take pleasure in this looking while out in public.

Given their status as tourists who were expected to want to explore the city, colonial women may have been even more publicly mobile than their British counterparts. In addition to the whiteness that allowed them to blend in with the crowd when needed, Angela Woollacott proposes that white colonial women held the further advantage of being able to “trade on a certain classlessness” because their foreign accents, places of birth, family names, and schools could not be easily identified, judged, and classified by Britons.⁷⁵ Moreover, she argues, their willingness to explore the city on their own terms might be attributed not just to being far from the watchful eyes of family and neighbours, but precisely to their colonial origins. Discussing Australian women’s experiences in London, she suggests that their confident occupation of London might be attributable to the perception that European cities were in fact safer spaces for middle-class white women than the rough streets of their colonial hometowns, in which men often outnumbered women, the working classes outnumbered the bourgeoisie, and Native populations outnumbered white Europeans.⁷⁶ These demographics were all equally true of Victoria, BC during Carr’s years growing up in the colonial outpost.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Woollacott, 59-60.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 61.

⁷⁷ Carr describes her youth in the town in her 1942 memoir *The Book of Small*. An excellent historical study of the complex class, gender, and racial dynamics at play in British Columbia during the mid-nineteenth century is Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849-1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).

Although she maintains throughout her narrative that she never grew to enjoy big cities (London or otherwise), it is evident that Carr was comfortable exploring the public spaces of her adopted home. The artist, for example, takes pride in choosing shortcuts through slums that her English colleagues will not attempt.⁷⁸ Although the Seven Dials district was, as May Alcott describes, “a well-known disreputable quarter,”⁷⁹ Carr seems to have no qualms visiting the bird shops there. While she allows that her companions Mrs. Radcliffe and Mrs. Denny would have been shocked by her adventures, the artist was certainly not alone in her understanding that both working-class neighbourhoods and the people who inhabited them were worthy tourist sights in themselves: historian Judith Walkowitz observes that the “construct of the metropolis as a dark, powerful, and seductive labyrinth held powerful sway over the social imagination.”⁸⁰ Indeed, the popularity of the drawings of Gustave Doré, the novels of Henry James, and the social journalism of Charles Booth, as well as the fascination with phenomena such as the Jack the Ripper murders and journalist W.T. Stead’s “Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon” series reveal that the *fin-de-siècle* London underworld was just as much a focus for public interest as the more famous Parisian demimonde depicted by Manet, Degas, and Toulouse-Lautrec.

While the rest of England was believed to be haunted by romantic historical and literary figures from centuries past (a belief that will be further

⁷⁸ Carr, *Growing Pains*, 146-47.

⁷⁹ Alcott does inform her readers that the area is safe for ladies during the day (Alcott, 21-22).

⁸⁰ Walkowitz, 17. Tourist guides that discuss these areas include Alcott, 21-22; WRTA, 33. On the tourist appeal of these areas, see also Morgan, *A Happy Holiday*, 203-8; Christopher Mulvey, *Transatlantic Manners: Social Patterns in Nineteenth-Century Anglo-American Travel Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 176.

examined in the following chapter of this dissertation), London's slums and their residents were more likely to be imaginatively transformed by tourists into scenes and characters from Charles Dickens's novels. Alcott, for instance, recommends a walk through the Seven Dials district, because although it is a "sight of poverty, vice, and misery of which one before could form no adequate conception,"

one meets people and catches glimpses of a life nowhere else likely to be encountered, which remind the passer of a chapter from Dickens, for here are the Olivers, Sairy Gamps, and Pecksniffs who seem like old friends, and even real Fagins occasionally emerge from the dingy little shops where many a stolen article is on sale.⁸¹

Carr, too, evoked the Victorian author, describing the "queer corners" of the city as "the world of Dickens, haunted by Dickens' houses, Dickens' characters."⁸²

The displacement of real-life poverty into the sphere of fiction appears to have been one strategy that tourist women used to cope with their confrontation with class difference.

However, when the artist attempted to move beyond this aloof tourist/*flâneuse* gaze in working-class spaces, what she saw there pushed her patience to the limit. Carr discusses her impressions of the slums of the metropolis in some detail. In contrast to the reassurances of the WRTA that "nothing will surprise a novice more than the discrepancy between the looks, even, of English beggars and roughs and their soft phrases and voices,"⁸³ the artist is quite horrified by her experiences. Of her walk to school through the slums of Westminster, she writes:

⁸¹ Alcott, 21-22.

⁸² Carr, *Growing Pains*, 192.

⁸³ WRTA, 33.

The slum was horrible – narrow streets cluttered with barrows, heaped with discards from high-class districts, fruit having decay-spots, wilted greens, cast-off clothing. Women brushed their hair in the street beside their barrows while waiting for trade. Withered, unwashed babies slept among shriveled apples on the barrows. I tried not to see too much slum while passing through. It revolted my spirit. ... I continued to limp through the murk, odours, grime, depravity; revolting ooze, eddying in waves of disgustingness, propelled by the brooms of dreadful creatures into the gutters, to be scooped into waiting Corporation wagons dripping in the street. One raw, foggy morning, as I hobbled along, a half drunk street-sweeper brought his broom whack across my knees. They bent the wrong way, my bad foot agonized! Street filth poured down my skirt.⁸⁴

On other occasions, she intentionally goes district visiting. While she does not wholly approve of the popular philanthropic activity (“I think it is beastly to go poking into the houses of the poor, shoving tracts at them and patting the heads of their dirty babies, pretending you are benevolent”), she saves the bulk of her criticism for the poor themselves, commenting on her disgust for the “revolting creatures” in “wretched lodgings.”⁸⁵

Carr’s observations seem especially disapproving of the women she encounters. Her criticisms are focused on the obvious collapse of traditional middle-class feminine roles: she remarks on the “unwashed” and “dirty” babies, the homes with “dirty curtains,” and the pies with “swarms of flies.” The women themselves brush their hair in public, are “aggressive,” or “slatterns.” If Carr’s privileged position as a white colonial tourist allowed her the freedom to enter such spaces, these spaces also evidently allowed Carr to actively identify herself as a woman of a certain class, in opposition to these so-called “revolting

⁸⁴ Carr, *Growing Pains*, 112-13.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 186-89.

creatures.”⁸⁶ Poor women were also a focus for Canadian writer and feminist activist Emily Murphy, who describes the “flashily dressed women who are avowedly and unblushingly disreputable” she saw in Liverpool with a decidedly more sympathetic air: “This life with its vile wage must be a great temptation to kitchen drudges, who see only the fine clothes and not the sad finale.”⁸⁷ Murphy’s feminist leanings are still clearer in her account of the women of London’s East End:

One cannot fail to observe the numbers of women with bruised faces – women who appear to have drained the draughts of poverty to their very depths. They are having their hell in this world no matter what may lie in store for them in the future. Men are black beasts. One day science will teach women how the race can be propagated without them and then we will sting the drones to death.⁸⁸

The author’s stories – in which working-class men are also racially-distinguished as violent, evil “black beasts” – reveal a gender-based solidarity that transcends class that is absent in Carr’s account.

The artist also recorded the differences she perceived between Canadian women and their British peers; the former, she believed, experienced a greater level of independence that went beyond just freedom of physical mobility. The artist directly notes the disparity between expectations of Canadian and British women in one conversation with her friend Wattie, for example:

“Come to Canada, Wattie.”
 “Canada! Why, Carlight? England is the only place in the whole world to live.”
 “Your brothers have all gone abroad, haven’t they?”

⁸⁶ Ibid. See Chapter 3 of this thesis for further discussion of district visiting as it related to contemporary politics of maternalism.

⁸⁷ Murphy, 10.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 74-75.

“Men are different, more adventurous. The world needs educated Englishmen. All my seven brothers went to college. It meant pinching a bit at home. They have all done so well for themselves in the Civil Service – India, China...”

“Why don’t they do a bit for you girls now, make up for your pinch? Why should everything be for the boys and men in England?”

“Mother brought us up that way – the boys first always. The boys have wives now.”

“I’m glad I’m Canadian! I don’t like your English ways, Wattie!”⁸⁹

On other occasions, she comments derisively on what she perceives to be English women’s obsession with marriage, frustrated that she has to convince her new friends that she “had really come to London seeking Art, not a husband.”⁹⁰

On the other hand, London also presented colonial women with opportunities for engagement with feminist organizations and politics that were as yet unavailable or rare in Canada. Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes, for example, was clearly aware of the contemporary debate surrounding women’s rights: she is listed as a signatory on a list of supporters of women’s suffrage published by the National Society for Women’s Suffrage in 1897, alongside 75 of her artist colleagues.⁹¹ Although Cecilia Morgan has discussed Canadian women’s engagement in suffrage campaigns while abroad, demonstrating that the events and activities of the movement were tourist spectacles that encouraged connections amongst women from across the Empire,⁹² direct evidence of Canadian women artists’ participation in the movement is rare. Sophie Pemberton provides one of the few overt expressions of support for the cause in a letter to her sister, writing, “I have heard a very good story of Christabel Pankhurst. A young

⁸⁹ Carr, *Growing Pains*, 155.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 189. Other references to British women and marriage include 138; 182.

⁹¹ Cherry, 93; Tickner, 15.

⁹² Morgan, ‘*A Happy Holiday*’, 187-89.

man interrupted her when she was speaking with ‘Would you rather have a husband or the vote.’ Christabel: “Will the gentleman who spoke stand up” – and then looking him down and up and up and down said “thank you I would rather have the vote.” I have been asked and am on the committee here, non militant.”⁹³

However, white colonial women tourists did face some restrictions on the basis of their gender. Both Jones and the authors of the WRTA guide later qualify their statements about the freedom of women to go about in public with further advice, making it clear that the primary danger to the middle-class woman out in the London streets was the risk to her respectability should she be confused with a prostitute. Jones, for instance, notes several areas that should be avoided by young women at certain times of the day: the luxury shopping area of Burlington arcade in the afternoon, for example, because “in the late afternoon women often walk there for whom they would not care to be mistaken.”⁹⁴ Female tourists are advised to dress appropriately, for the same reason: by dressing and behaving “quietly,” a woman will avoid any inconvenience.⁹⁵ Even respectably dressed women who stayed in appropriate spaces were not entirely safe from improper advances. Carr, for example, records two such occurrences in London: she is propositioned by a

⁹³ Sophie Pemberton to Ada Pemberton Beaven, date unknown. Ada Beaven fonds, BCA. See Chapter 4 for further discussion of the suffrage movement in relation to Helen McNicoll’s painting *The Chintz Sofa* (1913).

⁹⁴ Jones, 125.

⁹⁵ WRTA, 52. Mary Cadwalader Jones advises her readers “Ladies in Europe, especially on the Continent, dress quietly when walking, and wear very little jewelry in daytime. The mistake our women often make is in copying the clothes and manners of people who are not ladies at all.” If, however, she fails to take this advice and is approached, she has only herself to blame: “as a general rule, if a woman will dress quietly, walk quickly, and look ahead of her, she will not be molested; but if one who is strikingly pretty and showily dressed saunters slowly along, looking into shop windows and also staring at the passers-by, she will very likely be followed by some man who is willing to take the chance of possible amusement nor is he altogether to blame, because the nice women whom he has known have not laid themselves open to such misunderstanding” (15-16).

security guard at the National Gallery on one occasion, and a clergyman at Westminster Abbey touches her thigh on another.⁹⁶

And yet, the ease and safety of urban life for independent women in London seems especially apparent when placed in contrast with contemporary stereotypes about Paris, where, Jones warns, ladies must be particularly careful where they walk, what they wear, and what books they are seen to be reading; Parisian restaurants and most types of French theatre, she writes, are also to be avoided.⁹⁷ If recent scholarship has shown that bourgeois women were more free to circulate in Paris than previously assumed,⁹⁸ Jones echoes here the prevailing nineteenth-century North American view of Continental Europe in general, and Paris in particular, as a place rife with sex, depravity, and decadence. A frequent worry of parents was that studying art abroad was merely a pretext for their daughters to pursue a bohemian lifestyle of living in hovels, drinking in cafés, having men over unaccompanied, and generally associating with undesirable sorts, an environment that Carr herself characterizes as the “loose life of wicked Paris.”⁹⁹ They were not necessarily wrong. Jones’ own words reveal that even with these advised restrictions, women still explored their new cities on their own terms. She complains, for example, of the young tourist women who frequent the shops with windows “full of photographs of actresses and other conspicuous people ... it is absolutely incomprehensible that nice girls should stand around

⁹⁶ Carr, *Growing Pains*, 184; Blanchard, 82-83; Tippet, 46.

⁹⁷ Jones, 149-58.

⁹⁸ This has been demonstrated by many of the excellent essays in D’Souza and McDonough, for example.

⁹⁹ Carr, *Growing Pains*, 50. On these perceptions, see Kröller, 55; Harvey Levenstein, *Seductive Journey: American Tourists in France from Jefferson to the Jazz Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 199-200 and 205-7.

gazing and admiring as too many of them do.”¹⁰⁰ Canadian artist Estelle Kerr would likely have met with Jones’s disapproval as well: her reminiscences of student life in Paris, published in *Saturday Night* in 1913, reveal that she and her colleagues took full advantage of Paris’s nightlife, frequenting the cafés and restaurants with friends, staying out late to listen to music and talk about the latest developments in art.¹⁰¹ Florence Carlyle repeated many of Kerr’s impressions in an article for her hometown newspaper,¹⁰² while in a long, rambling letter to her sister, Sophie Pemberton notes this perception of Paris and of herself, remarking to her sister – part tongue-in-cheek, part wistful – that her recent professional success “makes me think that perhaps Mater will be a little proud of her bohemian ne’er do well and treat me to a 3 months ticket home.” A postscript – “I wish you were here for the champagne supper” – perhaps reveals the cause of the writer’s rambling.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Jones, 149. Carr herself was one of these girls during her stay in San Francisco; upon accidentally happening up on the city’s red light district and thinking it “all romantic, like old songs and books,” her landlady has to take it upon herself to explain not only what a red light district is, but also what prostitution and sex in general are, and horror stories of the white slavery, opium dens, drug addiction, and murder that lurked on the streets of the city, terrifying the girl, then only sixteen (*Growing Pains*, 56-59).

¹⁰¹ Estelle Kerr, “The Artist,” *Saturday Night* 26 (June 7th, 1913): 2.

¹⁰² Carlyle, “Student Life in Paris.”

¹⁰³ Sophie Pemberton to Ada Pemberton Beaven, February 27, year unknown. Ada Beaven fonds, BCA. In another letter, Pemberton writes of her relationship with a particular man, presumably the model for her painting *Bibi La Purée* (1900, AGGV): “With my usual propensity for bohemian types I picked up an old model Bibi or Salis (?). Such a character and wonderfully ragged clothes. I told him to call at the atelier and when I went out to interview him Mdme J said in her amusing way “la petite Tonton avec un homme la bas il tant que je la surveille.” She later notes that “Julian is going to let me paint my vagabond upstairs and I shall try and get the Voltaire grin only Mdme J won’t let me be in the room alone with him,” and proudly reports that “This morning Mdme J told the girls about the model last night and how Julian had once said to her he was glad I was going with her as I was “si douce et gentile” and she added so I told my husband it was la petite Pemberton si douce et gentile who brought him.” (Sophie Pemberton to Ada Pemberton Beaven, date unknown. Ada Beaven fonds, BCA). In the following letter, she discusses even more risky behaviour: “Last Sunday as I finished your letter a knock at the door and in came Bibi, he said he had had a little image blessed for me of St ?? and had said some masses for my speedy recovery, he looked at my ph?? and I gave him a glass of wine. We talked a while, then I suggested his

No doubt much to the dismay of their disapproving families, however, Canadian women discovered that this lifestyle could be led nearly as well in London. Far from home and the watchful eyes of family and friends, Canadian women found not only potential for sexual danger but sexual freedom as well. If Emily Carr experienced harassment in the city, there was also the possibility for women to pursue their own desires while abroad. In addition to conventional heterosexual marriage, Canadian women took up with unsuitable romantic matches; Carr, in particular, experienced several unsuccessful “dates” during her time in London.¹⁰⁴ Others cohabitated with male and female partners before or instead of marriage, and often formed close, long-lasting partnerships with other women. The latter lifestyle provided security and companionship for women living and travelling abroad; it was chosen by Florence Carlyle (with Juliet Hastings), Harriet Ford (Edith Hayes), and Helen McNicoll (Dorothea Sharp), among others. Carlyle not only lived and worked with another woman, but wrote stories about alternative lifestyles, including one with a female protagonist who rejects marriage and becomes a single mother by choice, and another about the type of close relationship she shared with Hastings.¹⁰⁵ Though they may or may not have been lesbian relationships in the modern sense (it is unclear to what extent these relationships were sexual or romantic), such partnerships nevertheless

taking my letters to the concierge to post. So he kissed my hand and departed” (Sophie Pemberton to Ada Pemberton Beaven, date unknown. Ada Beaven fonds, BCA).

¹⁰⁴ The artist records an unsuccessful meeting with a doctor she first met on the transatlantic trip; she quickly discovers that the romance of the sea was left behind in Liverpool, writing, “he did not look nearly so nice or nearly so well-bred in plain clothes.” She is still more dismissive of another man who made the mistake of thinking that Madame Tussaud’s Chamber of Horrors would be a nice place to spend their time together. She was also frustrated with Mrs. Denny’s frequent efforts to make a match between Emily and her son Ed (Carr, *Growing Pains*, 136-41).

¹⁰⁵ Murray, 24.

clearly challenged the dominant model of heterosexual marriage. As art historian Charmaine Nelson notes, such relationships, which clearly merged personal and professional interests, presented a clear threat to traditional gender norms on two fronts: “first, it challenged the traditional patriarchal expectation of an unquestioned female desire for marriage, domesticity, and motherhood; and second, it offered the possibility of professional and intimate relationships that required neither male authority nor male sexuality.”¹⁰⁶ Nor was the conventional choice of heterosexual marriage necessarily a straightforward path, as the case of Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes, discussed in Chapter 2, will show.

The vignettes in “London Student Sojourn” give a vivid account of women’s bohemian lives abroad. The poems about and illustrations of middle-class professional women coming home alone late at night, living alongside rats (fig. 30), and depicted in various states of semi-public undress reveal precisely the “loose life” middle-class parents feared. Several of Emily Carr’s depictions of Kindal in “London Student Sojourn” can be read within this context; one image, in which her friend appears carrying water for her roommates, is particularly interesting (fig. 31). The accompanying poem reads:

There is’nt a drop of water,
And it’s dreadfully, fearfully cold,
But Kindal turns out in her blue chemise –
For Kindal is brave and bold;
The jug and the can she carries,
And off to the tap she goes,
And brings back water for all of us,
And we groan as we look at her nose!
And I say to myself – “For long to-night
“She shall have the iron for her toes.”

¹⁰⁶ Nelson, 10. See Chapter 4 of this thesis for further discussion of these issues as they arise in relation to McNicoll’s life and work.

Kindal – a middle-class student like Emily– is dressed only in a light chemise, short slip, and stockings, with her hair in disarray and shoulders and arms bare.

This rather risky depiction of the semi-nude Kindal can be read within the context of one of the primary targets of North American parents' anxieties about bohemian life in Europe: the chance for women to study from the nude, an opportunity that encapsulates many of the issues surrounding gender and class identity encountered by female art students while abroad. Canadian women attended a variety of schools in London, and received different kinds of training. While Harriet Ford braved the ultra-traditional halls of the RA, Sydney Strickland Tully, Sophie Pemberton, and Helen McNicoll sought out the more avant-garde Slade School of Art. The South Kensington School of Art, affiliated with the South Kensington Museum Complex and attended by Pemberton, Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes, and Laura Muntz Lyall, was another popular option.¹⁰⁷ Carr chose the lesser-known Westminster School of Art as her destination, where she took classes six days a week, including two night sessions, and enrolled in classes on design, anatomy, and clay modeling in addition to the traditional drawing curriculum of the nineteenth-century art school.¹⁰⁸

Carr's attitude in *Growing Pains* towards the London art world and the education she received there is overwhelmingly negative. In addition to labeling it unfriendly compared to her previous experience in San Francisco, and backwards-thinking compared to Paris, she complains of a lack of discussion about

¹⁰⁷ On Canadian women's art education, see Lori Beavis, "An Educational Journey: Women's Art Training in Canada and Abroad, 1880-1929," MA Thesis, Concordia University, 2006.

¹⁰⁸ Tippet, 36.

contemporary art amongst her colleagues, that the National Gallery is “a dreary place,” that her friends, while interested in art, are overly sentimental,¹⁰⁹ and that the methods of her instructors and fellow students are outdated and unambitious: “Why must these people go on and on, copying, copying fragments of old relics from extinct churches, and old tombs as though those things were the best that *could ever* be, and it would be sacrilege to best them? Why didn’t they want to out-do the best instead of copying, always copying what had been done?”¹¹⁰

Carr’s impression of the academic education she received in London as old-fashioned and ultra-conservative has generally been taken at face value by her biographers who have viewed it as a backwards step in her progress towards modernism, or at the very least, as an insignificant period in the development of her art. However surprising it is to a twenty-first century audience steeped in modernist values though, it was precisely this type of traditional education that North Americans sought by going abroad. For many art students, the appeal of Europe was not the opportunity to immerse themselves in the most avant-garde styles of the day (though this was certainly also a selling point), but rather to train in the classical academic tradition with established and respected teachers, and to access the antique and Renaissance models unavailable in the New World. Most North American art students initially went to Europe in an attempt to insert themselves into this academic tradition, not to rebel against it (even if they later disavowed their training, as Carr did).¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Carr, *Growing Pains*, 184-85.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 129-30.

¹¹¹ Swinth 39; Van Hook, 19-20. In this respect, London and Paris served for late nineteenth-century North American art students the same role that Rome (and Italy more generally) served for

Furthermore, while the choice between the avant-garde and the Academy may have been a decision that men had to make, the options open to women artists in this period were considerably more limited, given that the social and professional circles cultivated by avant-garde artists were consistently “predicated on masculine social and sexual privilege.”¹¹² Indeed, it bears repeating that a traditional academic art education had itself only recently become available to women when Emily Carr enrolled at the Westminster School of Art in 1899: the first (draped and segregated) life class was offered to women at the RA in 1893, while the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris had only opened its doors to women in 1896.¹¹³ Kristen Swinth argues that this new access to the academic tradition was important for reasons that extended beyond the simple quality of instruction available to women. Importantly, the subjects taught and critiqued at the RA and the ÉBA were perceived to have quantifiable results: as long as women’s work measured up in terms of technical skill, they could be counted among the best.

earlier generations of northern European artists and cultural tourists who embarked on the Grand Tour.

¹¹² Alicia Foster, “Gwen John’s Self-Portrait: Art, Identity, and Women Art Students at the Slade School,” in *English Art, 1860-1914: Modern Artists and Identity*, eds. David Peters Corbett and Lara Perry (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 169. See also Cherry, 58-61; Orr, 15.

¹¹³ Many of the schools attended by Canadian women developed as responses to this exclusion from these most prestigious institutions. The Académie Julian, for example, catered to female students in Paris, while the Slade School of Art was two-thirds female by the 1890s. Each carried the reputation of offering women the same opportunities as men, though segregated. In North America, art schools were open to women from their beginnings in the mid-nineteenth century. On the former institution, see Gabriel P. Weisberg and Jane Becker, *Overcoming All Obstacles: The Women of the Académie Julian* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999); Caroline Fehrer, “Women at the Académie Julian in Paris,” *Burlington Magazine* 136, no. 1100 (November 1994): 752-57. On the Slade, see Foster; Hilary Taylor, “‘If a Young Painter Be Not Fierce and Arrogant God ... Help Him.’ Some Women Art Students at the Slade,” *Art History* 9, no. 2 (1986): 232-44. On North American art education, see Beavis; Swinth.

It was also possible for women to circumvent these institutional barriers by hiring private teachers and attending individual lessons at independent studios, although this option was limited to women who could afford the privilege. Carr pursued this option in France, where she studied with Gibb, Hodgkins, and Scottish artist John Duncan Fergusson in addition to attending the Académie Colarossi.

The rhetorical sphere of the avant-garde art world, with its vaguely defined values of individual genius and originality, was considerably more difficult for women to access.¹¹⁴

The relative radicalism of the academic education for Carr in particular is revealed in her memories of the life classes she enrolled in at the Westminster School of Art. Having declined the opportunity in her earlier studies in San Francisco, the experience of drawing from the nude in London was a revelatory one for the artist, and one which she acknowledges was, if not terribly forward-thinking by Parisian standards, then certainly avant-garde for herself and her family. Defending her earlier decision to avoid life classes (alongside her friend Adda), she writes,

Adda was of Puritan stock. I was Early Victorian. We were a couple of prim prudes by education. Neither her family nor mine had ever produced an artist or even known one – tales of artists’ life in Paris were not among the type of literature that was read by our people. If they had ever heard of studying Art from the nude, I am sure they only connected it with loose life in wicked Paris, not with Art. The modesty of our families was so great it almost amounted to wearing a bathing suit when you took a bath in a dark room. Their idea of beauty was the clothes that draped you, not the live body underneath. So because of our upbringing Adda and I supposed our art should be draped. Neither of our families nor we ourselves believed that Art Schools in new clean countries like Canada and the United States would have any other kind.¹¹⁵

Carr is clearly echoing the popular North American perception of Europe as a site of degenerate depravity, pitting “clean” North America against “wicked” Paris.

Art historian Alicia Foster details the variety of responses women art students developed in the face of this discourse surrounding the nude and the challenge it posed to their gender and class identities. Among these, she includes

¹¹⁴ Swinth 18-21, 97.

¹¹⁵ Carr, *Growing Pains*, 50.

the development of a discourse based on ideal beauty rather than masculine sexual desire.¹¹⁶ Carr's description of her first experience in a life class contributes to this dialogue: upon seeing the nude model for the first time, she writes, "Her live beauty swallowed every bit of my shyness. I had never been taught to think of our naked bodies as something beautiful, only as something to be hidden. Here was nothing but loveliness ... only loveliness – a glad, life-lit body, a woman proud of her profession, proud of her shapely self, regal, illuminated, vital, highpoised above our clothed insignificance."¹¹⁷ Carr clearly believed that her family would be unconvinced by such reassurances however, and also opted for another of Foster's strategies: simple avoidance of the topic around those who might disapprove. Though she clearly enjoyed her life classes, the artist responds to the recommendation that she not send her nude studies home to Victoria with the exclamation "Goodness gracious, I would never dream of doing so! Why they'd have me prayed for in church. My family are very conservative, they suppose I only draw clothes. If my drawings intimated that there was flesh and blood under the clothes they'd think I'd gone bad!"¹¹⁸

For her part, artist and tourist guide writer May Alcott re-deployed this Old/New World contrast as a strategy of response, but turned the associated stereotypes to her advantage. Lamenting the recent segregation of life classes at the Académie Julian in Paris, she describes how during her tenure at the school, the female students banded together in mixed classes and

¹¹⁶ Foster, 172-73. For a wider study of the nude in nineteenth-century British art, including a discussion of women's access to life classes and the nude model, see Alison Smith, *The Victorian Nude: Sexuality, Morality, and Art* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996).

¹¹⁷ Carr, *Growing Pains*, 132.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 183.

supported one another with such dignity and modesty, in steadfast purpose under this ordeal, that even Parisians, to whom such a type of womanly character was unknown and almost incomprehensible, were forced into respect and admiration of the simple earnestness and purity which proved a sufficient protection from even their evil tongues ... Something other than courage was needed for such a triumph; and young women of no other nationality could have accomplished it.¹¹⁹

For Alcott and her colleagues, safety in numbers and the collective performance of a particularly North American innocence and modesty was a means of retaining feminine respectability in the face of behaviour that might be regarded as otherwise threatening.

Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes encouraged a similar atmosphere of mutual support when it came to the question of life drawing for women at the school she ran with her husband, with rather surprising results. Student Wynifred Tennyson Jesse recorded in her diary that not only did the women draw from the nude in the controlled environment of their classes, but at home as well, using themselves and each other as models: "Sometimes Dod and Cicely and I have birthday suit evenings, posing on the big bed with nothing on but a silver belt to make us feel barbaric and a hand-glass so that we can judge the effect."¹²⁰ Foster notes that female Slade students worked together similarly, but makes clear that this practice was not without risk: drawing from the nude was ultimately a respectable undertaking for middle-class women only because they were able to comfortably distinguish themselves from the working-class model on the basis of that class difference.¹²¹ Indeed, Carr's ode to the model whose beauty she had admired ends

¹¹⁹ Alcott, 48-49. When the Académie Julian opened its doors in 1868, women were admitted into the same classes as men; the classes were made separate later (Weisberg and Becker, 3).

¹²⁰ Quoted in Cook and Hardie, 139. "Dod" is Dod Proctor, "Cicely" is Cicely Tennyson Jesse.

¹²¹ Foster, 172-73; see also Nelson, 34-35.

abruptly when the session is over, and the woman re-emerges from a dressing room, “ordinary, a woman clothed shabbily, all the beauty she had lent us hidden.”¹²² Carr’s personal enjoyment of the model’s beauty is dependent on the latter’s lower class – revealed in her “shabby” clothing – and the distinction that she can make between the woman and herself. When the nude model was a friend, colleague, or even oneself, that distinction becomes much less clear.

Where, then, does this leave fellow middle-class student Kindal, who, though not nude, is depicted in state of undressedness that would presumably have been inappropriate for the public view of the readers of “London Student Sojourn”? Still more risky is a recently rediscovered charcoal self-portrait of the artist (fig. 32).¹²³ Drawn during her time in England, the image depicts her from behind, with back and shoulders clearly unclothed. Carr ultimately overcame her trepidation in drawing from the nude and evidently she too participated in the potentially threatening behaviour described by Jesse and Foster. The potential risk here (and in the representation of Kindal) is in making the “respectable” Carr’s own nude body “the object of vision”¹²⁴ for an unknown audience, rather than the more safely-used body of a working class model, which, by virtue of her class, was always already sexualized. A carefully detailed and naturalistic representation, the portrait advertises Carr’s technical skill in drawing and the

¹²² Carr, *Growing Pains*, 133.

¹²³ I use the term “self-portrait” here following the title given to the image by Library and Archives Canada when that institution acquired it in 2006, though the designation has been contested, and it remains unclear whether this is a representation of Carr herself, or Carr’s drawing of another woman. Furthermore, as an academic practice exercise, it would presumably not have been meant as a formal “self-portrait,” as that genre is traditionally understood. I thank Gerta Moray for raising these questions about labeling during a panel at the annual conference of the Universities Art Association of Canada in 2008 in response to a paper based on an early version of this chapter.

¹²⁴ Nelson, 34.

type of traditional training she received at the Westminster School of Art – so much so that the conventional style masks the very unconventional subject matter. In the context of Carr’s pursuit of independent, bohemian life in the modern metropolis, such an image points not to a dull Academic tradition, but perhaps to the risk foreign women faced of “going bad” while abroad.

IV. “Little colonial girls, *mal élevées*”

Even as they turned their unstable positions as both foreigner and citizen to their advantage, white Canadian women did not always merge seamlessly into London’s urban fabric. If their roles as tourists gave them the license to explore and live in the city on their own terms, and their whiteness allowed them the relative freedom to do so without risk of harassment, this ease of mobility was not ensured when it came to the complex social networks in the capital. Indeed, Canadian women frequently found these more difficult to access and negotiate than expected. As white Canadians, they recognized themselves as imperial subjects who had a rightful claim to call themselves at home in Britain. This status equally turned against them, however, and they were frequently dismissed by their British peers as uncivilized outsiders – “colonials” – who did not fit into the heart of the Empire. Given this challenge to their sense of belonging, Canadian women were forced to re-assess their ideas about national and imperial identity, and what it meant to belong to the British World.

Emily Carr was just one of many Canadian women who expressed a considerable amount of anxiety about the appropriate performance of a particular

set of behaviours that signified “Britishness,” an anxiety that was at least partly a response to the epithet “colonial.” In this context, class was of special concern; once abroad, tourists and expatriates from the greater British World felt themselves to be primarily linked to native Britons and to their fellow travellers through the expression of a shared middle-class identity.¹²⁵ “Class” here, however, is not simply a designation of the amount of money one’s family made, but indicates a much more complex set of social markers, including appropriate social behaviours and the accumulation of certain cultural knowledge. Failing to live up to such standards was to risk falling into that undesirable category of the “uncivilized.” Class, then, was also intimately connected to ideas about race: clearly, to be middle-class was to be white, but in the later nineteenth-century context of shifting definitions of whiteness, to be white was also to be middle-class.

With this in mind, the boarding house was once again a crucial site for Canadians abroad, as a space for women to begin to work through these issues. For Emily Carr, as they had in “Sister and I from Victoria to London,” these anxieties frequently crystallized around the question of clothing.¹²⁶ In the first lines of “London Student Sojourn,” the artist fears her new roommates will judge her based on her appearance, writing,

We’ve all been through it once, but oh! it is not fair –
It makes you feel so dreadfully bad the way the old girls stare;

¹²⁵ Woollacott, 30-31; Alex Zwerdling, *Improvised Europeans: American Literary Expatriates and the Siege of London* (New York: Basic Books, 1998), 65-66.

¹²⁶ This is equally true of another of Carr’s London sketchbooks. “The Olsson Student,” created during the artist’s time in St. Ives, is a set of nine illustrations, each accompanied by a line of poetry. The illustrations and poem detail the unstylish clothing – laughed at by her fellow students – the artist wore to paint in the woods of Cornwall.

They whisper and the giggle and discuss your face and dress,
You never liked a cubicle, and now you like it less.

Fears about her ability – or lack of ability – to properly perform middle-class, white femininity persist throughout in “London Student Sojourn,” expressed in representations of Carr and her friends scrubbing and polishing their own boots, and washing and ironing their own laundry in order to save a few pennies (“Oh! Washing’s so dear in London Town,” Carr cries) (figs. 33 and 34). She describes “washing parties” and the “hubbub” of Saturday nights dedicated to boot polishing, demonstrating the level of commitment required to maintain the performance. Another illustration depicts the artist on her knees at a sewing machine, which is perched on a chair in her crowded cubicle (fig. 35). The accompanying poem is revealing:

Someone lent me a sewing-machine,
And extremely busy I have been,
I have made a great pile of wonderful things,
And they all are complete but the buttons and strings,
A new frock of blue and a lovely blouse too,
You can’t sew in small quarters – let those who will say –
I only repeat “where’s a will there’s a way!”
And just as I finish old Kindal comes in,
With a ready-made suit and a ready-made grin –
“Look, Carr, I bought this and it fits like a glove,
“It’s so smart and so neat, and the blue that I love:
“I am a stock figure, slight and graceful, you see
And everything nice and genteel doth fit me,
“While you, little Carr, being so chubby and fat,
“Must crouch on the floor doing the job you are at!”
I sigh for a figure, I sigh for a purse –
But then, after all, my lot might be worse:
I have ten nimble fingers and nine nimble toes,
And for all Kindal’s figure –
She’s got a red nose!

Carr's pride in self-sufficiency is brought up short by her friend's "ready-made suit." Clearly class and gender concerns are intertwined here: Kindal can buy things that are "nice and genteel" because she is "slight and graceful," while Carr, "chubby and fat," is left to "sigh for a figure, sigh for a purse" (though she is consoled by Kindal's red nose).

If Carr found her preconceptions of British society challenged in the working class slums she district-visited, she found herself equally lost in the rarefied world of the upper classes. Like those of the poor, the appearance, behaviour, and homes of the rich were tourist sights in themselves, though ones considerably more difficult to access for most Canadians. The artist's entrée into this set comes via Crummie, whom she meets at a summer sketching class in Berkshire, and first dismisses as "a society girl" who "had been born condensed ... She was like a hot loaf that had been put immediately into too small a bread-box and got misshapen by cramping. She was unaware of being cramped, because she was unconscious of any humans except those of her own class. The outer crowd propped her, but she was unaware of them."¹²⁷ When Emily is invited to spend time at Crummie's home, a mansion in glamorous Belgravia where all of the residents have carriages, stables, pools, and servants, she finds that although she enjoys the good food, service, and the peace and quiet, she is uncomfortable with the social rituals of the upper class – letter writing, responding to social invitations, dinner parties – and at a total loss as to how to perform them properly. Once again, clothes are a source of constant stress for the artist. Though Crummie assures her that "We don't love our friends for their clothes," Carr still worries

¹²⁷ Carr, *Growing Pains*, 196.

that her “washed-to-bits muslin dress [will] shame [her friend’s] dinner table.” In the end, Carr is embraced by Crummie’s family, save for one sister who did indeed “despise[... her] for one of Mildred’s ‘low-down student friends.’”¹²⁸

Carr was certainly not alone in her anxiety about class. Often seen as the well-born contrast to the poor-but-persistent Carr, Sophie Pemberton’s concern about class is perhaps harder to understand, and therefore still the more instructive about the ways in which class, race, and colonial identity were intimately linked. The daughter of a Hudson’s Bay Company executive and the first Surveyor-General of Vancouver Island, Pemberton’s family were major landowners in Victoria. Once in London though, she too reveals a considerable unease with her new position in society. Pemberton’s numerous letters to her sister record a constant stream of worries about money and status, and show that even she – much more wealthy than her Victoria neighbour – had considerable difficulty accessing British social networks.

Like Carr, Pemberton’s worries frequently centered around dress; in particular, they come out in embarrassed reports to her sister of their visiting mother. In one letter, she describes her mother’s experience at the theatre:

Mater ... behaved atrociously. The assistant was nearly called to force her to remove her bonnet and she objected violently to walking a very little distance to the Carlton where Mrs. Schletter was giving us tea and yet wanted to “bus” it home. Had it been wet or mother not fit I’d have understood but it was sheer naughtiness and yet mother wants to meet people and I shall have a mauvais quart d’heure trying to put it before her for I must do that or avoid my friends. Mother’s very naughty too about clothes but that is of secondary importance.¹²⁹

In another, she is ashamed by her mother’s dress and behaviour:

¹²⁸ Ibid., 197-202.

¹²⁹ Sophie Pemberton to Ada Pemberton Beaven, date unknown. Ada Beaven fonds, BCA.

Sometimes it is very funny. Mater wanting the white of the chicken and striking her own bosom saying “Je veux de ceci, Je ne veux pas les jambs” and tragic when one sees how everyone wants to avoid her. At Cannes I refused engagements sometimes not to leave her alone, but today I went to tea with Ethel, Lady Drummond and others were there and Ethel said she really couldn’t in such a tiny room ask Mater. I felt so badly about it and won’t go again. And at Cannes everyone grew absent minded when M. began her very lurid descriptions. ... Mother is letting herself go over clothes too – blouses at least 100, a very smart dress and cloak. I encourage it all, though I know they will go into boxes and here of course with her sateen blouse and worn out skirt it seems ridiculous buying a cloak for 225 francs or more and the little storms of temper over it all...¹³⁰

The elder woman’s lack of knowledge of the rituals of London theatre-going, of proper table manners, and confusion about dress, pairing expensive things with a “sateen blouse and worn out skirt” is distressing to Sophie, who is attempting to integrate into English society. Indeed, the artist’s distress that her mother was not asked to tea, and that Sophie must “avoid her friends” if her mother continues in such a vein, shows that Carr may have been right to fret about her clothing before staying with the Cromptons.

Evidently, then, being appropriately civilized was about more than just money: even the wealthy Sophie is excluded from the highest levels of society, labeled “a little colonial girl *mal élevée*” when she gets entangled in an argument with an English woman at her art school in Paris.¹³¹ While white women from the colonies were not targeted with the nosy gazes and overt discrimination experienced by non-white visitors to Europe, Permberton’s colleague’s slight – “colonial” – was one that did carry implications of class, gender, and racial insult, and one that Canadian travellers felt acutely. Cecilia Morgan has shown that a general consciousness – and displeasure – of being judged on one’s

¹³⁰ Sophie Pemberton to Ada Pemberton Beaven, date unknown. Ada Beaven fonds, BCA.

¹³¹ Sophie Pemberton to Ada Pemberton Beaven, date unknown. Ada Beaven fonds, BCA.

nationality permeates Canadians' travel literature;¹³² Emily Murphy, for example, encounters these judgments even before she steps off the boat in Liverpool, summarizing the attitudes of her fellow passengers as believing "Mrs. Jameson's statement that 'Canada is a small country of fourth-rate, half-educated people.'"¹³³ Carr, too, faced these slurs; she writes of her first lodgings, for example, "Aunt Amelia lived in West Kensington – one of those houses in a straight row all alike and smeared with smug gentility. I felt the shackles of propriety pinch me before the door was shut. The six PG's without one direct look amongst them disdainfully 'took me in' at lunch. 'Colonial!' I felt was their chilly, sniffy verdict. I hated them right away." Aunt Amelia further attributes Emily's lack of interest in viewing the upper classes promenade at Rotten Row in Hyde Park to the artist's unsophisticated origins: "You Canadians have no veneration for titles – jealousy, I presume."¹³⁴

This anxiety over being labeled a "colonial" was effectively a struggle over competing definitions of whiteness and Britishness, and what it meant to be included in those constantly shifting categories. Radhika Mohanram has argued of British travellers that in the act of "travelling to the colonies, white bodies experience their whiteness as marked in ways that they did not at home."¹³⁵ This was equally true of white bodies from the colonies that travelled to the centre of

¹³² Morgan, *A Happy Holiday*, 184.

¹³³ Murphy, 5. Murphy is referring to Anna Jameson's 1838 travel narrative *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada*. See also Morgan, *A Happy Holiday*, 119-23.

¹³⁴ Carr, *Growing Pains*, 118-19. Aunt Amelia was not necessarily incorrect in her perception of Canadian disrespect towards the upper classes on display. Emily Murphy, who did go to Rotten Row, wrote of her experience, "The young men do not look as robust and manly as their seniors. Many have figures like the ladies in Harper's Bazaar. They are pallid and languid as if all their vitality was exhausted. It would do them good to loosen out in a street fight." (57).

¹³⁵ Radhika Mohanram, *Imperial White: Race, Diaspora, and the British Empire* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), xxiv.

the empire, even if it was rarely expressed as a specifically racial anxiety. Nevertheless, Canadian women's whiteness changed on the voyage across the Atlantic. If Carr, Pemberton, and their white Canadian colleagues were clear symbols of civility while in Canada based on their whiteness, middle-class femininity, and British heritage, they were much less securely so when "returning home" to Britain. When the head student in her first art class in London dismisses Carr's previous work by warning her that "Stars in the West bump pretty hard when they compete with civilized countries,"¹³⁶ for example, the student overtly situates Canada as a provincial outpost of the Empire. In doing so, their British-born peers also positioned Canadian women as less feminine, less cultured, and effectively less white: a racist, but common European stereotype of North Americans and other colonials based on their perceived proximity to the black and First Nations residents of Britain's overseas territories, and the threat to racial purity that this proximity suggested. Ultimately, if Carr and other white colonial tourists could trade on their whiteness and British heritage to move freely about the crowded streets of the capital, this was a whiteness that itself existed within a hierarchy and not necessarily a stable means of identification.

Their privileged status in the British World thus challenged, Canadian women abroad were forced to re-evaluate their own, and Canada's place within that entity. It was once again within the ostensibly private space of the boarding house that women like Carr began to re-formulate their ideas about national and imperial identity. In *Growing Pains*, Carr describes the cosmopolitan atmosphere at her chosen establishment: "There were fifty-two women and girls in Mrs.

¹³⁶ Carr, *Growing Pains*, 131.

Dodds' boarding house, every kind of student and all nationalities. Once I counted fourteen countries dining at one table of sixteen souls. Sometimes nationalities clashed but not often. Many foreigners were here to learn English. They learnt squabble English and slang as well as the pure language in our boarding house.” She continues, casually listing the diverse women who passed through her floor: “We had a Welsh singer, a German governess, a French mademoiselle, some little Swedish girls. Often we had two Scotch sisters in the spare cubicles.”¹³⁷ This contact with other women allowed Carr to express her own sense of national and imperial identity, proudly asserting herself as British, Canadian, and sometimes both, depending on the context and strategic need.

One illustrated poem in “London Student Sojourn” points to some of the ambivalence Canadian women experienced when it came to the question of their national and imperial identities. Carr writes:

Now one of our number possessed
 A wonderful parrakeet,
 Which she thought in the front of her toque
 Would look too utterly sweet.
 And then our opinion was asked
 Full sixty times in the day,
 As to whether its glassy stare should be front,
 Or looking the other way?
 On us all it was frequently tried,
 And just as it was complete
 “Her Most Gracious Majesty” died,
 Order – Mourning – farewell parakeet!
 With a very long face and a very bad grace
 Fraulein’s mourning at last was complete -
 if the truth must be known, I fear I must own
 She mourned for the green parakeet.

¹³⁷ Carr, *Growing Pains*, 193-94. May Alcott describes the diverse residents of the boarding house as a worthy tourist sight in themselves: “the constantly changing society met with in a London *pension* proves a great source of entertainment” (21)

The poem is accompanied by a simple representation of a woman in black admiring a garish green hat – one of the few times in the series that the artist departs from her palette of red, blue, yellow, and neutral shades (fig. 36). It is also the only poem that has a clear reference to a specific event – the death of Queen Victoria in 1901 – upon which the artist elaborates at length in a chapter in *Growing Pains*.

Entitled “Queen Victoria,” the chapter begins with the artist accidentally encountering the Queen on the street one day. She records her first impressions:

Chatter ceased, our breath held when Her Majesty smiled right into our surprised faces. She gave us a private, most gracious bow, not a sweeping one to be shared by the crowd. The personal smile of a mother-lady who, having raised a family, loves all boys and girls ... How motherly! was my impression ... This kindly old lady in a black bonnet was woman as well as Queen.¹³⁸

Carr shared her excitement over a royal encounter with her fellow expatriates; Morgan argues that catching a personal glimpse of royalty was a major event to be hoped for by Canadian tourists, particularly by female travellers.¹³⁹ Journalist Kit Coleman and even the otherwise hard-to-please Emily Murphy each wrote in rapturous detail about their own personal encounters with the Queen. Indeed, Coleman’s language echoes that of Carr, describing the “extreme personal attachment felt for her Majesty, not only as Queen, but as a most perfect and beautiful example of all womanly virtues, by her subjects from the Colonies,” and later, “This woman, sitting in an open carriage, within hand-reach of her people, surrounded by no guard, knowing well that she needed no ‘protection’ from the crowd that adored her, expressed in all her attitude that of mother, more than

¹³⁸ Carr, *Growing Pains*, 166.

¹³⁹ Morgan, *A Happy Holiday*, 172-75.

anything else.”¹⁴⁰ Carr’s and Coleman’s descriptions of the Queen as a woman and a mother speaks clearly to the women’s attempts to personalize their individual relationships to the monarch. On a more universal level, this construction of the Queen as a reassuring mother figure also worked to domesticate and personalize the Empire as a whole, effectively envisioning the relationship between the Queen and her subjects and Britain and the colonies as a familial one, a metaphor that naturalized the colonial link and encouraged tighter, more emotional ties between all parties.¹⁴¹

Carr’s chapter continues with a long description of the atmosphere in London at the time of Victoria’s death. She writes evocatively of the silent, but restless mood in the days leading up to the Queen’s passing. As Carr and the city wait impatiently for the news however, her boarding house roommate is portrayed, as she is in “London Student Sojourn,” disdainfully, and not taking the occasion appropriately seriously. Instead, she uses the time to trim her hat with a green parakeet, annoying her mourning housemates with questions about the project. Specified as “Fräulein Zeigler, the German,” the foreign woman is placed outside of the imperial family, distinguished from Emily, who is participating fully in the country’s collective mourning. The hat is a short-lived creation: after seeing another (notably English) girl criticized for refusing to “black” her hat for church service, Carr’s roommate resentfully removes the bird, “slapping a black bow in his place and sulking under it.”¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Kit Coleman, *To London for the Jubilee* (Toronto: G. Morang, 1897), 20 and 61-62; Murphy, 126.

¹⁴¹ Kröller, 89-97.

¹⁴² Carr, *Growing Pains*, 169.

Neither, however, is Carr's narrative universally admiring of the monarchy, revealing that her own identifications shifted even within the timeframe of a single incident. When she sees the "sad and old" Edward, and remarks that the Queen ought to have let him reign before he was too old, she is admonished by her English friend Wattie that it is "poor taste to criticize England's Queen, particularly after she is dead." To this, Carr responds archly: "She was our Queen too,"¹⁴³ illustrating what historian Gail Campbell describes as a Canadian "proprietary pride in Britain."¹⁴⁴ However, her description of the funeral procession is rather dismissive of the over-the-top mourning on display:

Oh, the dismal hearing of those dead-march bands, which linked the interminable procession into one great sag of woe, dragging a little, old woman, who had fulfilled her years, over miles of route-march that her people might glut themselves with woe and souse themselves in tears on seeing the flag that draped the box that held the bones of the lady who had ruled their land.¹⁴⁵

Throughout her narrative, Carr swings easily from "*our* Queen" to "*their* land."

Carr's shift from "our" to "their" gives a sense of the slipperiness of identifications for Canadian women in Britain. For some, travel to Britain was a useful way of working out their ideas about the Empire (and Canada's place within it) and Canada's national status. Debates about these issues were pervasive in the decades between Confederation and the first World War, and Canadian travellers were certainly aware of them; women's expressions of national and imperial sentiment should therefore be seen as not only iterations of personal

¹⁴³ Ibid., 168.

¹⁴⁴ Gail G. Campbell, "New Brunswick Women Travellers and the British Connection, 1845-1905," in *Canada and the British World: Culture, Migration, and Identity*, eds. Phillip Buckner and R. Douglas Francis (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006), 80.

¹⁴⁵ Carr, *Growing Pains*, 170.

feeling, but within this wider political context.¹⁴⁶ Active assertions about what they were and what they were not (even if these often seem conflicting and dependent on context) reveal that Canadian women did not simply receive their identities passively, but took on active, observing, judging roles when resident in the imperial metropole.¹⁴⁷

The specter of empire forms a backdrop to much of Carr's time in England: her mentor Mrs. Radcliffe, for example, follows the course of the Boer War obsessively,¹⁴⁸ while another family of acquaintances has a son fighting in South Africa (whom they visit in a "nice little pleasure jaunt"¹⁴⁹). Later, Carr is disappointed when her good friend Wattie moves to India to live with her brother.¹⁵⁰ The artist narrates these anecdotes in a relatively neutral manner, suggesting that for her, the Empire was merely a fact of everyday life. Other travellers, though, expressed stronger opinions on the state of the Empire: the narratives of Kit Coleman and Maria Lauder, in particular, are full of pride and astonishment at the scope and the spectacle of British imperial power. Pemberton, in contrast, adopts an overtly anti-English and anti-imperial stance in letters to her sister Ada. In addition to her disapproving comments on the appearance of the royal family, she remarks that she has offended her English friend Mrs. S.D. – the same woman who called her a "little colonial girl" – by calling an awkward and overly polite gathering of friends "so very English."¹⁵¹ In another letter, written

¹⁴⁶ Morgan, *A Happy Holiday*, 8-9.

¹⁴⁷ Antoinette Burton has argued that this was equally true of Indian travellers in London (*In the Heart of the Empire*, 45-46).

¹⁴⁸ Carr, *Growing Pains*, 149.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 160.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 167.

¹⁵¹ Sophie Pemberton to Ada Pemberton Beaven, date unknown. Ada Beaven fonds, BCA.

from Paris at the turn of the century, she is even more overtly critical of the British imperial project:

You are all abominably patriotic it bores me a little. Miss Worley's (?) effusion is rubbish and I laugh to think of the opinion expressed by a French woman (great friend of mine) 'Savez vous que depuis que les Boers commencent a perdre je ne lis plus les journaux, ca ne m'interesse plus' and another said that the English would annex the moon if they could and make the inhabitants speak English too.¹⁵²

The rejection of imperialist cheerleading by Pemberton appears to be a common, if rarely so clearly articulated, response to her specific experience as a Canadian woman living abroad: her family in British Columbia, after all, remains "abominably patriotic." Angela Woollacott proposes that Australia women in Britain went through a similar process of defining and re-defining their ideas about imperialism and nationality. "Frequently having considered themselves both Australian and English or British and their pilgrimage to London as 'going home,'" she writes, "being in Britain impelled them to see the slippage between these identities and to confront the colonialness that most had previously elided through simultaneous but unreflecting identifications."¹⁵³ She finds that Australian women's response to this new recognition of their ambiguous positioning within the heart of the Empire "involved a proud rejection of the subordinate status of the colonial and a corollary nurturing of Australian cultural

¹⁵² Sophie Pemberton to Ada Pemberton Beaven, date unknown. Ada Beaven fonds, BCA. It must be noted however, that Pemberton's second husband Horace Deane-Drummond made his fortune in tea and rubber plantations in India and Sri Lanka; the couple travelled there in the early 1920's, where the artist produced works such as *The Parrot Court, Meduna Temple, India* (1923, AGGV).

¹⁵³ Woollacott, 140-41.

and national identity.”¹⁵⁴ The same is certainly true of Canadian women, who consistently proclaimed and re-iterated their Canadianness while in Britain.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Carr is an especially effective Canadian parallel to the process outlined by Woollacott; indeed, art historian Gerta Moray proposes that it was actually in London that this quintessentially Canadian artist first “became aware of Canada’s distinctive character and potential.”¹⁵⁵ Canadian tourists in England reacted to the colonial stereotypes attributed to them in various ways: by attempting to mimic proper British behaviour and put forth the best possible public image to counteract false assumptions, by actively refusing the accusations and taunts of others and proudly self-identifying as Canadian, and often, by simply passively aggressively complaining.¹⁵⁶ Carr and her colleagues made attempts at all of these responses; finally, the artist took the interesting further tactic of embodying and actively performing the stereotypes in outright defiance of what was expected of her.

When she first arrived in London, Carr attempted to fit smoothly into British society. She discusses her struggles to find the “English way” of doing things: where to walk, where to sit, how to tip properly.¹⁵⁷ She was not alone in finding English mores different from Canadian customs. Emily Murphy, for instance, blames her “blissful colonial ignorance” when she offends English onlookers by going to a public bath with her husband, “which is not the rule, not even the exception in England. Such naughty uncivilized doings are relegated to

¹⁵⁴ Woollacott, 140-41.

¹⁵⁵ Moray, *Unsettling Encounters*, 9.

¹⁵⁶ Morgan, *A Happy Holiday*, 118-121.

¹⁵⁷ Carr, *Growing Pains*, 180-81.

all the rest of the world.”¹⁵⁸ Carr writes about her difficulties with accents in particular, relating that her fellow students “ridiculed what they called my colonialism” when she has trouble deciphering the different British accents.¹⁵⁹ She responds by attempting to mimic English speech, ashamed of the accent that betrays her as an outsider in London. When confronted with her charade by someone she met on the ship, she is ashamed: “Unconsciously I’d tried to be less different from the other students, I who had seen many Canadian-born girls go to England to be educated and come back more English than the English. I had despised them for it. I was grateful for the doctor’s visit and I swore to myself I would go home to Canada as Canadian as I left her.”¹⁶⁰

It was specifically the act of going to Britain that enabled this new understanding of what it meant to be a part of the Empire, and, by extension, what it meant to be Canadian. Growing up in Canada, women may have been more likely to define themselves through regional identities; being in London, meeting fellow citizens from across the country and uniting together against native Britons and travellers from other locations allowed women to define themselves as Canadian. As such, Moray notes that Carr’s description of her time in Britain also functions as a description of “what Canada meant to her at that time: great open spaces, unspoiled natural wildness, a fascinatingly ‘different’ kind of Native population, and, not least, the scope she herself found, although a woman, to

¹⁵⁸ She also puts forth a pragmatic, rather than moral, reason for the sex-segregation: “I asked a lady the why and wherefore of it, and she assured me that the real reason was because the English women had shockingly bad figures” (Murphy, 26)

¹⁵⁹ Carr, *Growing Pains*, 184.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. 141.

pursue an independent life as an artist.”¹⁶¹ As such, Carr frequently compares the British landscape – “tame, self-satisfied, smug and meek”¹⁶² – to the Canadian West Coast, while Maria Lauder, too, compares British bridges, cliffs, rivers, and waterfalls to their Canadian counterparts; for both writers, the British versions come up short. In other cases, tourists delight in coming across evidence of Canada in Britain: Lauder is excited to see Canadian lumber being unloaded from a ship,¹⁶³ while Murphy notes that the horses driving her carriages are Canadian.¹⁶⁴ The latter is even more excited to find a portrait bust of Sir John A. MacDonald among the notable figures interred in the crypt at St. Paul’s.¹⁶⁵ Kit Coleman’s thrill at the sight of Wilfred Laurier passing in a hansom cab, which “brought Canada near in a rather down-hearted moment,” is only the first of her many exclamations upon finding Canada and Canadians in London.¹⁶⁶ Of all the tourist sights she sees in London, Carr is most excited by Kew Gardens, not because of the new things she finds, but because of the familiar ones: “Kew was a bouquet culled from the entire world. I found South America, and Asia, Africa, China, Australia – then I found Canada (even to a grove of pines and cedars from my own Province). I rubbed their greenery between my hands – it smelled homey.”¹⁶⁷

Over the course of her time in Britain as recounted in *Growing Pains*, Carr becomes more assertive about her Canadian identity. Upon responding negatively

¹⁶¹ Moray, *Unsettling Encounters*, 9.

¹⁶² Carr, *Growing Pains*, 179; see also 204.

¹⁶³ Lauder, 259.

¹⁶⁴ Murphy, 11.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 42-43.

¹⁶⁶ Coleman, 11-12.

¹⁶⁷ Carr, *Growing Pains*, 119.

to the question of whether she knew an acquaintance's brother in Chicago, the man is disappointed: "What! So few cities of importance in America and not know Chicago! Every American should be familiar with such cities as they have." To this, Emily retorts firmly, "But I do not live in America. I am Canadian."¹⁶⁸ She re-iterates her nationality still more strongly when her mentor Mrs. Radcliffe tells her, in what is meant to be an appealing prospect, that "London will soon polish Canada off you, smooth you, as your English parents were smooth. You are entitled to that." This "entitlement" suggests that only certain – namely white – colonials were allowed or able to become properly British and reject the lesser status of colonial. Nevertheless, Carr replies defiantly, "I am Canadian, I am not English. I do not want Canada polished out of me."¹⁶⁹

Canadian women who travelled abroad were encouraged to be constantly aware of their public appearance and behaviour, warned that they should represent their colonial homeland in the best possible manner while in the mother country.¹⁷⁰ This was an important task on both a personal and political level. Cecilia Morgan has argued that the popular phenomenon of groups of white British women travelling to Canada was part of a process by which "Nineteenth- and early-twentieth century colonial and imperial governments and voluntary organizations attempted to secure imperial ties through the importation and display of white British womanhood."¹⁷¹ This was likewise true of Canadian women "returning home" to England: they did so as representatives of their

¹⁶⁸ To the consternation of Emily (and Canadian travellers still today), the man remains unconvinced: "Same thing, same continent!" (*Growing Pains*, 127).

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 135.

¹⁷⁰ Kröller, 75.

¹⁷¹ Morgan, 113.

homeland, and were meant to show how far that colony had come in terms of the “civilization” process. Indeed, the protagonists of Sara Jeannette Duncan’s novel are sent abroad by their father with this explicit goal: as heroine Mary Trent explains, he

wanted to send us as samples ... to go and show forth his country for him ... We hadn’t any mission, no one had sent for us, yet father managed to impress upon us that we weren’t going precisely and only to have a good time, or quite in the frivolous spirit of a visit to the United States for instance. ‘If you come across anybody that seems curious,’ father said, ‘you can explain that this continent grows something besides Americans’.¹⁷²

Mary embodies a positive Canadian stereotype: the confident, healthy, independent “Canadian girl” who has been raised in the fresh northern Canadian climate. Significantly, it is specifically the white female body that acts as the sign that civilization has been achieved in the colonies, and who can therefore serve as an advertisement for the progress of her nation and, by extension, the health of the Empire and white race.

In some cases, however, female travellers went so far as to actively perform negative stereotypes of Canadianness, playing with British pre-conceptions of them as colonial women. Emily Murphy advises taking this approach with questioners ignorant of the realities of Canada: “they ask you about the buffaloes and ‘revolver fights’ and you answer them in a ‘Big Injun’ way, which, if not entirely reliable, is at least exciting and original.”¹⁷³ At the rural art colony of Bushey, Emily Carr doesn’t get along with the other British students at first, feeling that they are dismissive of her because she is from Canada; in

¹⁷² Duncan, 10-11.

¹⁷³ Murphy, 20.

response, she acts out in accordance with their prejudices. Her litany of misbehaviours included smoking and swearing, tramping around damp woods, and be-friending the male students, which she chronicled in her sketchbook from the period (fig. 37). These were, in the eyes of her fellow British female colleagues, “wild” activities that reinforced the perception of Canadian women as savage and unfeminine. She writes that she acted deliberately badly in the face of their narrow-minded perception of Canadians: “I behaved outrageously when Mack and Big Canary were around; I wanted to shock them! I was really ashamed of myself. The boys grinned; perhaps they were ashamed of me too – they were English. Mack would say, ‘Where *were* you brought up?’ and I would retort, ‘In a different land from you, thank Heaven!’”¹⁷⁴

Murphy and Carr’s descriptions reveal that performing Canadianness while abroad was in effect performing a kind of non-whiteness. Murphy’s “Big Injun” responses and Carr’s “wild” and “savage” behaviour re-affirmed in the minds of native Britons that colonial women remained uncivilized as a result of their perceived proximity to non-white Canadians. By adopting the nickname “Klee Wyck” while in London, Carr also takes the overt step of appropriating First Nations culture to identify herself as a Canadian. Conferred upon her during an earlier visit to Ucluelet, the Nuuchah-nulth name (meaning “Laughing One”) became the title of her first published book in 1941, and was enthusiastically used by her British friends to distinguish the Canadian in their midst.¹⁷⁵ Though representations of Native culture were viewed with caution due to the

¹⁷⁴ Carr, *Growing Pains*, 220.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 135.

connotations of primitiveness they were thought to imply, this was a not-unusual move for Canadian and Australian expatriates in Britain. The use of recognizable, “authentic” Aboriginal or First Nations signs and symbols was a strategy that allowed colonial women to publicly advertise the uniqueness of their homelands, to construct a historical narrative for their relatively new nations, and to show their own place within that history.¹⁷⁶ It also effectively made public their own authority as representatives of those lands.

The co-optation of First Nations culture and performance of colonial incivility was only possible by those who enjoyed the privileges of whiteness: white women could, after all, choose to stop performing this stereotype and regain the status of civilized immediately, an option not available to actual First Nations visitors to London. Carr’s tactics at Bushey were ultimately successful in winning over her initially-horrified fellow students: when one day she takes things a step too far by mocking the teacher in a sketch, the other students concede that they would miss her if she left, as “in spite of my being colonial and bad form it had been livelier since I came, they said.” While luckily the teacher is amused and gives her a sketch in return, only one disapproving hold out proclaims “I doubt *that Canadian* is capable of appreciating either the honour or the picture!”¹⁷⁷

V. Conclusion

If London became old-fashioned and dull with modernist hindsight, contemporary Canadian audiences did not consider it to be so. Canadian

¹⁷⁶ Morgan, *A Happy Holiday*, 184; Woollacott, 175-178.

¹⁷⁷ Carr, *Growing Pains*, 222.

newspapers and magazines reported on their hometown daughters' accomplishments abroad, noting their awards, honours, and exhibitions with pride.¹⁷⁸ Beyond the art world, Britain offered women like Carr the opportunity to lay claim to the public and social spaces of a modern metropolis and to explore their place in the British World more generally. Even if her impressions of the city were frequently negative, Carr's writing and illustrations reveal a firm confidence in her occupation of public space. In contrast to the relative freedom of physical mobility they experienced, however, women like Carr frequently found it difficult to access and negotiate the public social networks of the city. As a Canadian, the artist recognized herself as an imperial subject who was "at home" in London; this colonial status was, however, equally used against her, and she also found herself dismissed as an uncivilized outsider who did not belong in the heart of the Empire.

In the end, Carr herself agreed. After unrepentantly kicking the salesman at a fancy shoe shop in Regent Street and embarrassing her mentor Mrs. Radcliffe, she wrote sadly, "I knew I was not a nice person. I knew I did not belong to London. I was honestly ashamed of myself, but London was... Oh, I wanted my West! I wasn't a London lady."¹⁷⁹ The artist finished her "student sojourn" with an eighteen-month stay in an English sanatorium, being treated for what has been variously attributed to tuberculosis, neurasthenia, hysteria, and

¹⁷⁸ For example, Carr's hometown celebrated her return with a glowing article in the local newspaper. "Perfecting Her Art: Miss Carr Returns from Five Years Study under English Masters," *Victoria Daily Colonist*, January 11, 1905.

¹⁷⁹ Carr, *Growing Pains*, 158.

depression.¹⁸⁰ After five and a half years, Carr left England in 1904 without saying goodbye to her friends and colleagues, asserting her newly firm recognition that “Canada is my home.”¹⁸¹ Even if she later disparaged her time in London, at least one experience she had there was apparently positive enough to repeat at home in Victoria: the artist opened her own boarding house in 1913, a period in her life chronicled in her book *A House of All Sorts* (1944).

The sense of homecoming Canadian women expressed when going to Britain was a clearly a complicated one. “Home” here indicates not just a physical place, but, as Woollacott describes, the “locus of cultural memory and ancestral origins.”¹⁸² In the next chapter, we will look at the ways in which Canadian-born artist Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes tapped into these cultural memories in her work as a strategy for establishing herself in Britain.

¹⁸⁰ As Gerta Moray points out, Carr’s diagnoses – particularly hysteria – were those popular in the pre-WWI period to describe “women whose aspirations to professional independence led to breakdowns in health [and] women who rebelled against the expectations of the female domestic and sexual roles” (Moray, “‘T’Other Emily,” 79). The classic study of women and hysteria is Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980* (New York: Pantheon, 1985).

¹⁸¹ Carr, *Growing Pains*, 237.

¹⁸² Woollacott, 143.

Chapter 2

Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes and the colonial invention of British tradition

I. Introduction

In the same year that Emily Carr abandoned her own London student sojourn another Canadian-born artist was in Britain and putting the finishing touches on a very different illustrated book. After several years of intense work, Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes released her elaborately illustrated children's book *King Arthur's Wood: A Fairy Story* just in time for the 1904 Christmas season. A re-interpretation of "The Tale of Sir Gareth of Orkeney," from Sir Thomas Malory's fifteenth-century *Le Morte Darthur*, Forbes's foray into the world of Arthurian legend consisted of an original story, fourteen large watercolour illustrations, and numerous smaller charcoal drawings. Dedicated to her young son Alec, it was intended as a luxury art object and released in a limited print run of 350 copies.¹ It was a success: as early as 1899, the artist was elected an Associate of the Royal Watercolour Society on the strength of a portfolio of watercolours intended for the book;² once released, a reviewer for the *Studio* glowingly described each "exquisite" image as "a poem in itself."³ Two years later, Forbes's student and biographer Constance Birch claimed simply that *King Arthur's Wood* encapsulated "all that distinguished her as an artist," and praised

¹ Elizabeth Forbes, *King Arthur's Wood: A Fairy Story* (Bristol: Edward Everard, 1904). The copy consulted for this chapter is located at the National Art Library of the Victoria & Albert Museum, London (pressmark F.10.32, reference number 121-1905). It is copy #152, and has been signed by the artist and printer. The original watercolours produced for the book are in a private collection in Cornwall.

² Judith Cook and Melissa Hardie, *Singing from the Walls: The Life and Art of Elizabeth Forbes* (Clifton, Bristol: Sansom and Company, 2000), 173.

³ "Review of *King Arthur's Wood*," *Studio* 33 (1905): 270.

the book as an expression of what she called Forbes's "poetic outlook through Art on Life."⁴

This chapter explores in depth one way in which *King Arthur's Wood* might reflect Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes's "outlook through Art on Life." Specifically, I argue that the book can fruitfully be seen as one response to the ambivalence Canadian women experienced while living in between home and away as expatriates in Britain, as examined in Chapter 1. In both its subject matter – Arthurian legend – and its style – Pre-Raphaelitism – *King Arthur's Wood* deliberately engages with recognizably British historical, cultural, and artistic traditions. Through an appeal to history, and specifically, to the mythology of an extended white, Anglo-Saxon family that linked the British World, the foreign-born Forbes inserted herself and her work into an established cultural lineage, and asserted her claim to belonging in Britain and in the British art world. Considered in such a way, the book appears as perhaps the most sustained engagement on behalf of a Canadian woman artist with *fin-de-siècle* debates surrounding race, culture, and the British World – a clear participant in the construction of ideas about what "Britishness" had been, what it was, and what it should be. This focus is especially remarkable given that the artist spent much of her early career in Britain in the company of aggressively *anti*-British artists such as American expatriate J.A.M. Whistler and the German-born Walter Sickert.

Born in Ontario in 1859, Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes left Canada as a teenager to pursue an art education in London; in contrast to Carr's perception of

⁴ Mrs. Lionel Birch, *Stanhope Forbes, A.R.A. and Elizabeth Stanhope Forbes, A.R.W.S.* (London: Cassell and Company, 1906), 85.

the differences between Canadian and English women, for Forbes it was England that presented women with “every opportunity to study and grow wise.”⁵ Supported by her uncle and accompanied by her mother, the artist lived in Chelsea and attended the South Kensington Schools, before returning briefly to Canada in 1877. She then moved to New York City, where she spent the following three years working at the Art Students’ League. Forbes returned to her home base in London in 1881, from which she ventured out for significant periods of time over the next decade. Her first stop was a disappointing five months in Munich where, in contrast to London, she found her “sex to be a perpetual disadvantage,” and which she ultimately dismissed as “not at all a place in which women stood any chance of developing their artistic powers.”⁶ The artist then embarked on a more professionally satisfying tour of the rural artist colonies of England and the continent, including Pont-Aven in Brittany, Zandvoort in the Netherlands, and St. Ives in Cornwall. When she married fellow artist Stanhope Forbes in 1889, the couple settled permanently in the Cornish colony of Newlyn and became the core of a group popularly known as the “Newlyn school.” After her marriage and the subsequent birth of her only child Alec in 1893, Forbes continued to paint and exhibit until her death of uterine cancer in 1912, at the early age of 53.⁷

⁵ Ibid., 56.

⁶ Ibid., 61. The artist records that she chose Munich over Paris based on advice from her teachers at the ASL, who had worked with other American expatriates in Germany a decade previous. When Forbes arrived in Munich, the avant-garde American colony had disbanded, and Forbes was disappointed to find only what she perceived to be an old-fashioned local tradition that was hostile to women artists with professional ambitions.

⁷ The general facts of Forbes’s life are recorded in a dual biography of the artist and her husband; the author, Constance Birch (writing as Mrs. Lionel Birch), was a student at the Newlyn School of Painting, which was founded and run by the artist and her husband (not to be confused with the

Forbes enjoyed a prominent reputation during her lifetime. According to the statistics compiled by the artist's biographers Judith Cook and Melissa Hardie, Forbes participated in seventy-one major London shows in the decade between her first exhibition in 1883 and the birth of her child, at venues that included the Royal Academy, the Royal Society of British Artists, and the New English Art Club. Even after the birth of Alec, she continued to show and sell her work in

broader "Newlyn school" group and style). Forbes herself wrote the chapter covering the years up until her marriage; the section about her also includes reprinted articles and reviews, as well as commentary on her life and work written by Birch. A modern biography of the artist, written by Judith Cook and Melissa Hardie, with an introduction by Christiana Payne, adds considerably to the information contained in the Birch biography.

Further information about the couple and their work can also be found in recent texts dedicated to the Newlyn school. See, for example, Tom Cross, *The Shining Sands: Artists in Newlyn and St. Ives, 1880-1930* (Tiverton, Devon: Westcountry Books, 1994); Caroline Fox, *Stanhope Forbes and the Newlyn School* (Newton Abbot, Devon: David and Charles, 1993); Caroline Fox and Francis Greenacre, *Painting in Newlyn, 1880-1930* (London: Barbican Art Gallery, 1985); Caroline Fox and Francis Greenacre, *Artists of the Newlyn School, 1880-1900* (Newlyn: Newlyn Orion Art Galleries, 1979); Michael Jacobs, *The Good and Simple Life: Artist Colonies in Europe and America* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1985). In addition to the articles cited elsewhere in this chapter, contemporary articles devoted to the Forbes couple and the Newlyn school include Gladys Crozier, "Elizabeth Stanhope Forbes," *Art Journal* (1904): 382-385; Norman Garstin, "The Work of Stanhope A. Forbes, A.R.A.," *Studio* 23, no. 100 (1901): 81-88; Alice Meynell, "Newlyn," *Art Journal* 9 (1889): 97-102 and 137-42; W. Christian Symons, "Newlyn and the Newlyn School," *Magazine of Art* (1890): 199-205.

Forbes's life can also be traced through the large archive of material left by her husband, now in the collection of the Tate Archive, London, UK. Elizabeth's letters to Stanhope were unfortunately burned by him when she died. Though Stanhope's reasons for burning the letters might be attributed to grief, the fact that he also evidently destroyed sketches and pastels, many of them life drawings, suggest that he may have done so in the interest of preserving her reputation as a respectable woman. There is, however, no reliable evidence for this (or even, indeed, that he actually burned the letters) (Cook and Hardie, 155-6). However, hundreds of letters to Elizabeth from Stanhope are extant, and give valuable insight into the couple's professional and personal relationships, particularly in the years leading up to their marriage. This does, however, present the significant methodological problem of only being able to access her thoughts and ideas through her husband's voice. Though the number and dating of letters allows the reader to re-construct debates between the two to a certain extent, it is ultimately very difficult to reliably state what Elizabeth's intentions, motives, and goals might have been (Stanhope Forbes collection, TGA). Her voice is apparent in two articles she wrote for the *Studio*, written as Elizabeth Stanhope Forbes and Mrs. Stanhope Forbes, respectively: Elizabeth Forbes, "An April Holiday," *Studio* 43 (1908): 191-99 and Elizabeth Forbes, "On the Slope of a Southern Shore," *Studio* 18 (1900): 25-34.

Collections of photographs, clippings, and other material related to the couple are in the archives of the Newlyn Art Gallery and the Penlee House Museum and Gallery, both in Penzance, UK. Unless otherwise noted, the dates, titles, locations, and exhibition details given for Forbes's work throughout are those listed by Cook and Hardie in the catalogue raisonné that accompanies their biography.

prominent venues, including at her own solo shows.⁸ Over the course of this time, the artist worked with not only oils and watercolours, but had a significant reputation as an etcher as well. This prolific career was chronicled by the art press of her day on both sides of the Atlantic, with articles devoted to the artist appearing in the *Studio*, the *Art Journal*, and *Saturday Night*, and positive mentions of her work in the exhibition reviews of – to name only a few – the *Times*, the *Illustrated London News*, and *Canadian Magazine*. Sections dedicated to her were also included in contemporary survey texts such as Clara Erskine Waters's *Women in the Fine Arts* (1904), Walter Shaw Sparrow's *Women Painters* (1905), and fellow Canadian artist Mary Ella Dignam's contribution on artists to *Women of Canada: Their Life and Work* (1900). Forbes received further notice in a chapter about expatriates in Albert Robson's *Canadian Landscape Painters* (1932), which described her as “a brilliant painter and etcher,” but qualified this praise by remarking that her work “shows little Canadian background, and though by birth a Canadian, she takes her place as an eminent English artist.”⁹

Like Robson, contemporary writers frequently saw fit to comment on Forbes's unstable national identity: the artist's liminal position as a colonial woman living as an expatriate in the imperial metropole seems to have left reviewers uncertain as to her rightful home and the extent to which she could call herself at home in Britain. The author of an article in *Lady's Pictorial* in 1891

⁸ In comparison, Stanhope showed his work in forty-two venues between 1874 and 1893. Records also reveal that Elizabeth sold more works than her husband at the Newlyn Art Gallery during her lifetime (Catherine Wallace, *Women Artists in Cornwall, 1880-1940* [Falmouth: Falmouth Town Council, 1996], 6-7).

⁹ Albert Robson, *Canadian Landscape Painters* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1932), 92.

calls her “A Canadian by birth ... English by adoption,”¹⁰ for example, while the *New York Evening Post* states of her entry to the RA in 1892 that “decidedly the best showing by Americans is made by Mrs. Stanhope Forbes – a Canadian.”¹¹ Of her time in the United States though, Forbes later recalled that her colleagues insisted on considering her “the English girl.”¹² These assessments suggest the difficulty in pinning down a single, stable home for the very mobile artist.

Indeed, Forbes consistently positioned herself as an in-between figure: at once a local and a foreigner, and above all, a wanderer with no fixed or definable home. From childhood until her marriage, the artist travelled frequently and did not stay in one place for very long. The artist records that as a child in Canada, her family “lived in ... trunks” and that she “had not always a garden to be happy in.”¹³ The artist evidently remained mobile even after it was no longer necessary, taking the time in her autobiography to thank her “devoted mother, who had sacrificed much to accompany me on my wanderings” in the years when she was building her career.¹⁴ Frances Armstrong acted as patient chaperone to her daughter’s adventures, accompanying her from one rural artist colony to another. The elder woman’s presence secured her daughter’s respectability in these male-dominated environments. A series of photographs taken in Newlyn captures that atmosphere, and underscores the importance of the chaperone in making a young, white, middle-class woman’s art career possible (fig. 38). Surrounded by a group

¹⁰ M.W., “Lady Artists,” *Lady’s Pictorial* (April 1891): S26.

¹¹ Quoted in Cook and Hardie, 94.

¹² Birch, 60.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 55. The frequent change of address was presumably necessitated by her father’s career as a civil servant (Cook and Hardie, 33).

¹⁴ Birch, 62.

of men (including her future husband, who leans against her in two images, and against her mother in the other), Elizabeth is the only woman artist present in this gathering of what was popularly known as the “Newlyn Brotherhood.”¹⁵ Inclusion in this kind of rather bohemian lifestyle – upon which status in the modern art world was increasingly dependent – would have been impossible for a young, white, middle-class woman unaccompanied by an appropriate chaperone.

Even after she was joined by a husband and child, Forbes apparently continued to see herself as a restless wanderer. She expressed her desire for mobility in one letter to a friend shortly after the birth of her son:

I am interested in your account of the little place in Normandy, for I am trying to hear of a good place to migrate to next summer. I intend to pluck my poor unwilling husband from his beloved Newlyn and let the house if possible for a few months. He cannot bear the idea of being away long ... but I have been struck for an entire change of air and scene and I have only been waiting for Baby to be old enough to take about and now that he is beginning to talk I have a deep laid plot to take him to France so that French shall be his first language.¹⁶

Clearly, the artist wished her son to lead an equally cosmopolitan life. Forbes’s inclination to nomadism (in contrast to her “poor unwilling husband”) was also noted by critic Marion Dixon, who recorded in her article about Elizabeth, “Mr. Stanhope Forbes is less a wanderer at heart than is his Canadian wife.”¹⁷

Evidently, the ways in which Forbes self-identified and was identified by others were somewhat unstable. By first tracing the artist’s early career as a disciple of Whistler, and then through a close analysis of *King Arthur’s Wood*, I

¹⁵ The group also includes Newlyn school artists Norman Garstin (with beard), Frank Bodilly (with armband), Frank Wright Bourdillon (in hunting cap) and Alexander Chevallier Taylor (in bowling hat, with Garstin on his lap).

¹⁶ Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes to Mrs. Brooke Alder, December 18, year unknown. Elizabeth Forbes artist file, National Art Library, Victoria & Albert Museum, London, UK.

¹⁷ Marion H. Dixon, “The Art of Mrs. Stanhope Forbes,” *Lady’s Realm* (1904-5).

argue that Forbes attempted to resolve this ambiguity by turning to the past. She was not alone in looking to history to negotiate her conflicted sense of belonging and exclusion in Britain: many English-speaking travellers from the British World went in search of history in Britain for evidence of the roots of their own relatively new nations, and to understand their own positions within these national narratives. Considering this, and in the context of her years of association with the foreign-identified Whistler circle, Forbes's choice of a historical – and moreover, a distinctly British – subject and style in *King Arthur's Wood* must be seen as what Robert Upstone has called “an act of nationalist cultural assertion.”¹⁸ Unlike Emily Carr then, who came to consciously recognize herself as Canadian during her time in London, Forbes, through the evidence provided by her work, appears to have come to see herself as decidedly British.

II. “A parcel of foreigners:” Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes and the Whistler circle in the 1880s

Like other Canadian women abroad, Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes formed social and professional connections that bridged the private and public spheres in order to establish herself abroad. Most notable among these for Forbes during her early career was her participation in an informal group of avant-garde artists working in London in the mid-1880s. Looking back on her early years in 1906, the artist singled out her time at the Art Students' League under the tutelage of William Merritt Chase as being the most influential moment of her artistic life.

¹⁸ Upstone argues that this shift occurred in the work of John William Waterhouse, who moved from classical subjects to British ones in the same period (Robert Upstone, “Between Innovation and Tradition: Waterhouse and Modern French Painting,” in *J.W. Waterhouse: The Modern Pre-Raphaelite*, eds. Elizabeth Prettejohn et al. [London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2008], 44).

Describing the prominent American Impressionist as “one of the most inspiring and enthusiastic teachers it has ever been my good fortune to meet,” she expressed her “strong admiration for [his] work and aims.” It was in New York, she continues, that she first encountered the work of an artist who apparently needed no introduction: “that brilliant exponent of ‘symphonies in white’ and ‘nocturnes in blue and silver.’”¹⁹ After her return to London, Forbes cultivated a close professional relationship with this unnamed artist: James Abbott McNeill Whistler. Throughout the 1880s, Forbes’s social and artistic associations with these two leaders of Anglo-American Impressionism and Aestheticism – and, in particular, her link to the divisive latter artist – situated the artist and her work securely within contemporary debates about artistic style and national identity in Britain.

Elizabeth Armstrong (not yet Forbes) was just one of several young artists who formed a circle around Whistler in the mid-1880s, a group that included Mortimer Menpes, Theodore Roussel, Sidney Starr, Harper Pennington, and most prominently, Walter Sickert. These diverse artists were brought together by an interest in Impressionism, and some, by the practice of etching. Armstrong would have had an entrée into this set through Chase, who had worked and travelled with Whistler in the past.²⁰ In her important study of the Whistler group, art

¹⁹ Birch, 60.

²⁰ Anna Greutzner Robins, *A Fragile Modernism: Whistler and his Impressionist Followers* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 33.

Stanhope and Elizabeth met in the fall of 1885; he recorded his first impression in a letter to his mother: “She cannot be said to be pretty but is a nice intelligent and ladylike girl” (quoted in Cook and Hardie, 69). Evidently he changed his mind, and the two were engaged in the following year. Stanhope’s mother’s disapproval of the nomadic Canadian girl was so strong that she refused to consent to (or pay for) the wedding. It is only when Stanhope makes a major sale (of his large oil canvas *The Health of the Bride* [1889, Tate]) and can fund a family independent of his mother

historian Anna Gruetzner Robins suggests that Menpes may have performed the introductions between Armstrong and Whistler after working with her at Pont-Aven in 1882.²¹ This early meeting seems likely, considering that Armstrong's very first etching, made in 1882 with Menpes's aid, included a copy of a section of Whistler's own etching *Speke Hall* (1870, Walker Art Gallery).²² This loose group of artists crystallized in the following years through their involvement in first, the Royal Society of British Artists, where Whistler was controversially elected President in 1886, and later, through the New English Art Club, where Sickert's Impressionist leanings dominated. This group of "Whistler followers," art historian Anne Koval argues, "self-consciously regard[ed] themselves as the emerging avant-garde" in Britain in the mid-1880s.²³

Armstrong's then-fiancé Stanhope Forbes strongly disapproved of her professional and personal connection with the controversial Whistler, writing melodramatically to her on one occasion "I really can hardly bear to think that very likely you are going to meet him tomorrow,"²⁴ and further despairing at his

that the two marry, three years after their initial engagement; it seems that Stanhope's mother did not attend the wedding.

²¹ Ibid., 49.

²² Arthur K. Sabin, "The Dry-Points of Elizabeth Adela Forbes, Formerly E.A. Armstrong (1859-1912)," *The Print-Collector's Quarterly* 9, no. 1 (February 1922): 82.

²³ Anne Koval, "'The 'Artists' have come out and the 'British' remain: The Whistler Faction at the Society of British Artists,'" in *After the Pre-Raphaelites: Art and Aestheticism in Victorian England*, ed. Elizabeth Prettejohn (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999), 93. Koval points out that the Impressionist group in Paris, in addition to providing stylistic inspiration, supplied an ideal model for this kind of anti-academic group to follow, and notes that both leader and followers benefited from this relationship; the younger artists, by the celebrity that an association with Whistler inferred, the older, by the support of the younger (92-93). Robins posits that Whistler's deliberate cultivation of a dedicated entourage who would copy and disseminate his style and ideas did nothing less than construct his own school of art and "consolidate his status as an avant-garde artist" (*A Fragile Modernism*, 3).

²⁴ Stanhope Forbes to Elizabeth Armstrong, November 23, 1886. Stanhope Forbes collection, TGA.

intended's position in what he called the "clique" of the "Whistler gang."²⁵ Forbes disapproved of the changes that the elder artist had instituted at the RBA.

Founded as an equally conservative offshoot of the RA in 1823, the organization shifted in focus in the early 1880s, and changed dramatically when Whistler joined in 1884. Bringing students and followers with him (including Armstrong, whose first exhibit at the RBA was in the same year), the artist was in a position to be elected President in the summer of 1886, and thus to reform the Society from the inside by changing its membership demographics, exhibition standards, and overall aesthetic aims. Faced with continued resistance from competing artists like Forbes and his own set of followers from the Newlyn school, Whistler was ultimately forced to resign in 1888 and left, taking most of his followers with him,²⁶ again including Armstrong, who did not exhibit with the institution again after showing sixteen works during the Whistler era.

While Armstrong's professional relationship with the RBA was evidently such that Stanhope was secure in his knowledge that her work would "of course [be] sure of a place there,"²⁷ the artist's position in this "gang" extended beyond the walls of the gallery. Robins proposes that she posed for several previously unidentified Whistler sketches in 1885,²⁸ while Menpes taught her etching and

²⁵ He writes, "[Artist Thomas Cooper] Gotch has told me much about the Whistler gang lately and really I cannot find words strong enough to show my contempt for them. I feel sure a time will come when you will see it too, but my prayers do not go up for those who were instrumental in drawing you in with that clique..." (Stanhope Forbes to Elizabeth Armstrong, December 6, 1886. Stanhope Forbes collection, TGA).

²⁶ Koval 90-91, 97-98.

²⁷ Stanhope Forbes to Elizabeth Armstrong, c. November 20-22, 1886. Stanhope Forbes collection, TGA.

²⁸ Robins, *A Fragile Modernism*, 49. The works she proposes as representations of Armstrong are listed as numbers 1059, 1060, and 1061 in Margaret MacDonald's definitive catalogue raisonné of Whistler's drawings, pastels, and watercolours. Two, both entitled *Portrait of a Woman* (both

printed her work in his studio; she also used Menpes's children for her etchings on several occasions.²⁹ Sickert dedicated several of his own etchings to her in 1886, and she owned more than a dozen of his prints and at least one of his paintings.³⁰ Moreover, Armstrong, Menpes, and Sickert were all members of the Royal Society of Painter-Etchers throughout the 1880s. Armstrong also associated with the circle socially: her name appears on a guest list for a party in Whistler's honour in 1889, for example,³¹ and she seems to have formed a particular connection with Sickert's artist wife Ellen (*née* Cobden). This was a relationship that Stanhope appears to have grudgingly accepted, although he warns her "Don't be taken in by the gush about the sister artists,"³² tantalizingly suggesting the existence of a female faction within the wider group.

Both contemporary and recent viewers have noted the stylistic links between Armstrong's early work and that of her avant-garde colleagues. By the 1885 winter exhibition season, Armstrong was cited alongside Sickert, Menpes,

1885, Hunterian Art Gallery, University of Glasgow), show a young woman who resembles other portraits of Armstrong seated, her head on her hand. The third, called *Portrait of a Lady* (1885, private collection), is a side profile of a young woman, her fingers raised to her lips. MacDonald notes that the identification of the woman in each image is uncertain, but does not mention Armstrong as a possible sitter (Margaret F. MacDonald, *James McNeill Whistler: Drawings, Pastels, and Watercolours, a Catalogue Raisonné* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995], 394-5).

²⁹ These include *Dorothy (no.1)*, *Dorothy (no.2)*, and *Toby* (all c. 1882-83, both versions of *Dorothy* are in the collection of the NGC; *Toby* is unlocated, but listed in the Sabin catalogue). See Sabin for more on Armstrong's relationship with Menpes; at the time of the former's article, Menpes still owned a large collection of Armstrong's early prints (including *Toby*). Robins suggests that she may have used Sickert's printing press as well (*A Fragile Modernism*, 117). A large selection of Armstrong's etchings were given to the Victoria & Albert museum by her husband upon her death. The British Museum and NGC also have sizable collections of her prints.

³⁰ For identification of these images, see Robins, *A Fragile Modernism*, 192.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 49-53 and 191-92.

³² Stanhope Forbes to Elizabeth Armstrong, December 6, 1886. Stanhope Forbes collection, TGA. Other references to Elizabeth meeting with Ellen Sickert occur throughout Stanhope's letters over the next two years. Furthermore, Elizabeth wrote to her future mother-in-law that Ellen Sickert purchased one of her paintings from the Institute of Painters in Oil Colour (Elizabeth Armstrong to Mrs. Juliet Forbes, December 3, 1886, Stanhope Forbes collection, TGA).

and Pennington in a review in the *Illustrated London News* as producing works that showed “evidence of Whistler’s teaching.”³³ *Girl on a Window Seat* and *Young Woman in White* (both undated) (figs. 39 and 40) are immediately recognizable as having Whistlerian subjects; they equally recall the Impressionist interiors of her teacher Chase. Compare, for example, to Whistler’s *Symphony in White, Number 3* (1865-7) or to Chase’s *The Tenth Street Studio* (1880) (figs. 41 and 42). Armstrong’s versions on the theme also include the characteristic languid, contemplative female figure dressed in white and posed in an interior, surrounded by various decorative objects. The relative absence of narrative in her work, together with its focus on colour harmonies, is reminiscent of her teachers’ work. These Aesthetic representations of femininity simultaneously challenged and supported Victorian ideals of white womanhood. While the Aesthetic woman, with her lanky frame, strong features, and modern dress was sometimes coded by disapproving contemporaries as masculinized or, on the other hand, overly sexual, the way in which she was represented generally did not present a challenge to the idealized “angel in the house.” In Armstrong’s, Whistler’s, and Chase’s works, the female figures pose inertly in domestic interiors – not sitting or standing, they recline or lounge, producing an impression of sickliness even as they celebrate beauty. This was not a paradox to nineteenth-century viewers, given that the ideal white woman was meant to be as physically inactive as possible. What does seem

³³ Quoted in Robins, 36.

paradoxical is Armstrong's contribution to this cult of beauty/invalidism, given that her own life was so opposed to these ideals.³⁴

Armstrong's rural genre subjects – her primary focus throughout the period – equally demonstrated her sympathies with the Whistler circle's aims. As seen in *The Critics* (1885-86) (fig. 43), exhibited at the fall 1886 RBA show, Armstrong's *plein-air* emphasis on light, loosely-applied paint, and shallow composition were Impressionist-inspired additions to the experiments in colour, composition, and surface finish being conducted by Whistler and his followers. The subject matter of the small image – art creation itself – must have also appealed to a group dedicated to the dictate “art for art's sake.”³⁵ Elizabeth's future husband noted not only the visible similarities between the work of the two artists, but this affinity in attitudes towards art, concluding his impressions of one exhibition with “About that little Whistler – honestly it is a pretty little bit of colour and voilà tout – You will of course laugh and say that is everything.”³⁶

A decade later, critic Evelyn Blantyre Simpson again turned to Whistler as a point of comparison in his praise of Armstrong's etching *The Girl at the Window* (1884, private collection), arguing “The drawing of this particular line seems to me to be in itself a proof of rare power. To find one to measure it against, you must turn to one of Whistler's Venice etchings, where a telegraph wire, apparently as unimportant as this thread, plays a very vital part in the

³⁴ For further discussion of these types of female figures, and for a different reading of Chase's work, see Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

³⁵ See Chapter 3 of this thesis for further discussion of *The Critics*.

³⁶ Stanhope Forbes to Elizabeth Armstrong, December 26, 1887. Stanhope Forbes collection, TGA.

scheme of the design,”³⁷ Today, Anna Gruetzner Robins compares Armstrong’s work not only to Whistler’s, but to Edgar Degas’s as well. Her convincing analysis of Armstrong’s *School is Out* (1889) (fig. 44) situates the artist’s best-known work as a revision of Degas’s *The Rehearsal* (1877) (fig. 45), which she would likely have seen when it was exhibited at London’s Grosvenor Gallery in 1888, a space where she frequently exhibited as well. Armstrong drew on the French artist’s work, Robins argues, both in terms of style (she points out resemblances in the treatment of colour, the use of natural light, the diagonal composition, and the relaxed poses of the figures) and subject matter, even if this similarity is refracted through the lens of gender difference (both artists tackle the subject of the modern professional woman, in Armstrong’s case, in her respectable guise as a schoolteacher).³⁸ Deborah Cherry agrees, calling *School is Out* no less than “a bid to redefine modernity as it was being constituted in England in the 1880s.”³⁹ Finally, Armstrong’s interest in and facility with different media – charcoal, pastel, watercolour, etching – also places her among

³⁷ Evelyn Blantyre Simpson, “The Paintings and Etchings of Elizabeth Stanhope Forbes,” *Studio* 4, no. 24 (1895): 191.

³⁸ Robins, *A Fragile Modernism*, 107-110. Armstrong would have had access to Degas’s work through Sickert, who owned several of his works, including *The Green Dancer* (c. 1880, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza), *Mlle Bécot at the Café des Ambassadeurs* (1885, Pierpont Morgan Library), and *The Rehearsal of the Ballet on Stage* (c. 1873-74, Metropolitan Museum of Art). Sickert and Degas were close, and through him, Degas became the best-known and best-respected French artist in England in the later nineteenth century. His was the first French Impressionist work in a public institution in Britain (*The Ballet Scene from Meyerbeer’s Opera “Robert le Diable”*, 1876, bequeathed to the Victoria & Albert Museum in 1900) and by the turn of the century, the largest private collection of the French artist’s work was in Britain (Anna Gruetzner Robins and Richard Thomson, *Degas, Sickert, and Toulouse-Lautrec: London and Paris, 1870-1910* [London: Tate Publishing, 2005], 61-66).

³⁹ Deborah Cherry, *Painting Women: Victorian Women Artists* (London: Routledge, 1993), 185. For further discussion of the painting, see Deborah Cherry, *Beyond the Frame: Feminism and Visual Culture, Britain 1850-1900* (London: Routledge, 2000), 186-88.

artists like Degas, Sickert, and Whistler who also experimented with different techniques throughout the 1880s.⁴⁰

Stanhope's protestations against Elizabeth's participation in this circle were numerous and vehement: he both disliked Whistler's artistic ideas and disapproved of his controversial reputation. His letters describe the exhibitions with which Elizabeth was involved as deliberately, even aggressively avant-garde and elitist. Of the spring 1887 RBA show, for example, he writes, "I hear extraordinary accounts of the goings on at Suffolk St. Only twenty pictures by outsiders accepted. The walls dotted here and there with a few pictures about three or four on each wall. Whistler and Starr seem to be the guiding spirits. I wish you were out of the hole altogether."⁴¹ This report paints a picture of the exclusivity of the exhibition society with its mention of "outsiders," while his (disapproving) description of the hanging as sparse reveals the new exhibition aesthetics Whistler introduced. He provides a similar assessment of the spring 1888 exhibition of the NEAC, the institution to which Whistler's followers (if not the artist himself) decamped after their leader had been exiled from the RBA.⁴² In spite of his future wife's good placement in the show – Elizabeth's paintings had been placed in the "A" class, unlike those of several other of the couple's Newlyn friends – Stanhope writes, "I was astonished to find the impressionists in great force in consequence of which the public will be considerably astonished ... some

⁴⁰ Cook and Hardie, 24-25.

⁴¹ Stanhope Forbes to Elizabeth Armstrong, March 28, 1887. Stanhope Forbes collection, TGA.

⁴² Armstrong was one of the few women who exhibited with the NEAC in the institution's early years, and the only one to be elected a member at its founding. Both members of the Forbes couple were members, though letters reveal that they supported opposite factions within Club politics, with Stanhope predictably falling on the conservative Newlyn school side and Elizabeth continuing to support the Whistler-influenced Impressionist group, now led by Sickert (Stanhope Forbes to Elizabeth Armstrong, April 5, 1888. Stanhope Forbes collection, TGA).

production of Mssrs Starr, Roussel, Sickert, every one of which if I had my way would be sat upon.” He concludes pessimistically, “certainly unless the Whistler influence is stamped out the Club will soon go to the bad.”⁴³ In a following letter, he rather petulantly threatens to resign his membership in the group if the “Whistler element” remains prevalent.⁴⁴

Stanhope’s objections fused aesthetic concerns with moral ones. The conservative artist describes Sickert’s work at the NEAC, for instance, as “perfectly astonishing and I only hope it is not in any way a true reflection of the painter’s mind. Tawdry, vulgarity and the sentiment of the lowest music hall. I am bewildered by it.”⁴⁵ In another revealing letter, he complains at length about the placement of Elizabeth’s work at the RBA’s fall 1886 show. Forbes was horrified to find his fiancée’s work hung in a room in between a painting by Lady Colin Campbell, who was currently going through a scandalous and well-publicized divorce, and a portrait by “a lady you have heard of – I daresay you guess who it is” which was not submitted through the normal judging process. These works were joined in the sparsely-hung room by Whistler’s own controversial unfinished portrait of Lady Colin Campbell (1886, location unknown or destroyed). Stanhope Forbes clearly believed these notorious women – Whistler’s mistress Maud Franklin was the unnamed, but apparently infamous artist – to be unsuitable wall

⁴³ Stanhope Forbes to Elizabeth Armstrong, c. April 4, 1888. Stanhope Forbes collection, TGA.

⁴⁴ Stanhope Forbes to Elizabeth Armstrong, April 14, 1888. Stanhope Forbes collection, TGA.

⁴⁵ Stanhope Forbes to Elizabeth Armstrong, c. April 4, 1888. Stanhope Forbes collection, TGA. Forbes saved most of his venom for Sickert, writing of the man “you know I most passionately desire never to meet again” (Stanhope Forbes to Elizabeth Armstrong, December 6, 1886. Stanhope Forbes collection, TGA), and reporting on another occasion, “I met the arch imposter himself in Bond St. looking more of a brute than ever” (Stanhope Forbes to Elizabeth Armstrong, April 6, 1888. Stanhope Forbes collection, TGA).

company for his future wife.⁴⁶ His resistance to Elizabeth's participation in this instance is clearly not solely an aesthetic opinion: he fears that her respectability is at risk by associating with the group and their "tawdry" "music hall" leanings.

One of these letters hints at a further objection that Forbes may have had to Whistler and his circle. The former's exclamation "I was astonished to find the impressionists in great force in consequence of which the public will be considerably astonished" reveals a nationalist hostility to foreign style. In the mid-1880s, Impressionism had yet to make inroads into the London art world. Popularly and critically dismissed, the style was accused of being not only too modern, but explicitly too French, with all of the connotations of immorality and degeneracy that implied to a British audience.⁴⁷ Forbes's potential xenophobia becomes still more clear when read in the specific context of the popular debates around Whistler's time at the RBA. Anne Koval has traced the public reception of Whistler's presidency of the institution and the transformation he effected there, finding that the artist's supporters and detractors were persistently defined by the press in nationalist terms: Whistler was "the most un-English of painters," and his followers were "outsiders" who followed French trends like Impressionism, while

⁴⁶ Stanhope Forbes to Elizabeth Armstrong, November 23, 1886. Stanhope Forbes collection, TGA. This strategic grouping of his followers on the gallery walls was one of the changes Whistler made to the exhibitions of the RBA. Armstrong's contribution to the room was either *The Critics* or *Mushroom Gatherers* (1886, location unknown) (Robins, *A Fragile Modernism*, 49 and 54).

⁴⁷ For studies of the British reaction to French Impressionism (both negative and positive), see Kenneth McConkey, *Impressionism in Britain* (London: Barbican Art Gallery, 1995); Kenneth McConkey, *British Impressionism* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1989); and Anna Gruetzner Robins, "Two Reactions to French Painting in Britain," in *Post-Impressionism: Cross-Currents in European Painting*, eds. John House and Mary Anne Stevens (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1979), 178-82.

The naturalism espoused by Forbes and the Newlyn school, though learned in Brittany, was by the 1880s the international standard of the rural artist colony circuit and not necessarily associated with the specific "Frenchness" of the Parisian avant-garde (Gabriel P. Weisberg, *Beyond Impressionism: The Naturalist Impulse* [New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1992], 7-8).

his conservative opponents (like Forbes) were the true “British artists.”⁴⁸ Whistler himself described the distinction between the opposing groups in these terms upon his resignation, writing in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, “They could not remain together, and so you see the ‘Artists’ have come out and the ‘British’ remain – and peace and sweet obscurity are restored to Suffolk Street.”⁴⁹

As an American, Whistler was open to this criticism. Moreover, many of his followers were also foreigners: Harper Pennington was also American, while Mortimer Menpes was born in Australia, Sickert, in Germany, and Roussel, in France.⁵⁰ Armstrong, as a Canadian, fit in seamlessly with this mixed set, a “dissident group of Americans, colonials, and Europeans ... a modern ‘nation’ of artists with a shared interest in art that elided their social and cultural differences.”⁵¹ Like that group, Armstrong experienced critical distaste towards the foreign character of her work. This hostility became explicit in 1889, when her submissions to the Royal Society of Painter-Etchers were rejected; Sir Seymour Haden, that society’s president and one of many of Whistler’s enemies (and also his brother-in-law), wrote Armstrong what Forbes called a “horrid letter” to berate her for using an unnamed French artist to print her etchings. According to Forbes’s report to his mother, Haden “says nothing about the etching but is furious that she employed a Frenchman to print it as he is patriotic enough to say that no French man knows how to print a dry point.”⁵² Although her fiancé defended her on this occasion, he was in the process of attempting to

⁴⁸ Koval, 93-94.

⁴⁹ Quoted in Koval, 92.

⁵⁰ Robins, *A Fragile Modernism*, 34.

⁵¹ Ibid., 41.

⁵² Quoted in Robins, *A Fragile Modernism*, 117.

secure a reputation for his own Newlyn school as the pre-eminent British national style and fell decidedly on the side of what the *Glasgow Herald* called the “loyal Britishers.”⁵³ This attitude extended to the point of criticizing Elizabeth’s choice of residence. Of her pre-marriage decision to live in St. Ives (a colony that was more international in nature) rather than Newlyn (which was primarily home to English artists), he informed her “in my opinion it is more conducive to work to be living amongst a pleasant set of men than with a parcel of foreigners with whom I have no sympathy.”⁵⁴ Elizabeth, who had by this time lived for significant periods of time in Canada, England, the United States, Germany, the Netherlands, and France, evidently did feel sympathy with this cosmopolitan community of fellow “wanderers.”

Ultimately, Stanhope’s persistent dislike of the Whistler circle must have played some part in Elizabeth distancing herself from that group: after they married in 1889, the former made good on his threat to leave the NEAC, and Elizabeth followed. After her negative experience with Haden’s criticism in the same year, she found it equally necessary to resign from the Royal Society of Painter-Etchers. By moving to Newlyn permanently, the artist also lost easy

⁵³ Quoted in Koval, 107. See also Robins, *A Fragile Modernism*, 64.

⁵⁴ Stanhope Forbes to Elizabeth Armstrong, c. August/September, 1887. Stanhope Forbes collection, TGA. Nina Lübbren cites the Newlyn colony as being 94% British in the pre-WWI years; St. Ives was only 54% British, with large populations of American and Australians, as well as prominent Scandinavian and Continental artists in residence (*Rural Artists’ Colonies, 1870-1910* [New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001], 171-73). Whistler, Sickert, and Menpes had themselves been resident in St. Ives in the winter of 1883-84.

Forbes did not simply forget that his future wife was a member of this “parcel of foreigners.” In a letter written a few days earlier, he tells her of encounter with some Canadian tourists, in a story that would no doubt have made Emily Carr cringe: “... I had two American gents on their way home via Queenstown. Very pleasant and sociable. They told me they were Canadians but one I am sure was a genuine Yank. He says he came from Hamilton, knew Toronto and many people there and on being asked if among them were any of the name Armstrong he remembered an upholsterer in a very good way of business” (Stanhope Forbes to Elizabeth Armstrong, August 13, 1887. Stanhope Forbes collection, TGA).

access to a printing press.⁵⁵ Three years later, “New Art” critic George Moore (another Whistler-ite) accused her of letting her husband influence her style towards his own “square-brush” naturalism. In an article for the *Fortnightly Review*, he wrote in an appraising tone, “my impression is that *Miss Armstrong* stands easily at the head of English lady artists” (my emphasis), but later expands rather cuttingly,

I am thinking now of the ladies who marry painters, and who, after a few years of married life, exhibit work identical in execution with that of their illustrious husbands – Mrs. E.M. Ward ... Mrs. Stanhope Forbes. How interesting these households must be! Immediately after breakfast husband and wife sit down at their easels. “Let me mix a tone for you dear,” “I think that I would put that a little higher,” etc. This is “la peinture à quatre mains.”⁵⁶

As Robins points out, for Moore, Elizabeth’s “adoption of [her husband’s] technique was a betrayal.”⁵⁷ Mrs. Stanhope Forbes, whose work (and name) had merged with that of her conservative, “Britisher” husband’s, now eclipsed the earlier “outsider” Miss Armstrong.

⁵⁵ This is the reason that Armstrong herself gives for her decision to stop etching after her marriage. It is true, too, that like Emily Carr, the artist never took comfortably to life in London, writing that she “chafed like a prisoner behind bars, both in the dark days of winter and in the breathless summer heat,” before escaping to the Cornish coast (Birch, 67). With only these statements, and a lack of extant letters from Armstrong to her intended, it is impossible to ascertain the full extent that Stanhope’s disapproval of her colleagues played in her decision.

⁵⁶ Quoted in Robins, *A Fragile Modernism*, 166-67. “Mrs. E.M. Ward” is the mid-Victorian history and genre painter Henrietta Ward, married to fellow history painter Edward Matthew Ward.

⁵⁷ Robins, *A Fragile Modernism*, 167. On the other hand, others believed that Forbes’s work was unaffected by marriage. Birch, for example, writes of the post-marriage years, “the art of each, so individual in its manifestations, did not merge in the least; [with] Elizabeth Forbes’s method of expression, going from strength to strength” (41). If anything, letters indicate that romance was more detrimental to her husband’s work: Stanhope’s aunt wrote to his mother, upon meeting Elizabeth, “I fear love-making and painting don’t go together. Stannie has not done much of the latter and oh! to say he is silly over Miss Armstrong is to say nothing; he is too foolish and does not care who sees him. If I were Miss Armstrong I would box his ears” (quoted in Cook and Hardie, 76). This reversal of the gender stereotype, and of the traditional understanding that artistic genius and production was linked to male sexual energy, is rather ironic.

III. The Invention of Tradition

Moore was correct in attributing a change to Elizabeth Forbes's work after marriage; indeed, she herself would not have been likely to deny this. After an 1891 interview with the artist, a writer at *Lady's Pictorial* reported to the audience at home that in "[s]peaking of her own method of painting, Mrs. Forbes confesses that she is very fond of trying new ways of doing things. 'I work in a great many different mediums,' she says; 'in fact, I delight above all thing in trying experiments.'"⁵⁸ Following the Newlyn school "square-brush" phase criticized by Moore, Forbes's next experiment was a turn to a decidedly British style and subject matter in the form of late Pre-Raphaelite historical and literary themes. The artist took a first step towards the subject in 1896's *A Fairy Story*, a portrayal of two girls with a fairy tale picture book (fig. 46). The girls themselves are not terribly engaged with the book: the older girl is gazing at the pages with a slight smile on her face, but leans away relaxedly from the text. The younger girl seems lost in thought, perhaps imagining the tale her sister tells. In Forbes's typical Whistlerian fashion, the girls are dressed in white, creating a harmonious colour scheme of white on white, and other neutral colours, but one that is broken up by the intense pinks and reds of the flowers behind the girls, the images on the pages, and the rosy blushes of the girls' cheeks. After finding success at the RA with the image, Forbes shifted her focus to narrative subjects more firmly in the following year with her RA submission *A Dream Princess* (fig. 47). As a female figure costumed in an elaborate medieval dress enchants a sleeping man under the shadow of a rustic stone watermill, the fairy tale the girls read a year earlier now

⁵⁸ M.W., "Lady Artists."

seems come to life. Forbes did continue to paint rural genre scenes, but the majority of her exhibited oil paintings after this time seem to have been literary or historical in subject. Often she simply inserted these themes into rural settings, as in *A Dream Princess*, giving an impression of the existence of history or enchantment in the everyday British countryside – a theme that *King Arthur's Wood* explores still further.

Frequently praised in terms of their poetry, Forbes's sources for these later works were both diverse and vague. While some represent identifiable figures or scenes from literature, fairy tales, or legends, most do not have a specific referent, and merely give the impression of the idyllic romance of an earlier age through title, narrative situation, and costume.⁵⁹ By the next decade, Forbes's reputation for these subjects was evidently high enough that she was commissioned to provide the illustrations for an edition of the collected poems of Robert Herrick. The artist created eight watercolour, gouache, and charcoal images to accompany specific poems by the seventeenth-century Royalist poet, including "To the Virgins, to make much of Time," with its well-known first line "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may."⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Identifiable scenes include *A Woodland Scene: As You Like It* (n.d., Royal Cornwall Museum, Truro), *The Winter's Tale: When Daffodils Begin To Peer* (1906, NGC); *Take Oh Take Those Lips Away* (1902, location unknown, illustrated in Birch), and *Imogen Lying Among The Flowers That's Like Thy Face Pale Primrose* (1898, Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery), all from Shakespeare (the latter two from *Measure for Measure* and *Cymbeline*, respectively), and *Hop O' My Thumb* (1898, location unknown), *Pied Piper of Hamelin* (n.d., private collection), and *The Goose Girl and the Prince* (n.d., private collection), from the eponymous fairy tales. Works like *On a Fine Day* (1903, private collection), *The Lute Player* (n.d., private collection), *Ora Pro Nobis* (1901, location unknown, illustrated in Birch), and *A Troubadour* (n.d., private collection), among many others, have no clear sources.

⁶⁰ Robert Herrick, *Poems of Herrick* (London: Caxton Publishing, n.d.). Herrick's poem was the also the source for artists such as John William Waterhouse, who painted the scene twice, in 1908 and 1909 (the first, in a private collection; the second, at the Odon Wagner Gallery, Toronto).

Forbes was far from the only artist engaging with historical and literary themes in the years surrounding the *fin-de-siècle*; indeed, the popularity of these subjects was such that virtually every artist working in Britain in the last decades of the nineteenth century tried their hand at them, the trend pervading the Academy and the avant-garde in almost equal measure.⁶¹ Furthermore, the popularity of historical – and especially medieval – subjects and themes in art was paralleled by current trends in literature, theatre, and architecture, as well as regional movements to revive Celtic and other ancient native cultures in Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and, indeed, Cornwall. This medievalist revival was not unique to England and appeared in varied forms across Europe, linked to a growth in interest in primitive and folk cultures, and the emergence of Romantic nationalism. Like these trends, Victorian medievalism has tended to be explained as a reactionary response to the rapid social changes brought on by the Industrial Revolution. Nor was it a coincidence that the phenomenon exploded in popularity in the decades that followed the American and French Revolutions, the Napoleonic Wars, and the half-century of lesser conflicts that followed.⁶² To these causes, I would add the effects of both the increasingly prominent debate around “the woman question,” and especially, the enormous expansion of the British Empire over the course of the nineteenth century. All were responsible for

⁶¹ Forbes shared her affinity for these subjects with several of her Cornish colleagues, including Thomas Cooper Gotch, Frank Bourdillon, and Marianne Stokes. Intriguingly, Gotch and Bourdillon both shared Forbes’s colonial links: the former lived in Australia for several years and served as president of the Royal British Colonial Society of Artists (to which Forbes also belonged), while the latter was born in and returned to India. Stokes, for her part, was also foreign, an Austrian who married English artist Adrian Stokes.

⁶² Christine Poulson, *The Quest for the Grail: Arthurian Legend in British Art, 1840-1920* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 19-20; Stephanie Barczewski, *Myth and National Identity in Nineteenth-Century Britain: The Legends of King Arthur and Robin Hood* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 44.

producing an acute social anxiety surrounding class, gender, and racial instability, and an increased sense of the disruption of the proper order of things that only a return to an earlier time could remedy.⁶³

This past was valued precisely because it was a culture that was *not* diverse and confusing: a world before empire, before the British were spread across the globe (an accomplishment that was a point of anxiety just as often as a point of pride). The medieval and early modern past was prized as a time when class lines were firm and understood by all, when gender roles were secure and men and women content to play their parts, and when the “British World” meant simply the British Isles and their white residents. This stable, homogenous past was elevated in comparison to the alarming social confusion of the nineteenth-century present; the construction of a collective memory of this history functioned as a very powerful means of uniting a willing public in conflict under a shared heritage of white, Anglo-Saxon Britishness. This narrative of a glorious British past was, then, also a narrative about the Britain of the present and the future. That this past was a myth was utterly irrelevant.

Given this context, an engagement with British history was one strategy that members from the outlying areas of the British World employed to negotiate their unstable position within the heart of the empire. According to historian

⁶³ In addition to innumerable studies on specific artists and authors, solid general surveys of the medievalist revival in Britain include classic texts such as Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), Alice Chandler, *A Dream of Order: The Medieval Ideal in Nineteenth-Century English Literature* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970), and Roy Strong, *‘And when did you last see your father?’ The Victorian Painter and British History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), as well as edited collections like Florence Boos, ed., *History and Community: Essays in Victorian Medievalism* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1992) and Lorretta Holloway and Jennifer Palmgren, eds., *Beyond Arthurian Romances: The Reach of Victorian Medievalism* (New York: Palgrave, 2005).

Cecilia Morgan, Canadian tourists went to Britain, “in the expectation that there they would find the basis for their own histories, their own meanings of ‘Canada,’ and their own membership in the British Empire. By and large they were not disappointed.”⁶⁴ Indeed, the colonial longing for the past was much more complex than an abstract or academic interest in history; it was a longing for a shared cultural, linguistic, religious, and racial heritage, and an assertion of one’s rightful place within that celebrated lineage.

Accordingly, references to historical and literary figures, both real and fictional, permeate Canadian women’s writing while abroad. Tourists in Britain sought out historical sites in great numbers, selectively ignoring the too-obviously modern and industrial sights of Liverpool, Manchester, and Birmingham in favour of the romantic history evoked by places like Tintern Abbey, the Lake District, and Stratford-upon-Avon.⁶⁵ Tourist guides and travel narratives are rife with breathless references to historical figures and events: the Tower is an important destination not for its architecture, but as the site of Anne Boleyn’s tragic demise.

⁶⁴ Cecilia Morgan, *A Happy Holiday: English Canadians and Transatlantic Tourism, 1870-1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 109. This was also true of American travellers to Britain; see especially Christopher Mulvey, *Anglo-American Landscapes: A Study of Nineteenth-Century American Travel Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Mary Suzanne Schriber, *Writing Home: American Women Abroad, 1830-1920* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1997); Alex Zwerdling, *Improvised Europeans: American Literary Expatriates and the Siege of London* (New York: Basic Books, 1998). Schriber argues that an emphasis on history, literature, and other “intertexts,” and the ways that these precondition and influence impressions of tourist experience, is one particular difference between men’s and women’s travel narratives (Chapter 2).

⁶⁵ Not everyone enjoyed the history Britain had to offer. Emily Carr, contrary as usual, claims on several occasions that she hates the air of the past surrounding her: “To the British Museum I went and loathed it – the world mummified” and “History had always bored me. *Little Arthur’s History of England* in its smug red cover – ugh, the memory of it! And now here before me was the smugness of it ossified, monumented, spotted with dates thick as an attack of measles. The English had heads twisted round onto their backs like drowsy ducks afloat, their eyes on what they had passed, not on what they were coming to” (Emily Carr, *Growing Pains: The Autobiography of Emily Carr* [Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2004], 120 and 124).

The churches of London are not just places of worship, but haunted by the ghosts of Pepys, Donne, Milton, and an ever-present Shakespeare. Indeed, a vocabulary of haunting, enchantment, magic spells, and ghostly voices permeates tourist accounts. Real history merges seamlessly with fiction, as historical figures like Mary, Queen of Scots and William Wallace share the landscape with fairies, pixies, and ghostly knights and ladies. Christopher Mulvey describes the ways in which this “richness of the English scene, the connotative density, this associative intensity threw about England a sacred aura.”⁶⁶ Importantly, this focus on history constructs a cultural narrative that runs continuously from the ancient past to the modern present; moreover, this language of haunting gives the impression that past and present co-existed simultaneously, creating a sense that this mythical history was still alive.

Canadian traveller Emily Murphy describes her experience at the chapel in the Tower of London in a characteristic example of this kind of language,: “Into this chapel have been carried the blood-drenched, headless bodies of three Queens and thirty of England’s haughtiest dames and knights. Their kindly ghosts, dark plumed and visered, are said to haunt the altar in the dusk. This is quite true – I talked to them there.”⁶⁷ Also haunting the Tower were the boy-princes imprisoned by Richard III; in a telling statement, Murphy mourns that “to this day, the Anglo-Saxon heart aches for the murdered boys.”⁶⁸ On another occasion, she describes

⁶⁶ Mulvey, 122.

⁶⁷ Emily Murphy, *The Impressions of Janey Canuck Abroad* (Toronto: publisher unknown, 1902), 50.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 48.

Poet's Corner as "England's Walhalla...The Mecca of the Anglo-Saxon race."⁶⁹

With these words, Murphy gets at the heart of the British historical and cultural tradition so prized by white colonial travellers to the seat of empire: the mythology of Anglo-Saxonism made this desire for history a specifically racial desire.

The popular nineteenth-century discourse of Anglo-Saxonism held that all English-speaking peoples descended from an Anglo-Saxon race of the pre-feudal age. This was celebrated as an idealized time when the all men were equal and united as a group. Anglo-Saxonism thus provided a powerful mythology that linked the white members of the British World through a racial and familial metaphor that superceded contemporary political and social divisions within the greater group. Historian Alex Zwerdling explains the inclusions and exclusions encouraged by the model:

In Anglo-American relations around the turn of the century, what was called a 'patriotism of race' came close to replacing the traditional 'patriotism of country'... in the years of its greatest influence, Anglo-Saxonism became – like the fantasies of national and familial reconciliation – a powerful myth linking the fates of Britain and America. The political institutions and cultural patterns the Anglo-Saxon race had created might be taught to anyone: Indeed, this is the colonizing mission. But the racial identity and talent of the inventors cannot be passed on to other peoples. It is untransferable and transhistorical – a legacy that by the iron laws of heredity is rooted in the blood and can only remain in the family.⁷⁰

In this way, the ideal of Anglo-Saxonism stretched well beyond the borders of the British Isles, connecting the British World as one big family with an established

⁶⁹ Ibid., 111.

⁷⁰ Zwerdling, 34-35.

genealogy; moreover, this genealogy provided the sense of a long lineage, and therefore legitimacy, for that group.

The racial myth of Anglo-Saxonism was a particularly strong rallying point for white colonials of British descent in North America in the latter half of the nineteenth century, given the waves of immigration that were beginning to hit the shores of that continent. An influx of workers from new locations such as Ireland, Italy, Eastern Europe, and China inspired new anxieties about the racial make up and cultural character of Canada and the United States. Moreover, these immigrants were frequently perceived as no longer coming to the New World to do the necessary colonial work of settling the west, but instead to work for short periods of time in the crowded cities of the northeast, with no desire to stay and assimilate into the white, British norm.⁷¹ Further anxiety about the “other” within their midst increased in the period as well, particularly after the abolition of slavery in the United States, and as settler relationships with First Nations and Native American populations shifted. Social anxieties about these new additions were met on an official level by new legislation that attempted to define, limit, and control social integration and assimilation in order to maintain the white, Anglo-Saxon character of these nations; in Canada, these efforts included such laws as the head tax on Chinese immigrants (1885), the Indian Act (1876), and a variety of policies enacted over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries aimed at restricting immigration from “undesirable” places and peoples. Unofficial responses to this perceived threat to racial and national identity included an increased interest in cultural heritage and the study of

⁷¹ Ibid., 44-45; see also Mulvey, *Anglo-American Landscapes*, 267.

genealogy;⁷² this interest was formalized in the organization of groups such as the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire, a Canadian women's association founded in 1900 as an outlet for the expression of imperial patriotism, and an explicit attempt to strengthen the bonds between Canada and Britain, and throughout British Canada.⁷³ Travel "home" to Britain, and the search for one's history there, was perhaps the most powerful expression of this interest in personal and cultural heritage.

In this way, whiteness, and specifically, the white Britishness that was celebrated under the myth of Anglo-Saxonism, became an important defining characteristic of imperial belonging in the wider British World. Zwerdling explains the effectiveness of race as a connecting link in the face of nineteenth-century social confusion:

The harshness of the facts demanded compensatory myths, and of these the most potent was racial. It is impossible to separate theories of race from those of nation. The profusion of adjectives used in the discourse of race in turn-of-the-century Britain and America, in which their peoples are variously called English-speaking, Anglo-American, Anglo-Saxon, Nordic, Germanic, Teutonic, Aryan, and Caucasian, is a measure of its intellectual incoherence. But as with shifting familial identities, the pliability of the terms made them more useful in meeting the new pressures exerted by shifts in power and circumstance.⁷⁴

The fantasy of a united white, Anglo-Saxon race with a long, and glorious lineage was thus politically and culturally motivated, though obviously only a myth. It was through this shared racial and cultural history that, as Cecilia Morgan argues, imperial "membership [could be] claimed and legitimated." This was, she

⁷² Zwerdling, 57.

⁷³ See Katie Pickles, *Female Imperialism and National Identity: Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002).

⁷⁴ Zwerdling, 32-33.

continues, “a national and imperial memory which in turn bolstered Canada’s status as a white settler colony and dominion and an integral part of the ‘British world.’”⁷⁵

Finally, it was this self-conscious possession of a definable culture that had a lengthy history that reassured contemporary Britons that they were a modern nation and, moreover, an imperial power. Historian Catherine Hall has shown that history writing played a vital role in the construction of an ideal of Britishness in the nineteenth century, arguing that “Britons’ special status in the world was articulated in part through possession of their history, a narrative that took them from the barbarism of their ancestors to the civilization of the present. The peoples without history had not yet achieved modernity.”⁷⁶ This connection between history, modernity, and empire was a central belief of imperialism, at once differentiating the modern British from the still-“uncivilized” areas of the world, and providing a justification for their colonization of them. Once comfortably under control, British history could be beneficently bestowed upon new members of the Empire – like Canada. This was a move that at once united new populations with the greater British World and erased competing local histories.

First, however, this history had to be created: a project that can be understood as one iteration of the phenomenon that historians Eric Hobsbawm

⁷⁵ Morgan, *A Happy Holiday*, 109.

⁷⁶ Catherine Hall, “At Home with History: Macaulay and the *History of England*,” in *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World*, eds. Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 36.

and Terence Ranger have memorably called the “invention of tradition.”⁷⁷ The medievalist revival of the nineteenth century was part of this process of myth-making for the Victorians, who worked concertedly to re-invent the past “in their own image”⁷⁸ to suit the contemporary need for a community united through their common British heritage, if not by a stable order of gender, class, and racial relations. Moreover, the invention of British history also included the invention of a British *art history*, a narrative to which Forbes and *King Arthur’s Wood* contributes through not only an engagement with the typically British subject of Arthurian legend, but through a style that was specifically coded by contemporaries as uniquely British – *fin-de-siècle* Pre-Raphaelitism.

Reviews of Forbes’s later works reveal that in fact the artist’s style did not change as much as George Moore would have had his readers believe. The reviewer of the 1896 Royal Academy show, for example, praised the way in which “Mrs. Stanhope Forbes makes the domestic motive of her *Fairy Story* subservient to a colour scheme of a subtle kind.”⁷⁹ Another reviewer singled out the “distinctly Japanese influence” in her painting *At The Edge of the Wood* (1894, Wolverhampton Art Gallery) as being especially worthy of note.⁸⁰ Birch, writing in 1906, described Forbes as being “[p]rimarily occupied ... with the essentially pictorial” and praised the “quiet harmony” of her colour, the “pattern”

⁷⁷ Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). Similarly, historian Linda Colley has influentially traced the “invention of Britishness” in the preceding century (*Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992], 1).

⁷⁸ Inga Bryden, *Reinventing King Arthur: The Arthurian Legends in Victorian Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 6.

⁷⁹ “The Royal Academy,” *Art Journal* (June 1896): 178.

⁸⁰ “Art and Artists,” *Gentlewoman*, March 7, 1894. The titles of other works – *The Japanese Doll* (1895, location unknown), *Girl in Silk Kimono* (n.d., private collection), *The Fan* (c. 1900-4, location unknown) – further reveal the Japoniste themes of her later work.

of her lines, and the “decorative effects” of her work.⁸¹ These reports all clearly echo the Aesthetic aims and characteristics of her earlier work, and suggest that they remained a subject of interest for her long after her break from the Whistler circle.

What did change, however, were public attitudes towards this earlier style. Beginning in the 1890s, and led by pre-eminent critics like Moore, popular opinion began to shift in favour of the earlier generation of avant-garde British artists.⁸² By the turn of the century, Aestheticism, academic Neo-Classicism, and the work of the Pre-Raphaelites, though all clearly very different in founding principles, had grown together into an eclectic medley that could be counted under a loosely-defined category of late Pre-Raphaelitism that found enormous popularity with both critics and the general public, who now patriotically claimed these styles and their practitioners as forming the foundation of the modern British school.⁸³

The use of a multiplicity of styles by Forbes (and her contemporaries) was an approach to artistic production that has been described by art historian Tim Barringer as being “underpinned by a *fin-de-siècle* anxiety about the end of

⁸¹ Birch, 69-73.

⁸² Robins, 144.

⁸³ I employ the term “Pre-Raphaelitism” throughout for consistency, but use it to indicate this later nineteenth- and early twentieth-century “diffuse and elusive phenomenon” as distinct from the work of the original Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (Tim Barringer, *Reading the Pre-Raphaelites* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998], 13). Elizabeth Prettejohn makes a convincing case to subsume these later developments in British art under the category of Aestheticism (Introduction to *After the Pre-Raphaelites: Art and Aestheticism in Victorian England* [New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999], 2-3), while John Christian has called the artists who worked with these subjects and in these styles the “Last Romantics” (*The Last Romantics: The Romantic Tradition in British Art, Burne-Jones to Stanley Spencer* [London: Barbican Art Gallery, 1989]).

tradition”⁸⁴ brought on by not only various political and social crises, but the confusion of the modern art world as well. Just as artists turned to the past for their subject matter, so too did they look to the past for suitable styles. Forbes’s continued engagement with Aesthetic principles and her new adoption of Pre-Raphaelite-approved subjects – both so evident in *King Arthur’s Wood* – must be seen in the context of a deliberate “strategy of revival”⁸⁵ of these modes of expression at the turn of the twentieth century by British artists and critics who were in search of their own homegrown art tradition. This revival was an explicitly nationalist and imperialist project: an attempt to locate and celebrate an authentic and exclusively British art in the face of French dominance of the art world. The aesthetic characteristics of these styles were, as art historian Julie Codell argues, translated into national characteristics: this was an art that was both democratic and morally sound, worthy of colonizers, not the colonized, as the increasingly primitivized abstraction of modern French painting was criticized as being. That these styles were belittled as overly French not even two decades earlier was evidently not a problem.⁸⁶ This broadly defined Pre-Raphaelitism was,

⁸⁴ Tim Barringer, “‘Not a ‘Modern’ as the Word is Now Understood’? Byam Shaw, Imperialism, and the Poetics of Professional Society,” in *English Art, 1860-1914: Modern Artists and Identity*, eds. David Peters Corbett and Lara Perry (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 72.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 76.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 76-77; Julie Codell, “The Artist Colonized: Holman Hunt’s ‘Bio-History’, Masculinity, Nationalism, and the English School,” in *Re-Framing the Pre-Raphaelites: Historical and Theoretical Essays*, ed. Ellen Harding (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996), 221-25. See also Laurel Bradley, “The ‘Englishness’ of Pre-Raphaelite Painting: A Critical Review,” in *Collecting the Pre-Raphaelites: The Anglo-American Enchantment*, ed. Margaretta Frederick Watson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997), 199-208.

Interest in Pre-Raphaelitism extended through the British World. See, for example, David Latham, ed. *Scarlet Hunters: Pre-Raphaelitism in Canada* (Newcastle, ON: Penumra Press, 1998); Katharine A. Lochnan, Douglas E. Schoenherr, and Carole Silver, eds. *The Earthly Paradise: Arts and Crafts by William Morris and his Circle from Canadian Collections*

in the end, welcomed by British audiences. By 1907, even Stanhope Forbes had apparently changed his views: an article from that year describing the Forbes home reveals that a “choice set of Whistler etchings formed the chief decoration” of one wall of his studio. The accompanying photograph shows that the prints were joined by Elizabeth’s Pre-Raphaelite-inspired *Will o’ the Wisp* hanging above the mantel.⁸⁷

IV. *King Arthur’s Wood*: representing empires past and present

Elizabeth Forbes’s engagement with medieval themes and subjects in the later stages of her career must be understood as functioning within this wider social context and as actively participating in the construction of this “consensual, celebratory”⁸⁸ history (and art history) of the British World. Indeed, the artist deliberately inserted herself into this genealogy by linking herself to several of the most pre-eminent figures involved in the concerted effort to establish a glorious national past for Victorian Britain. Singled out for mention in her autobiographical chapter in Birch’s biography are John Ruskin, whose work she “rejoiced in [and] waded in neck-deep,” and Thomas Carlyle, whose writing she “whirled breathless through.”⁸⁹ Through texts such as the former’s *The Stones of Venice* (1853), and the latter’s *On Heroes and Hero Worship* (1841), and especially, his *Past and Present* (1843), Ruskin and Carlyle were instrumental figures in creating a popular interest in history in England, and in elevating that

(Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1993); and the essays in Margaretta Frederick Watson, ed., *Collecting the Pre-Raphaelites: The Anglo-American Enchantment* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997).

⁸⁷ “Houses of Today,” *The World*, September 10, 1907.

⁸⁸ Barczewski, 1.

⁸⁹ Birch, 58.

history over the present day. Also noted by Forbes were key artists in this tradition, including Frederic Leighton, of whose illustrations of George Eliot's Renaissance-set *Romola* (1863) she writes rapturously, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, whose house in Cheyne Walk was next door to her own and recalled as "never opened and full of mystery to me."⁹⁰ Though she never met the elder painter, by name-dropping him in her biography, she effectively positions herself within the same lineage. This intentional and explicit self-identification with her forbears continued in the artist's work: Forbes's *The Leaf* (before 1906) is subtitled with lines from Rossetti's translation of an Italian poem, for example, while *Will o' the Wisp* (1900) illustrates Pre-Raphaelite associate William Allingham's poem "The Fairies" (1850) (figs. 48 and 49).⁹¹

King Arthur's Wood was Elizabeth Forbes's most sustained engagement with literary and historical themes. Her choice of a distinctly British subject – Arthurian legend – places the book and its creator squarely within the contemporary project of the invention of a shared British history in the service of contemporary imperialism. Arthurian subjects were one of the most popular expressions of the medievalist revival in both literature and art. Forbes's book was just one of innumerable nineteenth-century re-imaginings of Sir Thomas Malory's 1485 *Le Morte Darthur*, the first compilation, translation into English, and printed publication of a variety of earlier texts about the legends of King

⁹⁰ Ibid., 58- 59. She continues to describe how, when accidentally coming face-to-face with the former writer as a teenager while admiringly looking at his portrait in a bookshop, she "turned crimson to the ears and fled down the street."

⁹¹ Allingham ran in the same circles as the Pre-Raphaelites, Tennyson, and Carlyle. Rossetti illustrated his *Poems*, in which "Fairies" first appeared, and the poem has been suggested as a source for Rossetti's sister Christina's "Goblin Market," published in 1862 (B. Ifor Evans, "The Sources of Christina Rossetti's 'Goblin Market'," *Modern Language Review* 28, no. 2 [April, 1933]: 158.

Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. After falling into disfavour in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries due to undesirable associations with the controversial Stuart monarchs and Britain's Catholic past, Arthurian tales burst back into fashion in the early nineteenth century when Malory's volume was re-printed in 1816-17.⁹²

The vogue for Arthurian subjects then exploded at mid-century with a twin assault on public consciousness undertaken by poet Alfred Lord Tennyson and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Tennyson's Arthurian obsession – lasting from his earliest attempts at the subject in the 1830s, through the first set of the *Idylls of the King* in 1859 and the frequent publication of additions to the original, to the final edition published in 1885 – spanned the greater part of the century and had an enormous impact on all forms of cultural production.⁹³ Arthurian subjects were equally popularized by the Pre-Raphaelites and their associates, who tackled them with great enthusiasm and great frequency. The two were linked when the “Moxon Tennyson,” a collection of the poet's early work, was published in 1857 with illustrations by Rossetti, William Holman Hunt, and John Everett Millais, among others. In the same year, Rossetti, now joined by William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones, once again turned to Malory as a source for that group's ultimately unfinished murals for the Oxford Union Society. These major public commissions, together with a large number of individual undertakings that continued until the end of the century, account for the enduring association

⁹² Poulson, *The Quest for the Grail*, 9-12.

⁹³ Debra Mancoff, *The Arthurian Revival in Victorian Art* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1990), 168-69.

between the Pre-Raphaelites and Arthurian legend in the mind of the *fin-de-siècle* British public.⁹⁴

The enormous popularity of all things Arthurian in the nineteenth century is unsurprising. As a figure who pre-dated the split of Britain into its constituent nations and between Protestant and Catholic populations, King Arthur was an extremely convenient nationalist icon in the era following the Act of Union in 1800 and Catholic Emancipation in 1829, which re-united the British community in ways unseen in several centuries, but which were not without considerable controversy.⁹⁵ Formed in the revolutionary year 1848, the short-lived Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood itself exploded onto the British art scene at a moment when this fragile union threatened to be split anew. A year of crisis and conflict across Europe, 1848 was marked by Chartist protests in Britain, placing the growing divide between classes at the centre of public imagination.⁹⁶ Malory's

⁹⁴ See Poulson, *The Quest for the Grail*, Chapter 3 for a survey of the Pre-Raphaelite engagement with Arthurian legend. For surveys of Arthurian subjects in nineteenth-century art more generally, see also Mancoff, *The Arthurian Revival in Victorian Art*; Debra Mancoff, *The Return of King Arthur: The Legend Through Victorian Eyes* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1995); Muriel Whitaker, *The Legends of King Arthur in Art* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1990). Poulson and Roger Simpson have compiled extensive lists of artists and art works dealing with Arthurian subject matter. Neither includes *King Arthur's Wood* (Christine Poulson, "Arthurian Legend in Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Fine and Applied Art: A Catalogue of Artists," *Arthurian Literature* 9 [1989]: 81-142; Christine Poulson, "Arthurian Legend in Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Fine and Applied Art: A Catalogue of Subjects," *Arthurian Literature* 10 [1990]: 111-34; Roger Simpson, "Update: Arthurian Legend in Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Fine and Applied Art," *Arthurian Literature* 11 [1992]: 81-96).

For a wider survey of the revival and the prevalence of Arthurian legend in everything from ship, horse, and pub names, to political discourse, to the developing tourist industry, see Barczewski, especially Chapters 1 and 2. For an account of nineteenth-century Arthurian literature beyond Tennyson, see Bryden and Roger Simpson, *Camelot Regained: The Arthurian Revival and Tennyson, 1800-1849* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1990).

⁹⁵ Barczewski, 5-6; Poulson, *The Quest for the Grail*, 21-22. The Act of Union joined Great Britain and Ireland to create the United Kingdom; Catholic Emancipation (officially, the Roman Catholic Relief Act) repealed centuries-old legal restrictions against Catholicism in Britain and Ireland.

⁹⁶ Chartism was a social movement that attempted to reform the voting system in Britain to include working class men. 1848 saw Chartist uprisings in several locations across Britain.

own version of the tales had appeared at the end of the Hundred Years' War and during the Wars of the Roses: another era of anxiety about Britain's status as a united entity. Malory's nostalgic expression of desire for a more stable and glorious past clearly found a sympathetic audience in the similarly concerned Victorian era.⁹⁷

In the second half of the century, the myth of Camelot as translated and transformed by nineteenth-century cultural producers provided an extremely effective metaphor for the power and glory of the British Empire. Historian Stephanie Barzcewski summarizes the clear connection between the two:

The legend's trajectory, after all, is inherently imperial. Much like civil servants going out from London to administer the colonies under the nation's command, the knights of the Round Table disperse from Arthur's court at Camelot in order to bring the benefits of their ostensibly superior civilization to the less fortunate parts of the world. In return, they receive eternal moral salvation as well as material riches.⁹⁸

By the end of the century, the British community resided not only in the British Isles, but across the world: a myth of happy union under a central power was clearly not simply a nostalgic look back at an earlier age, but the expression of a contemporary social and political ideal. Over the course of the century, the British Empire was imaginatively re-configured as a revival of the medieval feudal order, a metaphor that conveniently placed metropole and colony in an interdependent,

⁹⁷ Mancoff, *The Arthurian Revival in Victorian Art*, 3-4; Poulson, *The Quest for the Grail*, 3-4.

⁹⁸ Barzcewski, 214. Literary scholar Ian McGuire sees Tennyson's work in particular as constructing a complex, interactive relationship between the present-day empire and the mythical Arthurian past: "On one hand, as a metaphor, Arthurian Britain is merely a costumed version of the contemporary British empire with all its flaws and weaknesses; yet on the other, as metonym, it is the essential founding mythology of that empire which must be rediscovered if it is to survive" (Ian McGuire, "Epistemology and Empire in *Idylls of the King*," *Victorian Poetry*, 30, no. 3/4 [Autumn/Winter, 1992]: 391). For a solid survey of imperialist themes in Tennyson, see Victor Kiernan, "Tennyson, King Arthur, and Imperialism," in *Culture, Ideology, Politics: Essays for Eric Hobsbawm*, eds. Raphael Samuel and Gareth Stedman Jones (London: Routledge, 1982), 126-48.

harmonious relationship in which the latter was dependent on the former, and the former duty-bound to the latter; such rhetoric explained and validated the decidedly unequal status between members.⁹⁹ The increasing desire for a stable social order that mimicked the feudal order of dependence ran parallel to a society that was forced to come to terms with a changing empire and re-think how best to administer and structure it, as the slavery system that had previously supported an enormous territorial expansion was phased out over the course of the first half of the nineteenth century. This desire only heightened in the second half of the century, when the continued extension of the Empire seemed to some poised to destroy it, a feeling that only intensified after first the Indian Mutiny of 1857, and then the 1865 Morant Bay rebellion in Jamaica.¹⁰⁰ Nostalgia for a time when the social order was stable was therefore ripe, with the medieval past standing in for a more recent period of imperial stability. While the eventual destruction of Arthur's kingdom served as a warning for the over-extension of empire, the mythical promise of the king's return to Britain was ultimately a reassuring justification for current policies. That Arthur and the golden age of his reign were largely fictional was not a hindrance to their deployment as metaphors; to the contrary, the lack of solid historical sources made the legends easily adaptable to varying circumstances and therefore extremely durable.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Girouard, 220-26.

¹⁰⁰ Barczewski, 214-223. The Indian Mutiny (or Sepoy Rebellion, or First Indian War of Independence) and the Morant Bay rebellion were two significant colonial uprisings; both were put down violently, inspiring shock and heated debate at home in Britain, and ultimately leading to considerably anxiety over Britain's role as an imperial power.

¹⁰¹ Barczewski, 14.

Materially-speaking too, *King Arthur's Wood* was very much a product of its era. After half a century of incredible popularity, Arthurian imagery was no longer exclusively the province of the elite; indeed, by the turn of the twentieth century, Arthurian subjects were generally considered *passé* by audiences at the RA. Instead, the tales found a welcome home in the publishing industry, where new innovations in colour printing made elaborately illustrated texts not only possible, but ubiquitous.¹⁰² Earlier versions of Tennyson's poems (including the previously-mentioned 1857 "Moxon Tennyson," an 1866-68 edition of *Idylls of the King* with engravings by Gustave Doré, and a groundbreaking abridged version of the *Idylls* published by Julia Margaret Cameron in 1875, in which the stories were illustrated with photographs for the first time) paved the way for a flurry of Arthurian publishing at the *fin-de-siècle*.

Coming as it did in this golden age of book illustration, Forbes's adaptation of "Gareth" would have circulated in the same arena as several other high-profile editions of Malory, Tennyson, and other Arthurian authors. William Morris's Kelmscott Press, established in 1891 with the goal of producing not simply reading material, but beautiful objects in the model of medieval illuminated manuscripts, intended an edition of Malory with illustrations by Edward Burne-Jones as its first project, and contributed a copy of Morris's own Arthurian poem "The Defense of Guinevere" (1858) in 1892.¹⁰³ Publisher J.M. Dent, in competition with the prospective Kelmscott version, produced what is

¹⁰² Julia Thomas, "'Always Another Poem': Victorian Illustrations of Tennyson," in *Tennyson Transformed: Alfred Lord Tennyson and Visual Culture*, ed. Jim Cheshire (Farnham, UK: Lund Humphries, 2009), 21.

¹⁰³ The Kelmscott edition of *Le Morte Darthur* was ultimately only published in 1913, after the deaths of both Morris and Burne-Jones.

now the best-known *fin-de-siècle* version when he released an edition of Malory illustrated lavishly by a then-almost-unknown Aubrey Beardsley in that same year.¹⁰⁴ Innovative illustrator Arthur Rackham released 500 copies of his own *The Romance of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table* in 1917. These versions were joined by dozens more, including several by other female artists: in addition to Forbes and Cameron, Eleanor Fortesque-Brickdale, Jessie M. King, and Florence Harrison all produced elaborate editions of the legends on more than one occasion (in 1905 and 1911, in 1903 and 1904, and 1912 and 1914, respectively).¹⁰⁵ These objects, advertised as gift books (and often released during the Christmas season, as Forbes's was), offered artists a wide audience for their work; Forbes further increased her public visibility (and presumably demand for her book) by showing the original illustrations for *King Arthur's Wood* at a solo show at London's Leicester Galleries in 1904.¹⁰⁶

Forbes's biographer Constance Birch later claimed of the book "nothing could be more suited to noting down and translating into visual imagery the effect on the mind of remote and darkling legends of chivalry."¹⁰⁷ The illustrated book was indeed the ideal medium for medievalist subject matter. As Morris recognized, the format allowed medium and style to support the subject matter and create an aesthetically cohesive object. This was also the primary aim of the

¹⁰⁴ Whitaker, 259-265.

¹⁰⁵ Debra Mancoff includes a list of published illustrated books with Arthurian subjects, but does not include Forbes's iteration (*The Arthurian Revival in Victorian Art*, 330-31). See also Whitaker, Chapter 11.

¹⁰⁶ This exhibition, entitled *Model Children and Other People*, included over 60 works and a catalogue that featured a short essay written by Forbes herself (*Catalogue of an Exhibition of Water-Colours, entitled Model Children and Other People, By Mrs. Stanhope A. Forbes, A.R.W.S.* [London: The Leicester Galleries and Ernest Brown and Phillips, 1904]).

¹⁰⁷ Birch, 82.

Pre-Raphaelites at mid-century, who believed that British art would be rejuvenated through this “return to artistic integrity.”¹⁰⁸ Forbes showed interest in these goals in her painting as well. *Will o’ the Wisp* (fig. 49), for example, takes the form of a triptych, visually recalling an art form of an earlier era, while the elaborately-decorated wood frame, designed by Forbes herself, extends the painted trees branches beyond the limits of the canvas and gives the impression of an aesthetically unified object.

In the service of this goal, and like other contemporary editions, *King Arthur’s Wood* includes decorated letters throughout the text that visually unite word and image in a way that recalls illuminated manuscripts (fig. 50). In several illustrations, Forbes’s use of line and colour gives the appearance of another form of art associated with the medieval era: stained glass. *A Flush of Azure Bloom*, for example (fig. 51), is a forest scene composed of blocks of bright blue, green, and purple, with each tree and rock delineated by dark, thick outlines. The tree next to the boy, for example, is given three-dimensional form not by gradual shading, but by a distinct stripe of lighter colour on the left-hand side. Forbes transforms a labyrinthine forest interior into a study in design and surface pattern that could be a sketch for a medieval church window – or, for that matter, a contemporary Tiffany lamp. This emphasis on pattern and decoration shows the artist’s continued interest in the Aesthetic principles of her early career, and perhaps an awareness of the ways in which these ideals were translated into the more current vogue for Art Nouveau.

¹⁰⁸ Jan Marsh and Pamela Gerrish Nunn, *Pre-Raphaelite Women Artists* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Galleries, 1997), 54.

Forbes's book frames a specific Arthurian legend – the tale of Sir Gareth – within a second narrative of her own creation. The latter takes place in a contemporary rural setting: a young boy named Myles moves into a new house with his mother and sister Noel after his sailor father has been lost at sea. He seeks solace in the mysterious forest nearby (the eponymous “King Arthur’s Wood”), where he finds an old book and an unusual creature who claims to have known Merlin and the Knights of the Round Table. Upon Myles’s request – “I love stories and romances more than anything else in the world!,” he exclaims¹⁰⁹ – the creature tells him Gareth’s story. The framing device captures the sense of history-in-the-present that Canadian tourists sought and found in the British landscape, evoking the same kind of atmosphere of haunting or enchantment that produced the effect of simultaneity between past and present.

Forbes's interpretation of the legend is a straightforward narrative of knightly chivalry and courtly love. It begins with the arrival of a young man at the court of King Arthur; refusing to give his name and origins, he asks only for food and drink for one year, and the promise of two other favours at the end of that time. Intrigued, Arthur grants these wishes, and the boy is sent to the kitchen to live as a servant by a skeptical Sir Kay. On the anniversary of his arrival, a mysterious woman comes to the court to plead for help in rescuing her sister, the Lady Liones, from a tyrant. The young man, seizing his chance, asks for his two favours: that he be permitted to undertake this quest and that he be knighted by Sir Launcelot. Much to the dismay of the woman, who sees him only as a servant, his wishes are granted and the two set out on the adventure.

¹⁰⁹ Forbes, *King Arthur's Wood*, 16.

Now revealed to the reader (if not yet to his companion) as Sir Gareth, son of the King of Orkney, our hero patiently fights one enemy after another as the woman – dubbed “La Demoiselle Sauvage”¹¹⁰ – insults his character and status, proving not only his skill and strength, but also his patience. Gareth further reveals his magnanimity and loyalty by sparing his enemies’ lives at the request of the lady and the promise that they will serve Arthur. Having thus exposed his true chivalric nature, the knight and lady reconcile and carry on with the quest to save her sister. After a final battle, Gareth releases Liones from her captor and they fall in love at first sight. A happy ending is given to all as the defeated knights are brought together at King Arthur’s court, true identities are revealed, Gareth and Liones are married, and the reader is assured that the new couple “lived royally ... until their life’s end.”¹¹¹

Forbes’s interpretation of the story – subtitled in the book as “Sir Gareth of Orkney and ye Lady of ye Castle Perilous” – draws specifically on Malory’s version of the tale.¹¹² Although the story and illustrations clearly owe much to their nineteenth-century context (Tennyson’s version of the tale, titled “Gareth and Lynette,” was one of the final *Idylls*, published in 1872), Forbes follows Malory’s fifteenth-century narrative extremely closely. While the language has been modernized and the story simplified for a young audience, the plot and

¹¹⁰ Her given name in both the Malory and Tennyson versions is Lynette. Though Forbes never uses this name, I use Lynette throughout for the sake of consistency when discussing the various versions.

¹¹¹ Forbes, *King Arthur’s Wood*, 60.

¹¹² Malory’s “Tale of Sir Gareth” is thought to be his own invention, modeled on other medieval romances; though previous sources for the tale may have been lost and similar tales exist, no direct antecedents have been found (Dhira Mahoney, “Malory’s ‘Tale of Gareth’ and the Comedy of Class,” *The Arthurian Yearbook* [1991]: 167-68; 181-82)

descriptions are frequently nearly identical.¹¹³ Gareth's first sight of the Black Knight, for example, is described by Forbes as such:

As night fell, they came to a black field where grew a black thorn-tree; on it hung a black banner and a black shield; against it leaned a long black spear; standing close was a great black horse covered with silk, and there was a black stone near by. On the stone sat a knight in black armour, and his name was the Knight of the Black Lawn.¹¹⁴

Malory's description, in Middle English, of the same scene is as follows:

So this Beaumains rode with that lady tyll evynsonge, and ever she chydde hym and wolde nat reste. So at the laste they com to a blak launde, and there was a blak hauthorne, and thereon hynge a baner, and on the other side there hynge a blak shyld, and by hit stoode a blak speare grete and longe, and a grete blak horse covered with sylk, and a blak stone faste by.

Also there sate a knight all armed in blak harneyse, and his name was called the Knyght of the Blak Laundis.¹¹⁵

Save for the horse, these details are repeated in the accompanying illustration (fig. 52), from the hawthorn tree with a hanging black banner and the various weapons surrounding a knight whose eyes peek through his detailed armour, to the large full moon low in the sky, indicating the "evynsonge" hour.

Tennyson, described by art historian Muriel Whitaker as "the painter's poet,"¹¹⁶ provided nineteenth-century artists with a wealth of material from which to draw inspiration, and countless artists looked to their contemporary as a source

¹¹³ The most significant change to Malory made by Forbes may speak to the limitations she faced as a professional female artist. Notably, the artist omits completely the more bawdy sections of Malory's text, which deal with Gareth's explicitly sexual relationships: first, when Sir Persante gives his virgin daughter to Gareth as a show of his hospitality (Gareth respectfully declines), and then, when Liones has been saved, a lengthy section of the tale that sees the two prospective lovers attempt on numerous occasions to consummate their relationship even though they are not yet married (they are consistently foiled by Lynette). Tennyson, however, also omits these plot points, suggesting that nineteenth-century translators may simply have believed them to be unsuitable for a wide Victorian audience. Presumably Forbes also believed these sections to be inappropriate for the eleven-year-old son to whom the book was dedicated.

¹¹⁴ Forbes, *King Arthur's Wood*, 38.

¹¹⁵ Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, ed. Stephen H.A. Shepherd (New York: Norton, 2004), 184-185.

¹¹⁶ Whitaker, 208.

for their own work. In choosing instead to return to the original medieval source, Forbes followed in the steps of the Pre-Raphaelites who did the same.¹¹⁷ *King Arthur's Wood* clearly acknowledges its debt to Malory. The strange creature telling Myles the story also appears in the original version as a dwarf who accompanies Gareth on his adventures; in the later story, this character explicitly mentions Malory, telling Myles as he begins his tale "So the folk still talk of the Great King and his Knights? That is well. I remember to have heard that their feats of arms and great adventures were worthily set forth by a Knight of later days, in the time when the fourth Edward was King in this land."¹¹⁸ Forbes's references to Malory effectively link the artist-author to a long cultural tradition, lending authority to her narrative voice.

Whether in painting or in print, Gareth was not a character frequently tackled by artists. Art historian Christine Poulson attributes his unpopularity partly to the relatively late publication of Tennyson's "Gareth and Lynette." By 1872, Arthurian subjects had already been extremely popular for well over a decade and were experiencing a decline in reaction to that popularity. Furthermore, she argues, the straightforward, didactic narrative of the tale was viewed by artists and their publics as being more suitable for children – especially boys – than their exhibition-going (and art-purchasing) parents.¹¹⁹ Gareth,

¹¹⁷ Mancoff, *The Arthurian Revival in Victorian Art*, 178; Poulson, *The Quest for the Grail*, 77; Whitaker, 238.

¹¹⁸ Forbes, *King Arthur's Wood*, 24. This overt reference to the medieval text is a strategy that Tennyson uses as well: the last lines of "Gareth and Lynette" acknowledge both the original source and one of the many changes made by the later poet: "And he that told the tale in older times / Says that Sir Gareth wedded Lyonors, / But he, that told it later, says Lynette (Alfred Lord Tennyson, *Gareth and Lynette* [London: Strahan, 1872], 88).

¹¹⁹ Poulson, *The Quest for the Grail*, 68-70. Debra Mancoff argues that by the turn of the century, all of the characters and tales of the legends were perceived as being better suited for emulation by

whether portrayed by Malory, Tennyson, or Forbes, was an ideal role model for Victorian boys: as a true-hearted youth who becomes a man through his modest behaviour and heroic deeds, he perfectly embodied the archetype of the “bright boy knight” that emerged in the last decades of the nineteenth century.¹²⁰ Indeed, positioning Gareth as a role model seems to have been the purpose of Tennyson’s poem, which his wife Emily remarked was written to “describe a pattern youth for his boys.”¹²¹ Accordingly, Gareth’s story was more often used to decorate schools rather than gallery walls; British artist Mary Sargeant-Florence’s 1903-10 frescoes for the Oakham School in Rutland, for example, illustrated the tale using depictions of the schoolboys themselves in the crowd scenes and the identifiable architecture of the school buildings as the setting.¹²² Gareth even became a popular boy’s name in the last decades of the century.¹²³ In this context, the story of Sir Gareth was an obvious choice for Forbes’s children’s book, which she dedicated to her son Alec, who also served as the model for the illustrations of

young boys than by men. She points to the re-printing of Malory and other adapted stories in child-friendly ways in the final decades of the nineteenth century and the 1907 founding of the Boy Scout movement in the model of the Round Table as evidence that Arthur and his Knights had become “proper fare for the nursery” (*The Arthurian Revival in Victorian Art*, 223-224).

¹²⁰ The phrase is Tennyson’s, used to describe a young Sir Galahad, but taken up by Mancoff to describe a larger subset of Arthurian imagery, including representations of Gareth (*The Return of King Arthur*, 102).

¹²¹ Quoted in Poulson, *The Quest for the Grail*, 68. Tennyson’s version of the tale emphasizes the theme of growing up and becoming a man by beginning with a long description of Gareth leaving home for Arthur’s court which is not included in the original Malory (or Forbes), and then passing through a variety of milestones before marrying Liones (Adam Roberts, “‘The Star with in the Mere:’ Tennyson’s ‘Gareth and Lynette,’” *Victorian Poetry*, 32, no. 2 [Summer 1994]: 183).

¹²² Poulson, *The Quest for the Grail*, 68-69; Whitaker, 311. Tennyson’s *Gareth and Lynette* was also used as the subject of a series of stained glass windows at Trinity College, Glenalmond, in Scotland (Girouard, 184). A few decades into the twentieth-century reign of modernism when the narrative didacticism of Tennyson and his fellow Victorians had fallen decidedly out of fashion, T.S. Eliot was to accuse the former Poet Laureate of turning Malory’s “great British epic” into “suitable reading for a girls’ school” (quoted in Jeffrey E. Jackson, “The Once and Future Sword: Excalibur and the Poetics of Imperial Heroism in *Idylls of the King*,” *Victorian Poetry* 46, no. 2 [Summer 2008], 207).

¹²³ Poulson, *The Quest for the Grail*, 117.

Myles.¹²⁴ Published in the year that Alec left for boarding school, Gareth's coming-of-age story must have resonated with the Forbes family on a personal level.

The lessons of *King Arthur's Wood* circulated beyond the confines of the Forbes household however. Created during the span of the Boer War, *King Arthur's Wood* cannot be separated from its social context. As such, Forbes's chosen subject of Gareth, the quintessential chivalrous knight, must be seen as not only a romanticization of a social order that was perceived to be disappearing in the late nineteenth century, but as an overt celebration of contemporary imperial values. If, as historian Stephanie Barczewski points out, "the image of the solitary, vulnerable knight confronted with one life-threatening danger after another became one of the most frequently employed symbols of the British imperial experience,"¹²⁵ then Gareth's adventure is matched in Arthurian legend only by the quest for the Holy Grail as a metaphor for the imperial project.

The bulk of the tale's narrative is composed of a sequence of Gareth meeting and fighting with several other knights, known only (at first) as the Black Knight, the Green Knight, the Red Knight, the Blue Knight, and the Red Knight of the Red Lawns. Though he kills the Black Knight, the lives of the other knights are spared. The gallant Gareth's work is finally done when the men he has defeated arrive at Camelot to fulfill their promises to unite and serve the king. Forbes describes this final scene in a lengthy passage:

¹²⁴ A study for one of the illustrations from the book was also given to another Newlyn child, Phyllis Gotch, whose father, painter Thomas Cooper Gotch, had modeled for the figure of King Arthur (*British Post-Impressionists and Moderns* [London: Belgrave Gallery, 1987]).

¹²⁵ Barczewski, 215.

[T]here was a great stir and amazement at the court of King Arthur, for first the Green Knight, with the thirty gentlemen at arms who followed after him, came riding to put himself at the mercy of the King. Then came the Red Knight with his fifty, and after him the Blue Knight with his hundred; and all these three told the King how they had been overcome in battle by a young knight who rode with a damsel, who mocked at him and called him Lily-fingers. While they were all talking and marveling, in came Sir Launcelot of the Lake, and told that a goodly lord with six hundred knights was waiting without. Then the King rose and went out to meet him and demanded his errand.

“Sire,” said the strange lord, saluting low, “my name is Sir Ironside, and I am called the Red Knight of the Red Lawns. For thirty winters I have held my own in battle, but now I have been overcome by a knight who was called Lily-fingers, and he sends me to you to yield me to your will.”

“You are welcome,” said the King, “You have long been a foe to me and my Court, but now, if you become my friend, I will make you a Knight of the Round Table, only you must no longer be a murderer.”

“Sire, I have given my word to Lily-fingers to use such shameful customs no longer, and now I must crave forgiveness of Sir Launcelot and his brother knights for all the ill will I bore them.”

“May God forgive you as freely as we do...” cried they all.¹²⁶

Gareth’s conquest and “collection” of men from across the land, and their union under one strong central force has a clear analogue in the British imperial project, while the clear colour symbolism and the rhetorical device of placing the differently-coloured knights in a hierarchy of value cannot be ignored the context of the nineteenth-century science of race.¹²⁷ Notably, only the Black Knight is killed in the narrative, perhaps suggesting the black colonial subject’s low rank within this hierarchy. Further details – the Blue Knight’s name is revealed as Sir Persante of Inde (India); the Red Knight of the Red Lawns has an elephant tusk as a horn – certainly support this interpretation and (although both descriptions are

¹²⁶ Forbes, *King Arthur’s Wood*, 56-57.

¹²⁷ This narrative insistence on hierarchy is suggested in the passage, with the first knight bringing 30 knights with him, the next, 50, and so on. This device of repetition and increase is used throughout the story. On how these devices give Malory’s tale its comedic character, see Mahoney, 174-75.

included in the fifteenth-century Malory version as well) would no doubt have conjured up visions of contemporary foes-turned-fellows in the minds of *fin-de-siècle* readers.¹²⁸

The theme of a harmonious, united empire of diverse peoples underlined here is by no means unique to Gareth's story, but runs through Arthurian legend. Present in earlier versions of the tales, it was nevertheless one element of the story that required considerable adaptation to its new nineteenth-century context, especially as regarding contemporary concerns about race, ethnicity, and ancestry in the British Isles. Specifically, the "real" Arthur – a Celtic leader who made his name fighting *against* the Saxons – and his followers had to be smoothly integrated into the popular racial mythology that glorified the Anglo-Saxons as the heroic ancestors of modern Britons. Nineteenth-century writers tackled this disconnect by continuing to divorce Arthur from what was already a skeptical history and moving him even more firmly into the realm of fiction, where the king could be whatever best suited his new audiences. This racial translation was not simply a British or Anglo-Saxon appropriation of Celtic culture, but a fantasy of union between the various residents of the British Isles. Nineteenth-century adaptors of the Arthurian stories justified their use of the Celtic Arthur as their national hero by rewriting history to show that his revolt against the Saxons ended in peaceful reconciliation and a harmonious integrated community of different

¹²⁸ These are, however, changes that Tennyson made to the story. Instead of the multi-coloured knights, Gareth's enemies are named after different times of the day. The imperial inflection of their names remains however, in that Gareth's mission has him following the sun, leading him from West to East.

peoples who were strongly united against the outside world: a resolution that would no doubt have called to mind the goals of contemporary imperialists.¹²⁹

Following the path laid set by a half-century of artists and authors before her, Forbes's Gareth and Arthur are accordingly represented as Anglo-Saxon, unambiguously white figures, despite their Celtic origins (Gareth, after all, is specified as being from Orkney, on the Celtic fringes of Britain) (figs. 53 and 54). Both men portrayed with light hair, pale complexions, and prominent features that include the characteristic Saxon aquiline nose, rather than the smaller, darker features of the Celts. This racial conversion was an important feature of the translation of medieval sources into modern times, and key to making them palatable to a nineteenth-century public in which definitions of Anglo-Saxonness, whiteness, and Britishness were frequently conflated, but also unstable.

A second notable feature of the above passage is the "strange" Sir Ironside's promise to Gareth and Arthur to abandon his "shameful customs," and our heroes' subsequent forgiveness of his previous deeds. This interaction provides another clear metaphor for the aims of British imperialism and key insight into the character of the protagonists. The "shameful customs" referred to by Ironside include hanging the bodies of defeated knights at the entrance to his lands as a warning to those who enter, a practice illustrated by Forbes in a large charcoal drawing (fig. 55). The artist represents Gareth and Lynette riding high on horseback through a dark, dense forest. Surrounding them are the bodies of several knights hanging from the trees, which emerge out of their dark surroundings only gradually, gruesomely surprising the viewer. In the immediate

¹²⁹ Barczewski, 144-50; Bryden, 34-35.

foreground, two large black carrion birds hover over a single, disembodied head with their claws and beaks at the ready. In contrast, we see Gareth's reluctance to kill his enemies unless absolutely necessary. The narrative and illustration portray the enemy knight as a barbarian, operating outside the codes of civility maintained by Arthur and his Court. Gareth and Arthur's efforts to convince Ironside to abandon these practices reveal the civilizing aims of both Arthur's Court and the modern British Empire, and provide a justification for the colonization of other lands and peoples. Gareth's and Arthur's generous forgiveness of Ironside's previous misdeeds further show that both Court and Empire were built and maintained not only through strength, but mercy. Indeed, the balance of these qualities was considered the mark of both a properly chivalrous medieval knight and a true imperial gentleman.¹³⁰

V. Victorian Knights and Ladies

The similarity between the ideal character of a medieval knight and that of a Victorian gentleman was not coincidental. *King Arthur's Wood* operated within a *fin-de-siècle* climate of anxiety about British masculinity that ultimately culminated in the First World War. Beginning at mid-century, the bourgeois gentleman was forced to defend and redefine his privileged role in society when confronted with the rapid advances made by working-class men and middle-class

¹³⁰ In his discussion of Tennyson's *Idylls*, Jeffrey Jackson describes this characterization as rooted in moderation and repression: "a precarious Victorian moral masculinity, one 'valiant in redressing human wrong' but ever wary of unfettered male aggression" (210). Arguing that the poet's imperial Camelot is a direct metaphor for the mid-Victorian British Empire, Jackson notes that a "rejection of arbitrary violence" – as we see in the case of Gareth's quest – is one of the main characteristics of what he calls "the poetics of imperial heroism" that forms the core of the *Idylls* (209).

women into the public sphere.¹³¹ Considered together with the demands of an ever-expanding empire that necessitated increasing numbers of British men to fight, settle, and govern, the figure of the medieval knight provided an ideal for imperial men to aspire to. Barczewski summarizes the aptness of this new model, which, she states,

reformulated the image of the gentleman as an idealized medieval knight embodying the virtues of bravery, loyalty, courtesy, generosity, modesty, purity, and compassion. When translated into an imperial context, this chivalric ethos served as a code of colonial conduct that functioned to distinguish the British from the ostensible barbarities of the societies over which they ruled. The empire provided a field in which a gentleman could come to the aid of those less fortunate than himself. He could fight the good fight to rescue ostensibly inferior peoples from slavery, superstition, or unjust rulers, and bring them peace, wise but firm government, and the benefits of British civilization.¹³²

The new chivalric ideal of masculinity, then, was intimately linked to ideals of patriotism, service, and self-sacrifice within the context of the Empire. This beneficent ideal also, however, required an imaginative erasure of British involvement in their own “barbaric” practices.

When *King Arthur's Wood* was published in 1904, concerns about masculinity were particularly acute: the memory of the Boer War, when British men had been called upon to protect the Empire and did not perform as well as might have been hoped for, was still fresh, while the death of Queen Victoria and the resulting coronation of a new king for the first time in sixty years presented

¹³¹ The literature on Victorian masculinity is vast. See, for example, Joseph Bristow, *Empire Boys: Adventures in a Man's World* (London: HarperCollins Academic, 1991); Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire, and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London: Routledge, 1994); Joseph Kestner, *Masculinities in Victorian Painting* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1995); J.A. Mangan and James Walvin, eds., *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987); Radhika Mohanram, *Imperial White*, Chapter 1; Herbert Sussman, *Victorian Masculinities: Manhood and Masculine Poetics in Early Victorian Literature and Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

¹³² Barczewski, 220.

the opportunity to publicly re-define masculinity. With anxieties about the extension of the empire and subsequent degeneration of the race, and the failures of South Africa close at hand, the characteristics of an ideal imperial gentleman were also those characteristics that were believed to define white male body. The knightly Victorian gentleman was healthy, tall, and strong. He was equally fit in moral character: benevolent, Christian, and moderate in all things. Together, his was a body ready to protect and serve the Empire. Radhika Mohanram has described this ideal of chivalric white masculinity as a unifying model: it functions, she argues, to

construct a whiteness for maximum efficiency, one that will not be riddled with dissensions between classes, regionalisms, and sexualities. All these divisive differences that would locate the subject within an individuality and individual expressions of themselves would be uneconomical within a colonial situation where whites had to cohere as a group to homogenize blacks and rule them. Athleticism and muscular Christianity, far from locating the adolescent male body ... as erotic, subsumes them under representations of whiteness, which has the burden and duty of ruling the unruly blacks in the colonies.¹³³

As Mohanram suggests, the white chivalric ideal was always constructed in tandem with its opposite: the non-white colonial body, which was degenerate, weak or effeminate, and uncontrolled.

Nineteenth-century versions of the tale of Sir Gareth are particularly clear articulations of this construction of modern, white British masculinity: U.C. Knoepfelmacher has called Gareth's adventure a "quest for a male identity,"¹³⁴ while Ian McGuire suggests that Gareth is the only Tennysonian character to truly

¹³³ Mohanram, 24-25.

¹³⁴ U. C. Knoepfelmacher, "Idling in Gardens of the Queen: Tennyson's Boys, Princes, and Kings," *Victorian Poetry* 30, no. 3/4 (Autumn/Winter, 1992): 347.

successfully embody these modern imperial masculine virtues.¹³⁵ “Gareth” provided audiences with an un-complicated narrative of the deeds and duties of a perfect chivalric knight; his story leaves little room for ambiguous interpretations of chivalric values, unlike the tales of Sir Launcelot or Sir Tristram, with their prominent themes of adultery, for example.¹³⁶ In *King Arthur’s Wood*, Gareth embodies all of the characteristics of a true knight: he shows humility by first living and working as the kitchen servant “Lily-fingers,” keeping his true identity secret so that he can prove himself worthy through his good deeds, instead of his well-born name; he refuses any reward for these deeds, claiming that honour is reward enough; he patiently tolerates mocking from the other servants, Sir Kay, and Lynette; he bravely confronts his enemies; and finally, as previously mentioned, he treats the knights he defeats with mercy, and in so doing, shows both his own benevolence and his loyalty to King Arthur and his land. Throughout, the knight is described consistently in such terms as “modest,” “steadfast,” and “brave.” In essence, Gareth embodies the Victorian ideal of balance between physical and spiritual strength, showing off his “physical manliness” without compromising his “moral manliness.”¹³⁷

Forbes’s illustrations chronicle Gareth’s transformation from boy to masculine ideal. When we first meet the future knight, he stands before King Arthur, Queen Guinevere, and several members of the court (fig. 54). His back to

¹³⁵ McGuire, 387.

¹³⁶ Some scholars have contested this traditional interpretation of Gareth’s role in the legend, arguing that Gareth is not as “good” as usually assumed (Felicia Nimue Ackerman, “‘Your charge is to me a plesure’: Manipulation, Gareth, Lynet, and Malory,” *Arthuriana* 19, no. 3 [2009]: 8-14), that his tale is not as straightforward (Roberts), and that his coming of age process may in fact be incomplete (Knoepfmacher).

¹³⁷ Bryden, 82.

the viewer, Gareth stands with a slight build and short stature, the bare profile of his neck and chin standing in contrast to the older Arthur's beard and emphasizing the boy's relative youth. As he asks the King to send him on a quest, his pose, with legs ajar and hands in front clasping what appears to be a hat, betray his youthful uncertainty in the face of authority (and indeed, one lady of the court peeks out from behind Arthur's throne with a slight grin at the boy's precocious request). In the book's final representation of Gareth, however, the young boy has clearly grown up (fig. 56). Clad in a suit of armour and sitting astride an equally decorated horse, Gareth has assumed the role of a knight.

Joseph Kestner has argued that armour was an essential symbol in the context of nineteenth-century chivalry and medievalism; for him, the representation of armour "transforms the male body into the supreme signifier of masculinity ... Armour intensifies the power and presence of the male body by magnifying it."¹³⁸ It moreover quite literally contains the body, a physical symbol of the controlled nature of the white male body. Indeed, Gareth's adoption of armour provides important plot progression in *King Arthur's Wood*. When Gareth leaves the court, he refuses to ask for armour from the king; because armour was the traditional request of a man of noble birth, Gareth's refusal to make it arouses Sir Kay's suspicion and derision. When Gareth defeats the latter in his first battle, he takes the more experienced knight's sword and shield; later, when Gareth kills the Black Knight, he takes his armour and costumes himself in it to carry on with his quest. These symbols of masculinity should, for Gareth, only be honourably acquired through his own actions rather than by the lucky circumstances of his

¹³⁸ Kestner, 97.

birth. In the final representation of *King Arthur's Wood*, Gareth's posture matches his new uniform, as he confidently surveys the land around him. No longer gawked at by an amused lady of the court, several knights follow behind him, at his service.

An overwhelming 10 of the watercolour and charcoal illustrations in *King Arthur's Wood* contain men in armour; it was a subject that Forbes also drew on for her oil painting *There Was A Knight Came Riding By* (n.d., private collection). The many depictions of Gareth in armour throughout *King Arthur's Wood* would no doubt have called to the minds of contemporary audiences other popular representations of knights, especially George Frederic Watts's widely circulated painting *Sir Galahad* (fig. 57). Galahad, another young knight of pure reputation, was the most commonly represented Arthurian male figure in the early years of the twentieth century, and Watts's extremely popular 1862 version was ubiquitous by the that time, reproduced in paint, stained glass, and print across the Empire.¹³⁹ Like Gareth, Galahad was viewed as a desirable role model for schoolboys, and representations of the two were purposely meant as identificatory figures for young audiences to mimic and aspire to.¹⁴⁰ Watts's portrayal of a man whose mature body is obscured by a detailed shell of silver armour, but whose young face is highlighted by a ring of curls and lit, halo-like, by the sky behind him provided the standard iconography for the representation of a young knight.

One of Forbes's charcoal drawings seems especially to evoke the same feeling as Watts's version (fig. 58). Like Galahad, Forbes's Gareth is depicted in a

¹³⁹ Poulson, *The Quest for the Grail*, 110-113.

¹⁴⁰ Kestner, 108.

moment of reflection, seated on a rock with head in hand and helmet cast aside at his feet. Still in the armour suit that stands in for the masculine body, Gareth's bare face and hands stand out and humanize the knight. If Galahad's head is framed by the bright sky behind him, Forbes has taken advantage of her charcoal medium and done the opposite, framing Gareth's bright face with a dark landscape, creatively producing the same highlighting effect. In both cases, the contrast between the hard armour and a thoughtful, soft face conveys the importance of moderation between physical and moral masculinity.

Though clearly aimed at young boys like her son Alec, and therefore particularly focused on ideal masculinity, Forbes's book is by no means silent on the question of women's roles. *King Arthur's Wood*, together with other nineteenth-century re-interpretations of Arthurian legends, reflected and actively helped to construct contemporary ideas about femininity within the context of British imperialism. Female figures were a particular focus of painters of medievalist subjects: Muriel Whitaker argues that more so than images of knights and kings, it was above all "mystical, medieval resonances of beautiful, suffering women that provided an escape from materialistic industrialism."¹⁴¹ A considerable number of Forbes's works fall within this tradition: *The Leaf* (fig. 48) for example, is a typical portrayal of a pensive woman in a mysterious woodland setting. Writer Gladys Crozier, who visited the school run by the Forbes couple for an article about the same, could have been describing the painting when she wrote of her encounter with "a crimson-robed enchantress

¹⁴¹ Whitaker, 236. The ladies of Camelot joined historical figures with similarly tragic fates such as Lady Jane Grey and Mary, Queen of Scots in their popularity on gallery walls.

lying hidden in a wood, garbed in one of Mrs. Stanhope Forbes's pet medieval garments, bearing an air of magic and enchantment about her which both delighted the imagination and enchained the eye!"¹⁴² In *A Dream Princess* (fig. 47), the female figure is literally of another world, attempting to draw the sleeping male character out of his life into her dreamland. The anti-modern appeal of these images is clear.¹⁴³

Art historian Christiana Payne sees Forbes's later images of "dreamy women" as being direct descendents of Jules Bastien-Lepage's *Jeanne d'Arc écoutant les voix* (1879) (fig. 59), which the artist mentions in her autobiographical chapter, and which she would have had the opportunity to see in New York.¹⁴⁴ The French naturalist's representation of the young female saint, dressed in medieval peasant garb and gazing into the distance as her ghostly twin dressed in armour and accompanied by an angel floats in the background, no doubt provided one source for Forbes to draw upon. However, the artist's images of medievalized women were produced and operated within a much wider context in which the idealized female figure effectively served as a symbol of an ideal past. This was a possible and logical choice for nineteenth-century artists and viewers because women were not full participants in the "real" modern world; as such, female figures provided a useful cipher to be manipulated in the service of

¹⁴² Gladys Crozier, "The Newlyn School of Painting," *Girl's Realm*. November 1904. The "pet medieval garments" re-appear across Forbes's work: Lynette's dress in *King Arthur's Wood* is the same dress worn by the female figure in *A Dream Princess*, for example.

¹⁴³ Other works with similar subjects (and diverse interpretations) include, for example, *The Shell* (1900, location unknown, illustrated in *The Studio*) and *Wild Hyacinths* (before 1906, location unknown, illustrated in *Birch*).

¹⁴⁴ *Birch*, 60; Payne, in Cook and Hardie, 20.

whatever artistic goals were being pursued.¹⁴⁵ As such, representations of idealized women must be understood as more than just exercises in colour, line, and pattern (as Aesthetic subjects were thought to be) or costume studies of subjects in “fancy dress” (as Forbes’s works have been called¹⁴⁶).

Arthurian women were especially popular subjects for representation, and the connection between this popularity and the context in which it appeared was hardly accidental. Tennyson’s most popular poems “Guinevere,” “Vivien,” and especially “Elaine” (all published in the 1859 original edition of the *Idylls*), with their explicit lessons about adultery, prostitution, and the dangers of women abandoning the private sphere, for example, were written and published during the long and heavily publicized debates surrounding the 1857 Matrimonial Causes Act – also called the “Divorce Act” – which made the rights and legal status of married women the subject of public debate.¹⁴⁷ Tennyson’s tragic, but morally instructive female figures remained a popular subject for visual representation throughout the rest of the century even as real women entered the public sphere in ever-increasing numbers.

Like Gareth, the two main female characters in *King Arthur’s Wood* must be understood as operating within the context of the imperial project in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Sisters Lynette and Liones are set in a textual and visual parallel (figs. 60 and 61). Lynette is independent, uncontrollable, and so

¹⁴⁵ This is the argument of Bailey Van Hook, *Angels of Art: Women and Art in American Society, 1876-1914* (University Park: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996). Though the book focuses on American artists, her wider argument is certainly applicable to other examples.

¹⁴⁶ Cook and Hardie, 101.

¹⁴⁷ Barczewski, 174. The Matrimonial Causes Act re-defined divorce as a civil issue, and regulated the proceedings involved, making it more accessible than ever before.

hot-tempered that she is described as “heaping injurious words on the young knight till she stopped for lack of breath.”¹⁴⁸ Indeed, the other knights give her the nickname “La Demoiselle Sauvage” in response to her “pert” behaviour at court.¹⁴⁹ Liones, in contrast, is beautiful, demure, and quite literally trapped in a castle in need of rescue for most of the tale. Unlike her sister, she is described in terms such as “dainty” and “blushing,” with a voice that is “very soft and pleading” and “manners and ... speech ... so winning and gracious”¹⁵⁰ Although sisters, the dress and physical features of the two female figures are set in distinction: Lynette, with dark hair, heavy-lidded eyes, and red dress contrasts visually with her light-haired, pink-cheeked sister, who is dressed, when Gareth and the reader first meet her, in a white gown with a jeweled cross around her neck (fig. 62). In the end, it is the latter who wins Sir Gareth’s heart, though the former too, is given a happy ending: the storytelling dwarf reports that Lynette “learned to order her tongue with discretion and became a notable housewife.”¹⁵¹

Lynette and Liones embody the two opposing poles of female sexuality in the nineteenth century: “the madonna and the magdalen,” to draw on art historian Lynda Nead’s seminal discussion of Pre-Raphaelite representations of the female figure.¹⁵² As Nead suggests, the feminine ideal was “defined in terms of ‘health’

¹⁴⁸ Forbes, *King Arthur’s Wood*, 31.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 49, 56.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 60.

¹⁵² Lynn Nead, “The Magdalen in Modern Times: The Mythology of the Fallen Woman in Pre-Raphaelite Painting,” *Oxford Art Journal* 7, no. 1 (1984): 27. The body literature on Pre-Raphaelite and Aesthetic representations of femininity is very large. For surveys of the movements that include sustained discussion on female figures see J.B. Bullen, *The Pre-Raphaelite Body: Fear and Desire in Painting, Poetry, and Criticism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); Elizabeth Prettejohn, *Art for Art’s Sake: Aestheticism in Victorian Painting* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); Elizabeth Prettejohn, *The Art of the Pre-Raphaelites* (Princeton:

and ‘respectability’ – marking off those outside this category as deviant and dangerous.”¹⁵³ In the context of later nineteenth-century ideas about race, it fell to the white middle-class woman to police both public morality and her own sexuality: this was necessary not only to preserve her own respectability, but also to preserve the health and purity of the white race.

Accordingly, the two sisters are also positioned in opposing racial terms. Liones is consistently racialized as white through the use of the term “fair” throughout the text, both in terms of her appearance and her behaviour. More than a physical description, “fair” conflates lightness of skin and hair with beauty and goodness. This physical whiteness also signified in terms of class, indicating a non-working, leisurely body. In Forbes’s illustrations, Liones is portrayed as the very ideal of proper white female sexuality. In the plate entitled *But when the Lady of the Castle had sent Sir Gareth away* (fig. 61), for example, she is represented in the same languid, leisurely poses as Forbes’s (and Whistler’s and Chase’s) earlier aesthetic women were, positioned for the viewer as an object to be seen and appreciated for her beauty. In the context of the chivalric codes celebrated by *King Arthur’s Wood*, her physical inactivity reads as a feminine helplessness and inability to control her destiny; her rescue is, after all, at the heart of the tale.

On the other hand, Lynette’s dark hair, when combined with her hot temper, gives the impression of a very different kind of woman: if Arthur, Gareth, and Liones have been given suitably Anglo-Saxon features, Lynette remains

Princeton University Press, 2000); Kathy Alexis Psomiades, *Beauty’s Body: Femininity and Representation in British Aestheticism* (Stanford: Stanford University, 1997).

¹⁵³ Nead, 27.

stereotypically Celtic in look and nature. The latter's French nickname further increases the sense of difference, and bestows upon the woman not only a Celtic, but a Southern temperament; in effect, she reads as non-white in comparison to her sister in the context of contemporary definitions of whiteness as specifically Anglo-Saxon. Viewed in the context of the racial beliefs of the nineteenth century, each woman's physical characteristics act as visual shorthand for their moral characters.

Similar to Gareth's possible debt to Watts's *Sir Galahad*, Forbes's representations of Lynette and Liones are also reminiscent of a previous body of work. Both recall any number of icons of Pre-Raphaelite or Aesthetic femininity. Liones seems a clear call back to Rossetti's sensual heroines, with her long, flowing red hair circling her head like a halo, her white neck revealed by the pose with her head back, and her slightly parted pink bow lips, features done memorably in works like *Bocca Baciata* (1859) (fig. 63), the artist's "portrait" of his then-mistress Fanny Cornhill. The flat, decorative background in *The Lady Liones* (in this case, a medieval wall tapestry) is also a device used by Rossetti. The hot-tempered Lynette, in appropriate contrast, is more visually reminiscent of one of Burne-Jones's more sinister female figures, with heavily shadowed contours in her face and hands that contrast her pale skin; compare, for example, with his own Arthurian subject *The Beguiling of Merlin* (1872-77) (fig. 64). Forbes would presumably have been familiar with Burne-Jones's work (as she clearly was with Rossetti's), given that his *King Cophetua and the Beggar Girl* (1884, Tate) was exhibited at the Paris Exposition Universelle in 1889, where

Forbes won a medal for her own work. Like the elder artist's Vivien, Lynette possesses the strong features and slim, angular body that characterizes the Pre-Raphaelite and Aesthetic female figure. While Rossetti's "fleshly" study of sensual beauty would have been an appropriate body of work for Forbes to draw on in the context of the current nostalgia for courtly love for the depiction of Gareth's true love and eventual wife (though it must be said that Liones is considerably less sexualized than her predecessor), Burne-Jones's enchanting *femme fatale* was equally well-suited model for Gareth's uncontrollable nemesis.

King Arthur's Wood and its tale of Sir Gareth functioned to construct and maintain conventional gender roles and relationships in the face of growing social anxiety that the decline of empire was a result of general degeneration of the social order within the metropole. Beyond her physical appearance, the proper white imperial lady was defined by her role as a source of moral uplift and the purveyor of a civilizing influence. As discussed at length in the following chapter with respect to Mary Bell Eastlake's representations of motherhood, the responsibilities of the Victorian woman as the moral guardian of the home and family were expanded considerably throughout the later decades of the nineteenth century as the private home became increasingly understood as the most basic unit of the nation and empire upon which all other institutions were based. The safety, security, and strength of the entire imperial enterprise, then, was dependent on wives and mothers providing proper moral guidance and stability at home. These ideals were echoed in nineteenth-century re-tellings of Arthurian tales,¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ Margaret Linley, "Sexuality and Nationality in Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*," *Victorian Poetry* 30, no. 3/4 (Autumn/Winter, 1992): 366.

and are clearly apparent in *King Arthur's Wood*. Throughout the quest, Lynette provides the inspiration for Gareth's extension of mercy towards his enemies (though admittedly often reluctantly): he states he will only spare their lives if she desires it. In a backwards way, Lynette's constant taunts also teach the young knight courtesy, self-control, and patience.¹⁵⁵ Indeed, Gareth credits her with his success in his endeavours, claiming that she made him want to prove himself as a man: "Your rough words have done me good, for the more you angered me the more I sought to prove on my enemies that I was not the low-born knave you thought me."¹⁵⁶ Liones, too, is said to have been the motivation of all of the deeds (both good and evil) of her captor, which for Gareth is good enough reason to forgive the man.¹⁵⁷ Furthermore, it is the two women who ultimately deserve credit for Gareth's final victory over the Red Knight of the Red Lawns. With the hero on the verge of certain death, Lynette calls attention to her sister's visible distress at the scene, inspiring the knight to spring to action and defeat his enemy. Forbes's depiction of the scene makes clear the role of the sisters (fig. 65). While the bloody battle rages in the middle ground of the image, the two female figures are visible at either end of a diagonal composition that defines the sense of space in the scene. Though Liones is only a tiny figure watching from her castle, Lynette is front and centre, with her body and eyes turned to the fight and to Liones, as she holds her hands out pleading for Gareth to take inspiration from her

¹⁵⁵ Miriam Rheingold Fuller presents a lengthy defense on Lynette's actions in Malory's version of the tale, arguing that Lynette's actions are all ultimately meant to help Gareth in his quest ("Method in Her Malice: A Reconsideration of Lynet in Malory's 'Tale of Sir Gareth,'" *Fifteenth-Century Studies* 25 [1999]: 253-267).

¹⁵⁶ Forbes, *King Arthur's Wood*, 43.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 50.

sister's beauty in the distance. Lynette's ultimate importance in Gareth's success, and by extension, the crucial role played by modern wives, mothers, and daughters in the imperial project, is thus highlighted.

The messages conveyed by the story and illustrations of Forbes's book were not accidental. Indeed, the framing narrative of *King Arthur's Wood* makes the intended didacticism of Gareth's tale very clear. From the start, the story is positioned as a lesson for Myles: the dwarf tells the boy to pay attention to what he is hearing, "for though you are but a simple country lad, you may yet learn something from so shining an example."¹⁵⁸ And learn he does: throughout the book, we see Myles taking inspiration from the knight he so admires. On one occasion, after hearing about young Gareth courageously confronting his foes, Myles stands up to a bully. On another, he scares away a herd of cattle that has surrounded an elderly woman who has fallen. He does so even though he is frightened because, he says, "Lily-fingers would never have run away." Having conquered his fear and rescued the woman, he runs home "feeling a good deal like a hero."¹⁵⁹ At the end of the story, Myles and his sister break a farmer's fence gate; though given the opportunity to blame it on the bully who bothered him earlier, the boy follows Gareth's honest example and takes responsibility. Because of this honourable act, the farmer takes him on as an aide, and Myles eventually takes over the farm, thereby acquiring the ability to properly care for his mother and sister as the man of the household. For her part, Myles's younger sister Noel grows up to be the schoolmistress of the local school, presumably exerting her

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 25.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 52.

own feminine good influence over a new generation of British youngsters. In the last sentences of the book, the ancient dwarf takes credit for the boy's transformation into a proper gentleman: "I had a hand in making him," he says, "I and Sir Gareth of Orkney."¹⁶⁰

VI. Conclusion

In 1905, Walter Shaw Sparrow ultimately concluded that Elizabeth Forbes's work "has no connection in itself and shows very little affinity beneath the surface with the special influences of [its] time. The strong brushwork ... it is true, may be said to have arrived by way of Newlyn, but the fanciful sentiment underlying her work has an arrival quite of its own."¹⁶¹ Sparrow succinctly expresses the frustration of defining and categorizing Forbes's work within the traditional boundaries of nationalist art historical narratives. In her later career, Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes deliberately engaged with specifically British cultural and artistic traditions in terms of both subject matter and style. As such, *King Arthur's Wood* must be understood as a clear engagement with contemporary debates surrounding both the British World and the British art world at the *fin-de-siècle* – an important claim to belonging made by a colonial-born artist who had begun her career in a rather liminal position in those same worlds.

Contemporary popularity did not ensure art historical longevity in terms of either the subject or the style in evidence in *King Arthur's Wood*. Considered

¹⁶⁰ Forbes, *King Arthur's Wood*, 60.

¹⁶¹ Walter Shaw Sparrow, *Women Painters of the World* (Toronto: The Copp Clark Company, 1905), 70.

unfashionable for much of the twentieth century, historical and literary subjects were seen as overly narrative when art was moving towards abstraction, sentimental when shock was valued, and overtly anti-modern when urban modernity was prized above all.¹⁶² Art historians Elizabeth Prettejohn and Tim Barringer have both noted that critical and popular distaste for these subjects and styles that appeared at the time of the First World War and continued throughout the twentieth century can be attributed to the powerful hold of modernism – and especially the privileging of French modernism – over art historical writing.¹⁶³ When seen in its very specific context however, it is clear that Forbes's artistic turn to the past was operating within a contemporary art historical discourse that was engaging with the definition and re-definition of what British art was and what it should be. Indeed, this definition of a national style was so successful that it was to this genre's detriment when the tide turned again in the early twentieth century. The victory of French modernism as the only modernism of value meant that this British art was dismissed as provincial and unimportant, an attitude expressed by the painter Vanessa Bell, who (echoing Whistler's own distinction between "the artists" and "the British") wrote in the following decade that the only cure for what she perceived as the dismal state of the British art world would be for "the English to get outside of their island pretty often."¹⁶⁴

In terms of subject matter too, the after-history of *King Arthur's Wood* is a sad one. In Malory's *Morte Darthur*, Sir Gareth dies in the final tale: killed by

¹⁶² Christian, 18. Even the Pre-Raphaelites are a relatively recent addition to the modern canon, with sales increasing in the 1960s, followed by scholarly work in the 1980s (Barringer, *Reading the Pre-Raphaelites*, 17-18).

¹⁶³ Prettejohn, introduction to *After the Pre-Raphaelites*, 6; Barringer, "Not a Modern," 64-65.

¹⁶⁴ Quoted in Christian, 20.

Launcelot accidentally, his death precipitates the dismantling of the Round Table, and the eventual fall of Arthur's realm. A decade after the publication of *King Arthur's Wood*, the First World War caused the death of nineteenth-century medievalism, and especially, the celebration of chivalry as embodied in the figure of a knight like Gareth. Though in the lead up and the initial stages of fighting, the Great War was popularly imagined as Britain defending itself and smaller countries against the great bully Germany,¹⁶⁵ just as Gareth and Myles must defend themselves. It quickly became evident, however, that the chivalric ideal was simply unsustainable in the face of such horror, and that the Great War was ultimately, as Mark Girouard has called it, "a nightmare parody" of the ideals of Victorian medievalism.¹⁶⁶ Alec Forbes, having apparently learned the lessons of the book his mother had dedicated to him, left architecture school and enthusiastically enlisted in the British Army at the age of 22. He was killed after only three weeks at the Front in 1916; his final letter thanks its recipient not for her ladylike inspiration of great deeds, but for the pair of warm socks she sent.¹⁶⁷

This sad occasion was marked by Stanhope Forbes by donating one of Elizabeth's Shakespearean oil paintings to the newly founded National Gallery of Canada, along with a sizable collection of watercolours, drawings, and etchings, with the agreement that the purchase price of the painting would be given to YMCA and Red Cross war efforts. *A Winter's Tale: When Daffodils Begin to Peer* (1906) was received by the land of her birth with excitement: the exchange

¹⁶⁵ Girouard, 282.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 289.

¹⁶⁷ Alec Forbes to Wynifrid Tennyson Jesse, c. later August, 1916. Stanhope Forbes collection, TGA.

was reported in the press, which expressed happiness that the work of this “Canadian girl” was being returned to her home, with one reporter writing that “it is gratifying to know that the National Gallery of Canada now possesses a fine representation of the work of one of its greatest artists.”¹⁶⁸ Through this act, Forbes tied the British World together in a concrete way on the basis of an art object that celebrated a shared white, Anglo-Saxon heritage and common cultural history. At this heightened moment of shared imperial identity between the two countries, he could be sure, as Stanhope later wrote to the Vancouver Art Gallery when he donated his wife’s 1905 *The Woodcutter’s Little Daughter* – yet another medievalist painting – that the Canadian “public will love it.”¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ “Group of Pictures to National Art Gallery,” *Ottawa Citizen*, January 13, 1917. This transaction was described by then-NGC Director Eric Brown in a short essay about her life and work in which he describes Forbes as “one of the most brilliant artists of the day” and expresses a desire to hold a memorial exhibition of her work in the future; unfortunately this doesn’t seem to have transpired (Eric Brown, untitled essay, dated June 7, 1917. Eric and Maud Brown fonds, NGC Library and Archives, Ottawa, ON).

¹⁶⁹ Stanhope Forbes to the Vancouver Art Gallery, March 9, 1934. Elizabeth Forbes artist file, CWAHL.

Chapter 3

Like a natural woman: Mary Alexandra Bell Eastlake and the representation of imperial motherhood

I. Introduction

When Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes exhibited her painting *A Fairy Story* at the Royal Academy in 1896 (fig. 46), the image of two young girls looking through an illustrated book of fairy tales acted to bridge the gap between the artist's earlier "foreign" Aesthetic and Impressionist images of languid girls in white dresses posed in domestic interiors and her later distinctly British Pre-Raphaelite interest in historical and literary subjects. Two decades later, fellow Canadian expatriate Mary Alexandra Bell Eastlake produced a remarkably similar image entitled *Fairy Tales* (c. 1916) (fig. 66).¹ Exhibited with the charming inscription "There was a place in childhood / That I remember well / And there a voice of sweetest tone / Bright fairy tales did tell," the artist re-located the young pair outside, but maintained the subject matter and sense of mood of the earlier painting. Once again, the older girl takes on a supervisory role: her arm around her younger charge's shoulders, she seems to read from the book more intently than her ancestor. The younger girl, with her chin cradled in the palm of her hand and her eyes gazing into the distance, appears to be even more lost in her own thoughts.

In both images, childhood is portrayed as innocent and detached from the worries and cares of the world. Eastlake's set of girls is also confined to a shallow

¹ Their contemporary Laura Muntz Lyall took on the same subject in a more traditional fashion in her own *Interesting Story* (1898, AGO). Sophie Pemberton's *John-a-Dreams* (1901, AGGV) transforms the scene into an older sister reading to her younger brother (or perhaps a governess and her charge).

space by the bright flowers that surround them, and once again, the colours unify the surface of the canvas smoothly: the pinks, purples, and creams of the blooms are echoed in the dresses, cheeks, and lips of the children. The overall effect of Forbes's and Eastlake's stylistic choices is that each pair of girls seem to be set off in their own little separate, but complete world, at once suggesting a sense of sisterly intimacy within the safe confines of domestic privacy and an otherworldly space of imagination brought on by the fairy tales they read. These youthful visions of childhood innocence now seem quite ordinary: snapshots from any nursery school or family den. However, the idealized childhood captured by Forbes and Eastlake was (and is) not a universal, timeless experience of all children, but rather, a class- and race-specific construction, and, in fact, a fairly recent one. *Fairy Tales* is just one of a large number of images in Eastlake's oeuvre that reflects and constructs contemporary ideas about childhood as they evolved within the context of turn-of-the-twentieth-century colonial and racial discourse.

Although there is no evidence that the two artists knew one another, it is likely that they did given that both resided in Cornwall in the same period: Forbes, from 1885 until her death in 1912, and Eastlake in 1889 and again from 1893 to 1898. The two Canadians shared several other commonalities: both were born in Ontario, and later moved to Europe to pursue a professional artistic career; both married English artists, with whom they competed for equal notice from critics; in addition to Cornwall, both spent time working in Pont-Aven and Volendam (rural artist colonies in France and the Netherlands, respectively); and

both were well-known and well-respected by their colleagues for their genre and figure scenes, particularly those, like *A Fairy Story* and *Fairy Tales*, which featured children and child life.

Fairy Tales is one example of Eastlake's consistent interest in representing not only children, but also a feminine caretaking relationship, in this case between two sisters. This interest found its most frequent expression, however, in the artist's portrayal of mothers and children. Unlike her Canadian contemporaries who have often tended to be falsely generalized as painters of maternity (Helen McNicoll, for example),² Eastlake returned to the subject of motherhood frequently over the course of her long career, looking at white bourgeois mothers, peasant mothers, and non-white mothers with equal attention. Of course, she was far from the only artist to tackle the theme in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; in fact, the body of imagery of motherhood to which Eastlake's work contributed was virtually omnipresent, seen in both the exhibitions of the Academy and the avant-garde, as well as in contemporary advertising, book illustrations, and other popular culture. The prevalence of such imagery was at least partially responsible for transforming ideas about motherhood, family, and the home, and did so with such great success that the historical specificity of these images is now nearly invisible: the close, loving relationships between mother and child glimpsed in Eastlake's portrayals are now accepted as reflecting timeless and universal bonds. And yet, this vision of

² Maria Tippet's assertion that "Canadian women painters were content, for the most part, with the *maternité* theme" stands out here (*By a Lady: Celebrating Three Centuries of Art by Canadian Women* [Toronto: Viking, 1992], 35). On this misperception of McNicoll specifically, see Kristina Huneault, "Impressions of Difference: The Painted Canvases of Helen McNicoll," *Art History* 27, no. 2 (April 2004): 234 and 237.

motherhood was very much a Western invention of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and directly related to contemporary beliefs and anxieties about gender, class, race, and empire. Indeed, maternity was conceived of as nothing less than an imperial imperative for middle-class white women. This chapter examines Eastlake's images of white and non-white mothers and their children, and the ways in which they operated in the context of a shifting discourse surrounding motherhood.

Mary Alexandra Bell Eastlake was born in Almonte, Ontario in 1864, but moved to Quebec early in life to follow her father's career as a civil servant. Her first formal art education came when she joined Robert Harris's classes at the Art Association of Montreal in the early 1880s. She moved on to the Art Students' League in New York in 1884, where (like Forbes) she was taught by William Merritt Chase, before finally moving abroad at the end of the decade to pursue her professional career. Eastlake chose the Académie Colarossi in Paris as her first destination, before moving through the European rural artist colony circuit, and eventually settling in London, where she married British landscape artist Charles Herbert Eastlake in 1897. The artist remained in Britain for the majority of her life, only moving home to Canada permanently in the years immediately prior to World War II. From her adopted home, Eastlake maintained close ties with the Canadian art world, and continued to send her work to the annual exhibitions of the AAM and the Royal Canadian Academy, even as she also contributed to prominent institutions across the world, including the RA, the Paris Salon, the Royal Society of British Artists, the New English Art Club, the Pastel Society,

and various locations in the United States. She further enhanced her international career by holding solo shows and co-exhibitions with her husband in Britain, Canada, and New Zealand.³

Eastlake travelled extensively over the course of her career, not only throughout England and the Continent, but also much further abroad, to places as diverse as Morocco, Japan, and Bolivia. In this respect, the artist joins a number of other nineteenth-century “lady travellers” who acted quite contrarily to what was expected of them as Victorian “angels in the house.” However, this challenge to late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century gender norms was made possible at least partly through their whiteness and British heritage. If, as I have shown in previous chapters, Canadian women like Forbes and Emily Carr struggled with feeling at home within the imperial metropole because of their status as “colonials,” they were able to adopt an outlook that was much more confident in its sense of belonging to the Empire when outside the borders of the British Isles. White women like Eastlake were further emboldened in their travels through a contemporary discourse of philanthropic maternalism. Indeed, in certain contexts white women might be said to have been in advantageous positions in the

³ In the early years of her career, Eastlake also bridged the European and Canadian art worlds by teaching at the Victoria School of Art in Montreal. An advertisement for the classes offered by Eastlake and her friend and travel partner Canadian artist Margaret Houghton shows that the two women brought their *plein air* European training back to Canada by teaching outdoor sketching classes at the school (*Catalogue of the Spring Exhibition of the Art Association of Montreal* [Montreal: AAM, 1892]). On the other hand, Eastlake gave up the associate membership to the RCA to which she had been elected in 1893 when she married and moved to Britain permanently in 1897.

The biographical information on Eastlake in this chapter comes primarily from the artist file held at the Canadian Women Artists History Initiative, at Concordia University, Montreal, QC and from a large, but mostly unidentified collection of sources held at the St. Ives Archive Centre and Trust, in St. Ives, Cornwall. Both institutions have compiled materials concerning the artist and her life and work from a large variety of sources.

colonies not only because they were white, but specifically because they were women.

This chapter looks at the intersection of these two threads – the *fin-de-siècle* glorification of motherhood in the context of imperialism and the intricacies of white women’s colonial travel – as it occurred in Eastlake’s life and work. At first glance, it seems rather ironic to examine representations of an apparently private, intimate relationship like motherhood that were created while the painter was so far away from her own home: travel, after all, tends to be defined by its very opposition to the feminized sphere of the home, while home, in turn, is defined in contrast to this wide outside world.⁴ However, an examination of the context in which Eastlake lived and worked will reveal that contemporary anxieties about the private home – and especially about the mother-child relationship as the central axis of that sphere – were very public concerns, and closely connected to beliefs and fears about the strength, reach, and character of the British Empire as a whole.

As such, this chapter continues to explore the links between the varying levels of “home” in more detail, showing that each understanding of home mapped onto the other. In this respect, I follow scholars such as Felicity

⁴ Kristina Huneault, “Placing Frances Anne Hopkins: A British-Born Artist in Colonial Canada,” in *Local/Global: Women Artists in the Nineteenth Century*, eds. Deborah Cherry and Janice Helland (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 187. Huneault examines how this dynamic between home and travel played out in the work of British artist Frances Anne Hopkins, who travelled in colonial Canada. The way in which the “situation of the domestic within the wilderness” (“Placing Frances Anne Hopkins,” 189) is revealed in some of Hopkins’s well-regarded canoe paintings shows some similarities to Eastlake’s domestic subjects in Polynesia, Southeast Asia, and Asia. On the ways in which the concepts of travel and home are always intimately linked, see also Alison Blunt, *Travel, Gender, and Imperialism: Mary Kingsley and West Africa* (New York: Guilford Press, 1994), especially Chapter 4; Terry Caesar, *Forgiving the Boundaries: Home as Abroad in American Travel* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995); Mary Suzanne Schriber, *Writing Home: American Women Abroad, 1830-1920* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1997).

Nussbaum, Anna Davin, and Ann Laura Stoler, who have ably shown that the intimate relations of the home and family and the global dynamics of empire were inextricably linked; it is, as the latter has remarked, undeniably “striking when we look to identify the contours and composition of any particular colonial community ... the extent to which control over sexuality and reproduction was at the core of defining colonial privilege and its boundaries.”⁵ Eastlake’s work – which was overwhelmingly on the subject of mothers and children no matter where she was geographically – might fruitfully be seen within this context. Although unfortunately few textual sources concerning the artist exist, the persistence with which the artist approached the maternal theme demonstrates not, I argue, an inherently “feminine” ability or desire to capture the domestic sphere, but an active engagement with the subject in the context of a very specific historical moment that saw the re-definition of motherhood as a natural, desirable state for women in the service of the imperial project both at home and away from home.

II. Maternal *Happiness*

Mary Bell Eastlake saw considerable notice for her maternal subjects early in her career. The *Toronto Globe* reported to its readers that an unnamed canvas by the artist of “a peasant woman bending sadly over a sick baby,” painted while she was in Pont-Aven, met with great success at the Salon of 1889. The reviewer notes happily that the positive French reviews of the work “assert that ‘Miss Bell

⁵ Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 39.

will arrive at the rank of a master,”” and that readers “have particular reason to be proud of the young lady’s manifestation of high talent because she is ‘a Canadian of the Canadians.’”⁶ Eastlake – “our brilliant Canadian girl” – followed this success a few years later with another portrayal of devoted motherhood in her large pastel *Happiness* (c. 1892) (fig. 67). Acquired by Eric Brown for the National Gallery of Canada in 1914,⁷ the representation of a mother holding a young child falls comfortably into the genre of the modern Madonna pioneered by artists like Berthe Morisot and, especially, Mary Cassatt. Like her Impressionist contemporaries, Eastlake was and is known by her audiences as a skilled interpreter of domestic charm and – as the title of the work indicates – maternal happiness. With its pair of figures posed in a colourful floral landscape, *Happiness* lacks historical or material specificity. Though the central figure’s clothing and complexion suggest that she is *bourgeoise*, rather than a peasant, there is no firm indication of who she might be, or where or when the two might be situated. Our eyes are, however, drawn to a shiny gold wedding band on the woman’s ring finger. In its simplicity, *Happiness* seems to represent an archetype, the “natural” mother, whose body is soothing and nurturing, who is devoted to her child and its care, and who gains her own pleasure at providing this care.

⁶ “Success of a Young Canadian in France,” *Toronto Globe*, May 2, 1889.

⁷ Correspondence between Brown and Eastlake (and between Brown and other correspondents) reveals that the curator sought to collect the artist’s work quite aggressively (Eric and Maud Brown fonds, NGC Library and Archives, Ottawa, ON). The NGC also acquired her *Twilight Reverie* in 1891 (after the painting was exhibited at the Paris Salon of the previous year and had won a prize at that year’s AAM spring exhibition), *Japanese Children at Play* in 1914, *Blue and Gold* and *Snowy Morning* in 1923, and *Mobilization Day* in 1928. Brown and his colleagues also included her work at the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley in 1924-25 alongside other artists praised as explicitly modern and distinctly Canadian.

Describing Mary Cassatt's similarly focused body of work, art historian Harriet Scott Chessman has commented,

Europeans and Americans, in particular, have absorbed such images into their cultural vocabulary about motherhood, so that even in the late twentieth century, these images still hold the power to represent a cherished – or contested – ideal attached to the inherited ideology of the sentimental. The privacy of the middle-class interiors, the intense focus on the mother-child dyad, the quiet absorption of the mother in her child, the appearance of effortlessness and tranquility in the mother's occupations, the Madonna and child motif – all may suggest an idealization so familiar to us as to be almost invisible.⁸

This chapter seeks to dismantle this illusion: although (as we shall see) motherhood has frequently been rhetorically employed as a way to unite women across the world based on a shared ability to bear children, the type of maternity depicted by artists like Eastlake and Cassatt is not the transcendental, universal relationship that is so often assumed. Rather, this brand of motherhood was a historically, socially, and culturally specific phenomenon that was closely linked to contemporary ideas about class, race, and imperialism. Moreover, it was a phenomenon that was constructed by both formal legal, medical, and political discourses, and through more informal means that included the production and dissemination of images like *Happiness*.

It is now a popular, if contested, commonplace that both childhood and motherhood were invented in the eighteenth century.⁹ The cultural re-imagining

⁸ Harriet Scott Chessman, "Mary Cassatt and the Maternal Body," in *American Iconology: New Approaches to Nineteenth-Century Art and Literature*, ed. David C. Miller (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 239.

⁹ The key text arguing that childhood began in eighteenth-century Europe is Philippe Ariès' 1960 study *L'enfant et la vie familiale sous l'ancien régime*, published in English as *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (New York: Vintage Books, 1962). For a similar argument in the British context, see Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977). These influential works have since been followed by many others that examine the various ways in which childhood, then motherhood,

of these two social categories was clearly linked: indeed, cultural studies scholar E. Ann Kaplan argues that it was specifically the “new focus on the *child*, that produced the modern mother (in her role as there specially to care *for the child*).”¹⁰ The quick shift to a new understanding of childhood is most frequently attributed to the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose *Emile: An Education* laid out new ideas about what it meant to be a child when it was published in 1762. If in the early modern period the body of the child had been conceived of as a carrier of ultimate sin that he or she needed to be trained out of through strict supervision and harsh punishment, Rousseau wiped this slate clean when he proposed instead that children were essentially pure. Understandably, new kinds of mothers were required to care for these new kinds of children. Born innocent, it followed that any sinfulness would be the result of outside factors,

were constructed as new social categories throughout Europe over the course of the modern period.

In art history, the first major contribution to this body of scholarship was Carol Duncan’s important examination of the visual construction of the modern mother and her family in the later eighteenth-century in the works of Greuze and Fragonard, among others (“Happy Mothers and Other New Ideas in French Art,” *Art Bulletin* 55, no. 4 [December 1973]: 570-583). In the following quarter century, numerous scholars have continued to see the eighteenth century as a critical moment, and looked at modern childhood and motherhood in various contexts. In addition to the texts cited elsewhere in this chapter, see, for example, Erika Langmuir, *Imagining Childhood* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); Loren Lerner, ed., *Depicting Canada’s Children* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2009); David Lubin, “Guys and Dolls: Framing Femininity in Post-Civil War America,” in *Picturing a Nation: Art and Social Change in Nineteenth-Century America*, 204-271 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); Marcia Pointon, “The State of a Child,” in *Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 177-226; Robert Rosenblum, *The Romantic Child from Runge to Sendak* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988); James Christen Steward, *The New Child: British Art and the Origins of Modern Childhood, 1730-1830* (Berkeley: University of California Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, 1995).

With specific regard to pre-WWI Canadian women artists, Elizabeth Mulley has looked at the work of Laura Muntz Lyall in the context of turn-of-the-twentieth-century ideas about motherhood and eugenics in the article “Madonna, Mother, Death, and Child: Laura Muntz Lyall and the Representation of Maternity,” *RACAR* 25, no. 1-2 (1998): 84-93, as well as in her PhD thesis, “Women and Children in Context: Laura Muntz and the Representation of Maternity,” PhD thesis, McGill University, 2000.

¹⁰ E. Ann Kaplan, *Motherhood and Representation: The Mother in Popular Culture and Melodrama* (London: Routledge, 1992), 20.

whether actively encouraged by bad influences in the child's environment or allowed to thrive by neglect. Both causes were the fault of the parents – and particularly, of the mother – whose ultimate responsibility it was to protect their children from such dangers.¹¹ These prerequisites to good motherhood were clearly based on the standards of the white middle-class: after all, only mothers of a certain status and freedom of movement had the time and space necessary to shelter their children from “the real world” and all of its perils. Though perhaps included in the new definition of childhood in theory, the labouring children of the working classes and slave families, for example, certainly did not experience the idyllic state of innocence celebrated by Rousseau and his contemporaries.¹²

Key to this shift in the understanding of motherhood was the presumption that a respectable woman would and should obtain pleasure from this motherly work; indeed, that being a mother would give her the highest form of personal and emotional satisfaction and fulfillment. “This is the difference between the good wife of old and the happy mother of eighteenth-century art and literature,” art historian Carol Duncan explains, “The latter is psychologically trained to *want* to do the very things she must do in a middle-class family society.”¹³ By extension, the invention of the “happy mother” transformed contemporary understandings of women's sexuality. Ruth Perry has traced this shift in mid-eighteenth-century British literature, demonstrating that a woman's “natural” propensity towards

¹¹ Kaplan, 20. For a discussion of the ways in which modern white childhood in art was constructed as innocent above all, see Anne Higonnet, *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998), 22-30.

¹² Charmaine Nelson, *Representing the Black Female Subject in Western Art* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 31.

¹³ Duncan, 582.

“maternity came to be imagined as a counter to sexual feeling, opposing alike individual expression, desire, and agency in favour of a mother-self at the service of the family and the state,” and later stating succinctly, “in a remarkably short span, the maternal succeeded, supplanted, and repressed the sexual definition of women, who began to be re-imagined as nurturing rather than desiring, as supportive rather than appetitive.”¹⁴ This split intensified over the following century and a half, crystallizing into the strictly delineated categories of female sexuality that have come so often to structure discussions of modern art and colonial history: the sexually-respectable reproductive bourgeois lady, who is or would soon be a mother versus the sexually-deviant woman, whether in her guise as the hypersexual prostitute, the immodest and uninhibited non-white woman, or that barren spinster, the New Woman.

These transformations to childhood and motherhood emerged alongside the Industrial Revolution, the expansion of the middle class, and most importantly for the purposes of this chapter, the growth of European imperialism. Beginning in the mid-eighteenth century, motherhood and family life were re-configured to support and maintain both an increasingly capitalist market and an ever-growing

¹⁴ Ruth Perry, “Colonizing the Breast: Sexuality and Maternity in Eighteenth-Century England,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 2, no. 2 (October 1991): 209 and 213. On the other hand, maternal relationships between mothers and their children were also consistently figured in eroticized language and visual representation, suggesting that the divide between sexualized girl and asexual mother was not a firm or stable one. This is particularly evident in discussions and depictions of breastfeeding (Tamar Garb, “Renoir and the Natural Woman,” *Oxford Art Journal* 8, no. 2 [1985]: 13). Mary D. Sheriff brings together the sexualized female body and the maternal body in her examination of the ambiguities of Jean-Honoré Fragonard’s *Visit to the Nursery* (c. 1775, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC) (“Fragonard’s Erotic Mothers and the Politics of Reproduction,” in *Eroticism and the Body Politic*, ed. Lynn Hunt [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991], 14-40). Chessman’s essay on Mary Cassatt looks at how these two varieties of femininity might be reconciled in the later nineteenth century.

empire.¹⁵ Both market and empire required first and foremost an increasing number of bodies in order to expand; scholars have drawn on the language of economics to describe this need. In her study of eighteenth-century maternity and sexuality, for example, literary scholar Felicity Nussbaum argues that “a particular kind of national imperative to control women’s sexuality and fecundity emerged when the increasing demands of trade and colonization required a large, able-bodied citizenry, and ... women’s reproductive labour was harnessed to that task.”¹⁶ For her part, historian Anna Davin describes “the value of a healthy and numerous population as a natural resource.”¹⁷ Ruth Perry goes so far as to call the development of modern motherhood “a production-gearred phenomenon analogous to the capitalizing of agriculture, the industrializing of manufacture, and the institutionalizing of the nation state... The heady new belief in the rational manipulation of natural forces for greater productivity – whether in manufacture or in agriculture – can be traced in the operations of the family as well as in breeding cattle or in spinning cotton.”¹⁸ Even as mothers and children were romanticized as never before, then, the economic and political roots of these attitudes were considerably less sentimental. In essence, these scholars argue, maternal bodies and the children they produced were necessary commodities for the governance of a successful empire.

¹⁵ Felicity A. Nussbaum, *Torrid Zones: Maternity, Sexuality, and Empire in Eighteenth-Century English Narratives* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 24; Perry, “Colonizing the Breast,” 206-7.

¹⁶ Nussbaum, 1.

¹⁷ Anna Davin, “Imperialism and Motherhood,” *History Workshop*, no. 5 (Spring 1978): 9.

¹⁸ Perry, “Colonizing the Breast,” 206.

In Britain, the need for children was particularly acute. Even as Malthusian and Darwinian discourses drew attention to the problem of overpopulation throughout the nineteenth century (and later, to eugenics as a solution), a parallel push to increase the population continued in direct response to the rapid growth of the Empire. This only intensified in the late nineteenth century, when birth rates fell sharply and infant mortality rates began to rise. By the *fin-de-siècle*, the status of British motherhood became an even more heightened source of anxiety when it became disarmingly clear that victory in the Boer War would require more healthy soldiers than Britain could provide; this discourse reached its sad peak a little over a decade later in WWI, when the national need for British children as cannon fodder was paramount.¹⁹ The burden – or, in contemporary discourse, the honour and the joy – of producing and raising these children was placed squarely on the shoulders of British women.

Significantly, this was an explicitly racialized discourse: not just any children were required, but white children in particular. Numerous healthy, white, ideally male, and preferably English bodies were needed not only to conquer,

¹⁹ Davin, 10-12 and 43. Both Nussbaum and Ruth Perry locate the eighteenth-century beginnings of this discourse as coincident with the era of the Seven Years War, when healthy young bodies were also required to fight for the empire (Nussbaum, 26-27; Perry, "Colonizing the Breast," 206-8). Tamar Garb has similarly noted that the popularity of maternal imagery in later nineteenth-century France coincided with the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71 (11).

Anna Davin has discussed the perceived crisis in the British population as it related to the Boer War, finding that between those who were rejected when they attempted to enlist and those who were later forced to step down because of health problems, only 2 out of 5 volunteers ended up as working soldiers. Volunteers for the army were primarily urban, working-class men; the ignorance of their mothers when raising them was seen to be to blame for their lack of hardiness (15-16). The shifts in technology and increasing mechanization of both early twentieth-century wars was also a problem for people who feared that the lack of a healthy British population would lead to the degeneration of the race: "The much higher casualty rates of war conducted with machine guns (already starting to be used in the Boer War) would carry a double implication for the general health: the carefully skimmed cream of the nation's young men would be at great risk, and their inferiors who stayed at home unscathed would father the next generation, presumably to its detriment" (49).

settle, and work the far reaches of the Empire, but also to fend off the feared possibility of “race suicide” at home. It was, in fact, anxiously recognized by contemporaries that it was not actually the case that no one in England was having children: it was specifically white, middle-class women who were not.²⁰

Motherhood was in this way an imperial imperative: as Canadian historian Mariana Valverde suggests, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century white, middle-class women “did not merely have babies, they reproduced ‘the race’.”²¹ Once these valuable white children were born, anthropologist Ann Laura Stoler argues, mothers’ duties and the importance of a good home environment increased: mothers were responsible for teaching children “their place and their race, and the family was the crucial site in which future subjects were to be made and loyal citizenship was to be learned.”²² Looking back to Chapter 2 in this context, it is evident that when Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes dedicated *King Arthur’s Wood* to her young son Alec, teaching him how to be a proper Anglo-Saxon imperial gentleman, she was performing her motherly duty not just to her son, but also to her Empire.

A second representation by Eastlake speaks to the context of heightened anxiety about white motherhood in which it was created. *Mobilization Day*:

²⁰ Jewish and Irish families, for example, were anxiously perceived as having too many children (Davin, 23). On the demographics of the birth rate over this period, see Ellen Ross, *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London, 1870-1918* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 92-97.

These trends were also true of Canada in this period, where Catholic French-Canadians – viewed by contemporaries as “less moral but more prolific” – were the primary targets of this anxiety (Mariana Valverde, “When the Mother of the Race is Free: Race, Reproduction, and Sexuality in First-Wave Feminism,” in *Gender Conflicts: New Essays in Women’s History*, eds. Franca Iacovetta and Mariana Valverde [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992], 17). On Canadian birth rates, see also Katherine Arnup, *Education for Motherhood: Advice for Mothers in Twentieth-Century Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 15.

²¹ Valverde, “When the Mother of the Race is Free,” 4.

²² Stoler, 84.

French Fisherwomen Watching the Fleet, 1914 (1917) (fig. 68), exhibited at the RA in 1917, shows three women of different ages poised on the edge of a cliff, all gazing out to sea; the woman closest to the viewer holds a young baby in her arms. Perhaps this is three generations of the same family: a woman, her daughters, and grandchild? Though younger than the third, the two women in the foreground have not escaped the ravages of age, nor the physical effects of the labour of their class: their hands and faces look worn and weathered, and their reddened and darkened cheeks seem nearly chiseled, echoing the waves and rocks of the cliffs behind them, as though their faces too have been battered by wind and water. Although their posture and facial expressions betray no emotion, surely the women are thinking about the potential loss of their husbands, brothers, and sons who have shipped off to war.

The traditional white kerchiefs and the plain clothes worn by the women on what must have been a special day, together with the groups of people and small village in the distance reveal the painting's rural peasant setting. Positioned on cliffs looking out to sea, these women are quite literally on the edge of Europe, pushed to the fringes of "civilization." And yet, even as it perpetuates certain visual stereotypes of the primitive (which will be discussed later in this chapter in relation to another image by the artist), Eastlake's work does not adhere to the standard depiction of a "timeless" peasant culture. Rather, this is a painting of a very specific time and event: the mobilization of troops for WWI. These are not "primitive" women who are unfixed in the modern world; the modern world has come to them in the form of a war that has taken the male members of the village

away from their “traditional” ways of life.²³ And yet, at the centre of an image that explicitly tackles the subject of war, Eastlake again brings the question of motherhood to the forefront. Painted in 1917, as war continued to devastate Europe, babies and mothers remained central in the public imagination as the only solution to empires that were clearly spiraling out of control and the degeneration of the white race that was perceived as both a cause and the end result of that overextension. Eastlake’s image captures the contemporary sense that all potential – to win the war, to secure the empire, to keep the race pure and strong – now lay in the arms of a mother.

Proponents of what Kristina Huneault has called the “cultural imperative of maternity”²⁴ were in some ways fighting an uphill battle. Concurrent with this imperative were the beginnings of a rise in accessibility and public discussion about abortion, birth control, and sex education, discourses that, through the choices they gave to women – and particularly to those middle-class white women whose maternity was so sought after – *not* to bear children, or to only bear children on their own terms, threatened the national birth rate still further.²⁵ It is also significant that this ideology of imperial motherhood appeared at precisely the time when increasing numbers of these very same women were choosing to leave the home in favour of a career. Ultimately, the independent, professional

²³ Compare, for example to similarly-themed images of fisherwomen saying goodbye to their husbands or mourning those who have been lost at sea, including Walter Langley’s *In a Cornish Fishing Village: The Departure of the Fleet for the North* (1886, Penlee House Museum and Gallery, Penzance) and *Among the Missing: Scene in a Cornish Fishing Village* (1884, Penlee House Museum and Gallery, Penzance); and Frank Bramley’s *A Hopeless Dawn* (1888, Tate). These images do not represent a particular event or occasion, but are meant instead to represent a universal and timeless problem for the residents of fishing villages.

²⁴ Huneault, “Impressions of Difference,” 234.

²⁵ Ross, 97-98.

white woman who decided not to have children was as much a threat to the race and the nation as her working-class or non-white contemporaries.

To counter these trends, a veritable propaganda campaign was launched on behalf of motherhood, with new laws, educational reforms, medical dictates, charitable campaigns, and other social measures targeting both mothers and children introduced and adopted. Together with various official and unofficial societies and associations that were founded to pursue the cause, this phenomenon was known collectively as the Infant Welfare movement.²⁶ In order to appear desirable to those who now had the choice to opt out, motherhood was to be given a new dignity: “it was the duty and destiny of women to be the ‘mothers of the race,’” Davin summarizes, “but also their great reward.”²⁷ Importantly, the motherhood endorsed by doctors, lawmakers, and philanthropists was of a particular kind: the ideal mother was sequestered in a clean, comfortable home (a spatial limit that was rhetorically spun as a lucky privilege, not a confining drudgery), and performed her duties as a mother by putting her children and their

²⁶ During this period, an enormous number of legislative measures attempted to regulate motherhood and childrearing, making these domestic concerns a state matter, and revealing that the welfare of children and their mothers was at the centre of public discourse. These laws included (among others): the Education Act (1870 and expanded in later years), the Prevention of Cruelty and Protection of Children Act (1889), the Custody of Children Act (1891), the Children Act (1906/8), the Notification of Births Act (1907), the Health Insurance Act (1911), the Maternity and Child Welfare Act (1918), as well as various measures to legislate the conditions of childbirth, the training of midwives, the provision of food to children in schools, medical inspections in schools, and various modifications to the Poor Laws involving adoption, guardianship, and others. See the work of Ross and Davin for discussion of these legislative measures in the context in which they were instituted (Ross, 23-25 and Davin, 11-13).

As both scholars point out, while such measures were important in educating women in medical issues, the extreme focus on individual mother’s care of their children and the insistence on her ultimate responsibility if the child did not thrive, meant that wider social and political responsibility for the poverty that created and encouraged the circumstances in which more than 15% of children died in their first year was largely ignored (Ross, 182 and 199 and Davin, 12).

²⁷ Davin, 13.

well-being first above all else (including even her husband).²⁸ In this respect, the imperial and racial discourse of motherhood also propped up the gendered ideal of separate spheres in that, as art historian Norma Broude argues, “the good of family and country was [...] used as a persuasive argument in efforts to control and limit women’s access to higher education and the public sphere.”²⁹ Finally, motherhood was positioned as an identity – indeed, the *only* identity – that would make women happy.

Though clearly based on the standards of the white middle-class, this evangelizing about the glories of motherhood was targeted at all women. If philanthropic pamphlets and doctor’s orders proved to be insufficient motivation for women to follow the (increasingly difficult to achieve) model, contemporary visual culture worked hard to make this very specific brand of motherhood seem desirable to all. “Images of the ‘good mother’,” art historian Tamar Garb states simply, “reinforced through visual signification the message of the joy of motherhood.”³⁰ When seen in this wider context, an image like *Happiness* clearly

²⁸ Ibid., 12-13. This was a shift from earlier conceptions of femininity and the proper household, in which woman’s role as a wife and manager of the house came first. Anxieties about this particular change were voiced most prominently in contemporary debates surrounding breastfeeding. Breastfeeding was believed to be the healthiest option, but it also thought to be harmful to the child for the mother to have intercourse during the period she was breastfeeding. As such, women were perceived to have to choose between what was best for the child and what was best for her husband (Ross, 195).

Ellen Ross also notes an interesting and rather more pragmatic shift over the course of the nineteenth century that enabled the construction of a mythology of happy and fulfilling motherhood: the invention and popularization of anesthesia allowed childbirth to be viewed as a “tender and enriching emotional experience,” rather than a painful experience to be suffered through (128).

²⁹ Norma Broude, “Mary Cassatt: Modern Woman or the Cult of True Womanhood?” *Woman’s Art Journal* 21, no. 2 (Autumn 2000/Winter 2001), 40.

³⁰ Garb, 11. Although this chapter deals only with “high” art forms, representations of idealized mothers and children were equally found in contemporary popular visual culture, in particular, advertising for household items like soap and baby bottles, magazine and journal covers, and book illustrations and prints by other female artists like British illustrator Kate Greenaway and American illustrator Jessie Willcox Smith (See Higonnet, *Pictures of Innocence*, Chapter 3, for a

participates in the construction of motherhood's reputation as the most patriotic and most personally fulfilling choice for white, middle-class women. Moreover, visual culture functioned to make this myth of modern motherhood seem universal. One way that images made invisible the specific social and historical circumstances that lay behind the myth (and the class and racial privilege that it required) was to draw on visual tropes that called to mind the naturalness and timelessness of the mother-child bond. For inspiration, artists looked both to the art world present, at the extremely popular genre of peasant subjects, and to the art historical past, and its long tradition of Madonna and Child iconography.

Images of peasant mothers and children placed the mother-child relationship in an ahistorical and natural setting, divorcing the ideal from present social concerns and making it appear timeless. Look, for example, at William-Adolphe Bouguereau's *The Joys of Motherhood* (1878) (fig. 69), in which a young peasant mother tickles a smiling child lying across her lap. The location of the pair, on the bank of a stream surrounded by trees and plants that immerse them totally in nature, gives the viewer a sense of what art historian Linda Nochlin has called "The assimilation of the peasant woman to the position of the

discussion of Greenaway, Willcox Smith, and similar artists in this context, and in comparison to artists like Cassatt and John Everett Millais; see also Caroline Igra, "Conceiving the Child: British Illustrator Kate Greenaway's Determining Influence on the Graphic Work of Mary Cassatt," *Aurora* 7 [2006]: 19-34.)

A second group of artists interested in the figure of the mother in the decades around the turn of the twentieth century were those working in the context of Symbolism and other similar work, including Maurice Denis, Edvard Munch, and most notably, Gustav Klimt, whose images *Hope I* (1903, NGC) and *Hope 2* (1907-8, MoMA) tackle the subject of modern motherhood. See Wendy Slatkin, "Maternity and Sexuality in the 1890s," *Woman's Art Journal* 1, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 1980): 13-19. Eastlake's work seems less obviously associated with this approach to the subject than with the others examined in this chapter, although an argument could certainly be made in the case of her *The Annunciation*, examined in the final section of this chapter.

natural and the nurturant.”³¹ The mother is dressed in unremarkable peasant garb, with a sleeve rolled up and her feet and ankles bare, as the overly large baby pulls at her shirt top. The baby itself is cherub-like: perfect pale skin like his mother’s, and a round face with blushing cheeks and pink lips that is crowned with a perfect head of curls: a Cupid who lacks only wings and an arrow.

Nor was the fascination with “natural” peasant motherhood exclusively academic or old-fashioned. Pierre-Auguste Renoir’s engagements with the same theme – his *Nursing* (1886) (fig. 70), for example – equally construct motherhood as a natural, universal phenomenon that is not situated in any particular place or time, even when the mother is a recognizable woman: in this case, his wife, Aline. The artist has posed Aline, who is breastfeeding the couple’s son, in a country setting; the pair is once again surrounded by trees and long grass, now with a rustic cottage in the background and accompanied by a cat grooming itself. The constellation of the cat, mother, and child speaks to the naturalness of the situation: indeed, Renoir’s friend, art critic Georges Rivière, reported that the artist liked women, children, and cats because of each one’s “tenacious way of satisfying themselves without regard for the consequences, their essential amorality; like children, he believed, they lived impulsively and according to the ‘logic of their instincts.’”³² Renoir returned to the subject of his wife nursing on many occasions, producing not only three finished paintings, but several drawings and a sculpture as well. Garb describes this body of images as “clearly

³¹ Linda Nochlin, “Morisot’s *Wet Nurse*: The Construction of Work and Leisure in Impressionist Painting,” in *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History*, eds. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), 233.

³² Quoted in Garb, 5.

belong[ing] to the genre of *maternité* paintings in which the individual sitters become irrelevant, so that they operate not as portraits but as types within accepted conventions of representation. The image invoked is that of the breast-feeding Madonna who represents motherhood in all its fullness and perfection.”³³ This iconography of “natural” motherhood was key to disguising its historical specificity.

As suggested by this description, Renoir’s painting draws on a second body of imagery: the Christian iconography of the Madonna and Child. So too did Bouguereau’s, and indeed, it would be difficult not to see most nineteenth-century portrayals of motherhood as drawing liberally on this source to create the genre of the “modern Madonna.” Italian Renaissance artists like Giovanni Bellini and Raphael experienced a resurgence in popularity in the nineteenth century, aided by publications like early art historian (and Canadian traveller in her own right) Anna Jameson’s 1852 *Legends of the Madonna as Represented in the Fine Arts*, which made reproductions of medieval and Renaissance works accessible to a wide audience. Images like the former’s *Madonna of the Meadow* (c. 1500) and the latter’s *Madonna of the Pinks* (c. 1506-7) (figs. 71 and 72) had themselves translated medieval conventions for depicting the Virgin and Child into Renaissance terms, giving the holy figures human appearances and actions, and, more importantly, imbuing them with human emotion. These Renaissance forms were adopted and modified once more for nineteenth-century audiences: styles, costumes, and settings were updated and overtly religious symbols removed, even

³³ Garb, 12. Renoir’s tendency to idealize or mythologize his women is ably deconstructed by Garb, who argues that this approach was equally “a denial of women’s needs for rights, privileges, and responsibilities deemed natural to men, in the name of essential femininity” (4).

as artists continued to rely on visual conventions in terms of format and composition, with the mother (usually sitting in half or three-quarter length) and baby (typically lying or leaning on her lap) singled out in near-portrait fashion.³⁴

The deployment of religious iconography to celebrate modern mothers had predictable results, art historian Anne Higonnet describes: “In some ways, women denied their own bodies by identifying maternity with the Renaissance Madonna and Child image. Most obviously, they narrowed down female sexuality to maternity... by identifying with the Madonna, also known as the Virgin, nineteenth-century women identified maternity with sexual renunciation.”³⁵ The use of this visual trope, then, encouraged the split between the de-sexualized white bourgeois mother and her opposite. It was also effective in raising the reputation of motherhood in general: “If the Holy Mother was “mother,” then all mothers must be holy. Reinterpreted Madonnas endowed all mothers’ physical relationships to their children with a sacred aura. Motherhood became a holy calling.”³⁶ This was a persuasive argument on behalf of motherhood: being a mother wouldn’t just make a woman happy – it was a higher calling. And just as Mary had answered her call to be mother to the world, so too should modern woman answer that call to be mother to her race.

³⁴ Stewart Buettner, “Images of Modern Motherhood in the Art of Morisot, Cassatt, Modersohn-Becker, Kollwitz,” *Woman’s Art Journal* 7, no. 2 (Autumn 1986/Winter 1987): 15. For a survey of the emergence of the modern Madonna motif, particularly in relation to the work of Mary Cassatt, see Nancy Mowll Mathews, “Mary Cassatt and the ‘Modern Madonna’ of the nineteenth century,” PhD dissertation, New York University, 1980. Leo Steinberg provides an important examination of the Madonna and Child tradition in his seminal *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and Modern Oblivion* (New York: Pantheon, 1983).

³⁵ Higonnet, *Pictures of Innocence*, 41-42.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 42.

If the major feat of Bellini's and Raphael's Madonnas was to make a holy figure human, it fell to nineteenth-century artists to make everyday mothers holy. American Impressionist Mary Cassatt was a key player here: her numerous images of mothers and children (mostly completed in the exact timeframe that Eastlake was producing her own interpretations on the theme³⁷) revise Bellini and Raphael for modern Paris. Through the use of longstanding visual tropes, the artist's representations of mothers and children produce much of the same effect of the universality of mother-child bonding, even when they are set in identifiably bourgeois interiors instead of timeless nature. In *Mother About to Wash her Sleepy Child* (1880) (fig. 73), for example, the viewer is given the impression that this is a scene from everyday life. Though the mother and child are closely engaged, looking into each others' eyes, this child is rather un-cherub-like: the chubby arms, vaguely clammy looking skin, and gangly legs spread awkwardly do not suggest the same level of idealization that Bouguereau's version on the theme did. And yet, as Chessman remarks,

the mutual gaze here held between mother and child forms a crucial part of a sentimental vocabulary. The love between mother and child, suggested by such an intimate gaze, fills the canvas, just as, by implication, it fills the world for both mother and child. The varied whites, the angelic, puttylike aspects of the child, and the Madonna motif all suggest a world of innocence and goodness, a domestic sanctuary far from the strife of industry and public business. The mother, in the stillness of this prolonged moment, appears wholly occupied with her child.³⁸

³⁷ Though Cassatt's earliest engagement with the theme is *Mother About to Wash her Sleepy Child*, painted in 1880, the artist did not paint another mother-child scene until she picked up the theme again in the 1890s. A print series by Cassatt, which included "modern Madonna" images such as *Maternal Caress* and *Mother's Kiss*, was exhibited at the Durand-Ruel Gallery in Paris in 1891, a year before *Happiness* was painted; it is intriguing to think that Eastlake might have seen the show.

³⁸ Chessman, 246.

The image is perhaps all the more powerful for its very lack of idealization, because it suggests that this scene is happening in every modern bourgeois home in Paris; in this respect, Higonnet argues, “all Catholic theological significance was drained from Madonna and Child paintings and replaced by the meanings of a universal, non-denominational, maternity.”³⁹

Looking again at *Happiness*, it seems clear that the artist’s pastel draws on these same visual tropes. Eastlake’s mother and child are once again situated in a natural environment; indeed, like Bouguereau’s duo, they seem completely immersed in the landscape. Although the mother appears to be seated on a chair, the placement of the figures in the extreme foreground, and the flat, decorative patterning of the flowers behind them cuts off the viewer’s access to any larger setting or context, and creates the impression that the two are locked into this natural world, divorced completely from the everyday concerns of society. Eastlake also maintains the traditional Madonna and child format, with the mother depicted in three-quarter length view and the child lying across her lap. In conventional fashion, the composition creates a tightly complete circular shape, an “unbroken chain of arms, heads, and hands,”⁴⁰ in which the baby’s body is encircled protectively within the body of the mother. This format is even more evident in a later Eastlake image; in *Mother and Child* (date unknown) (fig. 74), the pair clings to each other even more closely, creating the impression that, as art historian Stewart Buettner argues of Cassatt’s work, “As the distance between

³⁹ Higonnet, *Pictures of Innocence*, 39.

⁴⁰ Huneault, “Impressions of Difference,” 237.

mother and child shrinks, the psychological bond between the two grows.”⁴¹ Both of Eastlake’s pairs are locked into close embraces: the babies clutch at their mothers’ clothing, and the mothers seem lost in a dreamy world of love and happiness. However, inherent in the images of happy mothers and innocent children by both Eastlake and Cassatt is a darker side: eventually the child will grow up and lose this innocence. This is, after all, precisely the point of Madonna and Child imagery, which is meant to prefigure Christ’s sacrifice.⁴² This potential loss seems particularly acute in *Mobilization Day*, painted in 1917 when so many European sons had already been lost to war.

In the context of heightened awareness of what it meant to be a mother in the period in which they were produced, images like *Happiness*, *Mother and Child*, and *Mobilization Day* function not only as descriptive, but prescriptive as well. First and foremost, it should not be taken for granted that Eastlake’s women do in fact seem to be mothers. This is less clear in, for example, Morisot’s *Wet Nurse and Julie* (1879, private collection), Cassatt’s *The Child’s Bath* (1893, Art Institute of Chicago), and McNicoll’s *In the Shadow of a Tree* (c. 1914, Musée National des Beaux-Arts du Québec), in which the adult females taking care of children are either overtly or potentially paid workers like wet nurses, governesses, or nannies.⁴³ Furthermore, in a way that departs significantly from an artist like Cassatt, the bodies of the mothers, not children, are the most central presence in *Happiness* and *Mobilization Day*. Whereas in *Mother About to Wash*

⁴¹ Buettner, “Images of Modern Motherhood,” 17.

⁴² Higonnet, *Pictures of Innocence*, 30.

⁴³ On Morisot, see Nochlin; on McNicoll, see Huneault, “Impressions of Difference,” 237; on Cassatt, see Griselda Pollock, “Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity” in *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism, and the Histories of Art* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 56.

her Sleepy Child, the mother is pushed to the side in order to highlight the body of the child (in a composition very similar to Raphael's), Eastlake's mothers take centre stage. In both images, the babies held in their mothers' arms are faceless, and we only see parts of them enveloped in their blankets. In essence, they act as little more than props to indicate the female figure's role as a mother.⁴⁴ Given this focus, Eastlake's maternal images are significant in the way that they enable an active viewing position for female audiences, who, encouraged to identify with the happy mother, are also encouraged to feel pleasure at this scene and even to desire this form of pleasure. Unlike so many images now classified as "modern," these are works in which the active gaze is female.⁴⁵

Paradoxically given their reputations as being skilled at representing an inherent "natural" maternal instinct, neither Eastlake nor Cassatt were actually mothers.⁴⁶ On one hand, these personal circumstances reveal the extent to which the representation of this brand of motherhood was a deliberate choice for both artists; this places them at a distance from an artist like Morisot, who, as a mother herself included her daughter Julie in many of her canvasses and might legitimately be said to be simply painting scenes from her everyday life. Instead, Eastlake and Cassatt would have needed to gain special access to models (whether

⁴⁴ Elizabeth Mulley describes Laura Muntz Lyall's maternal images similarly; here, the children "play only a supporting role. It is the mother who embodies the message, and the children are merely the objects that make her selflessness possible" ("Women and children in context," 154).

⁴⁵ Moreover, this gaze and pleasure is centered on the human body and frequently, on the nude or semi-nude human body, whether in terms of the child's body, or the mother's nursing body (Higonnet, *Pictures of Innocence*, 43). On gender and the gaze in Impressionist art more generally, see Pollock's classic essay "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity."

⁴⁶ This is also true of Helen McNicoll and Frances Jones, as well as several other Canadian women artists of the pre-WWI period who are now known best (rightly or wrongly) for their representations of maternity. Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes had one son; her letters and pictures indicate that she had considerable help at home raising him (letters speak of nannies and governesses) and that when Alec was of age he was sent to boarding school. Emily Carr did not have children, but is not now known for her images of children and motherhood like her peers.

paid models or friends and family members) and plan the scenes they represented. Both artists would likely have primarily used rural, working-class women to model for their depictions of idealized bourgeois motherhood for both practical and artistic or ideological purposes; Buettner, for instance, notes that Cassatt “preferred to pose rural women because they held their children with an ease and intimacy unknown to upper-class mothers.”⁴⁷ In this preference, we see the continued association of the peasant woman with a more natural maternal instinct. It should be noted, however, that for these working-class women, motherhood was often anything but happy and uncomplicated, given the high rate of infant mortality for impoverished families and the frequent necessity of their labour outside the home, including, ironically, as wet nurses and nannies for the wealthier classes. In this way, Eastlake is not merely reflecting a real mother-child relationship, but actively constructing the myth of one.

Moreover, Eastlake’s and Cassatt’s childlessness was significant given the context in which they worked. In fact, the careers that these women forged based on images of motherhood and childhood depended specifically on their choice to *not* have children and be bogged down in the everyday labour of childcare. Indeed, both seem to be models of the New Woman who so dismayed advocates of ideal motherhood at the turn of the century: that white, middle-class woman who put career above family and limited the number of children she produced. Indeed, the exact activities that Eastlake undertook throughout her lifetime – the intellectual and cultural production of art-making, paid work, rigorous travel, and

⁴⁷ Buettner, “Images of Modern Motherhood,” 16.

physical activity – were precisely those that conservative contemporaries believed would make her a bad mother to both her own children and to the white race.⁴⁸

As such, the representation of mothers and children might be seen as a strategic, perhaps necessary, choice for a professional woman artist. Art historian Angela Rosenthal has described the earlier French painter Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun's exhibition of *Portrait of the Artist with her Daughter Julie* (1786) (fig. 75) at the Salon of 1787 as being a savvy move on the part of a professional woman artist in an era when that was a questionable lifestyle; by showing an image of herself as a mother, rather than as a professional, Vigée-Lebrun was "linking herself with an appeal to motherly feelings to all women, and thus staging her own femininity."⁴⁹ Norma Broude has likewise argued on behalf of Cassatt that the subject of motherhood may have in fact been "one of the few, narrow gaps of possibility within which she, as an ambitious woman artist of the upper classes, could fully grasp and define for herself a socially-acceptable status and identity."⁵⁰ Of course, given the popular demand for the subject, it was also a smart business choice.

In this context, it is possible to view artists like Cassatt and Eastlake as the artistic voices of "maternalism," a strain of early feminism centered around the belief that not only was motherhood the ideal to which all women should aspire, but that white, middle-class women's natural capacity for maternal nurturing meant that they also had an important public role to play. Through a discourse of

⁴⁸ Davin, 20-21.

⁴⁹ Angela Rosenthal, "Infant Academies and the Childhood of Art: Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun's *Julie with a Mirror*," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 37, no. 4 (Summer 2004): 620.

⁵⁰ Broude, 39.

“women’s mission to women,” maternalists undertook the “rescue” and “uplift” of those mothers less fortunate than themselves. Even more so than the male politicians and medical authorities who attempted to legislate and cure the problems of modern motherhood, it was middle-class women who were in East End homes observing and trying to instruct their working-class counterparts in the best maternal practices, and frequently acting as unofficial anthropologists when doing so.⁵¹ We might recall here Emily Carr’s experience with district visiting and her impressions of the “unwashed” and “dirty” babies, the homes with “dirty curtains,” and the pies with “swarms of flies” she encountered in the slums of Westminster and Whitechapel. Through their participation in women’s societies and philanthropic organizations, women transformed their maternal role in the private home into the public role of caring for the nation and Empire, re-employing their supposedly natural skills at domestic housekeeping into civil or social housekeeping.⁵²

So, if white, middle-class women like Eastlake and Cassatt frequently rejected the role of mother themselves, it remained possible for them to articulate a respectable role for themselves as spreading the good word of happy

⁵¹ Ross, Chapter 1. Although this chapter primarily engages with British history, maternalism was an international movement. On maternal feminism in Canada, see Carol Lee Bacchi, *Liberation Deferred?: The Ideas of the English-Canadian Suffragists, 1877-1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983); Wayne Roberts, “‘Rocking the Cradle for the World:’ The New Woman and Maternal Feminism, Toronto, 1877-1914,” in *A Not Unreasonable Claim: Women and Reform in Canada, 1880s-1920s*, ed. Linda Kealey (Toronto: The Women’s Educational Press, 1979), 15-45; Valverde, “When the Mother of the Race is Free;” Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991).

⁵² This discourse extended into the fight for women’s suffrage. As we shall see in the following chapter, suffragettes leveraged this reputation for moral civility and nurturing in their fight for the right to vote (Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign, 1907-1914* [London: Chatto and Windus, 1987], 167-172.). For suffragette representation of motherhood in the American context, see also Mariea Caudill Dennison, “Babies for Suffrage: The Exhibition of Painting and Sculpture by Women Artists for the Benefit of the Woman Suffrage Campaign,” *Woman’s Art Journal* 24, no. 2 (Autumn 2003/Winter 2004): 27-28.

motherhood to dependent ‘Other’ women. These maternalist policies elevated the middle- and upper-class white women who were their proponents in a very tangible way, and elevated all women at least theoretically through the glorification of motherhood. In practice, however, they effectively made working-class, non-white, and non-Western women into children who themselves needed mothering. This mothering came not only with the protection and care that relationship implied, but also the surveillance and control.⁵³ It is within this context that Eastlake’s mobility, and the representations of non-western mothers she produced while travelling, must be understood.

III. “Other” mothers

Mary Bell Eastlake travelled extensively, first independently and with female friends around Britain and the Continent, and then after her marriage, with her husband, to sites still more far-flung. In 1905 – the same year she participated in exhibitions in London, Boston, and Chicago – the artist took her first trip to Japan (a country she re-visited at least once more before World War I). In the following year, she began to visit and exhibit in New Zealand, where her brother had been appointed director of that country’s Geological Society. To these locales, the Eastlakes added Morocco, Bolivia, and various locations in East and Southeast Asia, including the Philippines, Hong Kong, China, Thailand, and

⁵³ The condescension that overwhelmed the discourse of unity amongst women was inherent in the name, which is derivative of paternalism (Margaret D. Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940* [Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009], 112).

Tahiti.⁵⁴ Eastlake documented her time abroad in pastel, and maintained a consistent interest in representing mothers and children, apparently negotiating her time away through the lens of home. These works include two images entitled *Mother and Child*, which appear to show Southeast Asian or Polynesian subjects (figs. 76 and 77), and *Japanese Children at Play* and *Feeding the Pigeons*, which record a stay in Japan (figs. 78 and 79), all dated between 1905 and the outbreak of WWI.

In her mobility, Eastlake joins a large number of other late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century “lady travellers” who are now frequently celebrated for their enthusiastic pursuit of adventures that took them far outside the private sphere.⁵⁵ In her influential *Discourses of Difference* (1991), literary

⁵⁴ Unfortunately the dearth of archival resources and critical work on Mary Bell Eastlake makes it very difficult to trace exactly where and when certain images were created and which images correlate to exhibition histories. If this chapter errs on the side of generalizations about “Polynesia” and “Southeast Asia,” this is due to a lack of basic information about the sites that Eastlake worked in and documentation of her work.

⁵⁵ The body of literature on women travellers in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century colonial context is now large. These studies have focused especially on literary and historical studies of the phenomenon of women travellers in varying contexts, focusing especially on missionary women and colonial wives, and on certain relatively well-known “lady adventurers,” including Flora Tristan, Lady Mary Montagu, Isabella Bird, Anna Leonowens, Mary Kingsley, Marianne North, and others. In addition to the works cited elsewhere in this chapter, this scholarship includes: Dea Birkett, *Spinsters Abroad: Victorian Lady Explorers* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989); Helen Callaway, *Gender, Culture, and Empire: European Women in Colonial Nigeria* (London: Macmillan, 1987); Shirley Foster, *Across New Worlds: Nineteenth-Century Women Travellers and their Writings* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990); Maria Frawley, *A Wider Range: Travel Writing by Women in Victorian England* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh-Dickenson University Press, 1994); Jeanne Kay Guelke and Karen M. Morin, “Gender, Nature, Empire: Women Naturalists in Nineteenth-Century British Travel Literature,” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 26, no. 3 (2001): 306-36; Karen Lawrence, *Penelope Voyages: Women and Travel in the British Literary Tradition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); Billie Melman, *Women’s Orbits: English Women and the Middle East, 1718-1918, Sexuality, Religion, and Work* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992); Mary Russell, *The Blessings of a Good Thick Skirt: Women Travellers and their World* (London: Collins, 1988).

On the other hand, art historical studies of women’s travel in the pre-WWI period still lag surprisingly far behind, and often tend to focus especially on women’s botanical drawings and amateur picturesque landscape work. In addition to Huneault’s work on Frances Anne Hopkins, see the essays in Jordana Pomeroy, ed., *Intrepid Women: Victorian Artists Travel* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).

scholar Sara Mills raised the question of the difference that gender makes to both the genre of travel writing and to the practice of imperialism, examining how these two issues intersect in the writing of British women travellers to the far reaches of empire. Resisting the appealing urge to see these women exclusively as proto-feminist heroines who challenge the ideal of the “angel in the house,” she argues that white women, long understood as marginal to the colonial project, were in fact an integral part of that project, but in ways that were fundamentally different from their fathers, husbands, and sons.⁵⁶ Importantly, the liberation from Victorian gender norms that white women sought (and perhaps discovered) while abroad was based primarily on the position of racial and imperial privilege they occupied outside of the metropole. In her study of British women in west Africa, geographer Cheryl McEwan states succinctly that “[t]he fact of their whiteness meant that British women travellers assumed levels of authority and influence in west Africa that were not available to them in Britain; they were empowered by the fact that within the empire, status was determined by skin colour rather than gender.”⁵⁷

In some respects, however, it was precisely their gender that allowed Western women a certain level of access to some aspects of non-Western societies that were unavailable to white men (and sometimes, to non-white men as well): namely, to non-white women’s homes and family lives.⁵⁸ Buoyed by maternalist sentiment, white women expanded the territory under their watch not only outside

⁵⁶ Sara Mills, *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women’s Travel Writing and Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 1991), 3.

⁵⁷ Cheryl McEwan, *Gender, Geography and Empire: Victorian Women Travellers in West Africa* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 32-33.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 154.

of their own houses, but also outside of the urban slums of the West to the homes of the far reaches of empire. In this way, “lady travellers” did stay within their sphere; however, this travel also makes clear that women’s sphere was not a fixed geographical space, but a portable and mobile set of ideas and behaviours that crossed the lines between home and away.⁵⁹

As such, Eastlake’s work continued to contribute to a discourse that celebrated and regulated a particular type of motherhood even when her subjects were no longer white; this is not to say, however, that these subjects could always be smoothly incorporated into existing models. In this context, each version of the artist’s *Mother and Child* simultaneously confirms certain visual tropes and departs from them, both in terms of conventions for representing mothers and for representing the tropics. In both images, the focus is on a young woman and her child, mostly distinct of any narrative. In the first (fig. 76), the two figures stand in an indistinct tropical landscape, with dark, bluish-purple mountains in the background and lush green vegetation in the middle distance. The baby, swaddled onto his mother’s back in a green blanket, grasps his mother’s loose dark hair, which hangs loosely around her face. This dark hair sets off the large dark eyes that appear placed above a wide, flat nose and closed pink lips. In the second image (fig. 77), the mother sits cross-legged on the ground, with a naked baby with a plump belly perched on her knee. This pair, too, is situated in what is unmistakably a tropical landscape: thatched roof huts stand in the background, and what seem to be the trunks of palm trees appear on the sides of the image,

⁵⁹ Cheryl J. Fish, *Black and White Women’s Travel Narratives* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004), 3.

while the white-capped waves of the blue ocean wash ashore in the distance. This mother is clothed in a sarong of brightly coloured fabric; her sleek dark hair is pulled back behind her ear, which shines with a gold earring. The baby, too, has been adorned with a decorative ornament: a bright red flower is perched atop her head. Though difficult to ascertain, both mother and child appear to be holding flowers or fruit (it seems as though the baby brings the object to her mouth). The two images present fairly conventional maternal relationships inasmuch as they seem to represent a mother and child in a tight, loving bond.

How do these “Madonnas of the tropics”⁶⁰ work within traditional Western tropes for representing the “exotic”? From the initial explorations of Western colonists in the South Pacific captured by artists like English painter William Hodges in works such as *Tahiti Revisited (Oaitepeha Bay, Tahiti)* (c. 1776) (fig. 80), the region has been consistently represented as an “unspoilt Eden,” a sensual and sexual paradise that was available for the consumption of Westerners (and continues to carry this reputation in twenty-first-century tourist guides and advertising). Art historian Gill Perry, among others, has described this discourse of the tropics as one that was focused on the ideas of “fertility,” “nourishment,” and “replenishment” – enticing prospects for Westerners who were coming to see their own society as increasingly degenerate.⁶¹ These qualities applied equally well to tropical landscapes and to the non-white female bodies

⁶⁰ Jeff Rosen, “Cameron’s Colonized Eden: Picturesque Politics at the Edge of the Empire,” in *Intrepid Women: Victorian Artists Travel*, ed. Jordana Pomeroy (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 122.

⁶¹ Gill Perry, “Primitivism and the ‘Modern,’” in *Primitivism, Cubism, Abstraction: The Early Twentieth Century*, eds. Charles Harrison, Francis Frascina, and Gill Perry (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 29. For further discussion of contemporary discourses surrounding the tropics, see Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

who resided in them. Note, for example, that Hodges's lush landscape is accented by the nude bodies of the tattooed women cavorting on the edge of the water.

Even when the style was drastically different, this discourse continued to be mapped onto the female body in visual culture; the Tahitian work of Eastlake's contemporary Paul Gauguin is illustrative. In his *Two Tahitian Women* (1899) (fig. 81), for example, the (presumably white, male, and Western) viewer is presented with the sight of two partially-nude women standing in a tropical landscape, one holding a bouquet of flowers, the other, a tray of mangoes. The women's breasts are bare, and positioned just on top of the tray, as though they too were being offered to the viewer. Everything in the image equates the "natural" sexuality of the Polynesian female body with the natural fertility and lushness of the Polynesian landscape.⁶² As such, *Two Tahitian Women* – just one of a large number of Gauguin's images that re-iterate these themes – clearly participates in the common imperialist trope of feminizing the "Other" regions of the world (and particularly, the tropical ones) in contrast to the strong, masculine conquering powers of the West. As demonstrated by Edward Said as a defining feature of Orientalism, Western men's descriptions of colonization have frequently included these metaphors of sexual domination.⁶³

⁶² On the construction of the tropics as a sexual paradise with particular reference to Gauguin's work, see also Stephen Eisenman, *Gauguin's Skirt* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997); Griselda Pollock, *Avant-Garde Gambits, 1888-1893* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992); and Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Going Native: Paul Gauguin and the Invention of Primitivist Modernism," *Art in America* 77 (July 1989): 118-29.

A second comparison can be made to the work of a slightly later Canadian woman artist. Dorothy Stevens's *Coloured Nude* (c. 1933, AGO) re-iterates the conventional Western associations between the "natural" sexuality of the non-white female body and the tropical environment. See Chapter 6 of Nelson.

⁶³ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 25th anniversary ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 2003); on this discourse as it specifically applied to the tropics, see especially Nussbaum, 3 and Stoler, 43-46.

To what extent was it possible for Eastlake, as a woman, to participate in this discourse – what, in Mills’s terms, is the difference that her gender makes? In her important study of the travel writing of British women travellers in Southeast Asia, Susan Morgan demonstrates that women were far less likely than men to position themselves in a metaphor that included language or imagery of sexual domination. This, she argues, is not to say that white women were less imperialist, but rather that they understood their place in the overarching systems of imperial power in a different way than did their male contemporaries.⁶⁴ Looking at Eastlake’s images again, it is clear that the artist does represent her time in the tropics through many of the same tropes as Hodges and Gauguin do: the lush landscapes and the inclusion of flowers and fruit, for example, are still employed to give the viewer an impression of fertility. Moreover, Eastlake continues to deploy the “Other” female body as a sign and product of this nourishing tropical environment. Significantly, however, this female body has shifted from one that is presented as sexually available for the consumption of Western man, to a maternal body that is offered up for the interest, pleasure, and perhaps judgment of the Western woman.⁶⁵ In this respect, Eastlake was in line with many of her fellow female travellers. Instead of sexual metaphors, white Western women like Eastlake employed the language of motherhood to manage and describe their

⁶⁴ Susan Morgan, *Place Matters: Gendered Geography in Victorian Women’s Travel Books about Southeast Asia* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 17. See also Blunt, 28-29.

⁶⁵ It should be noted that Gauguin himself drew the comparison between the fertile maternal body and the fertile Tahitian landscape on several occasions, including in *La Orana Maria* (1891, Metropolitan Museum of Art), *The Offering* (1902, Emil G. Bührle Foundation, Zurich), and *Maternity (Women on the Seashore)* (1899, Hermitage). In each, lush landscapes, fruit, flowers, and partially nude women with children co-exist. Wendy Slatkin has described the ways in which the artist “compares woman’s procreativity with that of nature. Three women are depicted: one sits nursing a baby, another holds a bunch of flowers, while the third bears a basket of fruit. Babies, fruit, and flowers are all precious offspring of nature’s life cycle” (14).

experiences, relationships, and goals in the colonies. In addition to showing a basic ethnographic interest in the differing practices of motherhood and domesticity in the places they went, white women frequently adopted a self-appointed maternal role that they believed made them responsible for caring for, protecting, and supervising the “Other” mothers they encountered.

Although Mills argues that women’s travel writing was ultimately less assured and authoritative than men’s,⁶⁶ Eastlake’s pictures and exhibiting practice reveal a desire to document her time abroad in an objective manner. In this respect, the artist joined both male and female travellers who wrote and visually depicted the sites and sights of their journeys with an ethnographic or anthropological approach, for the ultimate education and entertainment of Western audiences. This practice has long been understood as one of the many ways in which the informal work of imperialism was undertaken. Morgan, for example, states that this near-scientific approach to describing one’s experience allowed British men and women to “represent themselves as bringing back to England something of higher value than the usual colonial material gains: proofs about the order of the world and the origins of man. As disinterested participants in the great march of science, their business ... was to find the facts which justified the Victorian ideology of progress and European, particularly British, superiority.”⁶⁷ Science and art were very effective means by which the British justified their presence in regions across the globe; moreover, as supposedly

⁶⁶ Mills, 3–4.

⁶⁷ Morgan, 27. See especially Mary Louise Pratt’s influential study of travel writing as a key tool of imperialism, and the ways in which it contributed to what she calls the pursuit of a “planetary consciousness” (*Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* [London: Routledge, 1992]).

transcendent and universal discourses, they disguised themselves as authoritative and politically neutral.

Consider too, that Eastlake's own brother was also engaged in just such a project in his capacity as first, an official with the Geological Survey of Canada who was responsible for mapping the Northwest Territories, and subsequently, as Director of the New Zealand Geological Survey.⁶⁸ It seems reasonable to assume that Eastlake's own travel was facilitated by her brother's prominent position in that region of the world, and that her time in New Zealand and elsewhere may have been spent in a similar manner to his: looking at new surroundings and documenting them for the lofty purposes of Western "knowledge." The images she produced contribute overtly to this production of knowledge through the artist's public exhibition of them in Britain and in North America. Eastlake showed her work in multiple venues, and it was evidently important to her to do so: in one letter to Eric Brown at the NGC, upon his request that she send some work to him, she asks if she can wait until her most recent Japanese images were finished.⁶⁹

Long before she set out for the east, Eastlake showed an interest in representing other cultures; indeed, the very first work she exhibited at the RCA in 1887 was a now-unlocated painting entitled *Study of a Hindoo*. The artist's pictures of mothers and children might also be accurately labeled "studies." Neither mothers, nor babies appear to be deliberately posing for Eastlake,

⁶⁸ Bell published his findings in *The Wilds of Maoriland* (1914), for which Charles H. Eastlake provided several illustrations.

⁶⁹ Mary Alexandra Bell Eastlake to Eric Brown, date unknown. Eric and Maud Brown fonds, NGC Library and Archives, Ottawa, ON.

seeming instead to be going about their everyday business without regard to the artist in their midst: in the first, the child looks indirectly toward the viewer, while the mother herself gazes sideways out of the picture frame; in the second, mother and baby are wrapped up in each other's eyes, completely unaware of any onlooker. The impression of an objective, distanced approach by the artist is further created in the second image by the inclusion of a scene in the background, where we see a group of indistinct figures outside the hut, giving the sense that this is a "slice of life" captured by the artist, rather than a posed scene. In neither scene are the figures caricatured, in the manner of contemporary cartoons and prints, or stylized, as are Gauguin's subjects.

A similar approach is also seen in images from Eastlake's time in Japan. In *Feeding the Pigeons* (fig. 79), the viewer is presented with a mother and child dressed in traditional garb as they feed the flock of white and grey pigeons surrounding them. It is an intimate scene, capturing a mother and her child engaged in a shared, everyday activity. The atmosphere is calm and quiet: so much so that the mother has a bird perched on her hand to show the young child. In *Japanese Children at Play* (fig. 78), a group of three young girls kneel on the ground, each dressed in a brightly coloured costume. In these, too, the subjects are presented as unaware of Eastlake's presence, absorbed in their own activities. Eastlake has accorded considerable attention to the dresses, especially considering the otherwise blank surroundings (see, for example, the patterns of the right-hand girls' sleeve and skirt). Their faces and hair too, are treated with a high level of detail: Eastlake has managed to represent the sheen of their dark hair, while their

pink cheeks stand out brightly. This finish and illusionism, also present in the two versions of *Mother and Child*, is quite a different approach to the human figure than that taken by Eastlake in a representation of Western women and children like *Happiness*, which seems much more expressionist.

In contrast to the detail paid to certain elements, Eastlake's pastel medium and sketchy finish produces the impression that these images were captured quickly on the spot, as the artist looked on. The images look almost incomplete, whether because their edges seem undefined or indistinct, or in *Japanese Children at Play*, because there is no background and the children have been completely de-contextualized (again, compare to *Happiness*, for example: all are pastels). The images are nevertheless signed, presumably indicating that they are finished pieces. While these two elements would seem to be in tension with one another, both effectively work to encourage a reading of the images as objective documentations of life abroad, and their producer as an authority on the subjects represented. To some extent, these techniques go so far as to position the white woman as even more of an authority than the subjects she represents: Susan Morgan argues that "Visual repetition-as-confirmation often functions as a form of imperial control over a foreign landscape. It is imperial in that the viewer, by nationality, by culture, by 'racial' ability, sees clearly and objectively in a way that those peoples who belong in the scene being observed cannot."⁷⁰

As such, Eastlake's choice of style says something not only about the subjects of the works, but about the artist and her place in the world as well: as

⁷⁰ Morgan, 70. Recall Emily Carr's similar anecdotal, authoritative approach to her travel narrative in "Sister and I from Victoria to London: Memoirs of Ods and Ends," discussed in the introduction to this dissertation.

Jeff Rosen argues of the Ceylonese work of photographer Julia Margaret

Cameron and botanical illustrator Marianne North,

The native subjects depicted by both women have been frozen by an artist's objectifying gaze; as subjects of that gaze, they record both the journey itself and the artist's own physical displacement from home. At the same time, their subjects provide representational doubles or stand-ins for a 'primitive,' pre-industrial age, no longer depicting individuals but points of reference marking visual and cultural difference from Western norms.⁷¹

Significantly, the specific brand of motherhood outlined in the first section of this chapter (and family and home life more generally) was an important means by which white Westerners – and particularly white, middle-class, Western women – defined themselves in contrast to their colonial “doubles.” Like the working-class women who needed supervision and monitoring at home, these women were conceived of primarily in terms of their sexuality rather than their maternity.⁷² It is true that in none of Eastlake's images are the figures overtly sexualized; in fact, aside from the woman's arms (and the naked baby) in the second version of *Mother and Child*, we see very little bare skin in any of these images.

Nevertheless, according to nineteenth-century discourses of race and gender, the non-white woman was always-already sexualized simply by virtue of her skin colour.

White women's position in the far reaches of empire was rather precarious given the physical and social proximity to these sexualized, “primitive” “stand-ins” it meant; Ann Laura Stoler has said that they formed a group that both

⁷¹ Rosen, 110-11.

⁷² This is the argument that Nussbaum makes in her important book.

“marked and threatened the limits of white prestige and colonial control.”⁷³ On one hand, the arrival of white women in the colonies meant that ways of life needed to change in order to preserve their respectability; frequently this resulted in the intensifying of racial and cultural stratification. On the other, their presence in a colony was the most visible symbol that the colony had reached a certain level of civilization.⁷⁴ The brand of domesticity and family life that was exported to the colonies alongside white women was one crucial means by which the divisions between gender and racial categories that existed in the metropole (at least theoretically) were transported and enforced in the colonies (where these divisions were far more unstable).

In that respect, the role of the home in this project was a very tangible one: Stoler describes the way in which

The arrival of large numbers of European women coincided with new bourgeois trappings and notions of privacy in colonial communities. And these, in turn, were accompanied by new distinctions based on race. European women supposedly required more metropolitan amenities than did men and more spacious surroundings for them. Women were claimed to have more delicate sensibilities and therefore needed suitable quarters – discrete and enclosed. Their psychological and physical constitutions were considered more fragile, demanding more servants for the chores they should be spared. In short, white women needed to be maintained at elevated standards of living, in insulated social spaces cushioned with the cultural artifacts of ‘being European.’⁷⁵

⁷³ Stoler, 26.

⁷⁴ See Stoler, Chapter 3, for a nuanced discussion of the various roles white women played and the effects their presence had on the colonization process. She challenges the traditional blame placed on white women for increasing racism in the colonies, arguing that white women alone were not responsible for particular changes; rather, that they should be seen as participants who acted and were acted upon within the larger system of imperialism. Margaret Jolly also effectively criticizes the two main narratives of women in the colonial process (as either absent completely or as lazy, jealous, racists who ruined the good and equal relationships imperial men had developed in the colonies) (Margaret Jolly, “Colonizing Women: The Maternal Body and Empire,” in *Feminism and the Politics of Difference*, eds. Sneja Gunew and Anna Yeatman [Winnipeg: Fernwood, 1997], 105-9). In the Canadian context, see Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849-1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

⁷⁵ Stoler, 55.

Furthermore, the home was also the site where imperial strength would be preserved through white women's moral guardianship: again, Stoler writes, "European women were to safeguard prestige and morality and insulate their men from the cultural and sexual contamination of contact with the colonized. Racial degeneracy would be curtailed by European women charged with regenerating the physical health, the metropolitan affinities, and the imperial purpose of their men."⁷⁶ This safeguarding also took place within the context of the domestic sphere: the wife and mother of the colonial official was responsible for maintaining a strict Western standard for cooking, cleaning, arranging, child-rearing and so on. Even beyond metaphor then, housekeeping was quite literally a way to strengthen the empire.⁷⁷

In this respect, the physical trappings of the home, and the white woman's care of and control over them, helped to define whiteness and civility in contrast to "Other" mothers' practices. As Stoler states, "The colonial measure of what it took to be classified as 'European' was not based on skin colour alone but on tenuously balanced assessments of who was judged to act with reason, affective appropriateness, and a sense of morality," later continuing, "Assessments of civility and the cultural distinctions on which racial membership relied were measured less by what people did in public than by how they conducted their private lives – with whom they cohabited, where they lived, what they ate, how

⁷⁶ Ibid., 71.

⁷⁷ A considerable amount of scholarship has been done on this dynamic in the Indian colonial context, and on the role of the memsahib in particular. See, for example, Elizabeth Buettner, *Empire Families: Britons and Late Imperial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). In the North American context, see especially Perry and Amy Kaplan, "Manifest Domesticity," *American Literature* 70, no. 3 (September 1998): 581-606.

they raised their children, what language they chose to speak to servants and family at home.”⁷⁸ Whiteness, European-ness, and civility all here clearly indicate not only physical features, but a set of moral, emotional, and cultural behaviours as well. As such, who was included in the category of “civilized” culture was an unstable, shifting thing: it might include non-white colonials (if they behaved like English middle-class ladies and gentlemen), and might exclude a British-born gentleman (if he had “gone native” while abroad). The limit of this is of course, however, still drawn at skin colour: the white gentleman maintained the privilege and opportunity of choosing to stop living as a “savage” and move home to London, recovering his respectability immediately.

In this context, Western domesticity and its foremost symbol, the happy mother, were prized in the colonies, particularly when “framed in opposition to more prevailing sorts of unions on which colonialisms thrived.”⁷⁹ These other sorts of sexual and domestic relationships – interracial, homosexual, polygamous, concubinage, and others – were set in sharp relief to “proper” domestic arrangements (i.e. that of the Western nuclear family). And who was responsible for judging and monitoring the relative correctness of these arrangements? The white Western woman, in her capacity as social housekeeper and moral centre of the family and the empire, was a logical choice. As such, the efforts of maternalism were heightened in the colonies, as white women proclaimed that all women were united by their femininity, their reproductive capacities, and their natural propensities towards motherhood and nurturing. By claiming a certain

⁷⁸ Stoler, 6.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 2.

level of gender solidarity in pursuit of their goals, white women carefully and selectively ignored what they did not share – race – and thereby sidestepped the unequal nature of this union between women of the world.

Ultimately, maternalist discourse treated white women's colonial counterparts more as daughters than sisters.⁸⁰ White women claimed guardianship over "Other" women, who they understood as needing to be protected from poor treatment at the hands of "Other" men. While Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has memorably summed up the colonial project as "white men saving brown women from brown men," white women also contributed significantly to this dynamic.⁸¹ In this understanding, the non-white inhabitants of these regions are imagined as alternately (and sometimes simultaneously) child-like and in need of proper parental guidance and regulation, or as hypersexual, and therefore in need of control. As Mariana Valverde had pointed out, this leaves no space for non-white women to be subjects themselves: they are always "presented as either too

⁸⁰ In the context of maternalism and relationships between women in the colonies, Jolly goes so far as to propose that missionary women took on the care of and intimate relationships with colonial women to replace the children who had died, who they had sent away, or who they never had, all because of their choices to live this atypical life (114).

On maternalist feminism in the colonies, see also Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1885* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), several essays in Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel, eds., *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992) and in Julia Clancy-Smith and Frances Gouda, eds. *Domesticating the Empire: Race, Gender, and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1998). On the Canadian context in particular, see Jennifer Henderson, *Settler Feminism and Race Making in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003); Myra Rutherdale, "Mothers of the Empire: Maternal Metaphors in the Northern Canadian Mission Field," in *Canadian Missionaries, Indigenous Peoples: Representing Religion at Home and Abroad*, eds. Alwyn Austin and Jamie S. Scott (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005); Myra Rutherdale, *Women and the White Man's God: Gender and Race in the Canadian Mission Field* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2002).

⁸¹ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 297. Chapter 4 of this dissertation examines this dynamic further in the context of the suffrage movement.

victimized or too corrupted to qualify as real mothers. Rather, they need to be themselves mothered by wiser Anglo-Saxon Protestant women.”⁸² It should be noted, too, that white women’s benevolence did not always stretch to protecting brown women from *white* men, given that the success of the colonial project (particularly in the context of slavery) frequently required turning a blind eye to or deliberately suppressing histories of white male violence (especially sexual violence) against non-white women, which were excused on the basis of racist stereotypes of non-white women’s dangerous and too-tempting hypersexuality.

White women looked to “Other” mothers as needing their assistance, not only on the basis of their perceived oppressed status within their respective non-Western societies (the gender relations of all non-Western societies were frequently generalized as one in this respect⁸³), but also on the supposed inadequacies of their maternal practices. White women travellers, reformers, and missionaries focused their attention on various cultural practices they believed to be harmful, ranging from marriage practices, to various beliefs about sexuality, to women’s physical labour outside the home. Though there was interest about sensational practices like infanticide and cannibalism, more often women simply observed the smaller ways that other cultures deviated from the late-nineteenth-century white Western ideal of the nuclear family with a male breadwinner who provided for the mother ensconced within the home.⁸⁴

⁸² Valverde, “When the Mother of the Race is Free,” 11.

⁸³ Jacobs, 118; McEwan, 153.

⁸⁴ Jacobs, 112-25.

As they had in the slums of London, white women made it a goal to change the mothering practices they encountered in the colonies.⁸⁵ These practices ranged from rituals around marriage (or lack thereof) and the question of pre-marital and/or promiscuous sexual activity, to health matters like breastfeeding and cleanliness, to more practical childrearing concerns like education, discipline, and play. In some contexts, this extended to the seemingly paradoxical practice of removing children from their homes and their mothers and placing them in residential schools (as in Canada, the U.S., and Australia); in others, it meant a set of smaller efforts to “forcibly reshape the maternal relationship.”⁸⁶ In this way, although Victorian lady travellers like Eastlake may appear to have rejected their own place within the home, in terms of their influence and effect on imperialism they generally remained within the accepted “separate sphere” of women’s influence.

Can we see Eastlake’s insistence on observing and recording these “Other” cultures’ approach to motherhood and family as functioning within this

⁸⁵ This was, after all, a comparison that was made by contemporaries: the slums of London were frequently rhetorically positioned as the dark heart of the empire, a site that needed to be colonized and missionized to just as surely as the dark heart of Africa. In part, this might be understood because while turn-of-the-century London was overwhelmingly white, the slums of Whitechapel, Westminster, Shoreditch, Seven Dials, and other working class neighbourhoods were home to non-white and/or non-English immigrants, including sizable Irish, Jewish, Italian, Eastern European, and colonial populations (Ross, 11-14).

⁸⁶ Jolly, 114. See also Rutherford, “Mothers of the Empire,” 56-60. An ambitious recent study by Margaret D. Jacobs provides an important analysis of the role of white women and the concept of motherhood in the American and Australian contexts. Although maternal politics advocated first and foremost that women’s roles as mothers who participated in hands-on child care were paramount, Jacobs finds that white women maternalists were paradoxically very involved in removing indigenous children from their mothers and placing them in residential schools and other institutions.

In the Canadian context, Myra Rutherdale has likewise examined the contradictions involved in the residential school system in terms of maternalist policies about hands-on mothering. She finds that maternalist missionaries adopted the language of motherhood in their capacities as teachers, nurses, and other types of caregivers, such that the seeming paradox of taking children away from their own mothers became a rhetoric of white women themselves mothering these children (“Mothers of the Empire,” 48).

larger project? Even if Eastlake was not herself a mother (and serving the Empire in that manner), through her social investigation of the colonies, she acted as a social or civil housekeeper, fulfilling another (more or less) acceptable role within the *fin-de-siècle* discourse of maternal feminism and the infant welfare movement. Moreover, if middle-class white women were required to sequester themselves from the dangerous sexuality of the “Other” woman (be it the urban prostitute or the non-white colonial body), then Eastlake’s insistence on placing the women she saw during her travels within the very safe boundaries of motherhood and family relationships may have legitimized and made appropriate her own travel and contact with foreign cultures and people. The artist’s insistence on observing and documenting the mother-child relationship can further be seen as a potential imperialist act, in the way in which it functioned to police the boundaries of whiteness and civility abroad, using the Western standards she herself was meant (but in some ways failed) to uphold.

As previously stated, on first glance, the images under discussion do seem to adhere to Western conventions for depicting idealized motherhood, in that the mothers are depicted in close, one-on-one physical relationships with their children. However, other elements reveal important differences. The first of these appears in both the first version of *Mother and Child* and in *Japanese Children at Play*. In the former, Eastlake has paid careful attention to the mother’s method of carrying the child on her back, wrapped in a green-checkered blanket. Historian Margaret D. Jacobs has looked at white women’s reactions to Native American women’s methods of carrying their children on their backs, demonstrating that

this was one practice understood to be evidence for the Native woman's lack of good mothering skills. Babies were strapped on their mothers' backs primarily for practical reasons: to make it easier for women to work. As such, this child-rearing strategy was frowned upon by white women not just because the babies seemed to them unsafe or uncomfortable, but more importantly because it was a visible indication that the mothers had returned to work outside the home, rather than staying home with the baby.⁸⁷ In Canada and the United States, babies strapped to their mothers' backs were a frequent focus of artists who were known for their supposedly authentic depictions of American Indian and First Nations culture; the practice can be seen in, for example, Benjamin West's *Penn's Treaty with the Indians* (1771, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts), George Catlin's *Chee-Ah-Ka-Tchee* (1835-36, Smithsonian American Art Museum), and Paul Kane's *Caw Wacham (Flathead Woman and Child)* (c. 1848-53, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts).⁸⁸ Other sketches by Eastlake reveal that this was a persistent interest for the artist (figs. 82 and 83).

Japanese Children at Play also finds a baby strapped to its minder's back; in this case, the eldest girl has a young baby strapped in what appears to be a rather precarious manner to her back: as she leans over to pick a flower, he peers

⁸⁷ Jacobs, 119-23.

⁸⁸ On the other hand, art historian Claire Perry argues that this practice was also sometimes acknowledged as evidence that Native women were even closer to their babies than white women were: "For nineteenth-century Americans preoccupied with child-rearing issues and the welfare of young republicans, the papoose introduced the possibility that civilized society might somehow be inadequate in dealing with the young. Though the papoose represented an archaic way of life, descriptions of the functionality of the practice of cradling and its reportedly healthful result on the child's lifelong constitution and posture invited uncomfortable comparisons with 'civilized' practices" (*Young America: Childhood in Nineteenth-Century Art and Culture* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006], 173). See Perry, *Young America*, Chapter 5, for further discussion of depictions of Native American childhood by American artists in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; on the popularity of the papoose stereotype in particular, see 168-77.

curiously over her shoulder to see what the girls are doing. In this case, the girl is clearly not the baby's mother, but more likely an older sister, revealing another practice that white Western women would have found lacking. Given that the mother's own care of small babies was increasingly seen as paramount, childcare done by nannies, older sisters, or neighbours was increasingly viewed as harmful to the child, and the mother-child bond.⁸⁹

Second, in all images discussed in this chapter, the mothers and children are represented carefully in their native dress, which put non-Western women at risk of being seen as "uncivilized" and "unclean" in the eyes of their white female observers. The second version of *Mother and Child* also situates the pair of figures seated on the sandy ground, with their home in the distance. Even if it represents a close mother-child relationship that Western women would recognize as "natural" and "correct," the pair is also situated at a distance from Western understandings of the clean, healthy, safe sphere of home. As Jacobs states, proper motherhood was closely linked to

a particular performance of one's class, whiteness, and femininity inasmuch as cleanliness of the body and home was not simply about an absence of dirt or even just a trope for morality; it was also tied to middle-class consumption, to promoting an aesthetics that required the adornment of the home and the body in a way that signified one's class status. Most white women reformers could not escape their constellation of middle-class aesthetics to recognize the different sensory universe that many indigenous people inhabited.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ This was also perceived by middle-class district-visiting women to be a major problem in working-class neighbourhoods (Davin, 13; Ross, 134-37)

⁹⁰ Jacobs, 128.

Ultimately, “civilization” was tied very closely to the white Western middle class ideal of home, its replication, and its normalization in all areas of the world.⁹¹

Finally, we must also be wary of making generalizations about contemporary understandings of childhood given that, like motherhood, it too was a historically and culturally variable institution. What is significant in this context is that children were themselves potent sites of imperial and colonial anxiety. If on the one hand, a white, Western child was understood at this time as innocent, pure, and natural, the colonial baby was something far more ambiguous. Given that the question of miscegenation was perhaps the foremost cultural worry in the years surrounding the turn of the twentieth century, the body of the child was a key sign and symbol of race-mixing or racial purity, and of the future of the race, nation, and empire, for better or for worse.⁹² Not only did a mixed-race child personify the blurry boundaries between self/other, citizen/foreigner, and colonized/colonizer that structured European imperialism, but, as Stoler proposes, “Such children represented both the supplement to empire and its excess. They were evidence of the sexual transgressions and indiscretions of European men and reminders of the dangers of a degenerate ... subaltern class.”⁹³ Beyond rhetoric, children were an important focus for the imperial project in practical terms as well, being most frequently the members of their groups targeted for reform,

⁹¹ For how this operated in the context of Canadian First Nations populations, see Julia V. Emberley, “The Bourgeois Family, Aboriginal Women, and Colonial Governance in Canada: A Study in Feminist Historical and Cultural Materialism,” *Signs* 27, no. 1 (Autumn 2001): 59-85.

⁹² See Stoler, Chapters 4 and 5. It should be noted that the question of race-mixing was viewed differently in different contexts.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 94.

civilization, and assimilation (think again, for instance, of the residential school program in Canada).

Furthermore, Western viewers who had vested interests in the success of the colonial project might have viewed images of colonial children with a certain amount of wariness. Art historian Claire Perry points out that images of Native American children and their mothers, for example, were rather ambivalently received by their audiences. For one thing, the existence and celebration through representation of a new generation challenged the predominant white belief that these cultures were dying out.⁹⁴ For another, images that showed non-white families mimicking so-called Western values of love, care, and tight familial bonds presented a potential threat to contemporary colonization efforts: Claire Perry proposes,

Pictures of tribal families, on the other hand, with toddlers lolling in the grass and mothers nursing babies, had the emotional heft to impede Manifest Destiny. Especially for nineteenth-century American women, who were steeped in the gospel of home and family, the question of Christian duty toward indigenous children and families was a thorny one that piqued the conscience. ... While pictures of Indian children surrounded by extended families prodded viewers' sense of Christian benevolence, such images also argued against the breakdown of tribal units that many considered the key to Indian assimilation into respectable society.⁹⁵

Moreover, primitivist stereotypes of non-white women as being closer to nature, to their bodies, and to sexuality also transferred to impressions of their capacities for reproduction and for maternal love. Pictures of happy motherhood in the colonial context presented a potential threat to colonial power: perhaps these mothers were even more naturally suited to the job than their white counterparts.

⁹⁴ Perry, *Young America*, 152.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 159 and 161.

Furthermore, if “domestic maternity defined civilization,”⁹⁶ then that must mean that the apparently loving non-white mothers of Eastlake’s pastels were civilized, not savage – or, perhaps more troublingly for contemporaries, that white women held the capacity for savagery themselves. Finally, the potential threat to the imperial project presented by such images was equally a threat to patriarchy: the fear that white women would ultimately sympathize and side with non-white women on the basis of a capacity for maternal love that crossed racial and geographic lines, was a fear that shared gender would prove triumphant over shared race.⁹⁷

Mary Bell Eastlake’s artistic focus on mothers and children while abroad raises these very types of (ultimately unanswerable) questions. To what extent might a white, female, middle-class, Canadian artist approach her non-white female subjects with an empathetic gaze based on their shared subjugated status as women? And to what lengths can this shared bond be said to operate within the context of imperialism and racial hierarchy, particularly considering that the white, female body and its potential for motherhood were themselves such potent symbols and tools of empire at the turn of the twentieth century? Class (and the distinctions in whiteness that it engendered) adds a further dimension to the identifying strategies of painter and painted. Geographer Alison Blunt suggests that the British Mary Kingsley, in her travels in West Africa, for example, viewed

⁹⁶ Nussbaum, 45.

⁹⁷ Nussbaum finds however that this potential was effectively absorbed into colonial power structures: “Through a doubling and even tripling of difference, women of the upper and middle classes are pitted against lower-class women, and ‘civilized’ English mothers against ‘barbaric’ mothers – with their difference offered as proof of racial and class superiority, and their sameness an indication of their gendered inferiority” (47-8).

“Other” women’s marriages, child-rearing, and domestic practices not through the lens of her own gendered role in the domestic sphere, instead placing them in comparison to those of her Irish housekeeper.⁹⁸ Eastlake’s Canadianness provides another level of nuance to these potential identifications: as a member of a privileged white settler colony, did she identify as a colonizer, or with those who were colonized? Moreover, the varied circumstances of the regions to which she travelled must have meant that the artist was required to shift her position frequently: while some of the places the Eastlake couple visited were British colonies (New Zealand, Hong Kong), others were the colonial possessions of other nations (French Tahiti, the Spanish and American Philippines), or independent countries (Thailand); Japan in the early twentieth century was an empire in its own right. Ultimately, the probability that the artist identified with all or none of these gender, class, and racial groups at different times and in different places reveals the essential instability and shifting nature of these categories.

IV. Primitivism and (pro)creativity

Julia Kristeva has influentially described the maternal body as a “thoroughfare, a threshold where ‘nature’ confronts ‘culture.’”⁹⁹ Childhood, too, has frequently been understood as a liminal state, straddling a border between

⁹⁸ Blunt, 85.

⁹⁹ Julia Kristeva, “Motherhood According to Giovanni Bellini,” in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. Leon S. Roudiez, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 238.

“the natural and the social.”¹⁰⁰ Drawing on these conceptualizations in the final section of this chapter, I re-examine Mary Bell Eastlake’s representations of motherhood within the context of the overwhelming *fin-de-siècle* interest in primitivism.¹⁰¹ Primitivist artists – Gauguin first among them – understood the body of the artist in much the same way as Kristeva theorizes the body of the mother: as a conduit between primal nature and the real world. If ideas about the primitive or the primal were most often associated with the sexualized, often non-white female body (as in the works of Hodges and Gauguin seen earlier), once again Eastlake substitutes the maternal body as her own point of access to the primitive within.

Painted c. 1900 before the artist left Europe, *The Annunciation* (fig. 84) is Eastlake’s strangest and most striking engagement with the subject of motherhood. If the artist elsewhere engaged with the subject of the modern Madonna, here she returns to the religious source of that imagery, but shifts to a different – but no less meaningful – moment in the narrative: this is Mary at the very instant when motherhood happens upon her. The work is a relatively small depiction of the Virgin and the angel Gabriel in a field of flowers. Both the setting and the figures are portrayed in shockingly bright colour: the red of Mary’s cloak, the turquoise trees, grass, and sky, and especially, the purple, orange, and red of the angel’s wings and hair are nearly fluorescent and not at all naturalistic. Purple,

¹⁰⁰ Anne Higonnet, “Making Babies, Painting Bodies: Women, Art, and Paula Modersohn-Becker’s Productivity,” *Woman’s Art Journal* 30, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2009): 20.

¹⁰¹ I use “primitivism” here to designate a stylistically diverse movement that was united through an “interest in, and /or reconstruction of, societies designated ‘primitive’ and their artifacts” (Perry, “Primitivism and the ‘Modern,’” 5). It needs hardly to be said that the designation of “primitive” given to certain societies is problematic in its Eurocentric, white, bourgeois, and urban outlook.

white, red, and blue flowers further punctuate the scene. These bright hues are laid on thickly, in blocks of colour with carefully delineated outlines. The figures of Mary and the angel lack depth and three-dimensional form, seeming almost like cut-outs that have been pasted onto the landscape; Mary, especially, seems to float above the grass weightlessly. The tops of the shadowy trees, the flowers, Mary's cloak, and hair, and the angel's wings are not only outlined, but highlighted in the same fluorescent orange of the angel's hair, creating the effect of the dying light of a sunset (a sliver of a moon is rising in the sky on the right) or a holy light shining over the entire scene. The effect given is of a stained glass window or perhaps a cloisonné or enameled object like those Eastlake and her husband produced and exhibited during the first years of their marriage in an effort to make ends meet.¹⁰²

Altogether, the artist's treatment of colour and line as tools for inner expression reveals the artist's Post-Impressionist and Primitivist leanings, and is reminiscent of Gauguin, particularly in the surreality of the colours and the stained glass effect.¹⁰³ The overall effect of Eastlake's formal choices is one of flatness; this lack of three-dimensional space and human form contributes to an overall feeling of otherworldliness. In this respect, Eastlake again seems to be following Gauguin: works like *Vision After the Sermon (Jacob Wrestling with the Angel)* (1888) and *Yellow Christ* (1889) (figs. 85 and 86) provide interesting

¹⁰² Both were well known for their jewelry in Canada and Britain; Mary, for designing the objects, and Charles for creating them. These objects were exhibited alongside their paintings at their exhibitions.

¹⁰³ Although there is no evidence that Eastlake ever met Gauguin, both artists were in Pont-Aven in 1888 and 1889. A reviewer for the *Montreal Gazette* described Eastlake's contributions to the AAM Spring Exhibition of the following year, including her Breton subjects, as showing "originality and a bold freedom," and critiques them for a lack of accuracy ("The Spring Exhibition: Private View at the Art Gallery Last Evening," *Montreal Gazette*, April 4, 1889).

comparisons, given that they too situate biblical events in discordant spaces (Jacob wrestling with Angel in the case of the former, the crucifixion in the latter; both re-located to contemporary Brittany). Like her predecessor, Eastlake's contribution removes the Annunciation from its original setting in favour of what appears to be a rural setting: judging by the vegetation, this is not a biblical landscape; nor does it take place in the conventional interior of Renaissance interpretations of the scene. While the standard iconography of lilies are present, they are growing in the field next to other flowers (red poppies, purple irises, and blue hyacinths), not cut and placed in a vase or presented to her by the angel. For both artists, the use of expressionistic colour, line, and form seems to place the scene in another realm; for each, the lack of illusionism points to the dissolution of material reality in favour of representing a more personal inner world.

Art historian Debora Silverman argues that "Gauguin constructed his *Vision* as a mystical encounter between the natural and the supernatural, the conduit between them being the fusion of the artist's dream and the peasant's visionary faith."¹⁰⁴ By linking these elements (the artist's inner world and peasant culture), Silverman, as Gauguin did, links artistic creativity with the primitive. In the nineteenth century, the label "primitive" held both positive and negative connotations. On one hand, "primitive" indicated something backwards, savage, and uncivilized; on the other, that which was "primitive" might be appreciated as being closer to nature, more stable, and ultimately more pure, in contrast to those corrupt, degenerate urban centres typically celebrated by modernity. It was this

¹⁰⁴ Debora Silverman, "At the Threshold of Symbolism: Van Gogh's *Sower* and Gauguin's *Vision After the Sermon*," in *Critical Readings in Impressionism and Post-Impressionism: An Anthology*, ed. Mary Tompkins Lewis (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 275.

second understanding of the primitive that led artists numbering in the thousands to the countryside and beyond the borders of Western Europe in the latter half of the nineteenth century in an attempt to access a more direct form of inner self-expression through proximity to these cultures.¹⁰⁵

Significantly, it is specifically the female peasant body that is positioned as the key to opening up this inner realm within the artist. Quite clearly for Gauguin, the female body – first the Bretonne peasant, then the Tahitian woman – is the one most allied with the primitive; access to that body was the easiest way of accessing the primitive within himself. Gill Perry has argued that “the construction of a ‘primitive’ art often (though not always) involved a *gendered* concept of nature and the natural. In Gauguin’s work, the female peasant and the female nude were often employed as literal and metaphorical equivalents for nature, the natural cycle or even the ‘essence of a race.’”¹⁰⁶ The female body – and especially, the non-white female body – was so effective in this role because of its historical associations with nature and the natural or primal.¹⁰⁷

To what extent was this discourse available to a female painter? Primitivism has been recently problematized on the basis that artists – Picasso first among them – promoted themselves as having an “affinity” with the primitive. This rhetorical claim both disavows the appropriation of culture

¹⁰⁵ If Gauguin ultimately fled to the South Pacific, other artists did not feel it necessary to leave Europe to find primitive cultures and peoples: they merely needed to leave the city. Beginning around 1870, artists from Paris, London, Berlin, and New York began to escape their cities for the countryside, in search of “the simple life.” Thousands of artists fled the cities and “colonized” the countryside, settling in certain villages and towns in remote areas of Europe; some of the most popular included the towns of Cornwall, England (such as St. Ives and Newlyn), the villages of Brittany, in France (like Quimperlé, Concarneau, and Pont-Aven), and northern European villages in the Netherlands and Germany (such as Volendam and Worpswede).

¹⁰⁶ Perry, “Primitivism and the ‘Modern,’” 27.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 22-24.

occurring in a dynamic where the privileged choose to perform a less-privileged social position, and furthermore, re-frames non-Western art forms within Western art judgments and narratives, making them suit Western narratives as to the value of their styles, mediums, and subjects.¹⁰⁸ It is also a position seemingly only available to the white male painter: after all, by claiming an affinity with the primitive, “the artist saw himself as a direct communicator, a kind of innate savage, for whom the objects and stimulus within an unsophisticated culture *enable* rather than simply inspire the expression of what is thought to be inherent in the artist. The artist is self-defined as a superior being, as creatively endowed”¹⁰⁹ It was believed to be simply impossible for women, always conceived as “feminine” first and foremost, to access such an inner creative genius, a binary Anne Higonnet neatly encapsulates as “Maternity vs. genius: to each gender his or her own kind of creation.”¹¹⁰ Moreover, women – always conceived of as more naturally primitive to begin with – could hardly be expected to harness and control this inner primitivism in the manner a male artist could. Finally, a demonstration of the mastery of the overtly sexualized female body as the sign and the source of that masculine creativity was a choice of subject simply unavailable to women artists.

And yet, Eastlake does engage with this discourse; in fact, the artist even continued to locate the primitive within the female body. If for Gauguin and Picasso the primitive female body was explicitly sexualized however, Eastlake

¹⁰⁸ See for example, James Clifford, “Histories of the Tribal and the Modern,” in *Race-ing Art History: Critical Readings in Race and Art History*, ed. Kymberly Pinder (London: Routledge, 2002), 217-232.

¹⁰⁹ Perry, “Primitivism and the ‘Modern,’” 19.

¹¹⁰ Higonnet, “Making Babies,” 15.

again turns to the maternal body as the site and source of natural instinct. Eastlake's Holy Mother is not only primitivized through style, but might potentially be read as a primitive subject herself. The young woman, who stands with her hands tightly clasped against her chest and a solemn expression on her face, is a serious figure. Though crudely painted and flat, her wide eyes and tightly pursed lips reveal her emotions. Her reddened, almost sunburned cheeks, large hands, and the feet revealed through her simple sandals make hers seem a real material body, even as she floats weightlessly over the grass. In noting such characteristics, we are effectively reading class and race into this body: her ruddy cheeks and tanned hands seem to indicate a working body. Indeed, the physicality of her body stands out against the pale near-featureless-ness of the angel beside her. Furthermore, this physicality is matched by a sense of primitive timelessness: the dress that exposes her sandals – neither fashion immediately legible as either specifically bourgeois or obviously peasant – make this a female figure that is difficult to firmly situate in contemporary Europe. Instead, she reads as timeless and placeless: unfixed in the modern world in a way that the women of *Mobilization Day* are not.

In her focus on the primitiveness of the maternal body, Eastlake seems better compared to an artist like German painter Paula Modersohn-Becker than to Gauguin. Modersohn-Becker, who had worked in Paris and come into contact with the work of Gauguin, brought home to the German art colony of Worpswede a primitivist style as well as subject matter. Eastlake's work indeed appears much more similar to the latter artist in its bright colours, simple lines, and distorted

forms, than it is to the work of contemporary naturalists in Worpswede or other rural art colonies.¹¹¹ Becker even employs the nude female figure, though in a way that results in a very different impression than her male primitivist contemporaries. See, for example, her *Kneeling Mother and Child* (1907), which represents a mother breastfeeding a child surrounded by fruit and plants, or *Self Portrait on her Sixth Wedding Anniversary* (1906) (fig. 87 and 88), which shows the artist, topless and pregnant, with arms cradling her swollen belly (although the artist herself was not, in fact, pregnant when she produced the image). However, even with the conventional inclusion of fruit and flowers to signify the fertility that links the woman with her natural environment, these figures actively resist being categorized as sensuous or eroticized nudes.¹¹²

For female artists like Eastlake and Modersohn-Becker, it was possible to make a link between the naturally *procreative* maternal body being represented and the naturally *creative* work of the artist. Anne Higonnet describes Modersohn-Becker's images as

celebrat[ing] what is natural, primitive, even animal, about the female birth cycle. Naked, kneeling in landscapes, embracing their babies, revealing gravid torsos, Modersohn-Becker's women appear to exist apart from, or prior to, culture. And yet, once examined, Modersohn-Becker's paintings suggest the opposite. Her handling of oil paint, her treatment of colour, light, and volume demand attention simultaneously to the material

¹¹¹ Perry, "Primitivism and the 'Modern,'" 43. Compare, for example, to German artist Fritz Mackensen's similarly-themed, but much more traditional *Worpswede Madonna* (1892, Kunsthalle, Bremen).

¹¹² Perry, "Primitivism and the 'Modern,'" 43. On the other hand, Diane Radycki astutely points out that these images have consistently been labeled as genre scenes and figure studies of mothers and children instead of the more respected artistic category of the nude, even when her many representations of the female nude were produced at the same time as Matisse and Picasso (among others) were themselves challenging the category around 1906-7 in images like *Nu Bleu: Souvenir de Biskra* and *Les Femmes d'Alger* (both 1907, Baltimore Museum of Art and MoMA), respectively (Diane Radycki, "'Pictures of Flesh': Modersohn-Becker and the Nude," *Woman's Art Journal* 30, no. 2 [Fall/Winter 2009]: 3.)

of her work and to the transformation of that material into representational marks. Modersohn-Becker's paintings ask us to notice a transaction between experience and the signs of that experience. To make that transaction represent the work of birth is to connect the natural creation of babies with the artistic creation of paintings.¹¹³

As an annunciation scene, Eastlake's engagement with the subject of the pregnant body may lack the monumental physicality of Modersohn-Becker's figures, but does keenly capture a single moment of (pro)creation: Mary has, after all, just learned that she will give birth. She has, indeed, just become pregnant: this is the very moment of procreation, a subject that would be impossible for a female artist to depict in anything other than this specific religious context. And like Modersohn-Becker, Eastlake's own creative capacities are called to attention through her use of strange colours, distorted forms, and thick paint, which do not hide the artist's own hand and call attention to the act of artistic creation.

In a similar manner to their primal, "natural" mothers, children too came to be accommodated in the discourse of primitivism; this was particularly true of the next generation of artists, including painters such as Gabrielle Mnter and Paul Klee, who explicitly named children's art as an influence.¹¹⁴ Over the course of the nineteenth century, art historian Marilyn Brown points out, writers and artists "updated Rousseau's equation of childhood with cultural primitivism by comparing children to savages and by seeing them as representatives of the

¹¹³ Higonnet, "Making Babies," 15.

¹¹⁴ On this phenomenon, see Jonathan Fineberg, ed., *Discovering Child Art: Essays on Childhood, Primitivism, and Modernism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001) and Jonathan Fineberg, *The Innocent Eye: Children's Art and the Modern Artist* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997). For broader nineteenth-century understandings of the child as the source of primitive or natural instinct, see Carolyn Steedman, *Strange Dislocations: Childhood and the Idea of Human Interiority, 1780-1930* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).

childhood of the human race as a whole.”¹¹⁵ Eastlake drew on the link between childhood and artistic creativity explicitly on one occasion, in a now unlocated painting she exhibited at the RCA as *The Little Sculptor* in 1896. A reviewer for *Saturday Night* described the image as such:

Miss Bell has a delightful subject in her “A Little Sculptor,” a little girl on a low stool is at work carving a face on the orange she holds; two grinning heads of the same kind rest each on a black bottle beside her. One cannot but be struck by the lack of proportion in the head it is so very large behind, but the intentness expressed in every line of the figure is well done and the blue tones are in fine contrast to the vivid touches of colour lent by the oranges; the subject is fresh and unhackneyed.¹¹⁶

In the absence of Eastlake’s painting, we might once again look to a similarly-themed work by Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes. *The Critics* (1886-87) (fig. 43), discussed briefly in Chapter 2 as a representation of that artist’s interest in Aesthetic “art for art’s sake” principles, represents a young boy drawing a simple stick figure with chalk on a rustic wooden gate. He is watched intently by a goose and a young girl, who holds a still younger baby in her arms. In the case of both *The Critics* and *The Little Sculptor*, the subject of the work is art itself.

In these paintings, Eastlake and Forbes can be seen as working within a genre established in the later eighteenth century known as “infant academies:” paintings of babies and children producing art works in imitation of their elders. Like primitive cultures, Angela Rosenthal writes, “childhood was also associated with a state of innocence that guaranteed a seemingly truthful recognition of

¹¹⁵ Marilyn Brown, “Baudelaire between Rousseau and Freud,” in *Picturing Children: Constructions of Children between Rousseau and Freud*, ed. Marilyn Brown (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 3.

¹¹⁶ “Art,” *Saturday Night* 9, no. 19 (March 28, 1896): 9. The painting was also described in the *Montreal Daily Witness*, where the reviewer also remarks on the strong colour contrasts and the originality of the painting (“The Canadian Academy,” *Montreal Daily Witness*, March 13, 1896).

nature. It was necessary for an artist to unlearn – to attain again a childlike look – in order to see the general truth.”¹¹⁷ The genre was understandably popular among artists, allowing them to tackle questions about artistic creativity in a winking manner: “children themselves could function as allegorical artists and thus convey cultural beliefs concerning childhood, primitivism, genuine creativity, artistic selfhood, and gendered procreativity.”¹¹⁸ Eastlake’s and Forbes’s images seem to raise these questions once more, attributing to children a naiveté that produces a purer form of expression.

Eastlake evidently also brought these questions to attention through the style of *A Little Sculptor*, given that the reviewer describes formal elements that also characterize a certain primitiveness of production: freshness of subject matter, a lack of Academic or learned proportion, and vividness of colour. Other contemporary reviews consistently picked up on these aspects of her style (for better or worse). By using labels like “Pre-Raphaelite” and “medieval” to describe *The Annunciation*, they situate her work in a more “primitive” age. Other descriptions of her work included adjectives like “very coarse,” “unintelligent,” “flat,”¹¹⁹ and phrases such as “very nice work in the modern French style of colouring,”¹²⁰ and “original in treatment.”¹²¹ Moreover, the pastel medium to which Eastlake increasingly turned also suited her primitivist needs. As Jane Quigley points out in an article about the artist’s work in the Dutch art colony of

¹¹⁷ Rosenthal, 615.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 606.

¹¹⁹ “Art Association: The Annual Spring Exhibition,” *Montreal Star*, April 19, 1892.

¹²⁰ “The Spring Exhibition,” *Montreal Gazette*, February 28, 1895.

¹²¹ “The Spring Exhibition Opened at the Art Gallery Last Night,” *Montreal Daily Star*, March 7, 1895.

Volendam, “happily for her, pastel seems to be *par excellence* the medium in which fresh and spontaneous treatment is invaluable.” Most interestingly, however, Quigley attributes these characteristics of her work not to her gender, or to the maternal and child bodies she represented, but to Eastlake’s own “primitive” colonial heritage: “Perhaps this freshness of idea is due to her Canadian parentage.”¹²²

V. Conclusion

Tamar Garb writes that even as early “feminists rejected traditional roles, symbols and even, in some cases, fashion, artists promoted with unprecedented intensity the myth of natural womanhood. Symbolized as the physical ‘source of life,’ ‘Woman’ was promoted through the image of the secular Madonna on the one hand and in a state of primitive ‘naturalness’ on the other.”¹²³ Mary Bell Eastlake’s representations of motherhood are interesting for the very ways in which she combines these elements, and does so as a woman who led a life opposed to the very ideals she painted so often. In stark contrast to their recent popular reception as revealing a universal, natural mother-child relationship, her representations of mothers and their children in various different contexts, were in fact produced in a very specific historical setting and reflect specific contemporary ideas and anxieties about race, class, gender, and the empire. In essence, far from being set off in the separate spheres of feminine domesticity and masculine politics, when read within the context in which they were created, these

¹²² Jane Quigley, “Volendam as a Sketching Ground,” *Studio* 38 (1906): 124

¹²³ Garb, 14.

images reveal that “racial vigilance and virility were domestic and household affairs, and vulnerabilities of body and mind were tightly bound to the conjugal and sexual arrangements in which Europeans lived.”¹²⁴

Ideas about home and empire were clearly tightly linked in the years surrounding the turn of the twentieth century. As Felicity Nussbaum argues, “the invention of the ‘other’ woman of empire enabled the consolidation of the cult of domesticity in England.”¹²⁵ This chapter has continued to explore the links between the varying levels of “home” in more detail, showing that each understanding of home mapped onto the other. In the next chapter, we will return to this cult of domesticity and examine how the “Other” was equally present in Western domestic spaces, helping also to construct Western domestic identity on its own ground.

¹²⁴ Stoler, 1.

¹²⁵ Nussbaum, 1.

Chapter 4

Decorating the contact zone: hybridity and imperial home décor

I. Introduction

The estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world – the unhomeliness – that is the condition of extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiations. To be unhomed is not to be homeless, nor can the ‘unhomely’ be easily accommodated in that familiar division of social life into private and public spheres. ... The recesses of the domestic space become sites for history’s most intricate invasions. In that displacement, the borders between home and world become confused; and, uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting.

Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*¹

The first chapter of this dissertation began with Emily Carr’s remarks on the colourful and strangely shaped orchid that decorated her East Anglia sanatorium room, a flower she described as foreign, mysterious, and utterly un-English. She was correct: the orchid was a decidedly exotic element in the private confines of her bedroom. A tropical flower, orchids were the target of a nineteenth-century collecting frenzy among a British elite that shipped the plants from the Caribbean, South America, and Asia home to Britain in such numbers that in some areas the flower became extinct in its natural habitat – a Victorian “orchidelerium” to match the “tulipmania” of the seventeenth century.² Carr’s orchid was, however, certainly not unique or even particularly notable in its foreign origins. Rather, objects perceived to be “foreign” or “exotic” filled the

¹ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1993), 7.

² For an engaging account of the history of orchid collecting in Victorian Britain, see Chapters 4 and 5 of Susan Orlean, *The Orchid Thief: A True Story of Beauty and Obsession* (New York: Ballantine, 1998).

metropolitan interior: a very public “invasion,” to use Homi K. Bhabha’s term, into the private spaces of the home.

If that chapter looked at Carr’s ambivalent experience as a foreigner in the imperial home of London, this final section re-examines the same question from a different perspective. Here, I move away from the metaphorical nation-as-home and take up the more quotidian definition of the home as a private, traditionally feminine space within the context of the nineteenth-century ideology of separate spheres. I return to the well-studied subject of women’s representations of domestic interiors and the female figures who inhabited them, not to show once again that Canadian women artists were affected by this ideology (they certainly were), nor that they somehow escaped or evaded it (they often did), but to argue that the lines between public and private were unstable, and that the so-called public world of politics, economics, and imperialism is, in fact, clearly evident within women’s depictions of the supposedly private sphere. If earlier chapters have traced the varying ways in which Canadian women artists located and negotiated their understandings of home while in the empire, this chapter performs a reversal, locating the empire within the home.

This chapter examines two particularly rich examples of representations of spaces that blur the boundaries between private/public and home/away: Montreal artist Helen McNicoll’s *The Chintz Sofa* (1913) (fig. 89) and Haligonian painter Frances Jones’s *In the Conservatory* (1883) (fig. 90). Though three decades separate their creation, the images and their makers share many similarities. Both women belonged to white, wealthy, Anglo-Canadian families who made their

names and fortunes in the colonial project (McNicoll's father was Vice-President of the Canadian Pacific Railway; Jones's, a successful West Indies merchant and politician). Both were physically disabled (McNicoll was left deaf by a bout with scarlet fever when she was just two years old; Jones's rheumatoid arthritis ended her painting career after only a decade). And both were professionals who were trained in avant-garde environments and who exhibited in prestigious institutions in both Canada and Europe. Accordingly, both paintings reveal a perhaps surprising progressiveness in terms of their shared Impressionist style and in their modern subject matter of a female figure in a bourgeois interior absorbed in an activity traditionally coded as "feminine" (sewing, in McNicoll's canvas; reading, in Jones's). Finally, each image reflects a space that is both physically and imaginatively liminal. By situating both *The Chintz Sofa* and *In the Conservatory* in the specific colonial contexts in which they were produced and in which they circulated, I argue that McNicoll's and Jones's works each reveal not a sphere that was isolated from the outside world, but a hybridized "contact zone" that is neither fully private nor public, home, nor away.

This interpretation of the spaces depicted in McNicoll's and Jones's works is indebted to the important postcolonial work of Bhabha and Mary Louise Pratt. Defined as the "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination,"³ Pratt's "contact zones" are interactive spaces in which each

³ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), 4. She later specifies, "By using the term 'contact,' I aim to foreground the interactive, improvisational dimensions of colonial encounters so easily ignored or suppressed by diffusionist accounts of conquest and domination" (7).

participant influences the other to produce new cultural forms – a process that she, drawing upon anthropological theory, calls transculturation. Likewise, Bhabha proposes that it is the phenomenon of hybridity that characterizes the colonial encounter, arguing that the hybrid body and culture, and what he calls “in-between” spaces are all necessary products of the exertion of imperial power.⁴ Though Pratt and Bhabha primarily examine how contact zones and in-between spaces function in the colonies, each also acknowledges that these are not processes exclusive to the far reaches of empire. Indeed, Pratt explicitly asks her readers to imagine how the colonies might have equally influenced the metropole:

Borders and all, the entity called Europe was constructed from the outside in as much as from the inside out ... While the imperial metropolis tends to understand itself as determining the periphery (in the emanating glow of the civilizing mission or the cash flow of development, for example), it habitually blinds itself to the ways in which the periphery determines the metropolis – beginning, perhaps, with the latter’s obsessive need to present and re-present its peripheries and its others continually to itself.⁵

Subsequent scholars have taken up Pratt’s challenge, examining the ways in which the contact zone might operate within the confines of the imperial metropolis and the ways in which the latter might also be understood as a hybrid, in-between space.⁶

This chapter extends this train of thought and argues that even the home – that most private of spaces – might fruitfully be seen as a contact zone or in-between space in the context of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century

⁴ Bhabha, 7.

⁵ Pratt, 6.

⁶ Studies specifically engaging with Pratt’s idea of the contact zone within the metropole include Antoinette Burton, *At the Heart of the Empire: Indians and the Colonial Encounter in Late-Victorian Britain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Felix Driver and David Gilbert, “Heart of Empire? Landscape, Space, and Performance in Imperial London,” *Environment and Planning D: Space and Society* 16 (1998): 11-28; and Inderpal Grewal, *Home and Harem: Nation, Gender, Empire, and the Cultures of Travel* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996).

British imperialism. The so-called “foreign” or “exotic” objects and designs that invaded Western walls, floors, and end tables in the decades between London’s Great Exhibition of 1851 and the First World War are today utterly unremarkable in their very pervasiveness. Regardless of twenty-first-century impressions however, their inclusion in metropolitan homes in the nineteenth-century did create hybrid spaces, contact zones that brought the “rest of the world” not just into the West, but into the West’s parlours, kitchens, and bedrooms.

For his part, Bhabha has suggested that this hybridity is an always-already-built-in subversive element of colonial systems, and ultimately a threat to imperial power. The hybrid, he proposes, is an unpredictable, uncontainable, and uncontrollable threat to imperial authority that ultimately reveals the artificiality of the Self/Other and metropole/colony binaries that form the backbone of imperialist ideologies.⁷ This transgression is present in McNicoll’s and Jones’s images: in several ways, both paintings challenge the norms of Victorian and Edwardian femininity and break down the boundaries between private and public. However, caution is necessary before celebrating these paintings as rejecting dominant power structures. They were, after all, produced within a colonial context, and the cross-cultural interactions they reflect were, as Pratt says, “highly asymmetrical.” Indeed, by smoothly incorporating the foreign into their homes, Western women played an important role in domesticating the empire. As representations of this process, *The Chintz Sofa* and *In the Conservatory* function to mask, neutralize, and naturalize the uneven power relations that lay behind their creation.

⁷ See especially Chapter 6 of *The Location of Culture*.

II. “Cosmopolitan domesticity:” foreign objects in the Western home

An undated photograph of Frances Jones shows the artist in an interior space, seated on the arm of a chair draped in an eye-catching striped fabric (fig. 6). The space is crammed with various objects. Paintings, prints, and photographs hang haphazardly, are propped against the wall, and stuffed into each other's frames. These are joined by a selection of more exotic items: a Japanese paper fan hangs on the wall next to a decorative (possibly jade) pendant, while the artist holds an Orientalist peacock feather fan against her legs to display it for the viewer. Porcelain knickknacks and jars filled with flowers are scattered across the sideboard that stands against the back wall. Like the chair, every surface in the photograph is covered in fabric; these not only conceal the functional furniture, but are also draped casually on the sideboard and hung from the wall as decorations in themselves. Altogether, the room is a quintessential example of the Aestheticist-inspired “artful interior,” in which every surface is seen as an opportunity for personal expression, and the interior as a whole treated as an art object in itself.⁸

Following the lead of feminist scholars Lynne Walker and Vron Ware, this chapter explores the “rather volatile meanings of what can seem disarmingly

⁸ Marilyn Johnson, “The Artful Interior,” in *In Pursuit of Beauty: Americans and the Aesthetic Movement*, eds. Doreen Bolger Burke et al. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1986), 110-41. Several of Jones's paintings show an equal obsession with objects and decorated interiors, including, for example, *Sonata Pathetique/At the Piano* (1882, Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management), which depicts a fashionably-dressed woman playing a piano, surrounded by fans, vases, fabrics draping the instrument and walls, and a chintz chair and Oriental rug.

innocent household objects.”⁹ Influenced by the turn towards “thing theory” and material culture studies, I insist upon the significance of objects that might now be considered banal: namely, a rather unremarkably designed sofa upholstered in an old-fashioned flowery print and a collection of colourful potted houseplants.

Since the publication of Arjun Appadurai’s influential *The Social Life of Things* in 1986, it has been well-acknowledged that everyday objects play an important role in shaping people’s worlds, that they have multiple and shifting meanings depending on context, and that they might indeed have their own stories to tell.¹⁰

In this respect, an object must be seen, as Joanna de Groot has written, as “a dynamic *agent* in the processes of material change ... rather than just an *effect* of changes.”¹¹ A couch, therefore, can function as more than simply a piece of furniture on which to sit, and plants might act as more than just pretty decorations. Instead, the objects themselves suggest a much wider range of meanings for the spaces in which they reside; indeed, in these particular examples, the objects signify in ways that make evident a slippage or gap in the traditional meanings of these types of representations. As Bill Brown has suggested, “These days, history can unabashedly begin with things and with the senses by which we apprehend them.”¹²

⁹ Lynne Walker and Vron Ware, “Political Pincushions: Decorating the Abolitionist Interior, 1787-1865,” in *Domestic Space: Reading the Nineteenth-Century Interior*, eds. Inga Bryden and Janet Floyd (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 59.

¹⁰ Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

¹¹ Joanna de Groot, “Metropolitan Desires and Colonial Connections: Reflections on Consumption and Empire,” in *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World*, eds. Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 166.

¹² Bill Brown, “Thing Theory,” *Critical Inquiry* 28, no. 1 (Autumn 2001): 2.

Things are a particularly good place to start for a study of nineteenth-century history, given that the Victorian era was, as Anne McClintock has described, a time when “middle-class domestic space became crammed as never before with furniture, clocks, mirrors, paintings, stuffed animals, ornaments, guns, and myriad gewgaws and knickknacks.”¹³ As writers such as John Ruskin and William Morris (in England) and Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau (in the United States) worked to establish the space of the home as the foundation of social and moral reform for their respective nations, increasing value was understandably placed on the clever arrangement and decoration of that space as the outward reflection of the values learned within it.¹⁴ Aided too by the Aesthetic and Arts and Crafts movements (and later, Art Nouveau), the latter half of the nineteenth century experienced an explosion of popular interest in design and decorating in both Europe and North America. The appearance of homemaking handbooks and manuals (including Charles Locke Eastlake’s *Hints on Household Taste* [1886], Clarence Cook’s *The House Beautiful* [1878], and sisters Catherine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *The American Woman’s*

¹³ Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (London: Routledge, 1995), 208. Thad Logan, among others, has argued that it is this eclecticism and the sheer volume of objects contained within interiors, a trend that began around 1860, that defines Victorian decorating (*The Victorian Parlour: A Cultural Study* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001], 7-9). On the value of this eclecticism and of “clutter” as a pleasure in itself, see Jason Edwards and Imogen Hart, “The Victorian Interior: A Collaborative, Eclectic Introduction,” in *Rethinking the Interior, c. 1867-1896: Aestheticism and Arts and Crafts*, eds. Jason Edwards and Imogen Hart (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2010), 12-14.

In addition to the texts cited elsewhere in this chapter, solid studies of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century decorating include Katherine C. Grier, *Culture and Comfort: People, Parlours, and Upholstery, 1850-1930* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988); Judy Giles, *The Parlour and the Suburb: Domestic Identities, Class, Femininity, and Modernity* (Oxford: Berg, 2004); Marilyn Ferris Motz and Pat Browne, eds., *Making the American Home: Middle-Class Women and Domestic Material Culture, 1840-1940* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Press, 1988).

¹⁴ Christopher Reed, introduction to *Not at Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1996), 12-14.

Home [1869]), specialty decorating magazines (like *House Beautiful* [founded in 1896], *The House* [in 1897], and *House and Garden* [in 1901]), articles on decoration in newspapers, art journals, and women's magazines such as *Godey's Lady's Book*, *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Good Housekeeping*, as well as a growing number of pamphlets, advertisements, and catalogues made the discourse of home decoration available to larger segments of the population than ever before.¹⁵

It is at this time that the ability to properly select, purchase, combine, and display eclectic objects in a logical, but clever manner became an important means of expression of one's personality in a modern sense.¹⁶ However, home decoration went beyond the advertisement of individual identity to function as an expression of evolving class and gender ideals. The new interest in home decoration was in part the product of a shifting class system and a growing consumer culture. Where once decorating on this scale had been the near-exclusive province of the wealthy, it was now the bourgeois family that was charged with the task of re-shaping taste in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The aesthetic of casual eclecticism evident in the photograph of Frances Jones grew alongside the new concerns of this class: these families lacked antique heirlooms and needed instead to purchase them new; the absence of grand family

¹⁵ Kristin Hoganson, *Consumers' Imperium: The Global Production of American Domesticity, 1865-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 61.

¹⁶ Karen Halttunen argues that a shift occurred around the turn of the twentieth century that positioned the domestic interior, particularly the living room, as an expression of its decorator's personality; conversely, this need to express one's personality "shaped a new understanding of the meaning of domestic things that has proved crucial to the emergence of mass consumer society in the twentieth century" ("From Parlor to Living Room: Domestic Space, Interior Decoration, and the Culture of Personality," in *Consuming Visions: Accumulation and Display of Goods in America, 1880-1920*, ed. Simon J. Bronner [New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1989], 159).

estates and a much greater likelihood of moving frequently required new or portable things to decorate and re-decorate with; and the further absence of a large household staff to clean these spaces meant that smaller, simpler, and less valuable objects were required to adorn the family space. Luckily, this growing class had more disposable income to spend on such projects than ever before.¹⁷

If seventeenth- and eighteenth-century trends in collecting and display have tended to be characterized as aristocratic and masculine (exemplified in trends such as the curiosity cabinet), the contents of the Victorian home were for the most part controlled by middle-class women. Being ideologically positioned within the private sphere of the home, it was women who were primarily responsible for its physical appearance.¹⁸ The results of their decoration spoke to the feminine taste, moral character, and good judgment of its female inhabitant; as Thad Logan writes, “It was women who were responsible for deploying objects to create the interior space identifiable as ‘home.’ They were, in some sense, its inmates, but they were also its producers, its curators, and its ornaments.”¹⁹

Beginning with the publication of Thorstein Veblen’s *The Theory of the Leisure Class* in 1899, numerous scholars have examined this association between the bourgeois woman and her things – a trend that carried over into artistic

¹⁷ Lisa Tiersten, “The Chic Interior and the Feminine Modern: Home Decorating as High Art in Turn-of-the-Century Paris,” in *Not at Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture*, ed. Christopher Reed (London: Thames and Hudson, 1996), 19-20.

¹⁸ Logan, 106-7. Deborah Cohen challenges this common understanding, arguing for an equal role for men in home decoration up until the *fin-de-siècle* trial of Oscar Wilde solidified the growing perception that such concerns were best left to ladies (Deborah Cohen, *Household Gods: The British and their Possessions* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006], 89-104). See also the excellent and wide-ranging essays in John Styles and Amanda Vickery, eds., *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700-1830* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006) and in Victoria de Grazia, with Ellen Furlough, eds., *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

¹⁹ Logan, 26.

representation.²⁰ In this respect, the photograph of Jones, like *The Chintz Sofa* and *In the Conservatory*, falls into the popular nineteenth-century Anglo-American Aesthetic trend of depicting a female figure in an interior surrounded by various objects. Recall, for example, the languid ladies of Whistler, Chase, and Forbes (figs. 39-42), positioned in interiors filled with fans, flowers, china, paintings, and other decorative objects, posing as though they themselves were meant to be seen and appreciated for their beauty, rarity, delicacy, and worth. Like those ladies, neither Jones, nor the two female figures in the paintings look out strongly at the viewer. Absorbed in their activities, or, in the case of Jones, simply gazing sideways out of the frame, the female figures might be read as decorative objects to be contemplated and admired amongst their collections.

While the association of women with their things has often been employed as a misogynist stereotype of feminine acquisitiveness, vanity, lack of reason, and susceptibility to temptation (dating, as historians John Styles and Amanda Vickery point out, back to Eve's desire for the apple²¹), art historian Sarah Burns has provided an alternative interpretation of these represented female figures, arguing that they might instead be seen as active and decisive curators of objects: "cultural shoppers" rather than passive figures to whom consumption simply happens, an argument that follows recent trends in material culture studies.²² This

²⁰ For example, Halttunen, 186; Logan, 90; Tiersten, 30. On this trend in representation in particular, see especially Bailey Van Hook, *Angels of Art: Women and Art in American Society, 1876-1914* (University Park: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 181-82.

²¹ John Styles and Amanda Vickery, introduction to *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700-1830* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 2.

²² Sarah Burns, "The Price of Beauty: Art, Commerce, and the Late Nineteenth-Century American Studio Interior," in *American Iconology: New Approaches to Nineteenth-Century Art and Literature*, ed. David C. Miller (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 229. On nineteenth-century consumption as an active process rather than a passive one, see also Inga Bryden and Janet

seems especially true of Chase's image, for example, where the female figure might literally be a patron in the process of buying a work of art. In this context, historian Erika Rappaport convincingly argues that women's lead role in consumer culture was in itself a serious challenge to the ideology of separate spheres, and ultimately, that this perception of a "natural" alliance between women and their consumption of objects did nothing less than completely re-configure the public sphere in nineteenth-century London to include middle-class white women.²³

If the ways in which gender and class interacted with material culture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have now been thoroughly examined, much less attention has been paid to the ways in which objects and interiors functioned in terms of the construction and display of their owners' racial and imperial identities. This is somewhat surprising, given that the emergence of the nineteenth-century British cult of domesticity and its obsession with decoration was intimately linked to the wider empire; indeed, it was quite "inseparable from an economy dependent on the circulation of imperial commodities," as art historian Romita Ray concisely summarizes.²⁴ After all, the objects on display in the photograph of Jones and in *The Chintz Sofa* and *In the Conservatory* are specifically foreign objects: Japanese and perhaps-Turkish fans. A couch covered

Floyd, introduction to *Domestic Space: Reading the Nineteenth-Century Interior* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 7.

²³ Erika Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London's West End* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 5.

²⁴ Romita Ray, "Storm in a Tea Cup? Visualising Tea Consumption in the British Empire," in *Art and the British Empire*, eds. Tim Barringer, Geoff Quilley, and Douglas Fordham (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 219. See also Erika Rappaport, "Imperial Possessions, Cultural Histories, and the Material Turn: Response," *Victorian Studies* 50, no. 2 (Winter 2008): 289-296, for a useful survey of the recent literature on the topic.

in an Indian print. And a collection of bright tropical plants. The importation of such things into the West did not start in the nineteenth century; beginning in the Victorian period, however, a new phase began, marked by differences in both the character of the market and the sheer demand for exotic goods. The desire for foreign objects reached its peak in the decades immediately preceding the First World War²⁵ – uncoincidentally, the same decades that saw the peak of the extension of the British Empire.

More so than the ownership of domestically-produced things, it was through this literal possession of the foreign that membership in a white, imperial community was most acutely expressed within the home; in essence, Ray writes, foreign objects were one way in which “empire was rendered visible by its citizenry to themselves.”²⁶ Unsurprisingly, McNicoll’s and Jones’s canvasses are far from unique examples of representations of these exotic things in Western domestic settings: throughout the late nineteenth century and well into the twentieth, exhibition catalogues list innumerable titles that allude to kimonos, fans, vases, and screens, to name just a few of the most popular items.²⁷ Generally studied in art history in relation to the Aesthetic movement, the craze for so-called foreign objects across Europe and North America must be situated more firmly

²⁵ Logan, 182-83.

²⁶ Ray, “Storm in a Tea Cup?,” 206-7.

²⁷ In addition to Elizabeth Forbes’s Japanese-influenced works mentioned in Chapter 2, other Canadian women’s examples include Laura Muntz Lyall, *The Japanese Kimono* (1902, University of Lethbridge Art Collection); and numerous works by Mary Hiester Reid, including *Chrysanthemums: A Japanese Arrangement* (c. 1895, AGO), *Morning Sunshine* (1913, NGC), and the now-lost *Ming Horseman*. Lady Charlotte Schreiber, the sole female founding member of the RCA, was known for her extensive collection of ceramic and porcelain, which she donated to the South Kensington Museum in 1884 (see Ann Eatwell, “Private Pleasure, Public Beneficence: Lady Charlotte Schreiber and Ceramic Collecting,” in *Women in the Victorian Art World*, ed. Clarissa Campbell Orr [Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1995], 125-145).

within the colonial context in which it took place.²⁸ Indeed, it must be seen as part of a larger trend in which objects perceived to be exotic flowed into Western cities, beginning especially with the 1851 Great Exhibition in London, followed by the ever-more elaborate displays of the World's Fairs and International Exhibitions, and eventually institutionalized in the collections of establishments like the South Kensington Museum.²⁹ The department store followed the

²⁸ Two excellent recent studies of the Aesthetic interior have been written by Jason Edwards and Imogen Hart, and Charlotte Gere, however neither deals very significantly with the imperial context or acknowledges the issues raised by the foreignness of many of these objects, beyond the usual cursory discussion of the mania for Japonisme (Edwards and Hart and Charlotte Gere, *Artistic Circles: Design and Decoration in the Aesthetic Movement* [London: V&A Publishing, 2010]).

While a considerable amount of literature exists on the actual interiors, the late nineteenth century seems to have seen less research on representations of these interiors than has the eighteenth century, particularly in terms of women's contributions to the genre. Though it is now a commonplace that this kind of cross-cultural encounter was integral to the development of modern art (think, for instance, of Picasso's collection of African masks), histories of art also tend to divorce representations of the domestic sphere from the category of the modern at exactly this point (Reed, 7). See, however, a recent essay by Jennifer T. Criss, which examines the use of Japanese objects such as the *uchiwa* fan to construct a certain modern artistic and privileged class and gender identity in the work of Berthe Morisot and Mary Cassatt. Criss however neglects to engage in any depth with the explicit foreignness of the fans. Even when looking at Morisot's *The Coiffure* (1894, National Museum of Fine Arts, Buenos Aires), in which, she argues, the French women in the foreground are being visually contrasted to the represented Japanese female figure on the fan in the upper-right of the picture, she does not acknowledge that the identity being constructed is a specifically white, European femininity rather than a universal feminine ideal ("Japanese Objects in Impressionist Women's Art: Collecting Culture and Creating Identity," in *Material Women, 1750-1950: Consuming Desires and Collecting Practices*, eds. Maureen Daly Goggin and Beth Fowkes Tobin [Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009], 295-313).

²⁹ Thomas Richards has argued that the Great Exhibition was the starting point for this new phase of consumerism: "In the short space of time between the Great Exhibition of 1851 and the First World War, the commodity became and has remained the one subject of mass culture, the centerpiece of everyday life, the focal point of all representation, the dead centre of the modern world" (*The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990], 1). On the Great Exhibition as the kick-off point for the new importance of home decoration, ornament, and domestic consumption, see also Logan, 47-48, McClintock, 208-9.

A considerable amount of scholarship has been done on the role of the World's Fair and museum, and the material culture in their custodies, in relation to imperialism. See, for example, Tim Barringer and Tom Flynn, eds., *Colonialism and the Object: Empire, Material Culture, and the Museum* (London: Routledge, 1998); Annie E. Coombes, *Reinventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture, and Popular Imagination in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); Grewal, Chapter 3; Curtis Hinsley, "The World as Marketplace: Commodification of the Exotic at the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893," in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, eds. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Levine (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 344-365.

exhibitionary complex's lead, stocking the shelves of London and Paris, Halifax and Montreal with objects from across the world, allowing eager shoppers to "quite literally consum[e] the empire."³⁰

In this respect, it was things, as much as people and ideas, that connected the British World; John Styles and Amanda Vickery have said, for example, that "The British Atlantic Empire was ... an "Empire of Goods," held together not just by political authority, military force, and a common language, but by a shared material culture constantly nourished by flows of commodities."³¹ Historian Kristin Hoganson has called this immense Western consumer interest in the foreign in the latter half of the nineteenth century "cosmopolitan domesticity," finding the intimate spaces of American home to be ideal examples of contact zones in which connections and meeting points between the local and the global, and the private and the public occurred. Even as the Western home was increasingly popularly conceived of as a sanctuary/cage for middle class women

³⁰ Driver and Gilbert, 22. On the development of the department store in relation to these themes, see Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*; Mica Nava, "Modernity's Disavowal: Women, the City, and the Department Store," in *Modern Times: Reflections on a Century of English Modernity*, eds. Mica Nava and Alan O'Shea (London: Routledge, 1996), 38-76. On Victorian commodity culture as it related to imperialism more generally, see especially McClintock and Richards. In the American context, see Hoganson, *Consumers' Imperium* and Mona Domosh, *American Commodities in the Age of Empire* (London: Routledge, 2006).

Other scholars have located the birth of this consumer and display culture in an earlier age, focusing on the first decades of the eighteenth century, seeing shifts in the number, kind, cost, and availability of things, as well as a change in individuals' personal relationships with their things. See, for example, Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger, eds., *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires, and Delectable Goods* (New York: Palgrave, 2005); Ann Bermingham and John Brewer, eds., *The Consumption of Culture, 1600-1800: Image, Object, Text* (London: Routledge, 1995); John Brewer and Roy Porter, eds., *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993); Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects: Women, Shopping, and Business in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Grant McCracken, *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and J.H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982); Styles and Vickery).

³¹ Styles and Vickery, 1.

and a haven against masses invading the city from the countryside and from across the oceans, it was simultaneously becoming a nexus for commercial and consumer relations that stretched across the world.³²

This interest in foreign objects was hardly coincidental: even as laws in the West were moving to restrict the immigration of foreign peoples from the very same countries, being foreign was precisely what was appealing about them as objects (though, as we shall see, this was not a universal opinion).³³ A link between the absent foreign body and the present foreign object might also be traced by pointing to the history of slavery. To what extent might we consider the imperial greed for colonial objects of all types as a stand-in for first, the commodification and possession of actual colonial bodies, and then, the loss of the same through abolition and emancipation? The elision between foreign objects and foreign bodies, especially enslaved bodies was a longstanding convention of Western visual culture. In Pierre Mignard's *Louise Renée de Penancoet Kéroüalle, Duchess of Portsmouth* (1682) (fig. 91), for example, visual associations are made between the body of the non-white servant or slave and the luxury objects (including pearls, coral, and a shell) presented to the female sitter; both function to highlight not only the worldly connections and wealth of the sitter, but also her benevolence and civilizing influence, as well as her beauty in the context of an idealized whiteness.³⁴ Furthermore, these exotic objects are

³² Hoganson, *Consumers' Imperium*, 15.

³³ *Ibid.*, 9.

³⁴ Angela Rosenthal, "Visceral Culture: Blushing and the Legibility of Whiteness in Eighteenth-Century British Portraiture," *Art History* 27, no. 4 (September 2004): 568-72. On this trope, see also Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power: Colonial Subjects in Eighteenth Century British Painting* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), Chapter 1; and David Dabydeen,

gendered: Mignard draws on tropes of plenty, fertility, and female sexuality in his image through the iconographic combination of the black female body and the selection of exotic goods. Examples abound of this trope in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century visual culture; indeed, the convention was so well-established that Manet could effectively (and notoriously) draw on it in his *Olympia* (1863, Musée d'Orsay) to make a point about commodification and (or perhaps *of*) female sexuality. Given these well-known associations then, it may be possible to say that even when the non-white body is no longer present in the image, the white, colonial "privilege of access and exclusivity of gluttony and overindulgence"³⁵ associated with slavery lives on in the objects themselves.

As such, the collection and display of exotic objects by middle-class white women acted to reinforce the privileged class and racial status of their owners, displaying her wealth and level of access to other cultures, as well as her good taste, artistic eye, and her presumed education and open-mindedness in the accumulation of such a collection. They also demonstrated the owner's power to accumulate, display, and change the meaning of objects by controlling the context in which they were used. Art historian Deborah Root explains why this is problematic:

The regard for difference can also become another way to control what has been determined to fall into the category marked 'foreign.' ... It can operate as an alibi for various forms of colonial encroachment and can serve as an attempt to domesticate and bring under control difference. ... More important, it can presuppose the right to decide what is valuable and interesting. What this comes down to is the assumption that the colonist

Hogarth's Blacks: Images of Blacks in Eighteenth-Century English Art (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987).

³⁵ Charmaine Nelson, *Representing the Black Female Subject in Western Art* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 84.

possesses the master code within which all data, all people and customs, all art objects, can be assimilated and judged.³⁶

Indeed, these objects were prized precisely because they made racial and cultural difference clear: Thad Logan notes that “‘foreign’ things constituted a special category of home furnishings, and that there was a keen distinction to be drawn between the normal style of an English room and the strange furnishings of different cultures.”³⁷ “Normal,” here, clearly indicates white, Anglo-Saxon culture. Moreover, the collection and value placed on such objects encouraged a feeling of imperial belonging in white women; as Kristin Hoganson writes, “Cosmopolitan decorators embraced the idea of homes as museums because they endorsed the racial, class, national, and imperial ends that museums served. They needed to look no further than their mantelpieces and corner tables to appreciate the benefits that accrued to them as the wives and daughters of the ruling class of a powerful nation in an imperial age.”³⁸

With an approach that combines thing theory with post-colonial concerns, Phillip Crang and Sonia Ashmore have usefully argued for the need to see these kinds of objects as constitutive of what they call a “transnational space of things,” calling on scholars to look not only at how objects are used, or the ways in which they signify differently in varied places and times, but also at how objects specifically act to link these disparate places and times, thus challenging the idea of fixed and bounded spaces or spheres. “Things,” they write, “enact the everyday as transnational space, complicating the temporalities and spatialities of the here

³⁶ Deborah Root, *Cannibal Culture: Art, Appropriation, and the Commodification of Difference* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), 21.

³⁷ Logan, 195.

³⁸ Hoganson, *Consumers' Imperium*, 48.

and now, connecting and disconnecting.”³⁹ In this conception, the Indian-British fabric and tropical flowers evident in McNicoll’s and Jones’s paintings of domestic interiors both reflect cross-cultural contact and actively construct that contact, producing a hybrid space. Critical to their study, however, is an insistence that things, the movement of these things, and the cross-cultural connections they enact are not “free-floating, nor inevitably benign,” but always politicized and embedded within existing power structures.⁴⁰ In stark contrast to the traditional histories of modern art that position Gauguin, Matisse, and Picasso in the role of bringing non-Western things into the history of Western art, in the works of McNicoll and Jones it is specifically the once-herself-objectified female consumer/decorator (and painter) who serves as the “conduit for the flow of culture” from the colonies to the metropolis, or in more active terms, who act as “agents of cultural exchange between colonizers and colonized.”⁴¹

III. The Politics of Chintz

Canadian art historian Carol Lowrey describes Helen McNicoll’s 1913 canvas *The Chintz Sofa* (fig. 89) as a reflection of the “indoor intimism” of “comfortable domestic surroundings.”⁴² Upon first glance, this seems to be an appropriate description: the subject – a woman seated in an interior space on a

³⁹ Philip Crang and Sonia Ashmore, “The Transnational Spaces of Things: South Asian Textiles in Britain and the Grammar of Ornament,” *European Review of History* 16, no. 5 (2009): 659.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 660.

⁴¹ Nupur Chaudhuri, “Shawls, Jewelry, Curry, and Rice in Victorian Britain,” in *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance*, eds. Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 232.

⁴² Carol Lowrey, “‘Into Line with the Progress of Art’: The Impressionist Tradition in Canadian Painting, 1885-1920,” in *Visions of Light and Air: Canadian Impressionism, 1885-1920*, ed. Carol Lowrey (New York: Americas Society Art Gallery, 1995), 35.

couch upholstered in a flowery fabric, quietly absorbed in her sewing or embroidery – seems easy to categorize as a representation of an appropriately feminized private sphere, falling within the genre well-established a generation earlier by Impressionist women such as Mary Cassatt and Berthe Morisot. However, as Kristina Huneault has shown, when McNicoll's paintings are placed in their appropriate social and historical context, ambiguities begin to appear, and a more subversive reading is made possible.⁴³ Instead of a reiteration of bourgeois gender ideals, Huneault finds instead “something faint, but perceptible ... that lends credence to the idea that femininity does not reside straightforwardly in the world that McNicoll envisions.”⁴⁴ Indeed, when viewed in the very specific context in which it was created and in which it circulated, this interior no longer reads as an “intimate” space cut off from the political, economic, and social concerns of the public sphere. Rather, *The Chintz Sofa* reflects a complex space that signifies in multiple ways and clearly blurs the boundaries between home and away on several levels.

Helen McNicoll, born in Toronto in 1879 (and moving to Montreal a year after her birth), achieved a significant level of success as a professional artist before dying of diabetes in England in 1915 at the early age of thirty-six. Undeterred by deafness (caused by a bout of scarlet fever when she was two), McNicoll's art education was extensive and took place in some of the most advanced institutions accessible to her, including the Art Association of Montreal and the Slade School of Art in London. Following her time at the latter, the artist

⁴³ Kristina Huneault, “Impressions of Difference: The Painted Canvases of Helen McNicoll,” *Art History* 27, no. 2 (April 2004): 222.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 224.

moved to the rural artist colony at St. Ives, and went on to travel throughout England and Europe. She seems to have lived abroad, based in London, from this point on, although she returned to Montreal for a part of every year, and apparently kept a studio in her hometown. While McNicoll sold very few works to public institutions during her lifetime, she had an extensive exhibiting career, becoming a member and showing her work at some of the leading institutions of her day, including the AAM, the Royal Canadian Academy, and the Ontario Society of Artists in Canada, and the Royal Society of British Artists and the Society of Women Artists in England.⁴⁵

Easily mistaken for a living room or parlour, *The Chintz Sofa* is, in fact, a depiction of the London studio the artist shared with her partner, British artist Dorothea Sharp; the latter has been identified as the figure in the painting.⁴⁶ As such, McNicoll's image joins a host of similar images of artist's studios, a particularly fashionable subject in American Impressionism, if not French.⁴⁷ Art historian Linda Docherty has called this relatively unstudied subgenre the "domesticated studio picture," describing works like William Merritt Chase's *The Friendly Call* (1880) and Edmund Tarbell's *Across the Room* (1899) (figs. 92 and

⁴⁵ In addition to Huneault's study, the most complete biography of McNicoll's life can be found in Natalie Luckyj's exhibition catalogue, *Helen McNicoll: A Canadian Impressionist* (Toronto: AGO, 1999). See also Joan Murray, *Helen McNicoll, 1879-1915: Oil Paintings from the Estate* (Toronto: Morris Gallery, 1974).

⁴⁶ Luckyj, 63.

⁴⁷ Kristin Ringelberg, *Redefining Gender in American Impressionist Studio Paintings: Work Place/Domestic Space* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2010), 6. Ringelberg proposes that this difference in interest in the subject might point to broader national differences in how artists perceived themselves and how they were perceived by others (6). However popular the subject was for American men, Ringelberg also demonstrates that it was not at all a common subject for women artists (whether American or French). Though she acknowledges that women may have represented their studios without an acknowledgment that they were in fact studios (like McNicoll's picture), very few paintings of obvious studio spaces exist. She points to the work of American painter Mary Fairchild MacMonnies Low as one exception to the rule (see Chapter 3, esp. 73-89).

93) (as well as the former's previously-mentioned *The Tenth Street Studio*) as representing spaces "in which the lines between home and workplace, so firmly drawn by urban capitalism, were purposefully blurred."⁴⁸ These scenes are set in the artist's studio, although there is little in either image to suggest this location. As Docherty notes, the subjects of such works frequently confuse the boundaries between private and public through their uncomfortable classification as both domestic objects and artistic props: are the objects represented here props for the studio or regular adornments of the home? Are the female figures wives, mothers, and daughters, or patrons or models? Frequently they function in multiple ways.⁴⁹ For her part, art historian Kristin Ringelberg proposes that the general lack of scholarly interest in such paintings might be precisely because of the impossibility of firmly categorizing the spaces and the figures they represent within traditional ideas about gender and separate spheres.⁵⁰ McNicoll's studio, which also provides the setting for at least two other works from the same period – two pendant paintings done around 1914, both entitled *The Victorian Dress* (figs. 94 and 95) – is a similar in-between space, operating as both private and public.

In opposition to the stereotype of "the romantically lonely artist suffering for art in a tiny garret,"⁵¹ Sarah Burns has shown that successful artists' studios functioned more often on multiple levels within the context of a consumer culture that did not ignore the art world:

⁴⁸ Linda Docherty, "Model-Families: The Domesticated Studio Pictures of William Merritt Chase and Edmund C. Tarbell," in *Not at Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture*, ed. Christopher Reed (London: Thames and Hudson, 1996), 48.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 50-51.

⁵⁰ Ringelberg, 13-14.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 26.

the decorated studio became in essence a salesroom: an aesthetic boutique, where the carefully compounded art atmosphere functioned very specifically both to set off the painter's own wares and to create desire among potential clientele by seducing their senses through the romantic associations of the aesthetic commodities on show. In this respect, the painter's studio was closely analogous to the contemporary department store, where merchants learned to concoct an atmosphere of rich, evocative displays to tempt the consumer.⁵²

Not simply a private site dedicated to the artist's personal self-expression, the studio was also a site of public exhibition and networking, and thus a space where classes, genders, races, and nationalities mixed and mingled, as everyone from models, friends, family, colleagues, and patrons moved in and out.⁵³

While the hint of a city skyline outside the window in *The Chintz Sofa* subtly suggests this broader world; McNicoll's letters explicitly indicate her canny use of this hybrid space. Writing to her father on one occasion, she describes holding a show at the studio a week before the annual elections of the RBA in 1913. She notes that fifty-seven people attended, including many members of the society, and that Sharp and her own cousin Dolly used the space to network on her behalf.⁵⁴ Ultimately, McNicoll's friends' efforts were successful and upon the artist's election, even fans on the other side of the Atlantic could catch a glimpse of the inside of her studio when a photograph of the space accompanied an article about the artist and her accomplishments in

⁵² Burns, 209-210.

⁵³ Ringelberg, 32-33. This trend culminated in the prestigious artist house, like those built by Frederic Leighton (Leighton House, 1866) and Whistler (White House, 1877-78) (Gere, 56).

⁵⁴ Helen McNicoll to David McNicoll, March 19, 1913. Helen McNicoll artist file, Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa, ON.

London in the *Montreal Daily Star* (fig. 96).⁵⁵ Notably, the photograph reveals that the chintz sofa was decoratively paired with an oriental rug.

Unlike the photograph, neither *The Chintz Sofa*, nor either version of *The Victorian Dress* includes evidence that this is a utilitarian space that was used in economic ways. While the photograph clearly shows a more functional space, with its light sconce, iron stove and, especially, the prominent easel, the paintings seem to highlight the private, domestic qualities of the space: note, for example, that the curtains are closed in the paintings, but open in the photograph, letting light into the studio (the better to work by). This omission is not necessarily attributable to the artist's gender; in this respect, McNicoll's works are once again quite easily compared to those of male artists like Chase and Tarbell. In each, the "identification of this painting as a studio painting comes from knowledge of the artist rather than a careful study of the work itself."⁵⁶ But perhaps we can still read the difference that gender makes into the painting. Scholars have argued that the public studio-home (like those of Chase and Tarbell) was a particularly masculine trend – that they were, indeed, "key components in the display of masculine identity."⁵⁷ Can we read McNicoll's representation of her place of work as

⁵⁵ "Miss McNicoll Now a Member of Royal Art Society," *Montreal Daily Star*, April 2, 1913. The artist's election was also reported on in the *Weekly Star* and the *Montreal Gazette* ("Miss McNicoll Highly Honoured," *Weekly Star*, April 12, 1913; "Honor Montreal Artist: Miss Helen McNicol Elected a R.B.A.," *Montreal Gazette*, April 2, 1913). Press reporting on artists' homes was enormously popular in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and public demand for stories and photographs of artists' homes and studios was high. Stories, photographs, illustrations, and satirical cartoons were everywhere apparent in diverse sources, including newspapers like the *Times*, art magazines like *Magazine of Art*, *Art Journal*, and *The Studio*, illustrated formats like *Punch* and the *Illustrated London News*, and decorating handbooks and guides (Gere, 24-27).

⁵⁶ Ringelberg, 53.

⁵⁷ Deborah Cherry, *Painting Women: Victorian Women Artists* (London: Routledge, 1993), 98. Women artists were, of course, much less likely to be financially able to set up a purpose-built studio or artist house in the manner of someone like Whistler or Leighton.

potentially re-inscribing the space with contemporary ideals of bourgeois femininity as a defense against the public and economic utility of the studio and its traditional coding as a masculine space? On the other hand, many members of the audience at the RBA and at home in Montreal would presumably have recognized the very identifiable sofa, having been to the studio to view her works or seen it in the newspaper photograph. Clearly, the painting and the space it represents is much more difficult to categorize within traditional definitions of private or public spheres than it first appears.

If *The Chintz Sofa* demonstrates the impossibility of separating work and home by bringing the studio into the home (and the home into the studio), the painting also domesticates the political sphere. Specifically, art historian Natalie Luckyj suggests the possibility of seeing the female figure not as a wife or mother dressed in an immaculate gown doing decorative needlework as befits her moral virtue and class, but as a suffragette in her politically-meaningful white dress working on a piece of memorabilia for the women's rights movement.⁵⁸ Once again, evidence for this is provided by a contextualization of the work and its creator. In 1913, when the painting was created and exhibited, the suffrage campaign was at the very height of its militant phase. The year, which began with the British Parliament's dismissal of the Reform Bill (which included amendments allowing for women's enfranchisement), was marked by

⁵⁸ Luckyj, 63. See also Chapter 3 of Lynne Lacombe Robinson's MA thesis on Helen McNicoll for a reading of *The Chintz Sofa* that expands upon Luckyj's proposed interpretation. Though Luckyj and Robinson provide good readings of the painting in terms of its significance for problematizing a traditional reading of Victorian/Edwardian femininity, neither discusses the eponymous sofa (Lynne Lacombe Robinson, "Tranquil transgressions: the formation of a feminine social identity in Helen McNicoll's representations of women," MA thesis, University of Alberta, 2003).

increasingly violent protests and civil disobedience, including vandalism, an arson campaign, and bombings. In response, 1913 also saw the passing of the infamous “Cat and Mouse” act, which allowed for the release of suffragette prisoners on hunger strike, only to re-imprison them once their strength had been regained. By June, 1913 had also seen the movement’s first death, when protester Emily Wilding Davison was killed when she stepped in front of the King’s horse at Derby.⁵⁹ Press reporting on these events, which covered suffrage issues extensively and sensationally, would have run side-by-side with exhibition reviews of *The Chintz Sofa* and the news of its creator’s RBA election.

There is unfortunately no record of McNicoll’s political views, and neither the artist nor Dorothea Sharp appear to have belonged to the Artists’ Suffrage League or the Suffrage Atelier (the two most prominent artist organizations explicitly linked to the suffrage movement), nor to any of the prominent suffrage organizations, such as the mainstream National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) or the militant Women’s Social and Political Union (WSPU).⁶⁰ Nevertheless, the studio represented in *The Chintz Sofa* was situated in London’s West End, which in 1913 was the heart of the women’s movement. Located at 6 Gordon Square in the Bloomsbury district,⁶¹ McNicoll’s and Sharp’s

⁵⁹ Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign, 1907-1914* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1987), 135-140. 1913 was the culmination of several years of militant (and non-militant) action on behalf of the cause in Britain. Beginning in the 1890s, the battle over women’s suffrage heated up; the militant phase of the movement began with the radicalization of the Women’s Social and Political Union, founded by Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst, in 1905. After the dramatic events of 1913, the movement came to a virtual standstill in the following year, with the outbreak of World War I (Tickner, 3-10).

⁶⁰ This is not necessarily indicative of either’s political leanings; Deborah Cherry notes that it was relatively rare for professional artists to affiliate themselves with the cause officially (*Beyond the Frame: Feminism and Visual Culture, Britain 1850-1900* [London: Routledge, 2000], 151).

⁶¹ Luckyj, 25.

studio could be found within only a few short blocks of a number of feminist organizations, including Bedford College, the New Hospital for Women (founded by Elizabeth Garrett, the first female doctor in Britain), and the Society for Promoting the Employment for Women, as well as the homes of Emmeline Pankhurst, founder of the WSPU, and Millicent Fawcett, President of the NUWSS.⁶² Moreover, the Slade School of Art, attended by McNicoll from 1902 to 1904, was located in this same neighbourhood and renowned for its liberal gender policies, known to be the training grounds for a considerable number of the artists working in the suffrage movement.⁶³ Even without firm evidence of McNicoll's political leanings, it seems reasonable to assume that it would have been very difficult for anyone – let alone an independent professional woman who lived in the geographic heart of the movement – to remain unaware of or uninformed about the cause.

In her influential study, art historian Lisa Tickner effectively shows that the war over suffrage was waged through competing approaches to visual culture. In addition to posters, postcards, photography, and other more conventional means, suffragettes deployed the “feminine arts” of fashion and needlework in subversive ways to further awareness of their cause. Which is not to say that these lost their connotations of femininity and domesticity; indeed, Tickner argues that such practices were so effectively employed by the suffragettes *because* they held

⁶² Lynne Walker, “Vistas of Pleasure: Women Consumers of Urban Space in the West End of London, 1850-1900,” in *Women in the Victorian Art World*, ed. Clarissa Campbell Orr (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 71-74. Walker's essay includes a map locating the most prominent women's organizations in the West End. See also Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*, on the centrality of the West End to women's consumer, political, and public life.

⁶³ Tickner, 18-19.

such connotations. By using the signs of a “guarantee[d] chaste and domestic femininity,” women were able to pursue decidedly “unwomanly demands.”⁶⁴ In light of this, the cloth that Sharp holds in the painting might be read as not a decorative trifle, but something to be used for a political purpose – a piece of a banner, perhaps, or a commemorative handkerchief.⁶⁵

Sharp’s white dress, cut in a modern style, might equally be seen as a reference to suffrage. White dresses had been closely associated with the movement since 1908, when the WPSU adopted white, green and purple as the official colours of their organization, and products of all types in those colours were hastily and effectively deployed to symbolize their demands. White dresses, in particular, would not only have been on display during the parades and processions, but in shop windows throughout the period, given that the tens of thousands of women who required the dresses for these parades also formed an enormous consumer base for West End shops.⁶⁶ Indeed, in 1913, the West End

⁶⁴ Ibid., 62-63. On women artists’ engagement with the feminist movement in Britain, see also Cherry, *Beyond the Frame* and Deborah Cherry, “Women Artists and the Politics of Feminism, 1850-1900,” in *Women in the Victorian Art World*, ed. Clarissa Campbell Orr (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 49-69.

⁶⁵ On suffragettes’ use of needlework and embroidery, see Tickner, 60-73. On women’s sewing and embroidering practices as being potentially transgressive more generally, see the seminal Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (London: Routledge, 1989) and the recent essays in Maureen Daly Goggin and Beth Fowkes Tobin, eds., *Women and the Material Culture of Needlework and Textiles, 1750-1950* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009). Kristina Huneault has problematized the gendered implications of sewing in relation to McNicoll’s work in particular, including in *The Chintz Sofa* and *The Open Door* (c. 1913, private collection), which also depicts a young woman in a white dress, sewing, in a liminal space (she is standing in the threshold of an open door) (223-24).

⁶⁶ Tickner, 93. Mica Nava has argued that the suffrage movement and department store both reached their peaks at the same moment in the years before WWI, arguing that the two evolved together quite deliberately: department stores produced and sold the white dresses, souvenirs, and artifacts associated with the movement, and became popular sites for meetings; the American Wanamaker’s department store even gave women time off to participate in parades and marches (55-56). On the other hand, militant suffragists also attacked these same shops by destroying their windows: the WPSU led a campaign in the spring of 1912 in London’s West End which destroyed

was London's primary shopping district; in this way the suffrage movement was also intimately linked to the greater trends in consumption explored throughout this chapter.

Regardless of the artist's personal beliefs, clearly *The Chintz Sofa* would have circulated in a context that might have encouraged a political reading. Furthermore, like other Canadian women expatriates in London, McNicoll made social and professional connections in her adopted home, and was involved in a network of women with similar interests and goals, including feminist politics. Specifically, the artist joined and exhibited with the Society of Women Artists, an organization originally established as the Society of Female Artists in 1856 with the explicitly feminist goal of enabling women's access to the male-dominated art world. This strategy was not uncontested even by artists and critics who identified themselves as supporters of the cause; while some believed that women's societies were essential in providing fair opportunities for women artists, others believed that segregationist groups like the SWA might be harmful to women artists in the long run by treating them separately.⁶⁷ Reading McNicoll's letters, however, it is easy to see why a female-oriented society might have been appealing. Even when elected to established societies like the RBA (usually as associate, as McNicoll was, rather than as full members), women remained in a tenuous position within such institutions. The artist describes one instance in which this system was shaken in a letter to her father:

over 400 shop windows in less than an hour, and continued to protest in the area over the following week (Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*, 215-20).

⁶⁷ Cherry, "Women Artists and the Politics of Feminism," 55-56.

Last Saturday was a stormy meeting, but only from one member, a Miss Wright. She and Dolly and I were the only women there. But this one protested the way she had been hung, they the hangers, were ‘ratters’ and the hanging was a disgrace. You never saw so many angry and helpless looking men – one who tried hard to keep her out of the society, moved that if she did not apologize she should resign. And she did resign, then and there. It was too bad because although her work was rather extreme it was interesting and helped to brighten the show.⁶⁸

Though McNicoll’s letter doesn’t explicitly name British artist Ethel Wright’s gender as being the reason for her work’s “disgraceful” hanging, her description of the “angry and helpless looking men” and her mention that there were only three women present makes the struggle between the sexes within such organizations evident.

Presumably the members of the SWA, who were overtly interested in “The Woman Question,” would have recognized the familiar iconography of the suffrage movement evident in *The Chintz Sofa*. Such imagery after all circulated widely, not only in the private meetings of those involved in the movement, but explicitly in the public sphere, through posters, picture postcards, and, perhaps most spectacularly, parades, demonstrations, and, in the final phase, violent protest. These visual spectacles were then themselves covered extensively in the press and print culture, giving access to the iconography to millions of men and women across Britain).⁶⁹ Given this context, it seems very possible that the image was meant and understood in this way by its contemporary audience.

Dorothea Sharp was in fact Vice-President of the SWA at the time that she posed for her partner’s brush. In this subject too, McNicoll’s depiction of Sharp is

⁶⁸ Helen McNicoll to David McNicoll, March 28, 1913. Helen McNicoll artist file, Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa, ON.

⁶⁹ Tickner, 58-59.

in line with the ways in which the art world intersected with feminist politics. Art historian Deborah Cherry has argued that one important action of the early feminist art movement was the making, exchanging, and exhibiting of portraits of friends and colleagues in the movement. “In portraits by women artists of close women friends, made for specific contexts to be viewed by women,” she proposes, pointing to works by and of Emily Mary Osborn, Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon, and others, “women artists produced works which disrupted the representation and signification of woman.”⁷⁰ As Cherry points out, even when the sitters are not shown explicitly as artists or activists, these representations made these women and their lives publicly visible; taken together as a group, they visually mapped a social and political network of women with shared interests.⁷¹ Ironically, these public social, political, and professional networks were frequently physically based within the home: women’s homes were used for political meetings, as offices for political and philanthropic organizations, and as bases for woman-run businesses.⁷² This strategy simultaneously acted to politicize the domestic sphere and to normalize and make acceptable women’s political action by placing it within the supposedly neutral confines of the feminized home.⁷³ Such a context certainly challenges the safe boundaries of the home that might be more quickly be read into an image like *The Chintz Sofa*,

⁷⁰ Cherry, “Women Artists and the Politics of Feminism,” 61.

⁷¹ Ibid., 61-62

⁷² Lynne Walker, “Home and Away: The Feminist Re-Mapping of Public and Private Space in Victorian London,” In *New Frontiers of Space, Bodies, and Gender*, ed. Rosa Ainley (London: Routledge, 1998), 65-75.

⁷³ A similar argument is made by Walker and Ware in their study of Abolitionist material culture within the early nineteenth-century Anglo-American home. The authors argue that the use of visual and material culture with Abolitionist themes as decoration (including textiles, framed prints, powder room objects, and dishware), as well as practical objects (food, clothing) that were

The presence of the sofa, however, which provides the title of the work and which takes up a significant portion of the pictorial space, necessitates a more complex reading of the figure as a suffragette, and ultimately opens the borders between home and away even more widely. Upholstered in chintz fabric, the sofa serves as a visual reminder of Britain's imperial relationship with India, a material link to the colony placed within the domestic sphere. Chintz was a powerful symbol of empire; indeed, Deirdre David begins her review of the scholarship on the connections between imperialism and domesticity by pointing specifically to the use of chintz in the decoration of British colonial homes in India as a way that the Empire was domesticated by British women, and later, points to the Victorian sofa covered in chintz as a foremost emblem of empire within the British household at home.⁷⁴

The term chintz was and is used loosely, meaning any floral cotton fabric; originally hand painted or printed, chintzes might also be embroidered or woven. Though chintz had been produced in India for export for centuries previous, the trade in Indian textiles exploded in popularity after the establishment of the British East India Company in the early sixteenth century; the first record of the

produced without slave labour, within the home complicates the traditional boundaries between private and public, domestic and political, and "not only mapped the home as a legitimate arena for women's political action, but produced a power base within the nineteenth-century domestic space for related activities in the previously masculine preserve of the public realm" (58).

Similarly, Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, among others, has looked at how women's boycotts of everyday consumer products like sugar signaled women's political positions with regard to the colonies, revealing on the one hand, an anti-slavery protest position, and on the other, a racist desire to "purify" the home of foreign things (41-42).

⁷⁴ Deirdre David, "Imperial Chintz: Domesticity and Empire," *Victorian Literature and Culture* (1999): 569-70.

“hybrid Indian-Dutch-English term”⁷⁵ “chint” or “chints” appeared in that company’s records. As even its name suggests, chintz was essentially a hybrid product, produced using Indian materials and designs, for European demand, and adapted specifically for Dutch and British markets.⁷⁶

In its first years in Europe, chintz, like other Indian textiles and patterns (including muslin, paisley, and madras, to name only the most popular), was a luxury item. A 1764 portrait of Madame de Pompadour by François-Hubert Drouais (fig. 97) gives a sense of the level of standing the textile continued to carry in the eighteenth century. The mistress of Louis XV and one of the most powerful women in France, she is depicted wearing an elaborate chintz gown in what was to be her final portrait. Well-known as a fashionable tastemaker, the choice of chintz for her gown indicates the status of the cloth in the mid-eighteenth century. This prestige did not last, however, and by the latter half of the nineteenth century, industrial production of cloth had made importation from India unnecessary, and most chintzes were made in Britain, making them inexpensive and accessible to the middle classes.⁷⁷ The fabric was encouraged on its way to mass popularity by the Great Exhibition, where the Indian section had been enormously well-received, and by the subsequent publication of architect Owen Jones’s design handbook *The Grammar of Ornament* (1856), which made

⁷⁵ Rosemary Crill, “The Golden Age of the Indian Textile Trade,” in *British Asian Style: Fashion and Textiles Past and Present*, eds. Christopher Breward, Philip Crang, and Rosemary Crill (London: V&A Publishing, 2010), 15.

⁷⁶ Rosemary Crill, *Chintz: Indian Textiles for the West* (London: V&A Publishing, 2008), 14-15. On the history of chintz, see also John Irwin and Katherine Brett, *The Origins of Chintz* (London: The Stationary Office, 1970). A broader, more critical study of the intersections of British and Indian culture related to objects is Saloni Mathur, *India by Design: Colonial History and Cultural Display* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

⁷⁷ Crill, *Chintz*, 8.

Indian patterns available to the general public. Over the following years, Indian style was increasingly incorporated into homegrown British traditions to such an extent that they have become difficult to separate: like tea, chintz provides an example of a hybridized, colonial import now often wrongly viewed as a quintessentially British product.⁷⁸

Taken together, the chintz sofa and the woman in white encapsulate some of the contradictions of the women's suffrage campaign and white feminism more generally; namely that the early women's rights movement was decidedly not a discourse on the universal equality of women. Quite the opposite: white Western women's right to vote was frequently sought through a comparison of their perceived superior place in the world with the position of so-called lesser classes and races, whether in complaint that they were allowed to vote while white women could not, or in protest at being placed in the same inferior category of

⁷⁸ Crang and Ashmore, 655-656. With reference to the incorporation of tea into British culture, Romita Ray usefully describes this process as a "transformation of a colonial commodity into an imperial product" (Ray, "Storm in a Tea Cup," 206). See also Kowaleski-Wallace on tea and china. James Walvin provides a good survey of the early modern trade of colonial commodities such as tea, sugar, and chocolate, and the ways in which they came to be incorporated into and, indeed, transform Western everyday life (*Fruits of Empire: Exotic Produce and British Taste, 1660-1800* [New York: New York University Press, 1997]).

The shawl worn by the female figure in one version of McNicoll's *The Victorian Dress* might also be an indication of the Indian influence on fashion in Britain: Nupur Chaudhuri has shown that the "Kashmir shawl," like chintz, was also initially brought into Britain by returning Indian civil servants and their wives, beginning in the eighteenth century as an expensive luxury object and evolving into a popular, but still relatively exclusive, fashion item by the mid-nineteenth century (233-35). Rosemary Crill notes that the shawl would have been "deeply unfashionable" by the time of McNicoll's painting, just as the dress the model wears was ("Golden Age," 21-22). On the shawl in Victorian culture, see Suzanne Daly, "Kashmir Shawls in Mid-Victorian Novels," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 30, no. 1 (2002): 237-255; Michelle Maskiell, "Consuming Kashmir: Shawls and Empires, 1500-2000," *Journal of World History* 13, no. 1 (2002): 27-65; Chitralekha Zutshi, "'Designed for Eternity': Kashmiri Shawls, Empire, and Cultures of Production and Consumption in Mid-Victorian Britain," *Journal of British Studies* 48, no. 2 (April 2009): 420-440.

Kristina Huneault has examined the *Victorian Dress* paintings, arguing the artist's deliberate use of an old-fashioned dress that does not fit quite properly as an indication of the knowing performance of Victorian femininity and the gaps in how ideology played out in the real lives of women (241-43). See also Chapter 3 of Lynne Lacombe Robinson's MA thesis on McNicoll and fashion. Neither author mentions the shawl as an Indian object.

non-citizen. Indeed, one British postcard, designed by Edwyn Llewellyn in 1907, goes still further, showing a white woman surrounded by caricatures of male figures of different races, with the inscriptions “I am denied a Parliamentary Vote but... this is allowed to vote... So is this... So is this... While this can qualify” (1907) (fig. 98). Llewellyn’s use of “this” to describe the figures (while the white woman remains an “I”) is an overt dehumanization of these non-white bodies. Though the imagery produced in Britain seems to have been less obviously racist than that employed in the United States,⁷⁹ a common (and apparently effective) technique in both countries was to compare the exclusion of the middle-class white woman to these perceived-to-be-lesser segments of society. This rhetoric was translated into visual terms in popular imagery like American artist Henrietta Briggs-Wall’s *The American Woman and her Political Peers* (fig. 99), which made its debut at the Chicago World’s Fair in 1893. Briggs-Wall’s poster shows a solemn female figure surrounded by four male “types” to show that white women are “classed, politically, with idiots, convicts, the insane, and Indians” in their disenfranchisement; other American suffrage imagery drew overtly on the recent enfranchisement of African-American men (with the passing of the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870, which prohibited disenfranchisement based on race).

Popular visual imagery in Britain drew similar comparisons between the educated, middle-class white woman and the working-class white men who had been widely enfranchised in 1884. Such men were found undeserving compared to the responsible figure of the middle-class white woman, and caricatured as

⁷⁹ Tickner finds that this postcard was unique in its overt reference to race within the British context, and notes that it appears to have been produced outside of any of the official suffrage organizations (37 and 284).

uneducated and/or drunk. Tickner notes that this strategy was a particularly “effective one in pictorial form, where a certain nobility of feature in the woman graduate could be contrasted to telling effect with the lascivious or stupid or degenerate expressions of the men.”⁸⁰ Even when race is not made an explicit focus in the design, artists made use of nineteenth-century discourses of race by showing the cartoonishly-portrayed “lesser” types of men as physiognomically-deficient (“degenerate”) by current definitions of whiteness (“nobility of feature”), if not overtly of a different race. This strategy was equally used by anti-suffrage artists, who used various “types” represented through physiognomic cues, to classify the suffragette (for example, as the hysteric, the spinster, or the fallen woman). In response, suffragettes put forth images of the “womanly woman,”⁸¹ who exerted her prized moral influence outside the home as well as inside. As seen in Chapter 3 with respect to maternalist politics, this stereotype was deployed with increasing frequency over the latter decades of the nineteenth century, growing in conjunction with an increasing “climate of moral panic over social degeneration and ‘race suicide’.”⁸² McNicoll’s depiction of Sharp, quietly performing a feminine activity in a feminine space falls neatly in line with this type of representation.

But feminists did not only position white women in relation to “lesser” men, but to other women as well. As seen with Mary Bell Eastlake’s “Other” mothers, it was first and foremost the figure of the apparently helpless non-white woman that was used to elevate the status of middle-class white women within

⁸⁰ Ibid., 37.

⁸¹ Ibid., 167-172.

⁸² Ibid., 216.

the West. Practices as diverse as polygamy, sati, rape, prostitution, interracial marriage and miscegenation, concubinage, the veil, and especially the harem, were denounced publicly by white women, providing a base for women's political action on behalf of other women, and were also symbols deployed in comparison to their own social and political standing (for better or for worse). This strategy had a long history in the British World: in an earlier period, for example, abolitionist politics were employed by white metropolitan women in similar ways. In essence, the perceived oppression of their non-white, colonial "sisters" allowed middle-class English women to construct their own identities as free, public, and equal. In positioning themselves as the saviours of these women and as public voices on their behalf, they also positioned themselves as capable and necessary parts of the political landscape.⁸³

Canadian traveller and novelist Maria Lauder, one of McNicoll's fellow Canadian expatriates in Britain, encapsulates this view succinctly. Lauder's female tourist characters are disappointed in their visit to the British Parliament where, they find, they cannot see the proceedings very well, being confined to the Ladies' Gallery: there, they report,

"We can imagine ourselves Turks, or Egyptians, or any other interesting ladies of the East, hidden behind that *lattice-work* in the ladies' gallery!" said Elise laughing; "a lady sees little behind that screen, and hears badly."

⁸³ Grewal, 11-12. See also Grewal, Chapter 2 and Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1885* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994). This critique of white feminism has been led by enormously influential theorists such as Gayatri Spivak. For a specific look at the nascent nineteenth-century women's movement in Britain as it related to the Empire, and particularly to Indian women, see especially Spivak's seminal "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism" (*Critical Inquiry*, 12, no. 1 [Autumn 1985]: 243-261). On white women's engagement with slavery practices, see, for example, Hilary McD. Beckles, "Property Rights in Pleasure: The Marketing of Enslaved Women's Sexuality," in *Caribbean Slavery in the Atlantic World: A Student Reader*, eds. Verene Shepherd and Hilary McD. Beckles (Kingston, JM: Ian Randale Publishers, 2000), 692-701.

“I shall help all the other busy fingers, that have broken out the ornamentations between the trellis work!” said Artist Annie.⁸⁴

As Lauder suggests, in the later nineteenth-century, it was frequently specifically the “Oriental” woman who was the non-white target for what was popularly known as “women’s mission to women.”

And yet, it was at this very moment when white, middle-class women were attempting to articulate their own political position in comparison to non-white and/or non-Western women that they also incorporated the objects and textiles of these cultures into their own homes, including most prominently, chintz (we should also recall here the oriental rug that also appears in the photograph of McNicoll’s studio). That white women should so enthusiastically draw on an Orientalist model of design seems somewhat paradoxical, given that it was precisely a Western fantasy of the Eastern domestic sphere – the harem – that was held up (together with the symbol of the veil) as the predominant sign of the “Other” woman’s confinement and oppression in the late nineteenth century.⁸⁵ This distinction between, as Inderpal Grewal has written, “home” and “harem” – between the ideal British woman and her incarcerated Indian sister – propped up the suffrage campaign, as well as modern Western notions of appropriate white, feminine identity. As Grewal suggests, “these women saw the ‘oriental’ woman as an example of the submission that symbolized what they were fighting against

⁸⁴ Maria Elise Turner Lauder, *Evergreen Leaves, Being Notes from My Travel Book, by ‘Toofie,’* (Toronto: Belford Brothers, 1877), 343.

⁸⁵ Grewal, 60-61. See also Malek Alloula’s classic examination of the Western fantasy of the harem *The Colonial Harem* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

and what they did not wish to be: immobile women, in seclusion at home, without any rights that brought them to the public arena.”⁸⁶

Why, then, did white Western women bring visible signs of those homes into their own with such enthusiasm? Orientalist items were seen as particularly excellent for decorating a man’s study or smoking room, connoting, as they did, leisure, languidness, and eroticism.⁸⁷ In a studio setting, Eastern objects were equally suitable: in addition to lending an atmosphere of exotic difference and history, they could serve as “irresistible inducements to dream of what was distant and past, while deemphasizing the material circumstances of production and enhancing the notion of sanctuary from the humdrum world outside.”⁸⁸ Used in this way, such objects might have contributed to the growing sense of art and high culture as being above and beyond everyday politics and economics.⁸⁹

Eastern decorating schemes were also used in the living spaces of women however – in the popular “cozy corner,” for example. If men found the implicit power dynamics of gender difference within their imported “harems” appealing, women appreciated these spaces and objects because they enabled a performance or expression of their owner’s whiteness, class privilege, and affiliation with imperial power. This was possible because in moving from the “Orient” to British (or American, or Canadian) homes, objects like chintz sofas became hybrid: as Kristin Hoganson argues, Western women “did not produce an unmediated Eastern décor but a colonial décor, one that emerged from the crucible of empire

⁸⁶ Grewal, 66.

⁸⁷ Hoganson, *Consumers’ Imperium*, 51; Halttunen, 164-165.

⁸⁸ Burns, 217.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 218-220.

and was as much European as ‘Oriental.’”⁹⁰ Moreover, women’s access to and display of products that visually or materially referenced the East was often supported by a philanthropic rationalization for buying foreign goods in that such a practice at least theoretically (if not in practice) provided financial aid to areas believed to be less fortunate.⁹¹ This benevolent decorating clearly falls in line with the overarching concern for saving or civilizing the East; it also, however, helped to construct a sense of class privilege amongst Western consumers that was inextricably tied to an expression of national identity, and the construction of such in opposition to the popular idea of an impoverished East. In this respect, chintz (especially given its movement from a luxury product to a symbol of everyday middle-class taste) provides an example of how consumer goods functioned to encourage a unified British identity that superceded class and gender difference *within* the nation. Finally, Hoganson continues, “Western women may have regarded the harem as a locus of oppression for its denizens, but they saw it as a tourist destination for themselves. The ability to travel, if only imaginatively through their household interiors, marked them as privileged.”⁹² While we will return to the imaginative possibilities of the foreign-inflected interior later in this chapter, it is clear that read within the context in which it was created, McNicoll’s *The Chintz Sofa*, with its woman in white, placed on a chintz sofa, signifies on multiple levels, mediating between private and public, home and away in several different ways.

⁹⁰ Hoganson, *Consumers’ Imperium*, 53.

⁹¹ Ibid., 45-46.

⁹² Ibid., 53.

IV. Trans(national)plants

In her survey of Canadian women artists, Maria Tippet describes Frances Jones's ability in 1883 *In the Conservatory* (fig. 90) to "draw the viewer into the lush atmosphere of the conservatory and the intimate world of the reading woman."⁹³ Once again, this initially seems to be an accurate description: like *The Chintz Sofa*, Jones's depiction of a woman surrounded by flowers, quietly reading, does seem to reflect an "intimate" atmosphere, falling comfortably into the genre of bourgeois women's representations of the domestic sphere to which they were confined in the ideology of separate spheres. Also like that work however, *In the Conservatory* contains elements that betray the impossibility of a private sphere set off from the public world. When viewed in the context in which it was painted and in which it circulated, it is clear that Jones's canvas shows a much more complex space: one that is directly linked to the politics and economics of empire. A representation of the conservatory of her Halifax family home Bloomingdale, built by her father in 1861, the painting reveals a space that is both physically on the threshold between inside and outside, and an imaginative link between home and away.⁹⁴

Frances Jones had a long life, but a career that was cut short when her hands were crippled by rheumatoid arthritis when she was only 36, leaving an

⁹³ Maria Tippet, *By a Lady: Celebrating Three Centuries of Art by Canadian Women* (Toronto: Penguin, 1992), 30.

⁹⁴ The house itself – now the private Waegwoltic Club – was the subject of a short article in the newsletter of the Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia in 2002, which includes photographs of the exterior and interior of the home as it appeared in the nineteenth century, as well as a short description of the house and its residents. The author describes the style of decoration of the house using that typically Victorian adjective "eclectic" (Garry D. Shutlak, "The Honourable A.G. Jones and family called roomy Bloomingdale on the Northwest Arm home," *The Griffin* [Halifax: Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia, December 2002], 6).

exhibiting record that lasted only a decade.⁹⁵ Born and raised in Halifax, Jones left for Europe in 1878 with her sister Alice, a writer, in search of a French art education and the pleasures of that year's Exposition Universelle. Though she continued to live abroad (in France, England, and Italy) for the remainder of her life, Jones, like McNicoll, maintained her links with the Canadian art scene: in addition to showing her work at the Paris Salon, the RA, and the RBA throughout the 1880s, the artist was elected an Associate of the RCA in 1882 (the first woman to be so honoured, and the last for another decade⁹⁶), sent paintings back across the Atlantic to be exhibited at this institution and in local Halifax exhibitions, and was involved in efforts to establish her hometown's first art school, the Victoria School of Art and Design (eventually to become the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design).⁹⁷

In Paris, Jones sought instruction at the Académie Edouard Krug. Her teacher, Augustin Feyen-Perrin, was among the founders of the Société Anonyme; both teacher and student would therefore have no doubt been well acquainted with

⁹⁵ After she could no longer paint, Jones turned to poetry; the artist published a book of verse entitled *Milestones* in 1899. Her husband died in 1895, and in 1901, Jones left England for Italy, where she remained until WWII necessitated her return to England in 1940. She died four years later in Cornwall in 1944. The most complete biography of Jones is Mora Dianne O'Neill's exhibition catalogue, *Two Artists Time Forgot / Deux artistes oubliées par l'histoire: Frances Jones (Bannerman) and Margaret Campbell MacPherson* (Halifax: AGNS, 2006).

⁹⁶ Charlotte Schreiber was a charter member when the RCA was founded a year earlier; the next women elected as associate members were Mary Bell Eastlake and Mary Hiester Reid, in 1893. Only nineteen women were elected associates in the half-century between the founding of the RCA in 1880 and Marion Long's election as a full member in 1933 (Dorothy Farr and Natalie Luckyj, *From Women's Eyes: Women Painters in Canada* [Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 1975], 3). Jones's achievement of membership in the RCA has since been obscured, possibly because of confusion with the similarly-named male American painter Francis Jones (Frances Jones astutely signed her works with only her initials, masking her gender) (O'Neill, *Two Artists*, 100-114).

⁹⁷ J. Russell Harper, *Painting in Canada: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), 178-79. In addition to lending her voice to the chorus agitating for the cause, Jones contributed 3 paintings, including *In the Conservatory*, to the major exhibition held to raise funds for the school in 1887 (Gwendolyn Davies, "Art, Fiction, and Adventure: The Jones Sisters of Halifax," *Journal of the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society* 5 [2002]: 13).

the Impressionists and their work (the Société Anonyme having organized the eight formal Impressionist shows; Jones would have been resident in Paris during the fourth [1879], fifth [1880], sixth [1881], and seventh [1882] of these). Jones's address during this period also reveals potential links to the Impressionist group: located near Montmartre on Paris's *rive droite* (as was her school), the artist's studio was a stone's throw away from Mary Cassatt's and looked down on the Place Pigalle, where followers of Edouard Manet were known to gather.⁹⁸ In tending towards Impressionism during her studies abroad, Jones was relatively unusual for a Canadian artist, who, as discussed in Chapter 1, generally pursued traditional academic educations while abroad. Nevertheless, *In the Conservatory* clearly reflects the Impressionist principles she must have encountered in both its subject and its style. Like McNicoll's image, the solitary female figure pictured in the painting is identifiable as someone close to the artist, in this case, Jones's cousin Helen "Nelly" Morrow.⁹⁹ The modern Nelly is absorbed in the everyday leisurely activity of reading, enclosed within a glass-walled conservatory and surrounded by colourful tropical plants and flowers, while a gloomy grey landscape appears outside the windows. Jones has cropped the scene closely along the bottom, cutting off the woman's figure and making the viewer feel as though he or she is included in the intimate space of the conservatory. Light glints off every surface, and while the figure of the woman is treated in a relatively traditional manner, Jones's loose brushstrokes cover the surface of the rest of the

⁹⁸ In 1884, Jones's address in Paris was recorded as #1, Boulevard de Clichy; Cassatt's, at #6, and Feyen-Perrin's, at #11, where Sarah Bernhardt's studio was also located (O'Neill, *Two Artists*, 36).

⁹⁹ Gwendolyn Davies describes Jones as growing up in tight circle of female family members including sister Alice, and cousins Susan and Helen Morrow (3-5).

painting, especially in terms of the depictions of the flowers and the outside landscape. Though nothing in particular in the painting acknowledges its location, *In the Conservatory* was in fact the first Canadian subject ever to be exhibited at the Paris Salon when it was shown there under the name *Le jardin d'hiver* in 1883.¹⁰⁰ The painting has since been acknowledged as an homage to Manet's 1879 painting of the same name, which was exhibited at the Salon in 1881 (fig. 100).¹⁰¹

The artist's participation at the Salon, and subsequently at the RBA in London (where the painting was exhibited as *The Favourite Corner*), was acknowledged by the Canadian press as a coup for the young artist and celebrated accordingly. Jones was singled out for praise, for example, in the speech of Canada's Governor General, the Marquess of Lorne, replying to Lucius O'Brien and G.W. Allan's words of thanks upon the former's visit to Toronto in 1883 with his wife, the Princess Louise. The *Toronto Daily* printed the Governor General's

¹⁰⁰ O'Neill notes that Jones had previously exhibited Canadian subjects at the RBA, and in the meantime, sent European subjects home to Canada, suggesting that this might have been an inside joke between the sisters. Jones had two works accepted to the 1883 Salon; the other is recorded as *Nature Morte*, which the author proposes was the work now known as *Still Life with Lobsters* (1883, AGNS) (O'Neill, *Two Artists*, 76-78).

¹⁰¹ Manet did not live to see Jones's tribute: the elder artist died the day before the 1883 Salon opened (O'Neill, *Two Artists*, 40). O'Neill suggests that another of Jones's works, *Still Life on Sideboard* (1882, AGNS), may be a second homage to Manet, this time referring to his *Bar at the Folies-Bergère* (1882, Courtauld Institute Galleries), which was exhibited at the Salon in the year that Jones painted her work. The two works share a similar approach to depicting various objects and surfaces (76). She further argues that Jones's *Vase of Peonies* (1882, AGNS) resembles Manet's late flower studies, with his own representation of peonies also including a single fallen flower, as well as stylistically resembling Monet's flower paintings *Jerusalem Artichoke Flowers* (1880, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC) and *Chrysanthemums* (1882, Metropolitan Museum of Art), which were exhibited at the 1882 Seventh Impressionist Exhibition. O'Neill also suggests Mary Cassatt's *Woman Reading in a Garden* (1880, Art Institute of Chicago) as a comparison (76-78). These comparisons are also made in the short catalogue essay for the exhibition *Choosing Their Own Path: Canadian Women Impressionists*, curated by O'Neill at the AGNS in 2001 (Halifax: AGNS, 2001). Carol Lowrey and Maria Tippet also make the link between the two versions of *In the Conservatory*, the latter even calling it "not a particularly imaginative work" because of this relationship (Lowrey, 34; Tippet 30).

remarks on the growth of the Canadian art world, which included an exhortation for all Canadians to

pride ourselves upon the spirit which our artists have shown in seeking instruction abroad. The names of several gentlemen might be cited as those who have gone abroad, and are vigorously studying in Paris and elsewhere. In the French Salon this year two of our lady members, Miss Jones and Miss Richard, have been very successful in carrying all before them, and having every picture admitted which they sent to that exhibition. (Cheers.)¹⁰²

Jones and her image were praised even as Impressionism largely failed to make inroads in Canada at this early date, facing antagonism from critics and a general public more inclined to mid-Victorian didactic “story pictures” and Hague School landscape and genre scenes. Jones’s consistently positive reviews might be attributed to the gendering of Impressionism as a feminine style, suitable for domestic subjects like *In the Conservatory*’s.¹⁰³

¹⁰² “Viceroyalty: Cordial and Loyal Reception Accorded his Excellency and Princess,” *Toronto Daily*, June 2, 1883. “Miss Richard” is Frances Elwood Richards (1852-1934). O’Brien and Allan were presidents of the RCA and the Ontario Society of Artists, respectively. The Governor General and his wife were prominent members of the Canadian art community, having founded the RCA and the NGC, and the latter being herself an accomplished painter and sculptor, whose works included public statues of her mother, Queen Victoria, at Kensington Palace and McGill University.

¹⁰³ On the gendering of impressionism as a feminine style, see Tamar Garb, “Berthe Morisot and the Feminizing of Impressionism,” in *Perspectives on Morisot*, eds. Kathryn Adler and T.J. Edelstein (New York: Hudson Hills, 1990), 57-66 and Norma Broude, “The Gendering of Impressionism,” in *Reclaiming Female Agency: Feminist Art History After Postmodernism*, eds. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 216-233.

On the development and reception of Impressionism in Canada, see Laurier Lacroix, “The Surprise of Today is the Commonplace of Tomorrow,” in *Visions of Light and Air: Canadian Impressionism, 1885-1920*, ed. Carol Lowrey (New York: Americas Society Art Gallery, 1995), 40-53. Joan Murray, who does not mention Jones’s work, argues that Impressionism only emerged in Canada in the 1890s with the work of Lucius O’Brien (*Impressionism in Canada, 1895-1935* [Toronto: AGO, 1974], 9-10). Carol Lowrey does make note of her work, acknowledging her as “the first Canadian painter to experiment with the stylistic and thematic precepts associated with the New Painting” (34), but concludes that “Despite the progressive nature of Jones’s work, her paintings had little impact on her Canadian contemporaries” (34-35) and ultimately names William Blair Bruce, who worked with an American group of painters at Giverny in the later 1880s, as the “first” Canadian Impressionist (18). Impressionism in Canada was never a formal movement as it was in France; rather, a diverse group of artists across the country and at different periods experimented with Impressionist principles (Lowrey, 16). See also Dennis Reid, “Impressionism in Canada,” in *World*

As a type of garden, the conservatory represented in Jones's work is a complex space. While the garden is traditionally coded as feminine, calling to mind associations with domesticity, intimacy, seclusion, familiarity, and comfort, as well as ideas about fertility, flowering, being "in bloom," and so on, in fact, the garden is an ideal in-between space, both a physical and metaphorical threshold site that mediates between inside and outside.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, the garden of the mid-Victorian middle-class urban household was conceived of as an extra room of the home, a purpose-built space for socializing and display.¹⁰⁵ But not only do gardens expand private space outside the physical walls of the home: they simultaneously extend the public sphere – since gardens are frequently economically, politically, and discursively valuable sites, especially in the colonial context – into the home.

Nineteenth-century gardens were, after all, frequently productive pieces of land, providing food for the family, and sometimes items for sale or trade, and should therefore be seen to be participating in the wider economy.¹⁰⁶ Gardens, and the women who were largely responsible for planning and working them, also contributed to the territorial expansion of empire quite literally through their cultivation of land. Gardens were furthermore a space around which public networks of friendship and support operated. The garden provided a subject for discussion, and for women to get and give advice, whether in informal fora like

Impressionism: The International Movement, 1860-1920, ed. Norma Broude (New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc., 1990), 92-113 and Paul Duval, *Canadian Impressionism* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1990), neither of whom mention Jones.

¹⁰⁴ Shelley Boyd, "How Does Her Garden Grow? The Garden Topos and Trope in Canadian Women's Writing." PhD dissertation McGill University, 2007, 18-22.

¹⁰⁵ Gere, 59-60.

¹⁰⁶ Boyd, 62-63.

weekly get-togethers or through the traditional public sphere of the press. Seed and flower exchanges also formed a valuable aesthetic and commercial network among women. Moreover, these networks extended further than the immediate neighbourhood: women who travelled, for example, brought home both ideas and physical specimens for their gardens from the United States, Europe, and beyond. Back in Canada, the ideas and plants had to be adapted to their new locales and women were obliged to share their knowledge, techniques, and tools of the trade.¹⁰⁷ As one of the primary ways in which women related to the natural environment and made aesthetic, physical, and scientific sense of the world around them then, gardens, like botanical drawing and natural history collections, have often been understood as particularly feminine ways of relating to a wider world, particularly in the context of the nineteenth-century colonial project.¹⁰⁸

Plants and gardening were employed on a wider scale in the service of colonial rule as well. Metaphorically, the distant territories of the British Empire – including Canada – were thought of as gardens and breadbaskets for the metropole; furthermore, the possession of gardens was considered a mark of a civilized person and nation, and indeed, a patriotic necessity.¹⁰⁹ Intellectually speaking, plant collecting and the natural history project that was launched with

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 51-59.

¹⁰⁸ See, for example, Ann B. Shteir, *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science: Flora's Daughters and Botany in England, 1760-1860* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

¹⁰⁹ Rebecca Preston, "'The Scenery of the Torrid Zone': Imagined Travels and the Culture of Exotics in Nineteenth-Century British Gardens," in *Imperial Cities: Landscape, Display, and Identity*, eds. Felix Driver and David Gilbert (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 196. See also Romita Ray, "A Dream of Beauty: Inscribing the English Garden in Victorian India," in *Intrepid Women: Victorian Artists Travel*, ed. Jordana Pomeroy (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 51-66.

On the general history of gardening in Canada, see Edwinna von Baeyer, *Rhetoric and Roses: A History of Canadian Gardening, 1900-1930* (Markham, ON: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1984) and Eileen Woodhead, *Early Canadian Gardening: An 1827 Nursery Catalogue* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998).

the publication of Linnaeus's *Systema Naturae* in 1735 have been shown by numerous scholars to have been enormous contributions to the growth of European imperialism, as a knowledge-building systems and as ways that Europeans made sense of their new worlds.¹¹⁰ The first modern European botanical gardens, built for both private and public education and entertainment, emerged alongside this scientific mission, the predecessors of the smaller-scale Jones conservatory.¹¹¹ Like other foreign objects, public botanical gardens made the empire visible to the metropole; recall, for example, Emily Carr's pleasure at being able to see "the bouquet culled from the entire world" at Kew. Part of this pleasure on the part of onlookers must have been the knowledge that they were members of a community that had the power to do this "culling" and to amass such an impressive collection.

Moreover, the importation and transplanting of foreign species and the breeding of new types of plants physically transformed the imperial landscape: art historian Jill Casid has described the extent of this project, writing

The contested terrain of empire in the eighteenth century was constituted not just out of appropriated lands and claims of property or conquest but also out of its supposed opposite—the aesthetic, economic, and imaginative practices of 'cultivation,' or landscaping ... Landscaping functioned as an imperial mode that defined and transformed the

¹¹⁰ Pratt, 24-37.

¹¹¹ The classic examination of European botanical gardens and the role they played in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century colonial project is Lucille Brockway, *Science and Colonialism: The Role of the British Royal Botanic Gardens*. New York: Academic Press, 1979. More recent studies include Donal P. McCracken, *Gardens of Empire: Botanical Institutions of the Victorian British Empire* (London: Leicester University Press, 1997) and Richard Harry Drayton, *Nature's Government: Science, Imperial Britain, and the 'Improvement' of the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000). For discussions of botany and empire in an earlier period, see, for example, the diverse essays in Londa Schiebinger and Claudia Swan, eds., *Colonial Botany: Science, Commerce, and Politics in the Early Modern World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

‘heartlands’ of nations as well as the conceived national borders, contact zones, and colonial peripheries in the West and East Indies.¹¹²

Casid details the process of this importation, breeding, and cross-breeding of plants from the South Pacific into the Caribbean and South America in the effort to, on the one hand, control monopolies on spices, plants, and other commodities, and on the other, to clear, repossess, and make over the land for their own needs. The very plants we think of today as being quintessentially Caribbean – the palm tree, citrus and breadfruit, bananas, as well as sugar cane, tobacco, and coffee – were all British and French imports to the region from both Europe and other European colonies.¹¹³ And just as these earlier colonizers “grafted one idea of island paradise onto another,”¹¹⁴ so too did the Jones family then transplant it to Nova Scotia.

The garden represented in *In the Conservatory* was a forty-foot space dedicated to tropical plants, and part of the larger horticultural collection of the artist’s father, which also included an extensive arboretum on the property of the family’s Halifax estate.¹¹⁵ Decidedly *unfunctional*, the conservatory’s plants appear to be purely decorative, exclusively intended to provide pleasure to their owners. Though obviously unremarkable today, when the painting was completed in 1883 the use of flowers as consumer products for home decoration had only

¹¹² Jill Casid, *Sowing Empire: Landscape and Colonization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2005), xxi-xxii.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 3-9. Casid calls this process an “imperial discourse of hybridization” (8), and proposes that the interest in intermixing of new plant species into a unified field was a displacement of anxieties over human intermixing in the colonies (15). See also Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power*, 176-77.

¹¹⁴ Casid, 7.

¹¹⁵ Shutlak, 6.

recently exploded in wide popularity as of the mid-nineteenth century.¹¹⁶ Though Beth Fowkes Tobin has acknowledged the frequent hesitation on the part of both owners and scholars to consider natural history objects as circulating commodities within the greater context of a culture of consumption, noting the tendency of “science [...] to forget its material and social origins,”¹¹⁷ the plants represented in *In the Conservatory*, like other exotic objects collected in the West, enact and make evident the trans-Atlantic and cross-cultural networks of commodity exchange and collecting that helped to literally and imaginatively construct the private space of the home.

In the case of the plants in the Jones collection, those “material and social origins” fell firmly within the nineteenth-century world of colonial trade. The Jones family was actively involved in the imperial project. The letters of Jones’s sister Alice provide one glimpse into the decidedly imperialist politics of the family; writing from Egypt at the turn of the twentieth century, for example, she includes ongoing commentary on British-Egyptian colonial conflicts in very pro-British tones.¹¹⁸ Further evidence is offered by Frances’s slightly-younger first cousin and next-door neighbour William Grant Stairs, who was a leader in two notorious expeditions undertaken during the late nineteenth-century Scramble for Africa: first, the Emin Pasha Relief Expedition in Sudan from 1887-1889 under Henry Stanley Morton, and second, Stairs’s own Katanga Expedition, to claim land in the Congo on behalf of the infamous King Leopold II of Belgium in 1891-

¹¹⁶ Logan, 147-48.

¹¹⁷ Beth Fowkes Tobin, “The Duchess’s Shells: Natural History Collecting, Gender, and Scientific Practice,” in *Material Women, 1750-1950: Consuming Desires and Collecting Practices*, eds. Maureen Daly Goggin and Beth Fowkes Tobin (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), 250.

¹¹⁸ Davies, 19-20.

92.¹¹⁹ Halifax was itself a key port of trade between the Caribbean, North America, and Europe in the nineteenth century, and the artist's father, Alfred Gilpin Jones, was a wealthy merchant and partner in this West Indies trade, owning a company that Phyllis Blakely has described as "one of the largest and most flourishing of the West India firms, shipowners, and steamship agents."¹²⁰ A descendant of Massachusetts Loyalists, the elder Jones was elected to parliament in 1867 on an anti-Confederation platform that aimed to preserve Nova Scotia's colonial trade economy. He was later to become Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia, serving from 1900 until his death in 1906.¹²¹ The explicitly pro-imperialist context in which the artist was raised provides a clear explanation of the circumstances under which the home and conservatory in the image were funded and built, and how such plants came to be present in Halifax and within the Jones home.

Frances Jones had herself acted out these colonial trade networks. Records show that the artist travelled to England frequently as a young girl for seasonal

¹¹⁹ Stairs's biographer Janina Konczacki notes the closeness of the families when she describes Stairs's childhood as "something approaching a Dickensian idyll of domestic bliss: the numerous offspring of three families growing up together in lively rural surroundings" (*Victorian Explorer: The African Diaries of Captain William G. Stairs, 1887-1892* [Halifax: Nimbus Publishing, 1994], 4). Mary Bell Eastlake also had connections to the Stairs family; she lists her sister, Mrs. John Stairs (in both Halifax and Montreal) as her Canadian contact address, and painted at least one portrait of her.

To tie various strands of this chapter together, Thomas Richards has linked Stanley's Emin Pasha Relief Expedition to a new phase in the commodification and advertisement of the empire based on ideas about the spread of civilization through the commodity (see Chapter 3, esp. 119-146). Similarly, Annie E. Coombes has looked at the Stanley and African Exhibition held in London upon the return of the members of the Emin Pasha Relief Exhibition as an example of the combination of science and entertainment used to display foreign objects within the metropolis (see Chapter 4).

¹²⁰ Phyllis Blakely, "Three Nova Scotian Women Artists – Maria Morris Miller, Frances Jones Bannerman, and Annie Louisa Prat" (paper presented at the Public Archives of Nova Scotia, October 11, 1960).

¹²¹ O'Neill, *Two Artists*, 28-30.

dress shopping with her sisters and female cousins, even inspiring one British-born governess to claim that her Canadian charges were more familiar with London than she.¹²² On the other hand, Jones also travelled to the Caribbean on multiple occasions: watercolours in her early sketchbooks depict landscape and seascape views in Bermuda. The conservatory brought these foreign locales home to Halifax. Like the plants, the large glass windows of the conservatory were foreign to nineteenth-century Nova Scotia: Bloomingdale was, after all, built in 1861, more than half a century before such glass was widely available for purchase in Canada.¹²³ The glass windows, which would presumably have been imported from England or the United States, and subject to the perils of rough ship, railway, and road travel, would no doubt have been accordingly expensive and rare, and thus acted as a clear sign of the family's status.

Aesthetically, too, the glass-walled conservatory was a sign of imperial privilege. Visually recalling the iconic structure of Joseph Paxton's Crystal Palace at the Great Exhibition, the appearance of the glass conservatory would have

¹²² Ibid., 109.

¹²³ Though the house was built at this date, it is unclear if the conservatory was part of the original construction or an addition from a later date. Unfortunately, no records exist as to the building of the house (Shutlak, 6). Even if the conservatory was not part of the original construction, it was still extremely early and rare. Antony Pacey has examined the history of window glass in Canada, finding that while four glass companies existed in Canada in the early decades of the nineteenth century, political and economic change in the decades around Confederation, including a reduction of the glass tax and other trade tariffs for trade with the United States meant that the acquisition of glass windows was overwhelmingly based on importation. Though one window glass company was extant in St. John, NB from 1874-78, providing a potential source for the glass used in the Jones conservatory, if it was built during those years, Pacey dismisses the company – primarily a producer of crystal glass – as being “of little significance” for window glass history and known for producing “only poor quality window glass” (“A History of Window Glass Manufacture in Canada,” *Bulletin of the Association for Preservation Technology* 13, no. 3 [1981]: 44).

Although other conservatories and hothouses did exist in Canada at this time among the elite (one comparison might be to Anne Ross McCord's Montreal hothouse, which she used for botanical drawings), the Glass Garden Builders of Toronto, the first company to produce and sell the parts for greenhouses and conservatories in Canada, only opened in 1914 (von Baeyer, 111).

likely functioned not only as a sign of wealth, but as a symbol of the Empire. In 1851, the steel-and-glass structure had functioned as a kind of reliquary to store and display the goods of the colonies within the metropolis, just as a conservatory did for foreign plants.¹²⁴ Given its origins, it was an architectural form that came to signify the reach, strength, and possibilities of British imperialism. In addition to private undertakings like the Jones conservatory, the Crystal Palace was replicated on a smaller scale for industrial exhibitions in various locations in North America (including in New York, in 1853, Toronto, in 1858, and in Montreal and Hamilton, both in 1860).¹²⁵ After the original Crystal Palace was moved post-Great Exhibition (in 1854), it too was used as a garden and greenhouse, inspiring one contemporary magazine writer to dream of the possibility of individuals building their own “crystal palaces on a domestic scale.”¹²⁶ Moreover, 1861 was the same year as the Royal Horticultural Society received its royal charter, and opened its own conservatory to the English public, using the extra funds from the Great Exhibition.¹²⁷

The glass-windowed space of the conservatory, which would have required special heating and ventilation systems,¹²⁸ was of course functional as well, a necessary space for the translation of these tropical plants into the cold Canadian climate. The conservatory is a site of Mary Louise Pratt’s transculturation then, a contact zone where cultures merge, adapt, and quite

¹²⁴ Richards, 23.

¹²⁵ On the cultural impact of the Crystal Palace, see the essays in James Buzard, Joseph W. Childers, and Elaine Gillooly, eds., *Victorian Prism: Refractions of the Crystal Palace* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007).

¹²⁶ Quoted in Preston, 201.

¹²⁷ Gere, 59-60.

¹²⁸ Woodhead, 183.

literally produce hybrids. Returning to the painting, we see that Nelly Morrow sits among a variety of these tropical breeds. Though difficult to identify with any certainty, some appear to be hibiscus and hydrangeas (at the back) and azaleas (at the front); their colourful exoticism stands out against the dreary, grey Canadian landscape represented on the other side of the conservatory windows. The focus of this image is on the large green plant at the back, which, in North America is an ornamental commonly called an elephant ear plant. In tropical regions, however, it is called taro (among other names), and it was (and is) an important source of sustenance. Indeed its root – a tuber, like a potato – is believed to be the oldest cultivated crop in the world, originating in India and Southeast Asia before being imported to the Caribbean alongside the slave trade to serve as a food source for slaves.¹²⁹

The inclusion of such plants in such a conservatory must have been a clear indication of the family's privileged status, requiring, as they did, considerable resources, time, knowledge, skill, and social and economic connections to find, buy, transport, and maintain.¹³⁰ Although exotic plants had been imported into Europe since at least the Middle Ages, the pace increased alongside the pace of imperial expansion through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; in this context, the development of nurseries, botanical gardens, and personal collections that used plants for personal pleasure and entertainment rather than scientific classification became increasingly popular. As the legacy of the curiosity cabinet or the Grand Tour souvenir collection, the personal

¹²⁹ Casid, 3-9.

¹³⁰ Gere, 202.

greenhouse was, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, growing in popularity but still not widely accessible by any means. While public gardens like Kew made tropical flora available to the London public beginning in the eighteenth century, private collections like the Jones conservatory would certainly have remained an exclusive hobby, available only to a privileged few.¹³¹

A second representation of the conservatory entitled *Harry in the Morning Room* (c. 1886) (fig. 101) reveals that the Jones family evidently made further decorative efforts to evoke southern climes at home in Nova Scotia. The inclusion of a wicker or rattan chair and a delicate, polished dark wood sideboard evoke a colonial design aesthetic. Said to be a study for *In the Conservatory*, but more likely to be a later work based on the age of the model and the considerably looser style,¹³² *Harry in the Morning Room* is at once a similar and very different work. As a picture of a young man (Frances's brother Harry), the subject is relatively unusual for a woman painter. Even in the same space, Harry's relaxed and confident pose as he reclines on the chair – smoking a pipe, rather than reading (his newspaper is cast aside at his feet) – gives a much different impression than that of his cousin Nelly. Posed frontally, he stares out at the viewer, while she is turned away, forcing the viewer to look over her shoulder. This change removes the sense of intimacy that Maria Tippet identified in the earlier image: clearly then, this perceived spatial intimacy is not solely related to the location itself, but to the gender of its inhabitant. Moreover, the image positions Harry as not only a gentleman, but a colonial gentleman: dressed casually in lightweight white linen,

¹³¹ Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Colonizing Nature: The Tropics in British Arts and Letters, 1760-1820* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 187-190.

¹³² O'Neill, *Two Artists*, 78.

with a short-sleeved shirt (an outfit that seems like a poor choice for the grey weather outside the windows), and accompanied by a decanter of alcohol – perhaps rum? – Harry seems as though he himself has been transplanted from the Caribbean. The comfort with which he occupies the space is the product of his white masculinity; indeed, the scene represented in *Harry in the Morning Room* might stand in for the white imperial gentleman’s privilege to be at ease anywhere in his empire.

Jill Casid has convincingly argued that plants were not merely innocent, decorative objects, nor even objective scientific ones, but “commodities at the centre of global navigation and imperial pillaging as well as colonial trade for both the riches and the symbolic power that successful transfer, reclamation, and reproduction promised.”¹³³ The “symbolic power” a conservatory in Halifax filled with exotic plants promised its viewers was of imaginative (if not immediate physical) control over the tropical regions of the world and their natural resources and human inhabitants. In effect, geographer Rebecca Preston argues, the presence of foreign and exotic plants in the West “encouraged a sort of global consciousness,”¹³⁴ allowing their owners and viewers to imaginatively travel and know the world without ever leaving home:

The cultivation of all ‘exotics’ in British soil helped frame the unknown world in a familiar context, and their culture in the home landscape allowed a personal as well as a national understanding of far-away places. This offered a very private form of imperial display which quietly expanded the horizons of its audience and allowed for a form of imaginative travel beyond, yet framed by, the realm of home. The Other

¹³³ Casid, 33.

¹³⁴ Preston, 202. Preston’s language seems to recall Pratt’s influential ideas about “planetary consciousness,” a phrase she uses to describe the growth of supposedly “universal” systems of knowledge (see Part 1 of *Imperial Eyes*).

landscapes suggested by exotics and their arrangement within the garden were arguably as important in shaping the imaginative geographies of British imperialism as exploration and travel abroad.¹³⁵

For her part, Annie E. Coombes understands this as a “process whereby material culture functioned, metonymically, to stand in for” the societies of its origin.¹³⁶ In effect, plants (in their guise as objects and commodities) functioned to link the British World, to enact, as Crang and Ashmore say, a “transnational space of things.” Signifying as they did as simultaneously scientific, cultural, luxury, and art objects, tropical plants within the space of the metropolitan home were effective carriers of ideas about colonial power relations, even as – or perhaps *because* – they masked these messages behind their status as “natural” objects that existed above the political and economic sphere in a manner similar to both art and the home itself.

The presence of tropical plants in both representations of the Jones conservatory disturbs the easy and stereotypical associations the viewer makes of their supposedly “private” and “intimate” subject matter. The overwhelming size and obvious out-of-place-ness of the taro plant in *In the Conservatory* challenges the natural seclusion and separation of the supposedly female sphere of the home. The colourful tropical plants and flowers that fill the room are, after all, in the conservatory because they are specifically *not* native to Canadian homes and gardens. The Canadian climate does not allow for these plants to seem “natural” or “authentic” in their new setting; furthermore, the visual contrast of the tropical

¹³⁵ Preston, 195. Casid, too, writes that elaborate European landscape gardens provided a space in which visitors could “take on the role of global traveller acting out in the enclosed space of the landscape garden the ancient right invoked as one of the bases for the legitimacy of empire: the right to voyage on the seas and ‘visit’ other countries” (86).

¹³⁶ Coombes, 4.

flowers with the cold, grey Canadian exterior does not attempt to conceal the artifice of this environment. In fact, the painting makes this strangeness quite evident when we look for it: Jones has, for instance, included numerous terracotta pots and a watering can, which reveal the non-natural, deliberately cultivated origins of these plants. In essence, the presence of objects within the home that are so clearly from “away” calls the viewer’s attention to the constructedness of the boundaries between the two, and also to their permeability. In this way, an image like *In the Conservatory* could potentially be interpreted in terms of Bhabha’s understanding of colonial hybridity as subversive of imperial power structures. By calling attention to the lack of firm boundaries between home and away, Jones’s painting challenges dominant ideas about gender and space. However, if the image does subvert gender norms, like *The Chintz Sofa*, it does so by drawing on the privileged racial and imperial position of its creator and viewers.

V. Hybridity and subversion

Thad Logan has argued that “‘foreign objects’ might have worked to evoke and partially satisfy desires for escape and autonomy that were literally unspeakable for many, if not most, Victorian women,” simply by giving them “imaginative access to realms of experience otherwise closed off.”¹³⁷ As important as physical access to the public spheres of politics and economics and to the far-off lands of the Empire was, equally interesting was the access chintz fabrics and tropical plants offered women to an inner world that departed from

¹³⁷ Logan, 198-99.

traditional norms of Victorian femininity. Namely, Logan continues, “the exotic ... could threaten to unravel the fabric of domesticity by reactivating a never-too-deeply suppressed link between women and sensuality and by shifting the focus of the home from moral probity to sensory delight.”¹³⁸ In other words, if colonial hybridity held the potential for subversion, as Bhabha argues, in the context of a hybrid home that subversion might be located in the ways in which imperial objects activated or enabled feminine sexual desire.

The potential for an expression or reception of an erotic or sensual pleasure linked to the exotic becomes evident in both images when they are artistically and socially contextualized. Casid has characterized eighteenth-century representations of the tropics as evocations of “a global botanical garden that becomes the scene of torrid romance, particularly of those sexual practices disavowed at home.”¹³⁹ As described in Chapter 3, the landscape, flora, and fauna of the tropics has long been (and remains) linked to a moral geography of uncontrolled sexuality, sensuality, desire, and freedom from traditional Western rules and mores.¹⁴⁰ In the seminal *Orientalism*, Edward Said reveals that this was equally true of Europeans’ imaginative construction of the “Orient.” Importantly, associations between eroticism and certain geographies remained current even

¹³⁸ Ibid., 198.

¹³⁹ Casid, 2.

¹⁴⁰ Felicity Nussbaum calls these areas “torrid zones,” and provides an excellent survey of how common ideas about sexuality were linked to certain climates and areas of the globe over the course of the eighteenth century (*Torrid Zones: Maternity, Sexuality, and Empire in Eighteenth-Century English Narratives* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995], 6-10). See also Deborah Root on the (often contradictory) tropes that make up the category of the “exotic,” including violence, passivity, sublimity, primitivism, timelessness, and especially, eroticism (36-41, esp. 38-40 on eroticism).

when the exotic was transported into the metropole in the form of objects like plants and fabrics.

Look again, for example, at the painting Frances Jones drew upon for inspiration. Manet's *Le jardin d'hiver* (fig. 100) depicts a man and woman surrounded by tropical plants. The relationship between the two figures is somewhat unclear, but their physical closeness is emphasized by the shallow pictorial space and the almost oppressive atmosphere of the plants, whose leaves and pots fill the background, trapping the figures in the very front plane of the image. Griselda Pollock has argued that Manet's insistence on a lack of specific identification and narrative in the image lends a certain questionableness to the sitters and their actions, describing the "undefined relations between the bourgeois couple" and "the paradoxical space of an interior bursting with the vegetation from exotic exteriors."¹⁴¹ Though the couple depicted in *Le jardin d'hiver* has been identified as a particular married couple, Jules Guillemet and his American wife (and their wedding rings are noticeable), Pollock and others have also noted that the man resembles Manet himself quite closely (and the cigar in the man's hand – possibly a stand-in for the artist's paint brush – also re-appears in the older male figure's grasp in the earlier *Le déjeuner dans l'atelier* [1869, Neue Pinakothek, Munich], a painting of the artist's son).¹⁴² Manet was known to have had (at least) a flirtation with Mme. Guillemet; the painting thus hints at

¹⁴¹ Griselda Pollock, "Louise Abbéma's *Lunch* and Alfred Stevens's *Studio*: Theatricality, Feminine Subjectivity, and Space around Sarah Bernhardt, Paris, 1877-1888," in *Local/Global: Women Artists in the Nineteenth Century*, eds. Deborah Cherry and Janice Helland (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 103.

¹⁴² Pollock, "Louise Abbéma," 119. See also Rolf Læssøe, "Édouard Manet's *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe* as a Veiled Allegory of Painting," *Artibus et Historiae* 26, no. 51 (2005): 203-205.

infidelity, and sexual deviancy is further suggested through the tropical environment.

The association of eroticism with the tropical atmosphere of a conservatory is made more clear through a comparison with the reputation of the French artist J.J.J. Tissot, and the public reception of his multiple attempts at the subject in exactly the same period as Jones and Manet were undertaking their own versions.¹⁴³ The French artist's conservatory, located in the studio-home he adopted in St. John's Wood, London after leaving Paris in 1871, was well-known to contemporaries as a hedonistic site, as well as a morally-dubious and sexualized one, considering the widespread gossip regarding his mistress, Irish divorcée Kathleen Newton. Charlotte Gere quotes French critic Edmond de Goncourt, for example, who described the luxurious atmosphere of the space in his diary, recording that Tissot had "a studio with a waiting room where, at all times, there is iced champagne, and ... a garden where all day long one can see a footman shining the shrubby leaves"¹⁴⁴ The undercurrents of sensuality and seduction of a tropical environment are made explicit in the background of one image, also called *In the Conservatory* (c. 1875-78) (fig. 102). Here, a man and woman meet amongst the foreign plants (not to mention the Asian objects and Oriental rug in the main space of the picture), the lady's fan coyly separating the two figures as they meet. Gere describes the painting as having "a loaded agenda, being associated in contemporary imagination with assignation and seduction,"

¹⁴³ For example, *A Bunch of Lilacs*, *In the Greenhouse*, *The Older Sister*, and several paintings called *In the Conservatory* for other works representing this space (all c. 1875-1882, various locations).

¹⁴⁴ Gere, 202.

and notes that the “ambiguous sexual messages” of the image were remarked upon by exhibition audiences.¹⁴⁵ Clearly, then, an association between conservatories and eroticism circulated in popular contemporary opinion: the conservatory garden acted not only as a threshold space that physically mediates between private and public, but also as a morally-liminal space.

Jones’s version retains some of these implications even though the lack of a male figure makes them less obvious. While the placement of a female figure in such a space – an increasingly popular motif as conservatories themselves became more common¹⁴⁶ – feminizes the space, this is not as simple as it seems.

Representations of these plants in such an environment were sensual subjects because – like the real spaces they portrayed – they engaged the physical body of the viewer through an appeal to the senses. The subject calls to mind the heat, dampness, and oppressive air created by the artificial environment of the conservatory, as well as the scent, texture, and appeal to the eye of the flowers themselves; Jones’s tactile Impressionist style only enhances these aspects. The ways in which the tropics engaged the senses of white Europeans were believed by contemporaries to be dangerous: Ann Laura Stoler points out that “Medical guides to acclimatization in tropical regions warned that if Europeans would lose their physical health and cultural bearings if they stayed in the tropics too

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 204 and 206.

¹⁴⁶ Other images of women placed within the setting of a conservatory or greenhouse produced in the circle of Impressionist or Impressionist-influenced artists include Manet’s *Madame Manet dans la serre* (1879, Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo), painter and sculptor Albert Bartholomé’s portrait of his own wife *In the Conservatory* (1881, Musée d’Orsay), Cézanne’s version of the same topic *Madame Cézanne in the Conservatory* (1891, Metropolitan Museum of Art), and Mary Cassatt’s *Mother and Child in the Conservatory* (1906, New Orleans Museum of Art).

long.”¹⁴⁷ In this respect, the overtly sensual conservatory space might be seen as somewhat risky for the respectable middle-class white woman. If the female figure feminizes the space through her presence, at what point might the sexual connotations of the atmosphere begin to transfer back to the figure herself? Moreover, the sensual features of that environment – excess dampness, humidity, and so on – were also those believed to characterize the female body; they were also, though, in conflict with the moderate, controlled containment of the ideal *white* body. In this respect, a painting like *In the Conservatory* hints at the slippage between ideal whiteness and the feminine body, pointing out the instability of both constructs.

Rebecca Preston further discusses the Victorian understanding of the ways in which the senses were engaged by exotic plants, and for what purpose, writing evocatively of the

psychosexual resonance of flowers in the garden, being particularly concerned with representations of the luxuriant forms of exotic species, hanging heavily near the open window at dusk. ... A larger sense of eroticized danger was felt at the time to issue from scent – heady or malodorous humours – that were all the more powerful for their invisibility. Perfume, then, perhaps more than form, conjured other worlds and drifting across the threshold made tangibly domestic boundaries elastic, transporting its subject elsewhere in space and time.¹⁴⁸

Records show that plants with strong scents were also preferred in Canada, in particular those plants with scented leaves as well as flowers, so that their perfume would be constant rather than present only briefly when the flower was in bloom; plants such as geraniums, which had a strong fragrance all year round

¹⁴⁷ Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 97.

¹⁴⁸ Preston, 200.

were especially popular.¹⁴⁹ Geraniums, whose scent can be released simply by touching the leaves, had an explicitly colonial history. Native to the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa, the flowers only became available to British gardeners when Britain took over governance of the territory from the Dutch in the early nineteenth century.¹⁵⁰ It is enticing to imagine that Nelly Morrow is clutching such a plant in her right hand – potted geraniums are clearly present in *Harry in the Morning Room* – releasing its scent into the conservatory, and, imaginatively, herself into another world. Moreover, the access to another world evoked by the plants is extremely reminiscent of the ways that reading and sewing have been described in terms of the possibility of imaginative escape from the confining domestic sphere they offered.¹⁵¹

Likewise, we might read Helen McNicoll's incorporation of exotic elements into *The Chintz Sofa* (and into her own studio) as a potential subversion of normative expressions of gender and sexuality. Thad Logan has argued that the use of Orientalist décor in Western homes was also an incorporation of an "aura

¹⁴⁹ Woodhead, 183-184.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 191-92.

¹⁵¹ Griselda Pollock and Bailey Van Hook have argued this in reference to Mary Cassatt's representations of women reading (Pollock, *Mary Cassatt* [New York: Harper and Row, 1988], 7; Van Hook, 184). Cassatt's *Woman Reading in a Garden*, painted 3 years before Jones's work, provides one particularly good comparison. A.K. Prakash has described *The Chintz Sofa* in similar terms: "The woman on the sofa is as deeply absorbed in her sewing as the letter readers in seventeenth-century Dutch master paintings. For the moment, peace has triumphed over oppression and servitude. Perhaps McNicoll is suggesting that the home is not only an arena of confinement and turmoil, but also of passion and liberation" (*Independent Spirit: Early Canadian Women Artists* [Toronto: Firefly, 2008], 70). See also Kate Flint, *The Woman Reader: 1837-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

Carol Lowrey writes, without further comment, that the book Nelly Morrow is absorbed in is "possibly a novel by an English writer such as Dickens, Kipling, or Thackeray, all of whom found large audiences in Canada and the United States" (34). Her choice of Victorian novelists is (accidentally?) illuminating: all have been noted for their imperialist themes and narratives (for example, in *Great Expectations*, *Vanity Fair*, and all of Kipling's work).

of eroticism so frequently associated with India and the Middle East”¹⁵² that clearly opposed traditional Victorian feminine ideals. Sarah Burns agrees, describing an Orientalized studio like McNicoll’s as carrying “insinuations of the forbidden, the licentious, and mysterious East [...and c]onjuring up an atmosphere of seduction,”¹⁵³ and suggests that such a space might in fact represent a threat to traditional gender norms in terms of masculinity as well as bourgeois femininity, perceiving that it might equally be viewed as the overly feminized, emasculating, and disarmingly seductive space of a *femme fatale*.¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, Kristin Hoganson provides anecdotal evidence that some women found Orientalist décor a source of personal liberation from contemporary norms of gender and sexuality: if Orientalist objects acted as symbols of passion, romance, and freedom from convention, they sometimes required a quite physical subversion of these norms, in terms of sitting differently on a divan, for example.¹⁵⁵

In addition to these aspects, it is possible to read McNicoll’s interior – the studio she shared with her female life partner – as operating within the context of the queer Aesthetic interior made famous by fellow cultural figures such as Frederic Leighton and Oscar Wilde. Within the gay male context, the perceived connections between sexuality (in particular, “deviant” sexuality) and the Aesthetic interior – and especially with the exotic elements contained there within

¹⁵² Logan, 194.

¹⁵³ Burns, 232.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 235-36.

¹⁵⁵ Hoganson, *Consumers’ Imperium*, 31-32.

– were well-established and have since been well-examined.¹⁵⁶ But what did it mean for a woman to draw on this visual language of “the forbidden, the licentious, and mysterious”? The use of such elements in lesbian spaces has been much less examined; however, Diana Maltz’s examination of British writer Vernon Lee’s engagement with Orientalism proves a useful way to look at McNicoll and Sharp’s studio-home space. Maltz examines Lee (born Violet Paget) and her interest in an Orientalist aesthetic, both at home and during the time she spent as a single, female, lesbian traveller in North Africa.¹⁵⁷ Of particular interest is Lee’s interest in collecting chintzes as one acceptable way of making the East (and all that it connoted) available to her. Maltz demonstrates through Lee’s own deployment of chintz to describe both the westernization of eastern homes and the exoticism of eastern rituals and practices being employed within the metropole, that something as seemingly ordinary as a flowered couch could operate on multiple levels of signification in terms of its origins, its transformations, and its meaning.¹⁵⁸

Griselda Pollock has argued for a similar reading of French painter Louise Abbéma’s *Déjeuner dans la serre* (1877) (fig. 103), which in fact combines elements from Jones’s and McNicoll’s images (indeed, Pollock proposes that the

¹⁵⁶ See, for example, Charlotte Gere, with Lesley Hoskins, *The House Beautiful: Oscar Wilde and the Aesthetic Interior* (Aldershot: Lund Humphries, 2000); Jason Edwards, “The Lessons of Leighton House: Aesthetics, Politics, Erotics,” in *Rethinking the Interior, c. 1867-1896: Aestheticism and Arts and Crafts*, eds. Jason Edwards and Imogen Hart (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2010), 85-110, esp. 95-104 and 109; John Potvin, “The Aesthetics of Community: Queer Interiors and the Desire for Intimacy,” in *Rethinking the Interior, c. 1867-1896: Aestheticism and Arts and Crafts*, eds. Jason Edwards and Imogen Hart (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2010), 169-174; Michael Hatt, “Space, Surface, and Self: Homosexuality and the Aesthetic Interior,” *Visual Culture in Britain* 8, no. 1 (2007): 105-28.

¹⁵⁷ Dianna Maltz, “‘Baffling Arrangements’: Vernon Lee and John Singer Sargent in Queer Tangier,” in *Rethinking the Interior, c. 1867-1896: Aestheticism and Arts and Crafts*, eds. Jason Edwards and Imogen Hart (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2010), 183-210.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 192 and 194.

scene in fact represents a studio rather than a conservatory). *Déjeuner dans la serre* includes Abbéma and her partner Sarah Bernhardt “seated in an easy intimacy on an imported piece of North African furniture: the divan or sofa which had significant Orientalist, and hence erotic, associations in colonial France.”¹⁵⁹ For Pollock, it is specifically the exotic elements of the setting that lend the possibility of “signifying both difference and self-definition” on the part of the represented female figures of lovers Abbéma and Bernhardt.¹⁶⁰ It is extremely intriguing to think about McNicoll’s chintz sofa, placed as it was in the studio she shared with another woman, in the heart of the feminist district of London, as signifying in much the same way as Lee’s and Abbéma’s Orientalist décor did. Given the lack of documentation of their relationship in personal letters or other sources, it is ultimately impossible to definitively label McNicoll and Sharp’s relationship a lesbian one; it is certainly true, however, that both women chose to travel, live, and work together rather than marry and have children, and in this way, they “forsook the gendered and heterosexual contract of marriage [and] the normalized regime of separate spheres.”¹⁶¹

Even as these images subvert conventional gender ideals, however, they also construct and reinforce colonial power structures. Anne McClintock, among others, has challenged the assumption that colonial hybridity is necessarily disruptive of imperial power: “The disruption of social norms is not always subversive,” she writes, “especially in postmodernist commodity cultures where

¹⁵⁹ Pollock, “Louise Abbéma,” 105.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 107.

¹⁶¹ Huneault, 234. See Lillian Faderman’s classic study of the shifting definitions of female friendship and lesbianism over the course of this period (*Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1991]).

formal fluidity, fragmentation and marketing through difference are central elements. Indeed, privileged groups can, on occasion, display their privilege precisely by the extravagant display of their *right to ambiguity*.¹⁶² Jill Casid agrees, arguing that the “production of hybridization should be understood not merely as an effect of colonial power but rather as one of the main technologies by which colonial power was produced as discursive and material effect.”¹⁶³ Even as they challenge ideas about gender and sexuality, *The Chintz Sofa* and *In the Conservatory* also reflect and help to shape ideas about imperial power by normalizing the asymmetrical cross-cultural interactions that led to such objects being available in the West, and by neutralizing the potential threat of a hybridized culture by disguising it under a pleasant veneer of private domesticity.

The process of incorporating empire into the home was one of extraction, abstraction, and re-contextualization and was an important shift in meaning: when foreign objects are understood, treated, and portrayed as commodities, “shorn of cultural and ecological ties, ready to be consumed as objects of little utility and much pleasure,”¹⁶⁴ their original uses, contexts, and the means by which they came to be present in Europe and North America are wholly erased. The original meaning associated with the object – in which the taro plant in *In the Conservatory*, for example, is associated not with luxurious domestic decoration, but with a history of subsistence, violently-enforced labour, and trauma – is wiped out in the plant’s relocation to an upper-class Canadian home through a process

¹⁶² McClintock, 68.

¹⁶³ Casid, 1.

¹⁶⁴ Tobin, *Colonizing Nature*, 170.

that Arjun Appadurai has called the “aesthetics of decontextualization.”¹⁶⁵ The possibility of collection, purchase, and display of foreign objects like these, and the power to create fictions around them that could be adopted and abandoned at will was essentially a privilege that whiteness allowed (McClintock’s “right to ambiguity”). If these objects connected home and away and enabled women like McNicoll and Jones to subvert contemporary ideas about gender and sexuality, this was only possible because both women occupied a privileged racial and imperial position within the British World.

Moreover, this process of de- and re-contextualization simultaneously masks itself through its association with the supposedly private home, making the relationship between the objects and their owners appear benign and natural. Another of Mary Louise Pratt’s terms is useful here: she uses “anti-conquest” to refer to “strategies of representation whereby European bourgeois subjects seek to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert European hegemony”

¹⁶⁵ Appadurai, introduction to *The Social Life of Things*, 28. Tobin points out that even in the tropics, this history was erased by the tendency of colonizers to attribute the growth of such plants to “nature’s benevolent powers,” rather than to the forced labour of native and/or slave populations (*Colonizing Nature*, 12). See also Shelley Saguaro’s work on the writing of authors such as Toni Morrison and Jamaica Kincaid on the colonial garden as a site that gives pleasure to some, but is associated with trauma and pain of others (*Garden Plots: The Politics and Poetics of Gardens* [Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006], 129)

My understanding of this process of the de-contextualization and re-contextualization of colonial objects has been influenced by the scholarship of Pratt and Tobin on the imperial natural history project. Pratt proposes that natural history collectors “extracted specimens not only from their places in other peoples’ economies, histories, social and symbolic systems” (31), simultaneously masking their imperialist aims through an appeal to scientific objectivity: “Here is to be found a utopian image of a European bourgeois subject simultaneously innocent and imperial, asserting a harmless hegemonic vision that installs no apparatus of domination” (33-34). See Part 1 of Pratt, Tobin’s *Colonizing Nature*, and Chapter 6 of Tobin’s *Picturing Imperial Power*.

(in contrast to earlier narratives of outright conquest).¹⁶⁶ Thad Logan locates home decoration as one of these “strategies of representation”:

From the consumer’s perspective, the home was an arena in which the relationship to colonial possessions played itself out and made itself visible in a benign way; in the domestic environment, the violence and threats of violence that actually characterized British foreign policy were effaced or sublimated ... To aestheticize a culture is to subsume its political, moral, and economic complexity into a style, to reduce that complexity to an appearance open to (and possessed by) the gaze of the European. To import the styles of foreign cultures as interior decoration for the home is literally to domesticate those cultures, to assimilate them into the comforting normalcy of ‘ordinary’ life.¹⁶⁷

This was a necessary process, as foreign objects of all types were not always immediately accepted as appropriate inclusions in the Western home. When such objects were first imported into Europe in the eighteenth century, the consistent association of “the foreign” with decoration and luxury had more sinister connotations. Foreign commodities as diverse as tea, chocolate, and porcelain (in addition to various fabrics and plants) were not only seen as markers of a declining domestic production, but frequently linked to beliefs about excess, irrationality, immorality, and effeminacy. At the very least, foreign objects were perceived with ambivalence: were they symbols of the power, strength, and reach of the Empire, or evidence for the degeneration and degradation of Britishness caused by mixing with the Other?¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ Pratt, 7. Jill Casid uses the term “anti-empire” in a similar manner (28).

¹⁶⁷ Logan, 196-97.

¹⁶⁸ These suspicious products included chintz itself, which was banned from import into Britain in 1701, inspiring a thriving black market and smuggling industry throughout the eighteenth century, until the ban was reversed in 1774 (Crill, *Chintz*, 25).

Tobin also includes products such as tea, china, silk, coffee, chocolate, mahogany, ivory, and sugar among those which were perceived as morally suspect, noting that the importation of such goods resulted in a shifting social and economic order back at home (*Picturing Imperial Power*, 31-33). Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace links the degeneracy attributed to foreign and exotic goods specifically to the feminine consumption of them (5-6). William Hogarth’s satirical print

Over the course of the nineteenth century, exotic commodities gradually lost their negative connotations;¹⁶⁹ as decorators, and as artists who represented the results of that decoration, women played a significant role in normalizing and neutralizing these associations and the threat of invasion and cultural hybridity they connoted. In her study of Victorian cookbooks, Susan Zlotnick explains (using curry recipes as an example) how

desire for the Other, and the fear of hybridity it unleashes, could be deactivated through the metaphors of domestication. Middle-class women, as morally regenerative and utterly domestic figures, could take into their homes a hybrid like curry, the mongrelized offspring of England's union with India, and through the ideological effect of domesticating it, erase its foreign origins and represent it as purely English.¹⁷⁰

“By virtue of their own domesticity,” she continues, “Victorian women could neutralize the threat of the Other by naturalizing the products of foreign lands.”¹⁷¹ This was a specifically feminine project: it was precisely because the home, and woman herself, was socially coded as private and apolitical that this was so effective as a discourse of anti-conquest.

Moreover, through their incorporation of the foreign into the established artistic genre of representations of the domestic sphere, artists like Jones and

sets *A Rake's Progress*, *A Harlot's Progress*, and *Mariage à la Mode* provide the most well known visual critique of exotic objects in Western interiors, showing foreign objects and peoples within a context of moral corruption and social disorder.

¹⁶⁹ While this was true of most products, others – like china, for example – retained these associations of effeminacy and luxurious delicacy throughout the nineteenth century, making foreign objects a natural fit for the later Aesthetic movement (which was also associated with these notions), with the nineteenth-century Aesthete gentleman replacing the eighteenth-century dandy or nabob as the target of social criticism (Ray, “Storm in a Tea Cup,” 214-216).

¹⁷⁰ Susan Zlotnick, “Domesticating Imperialism: Curry and Cookbooks in Victorian England,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 16, no. 2/3 (1996): 54. See also Chaudhuri, 238-241 on the incorporation of various Indian foods into the British diet.

¹⁷¹ Zlotnick, 53. Similarly, Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace writes of tea and china, “Once it was brought to the tea table, a china pattern like that of the Willow-Nankin became the domain of women: they were to oversee the domestication of the foreign and the exotic. As the scented tea poured from the latest teapot, the woman herself was poised at the place where the East would yield to the West; Orientalism was brought home in feminine hands” (60).

McNicoll go a step further, masking and neutralizing the frequently unequal and exploitative cross-cultural encounters that lay behind such exchanges by intentionally aestheticizing them: these are images in which “otherness is identified only to be assimilated.”¹⁷² Colonization was, after all, not solely about military take over and resource extraction: images like *The Chintz Sofa* and *In the Conservatory* helped to perform the valuable “ideological work” of normalizing and selling empire – and a home that incorporated signs of control over that empire – as “something that is aesthetically pleasing and morally satisfying.”¹⁷³ Through their art production, then, Canadian women like McNicoll and Jones were actively involved in the imperial project.

VI. Conclusion

Inderpal Grewal proposes that “‘Home’ is a crucial category within European travel because it is the space of return and of consolidation of the Self enabled by the encounter with the ‘Other.’”¹⁷⁴ This is certainly true in theory. In practice, however, as I have shown throughout this chapter, the home was itself persistently inflected with elements of the Other and the outside world, leaving an impossibility of seeing a firm distinction between Self/Other, home/away, and

¹⁷² Marcia Pointon, *Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 163. Pointon uses the phrase to describe Johann Zoffany’s conversation piece *Queen Charlotte with her Two Eldest Sons* (1764, Royal Collection), in which the Queen is surrounded by her children, pet dog, and a host of imported foreign objects (including a Turkish carpet and Turkish costume for one of the children, Chinese statuettes, Flemish lace, and French and German decorative objects), giving the impression of her role as both mother of her sons, the country, and the colonies, and her role in domesticating all of the above. As Pointon notes, the distinction between private and public in such a representation is impossible, and “the questions of power that are formulated on the domestic stage are subtly insistent precisely because they are articulated indirectly rather than overtly as they tend to be in the court arena” (164).

¹⁷³ Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power*, 2.

¹⁷⁴ Grewal, 6.

private/public. The intimate spaces of the home are perhaps unexpected sites to look for evidence of global networks of empire, however contemporary decorating trends offered middle-class women the opportunity to “stuff the entire world into their parlours.”¹⁷⁵ The choice of subject matter – women performing quiet activities in indoor spaces – has traditionally been attributed to their gender, while the foreignness of the objects in them have become at once “pervasive and invisible.”¹⁷⁶ However, upon a close reading, these objects contribute to the production of hybrid spaces, and furthermore, work to connect diverse peoples and places: if Canadian women travellers acted as the links that connected the British World, so too did their possessions. Ultimately, the presence of so-called exotic objects in these domestic scenes disturbs the easy and stereotypical associations the viewer makes of the images: the presence of things in the “home” that are so obviously from “away” calls attention to the constructed nature of the separate spheres ideology and the images which are said to reflect and construct it. Moreover, through an understanding of the image itself as a kind of contact zone, in which cross-cultural encounters were constructed and reflected, but are neutralized through the process of representation, I show how Canadian women artists actively participated in the imperial project.

¹⁷⁵ Kristin Hoganson, “Cosmopolitan Domesticity: Importing the American Dream, 1865-1920,” *American Historical Review* 107, no. 1 (2002): 63.

¹⁷⁶ de Groot, 170.

Conclusion A mobile home

I. From Victoria to London again

“Too pas the seaes som thinkes a toile,
Sum thinkes it strange abrod to rome;
Sum thinkes it a grefe to leave their soylle-
Their parents, oynfolke, and their whome.
Thinke soe who list, I like it nott;
I must abrod to trie my lott”

In the British Columbia Archives there is a small scripture book with a handsown green cover. The book includes a passage of scripture for each day of the year; these printed passages have been supplemented by short handwritten notations on each page. The notes are in different colours and different handwritings, and trace the major events of an artist's life day by day over the course of many years, from her art school enrollment, to her engagement, to her first ride in a car and first suffrage meeting. World events appear scattered among the personal events of her life: royal coronations, the 1906 earthquake in San Francisco, the outbreak of World War I. The first pages of the book are filled with quotations, both written by hand and pasted in from books, newspapers, and magazines. On the first page, among the English, French, and Italian poems and slogans that are attributed to sources from Dickens to Leonardo to the Bible, is the above quote, from a traditional British sea shanty. The short verse, dedicated to the potential that travel offered to a willing adventurer, must have spoken to the young artist who pasted it into her scripture book, given that she herself had left her “parents, oynfolke, and whome” to try her lot abroad.

The book belonged to Victoria, British Columbia native Sophie Pemberton (1869-1959), who signed and dated it “Sophie T. Pemberton, December 13th, 1904.”¹ We met Pemberton briefly in Chapter 1 as one member of the group of white, Protestant, English-Canadian women artists who left their colonial homeland in pursuit of personal and professional opportunities abroad and proceeded to live and work as expatriates in Britain. By 1904, the artist had attended the South Kensington Schools and Slade School of Art in London, and the Académie Julian in Paris, finding success with her portraits and genre scenes in both cities. The artist exhibited at the Salon and the Royal Academy to glowing reviews and won prizes for her work at Julian’s, including one, she boasts in a letter to her sister, that was “open to every studio and no end of men competed for it” (an accomplishment, we will recall, of which her friends and colleagues were jealous).² In Canada, she showed her work at the annual exhibitions of the Art Association of Montreal and the Royal Canadian Academy (to which she was elected an associate member), as well as at her own solo shows in Victoria. In the year after she began to write in her scripture book, however, Pemberton married and all but abandoned her professional exhibiting career (though she continued to paint for some time after).³

¹ Pemberton family fonds, British Columbia Archives, Victoria, BC. Pemberton’s letters and other ephemera can be found in the British Columbia Archives; most of her work is at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria. Biographical information about the artist can be found in a short catalogue for an exhibition held at the AGGV (Nicholas Tuele, *Sophia Theresa Pemberton [1869-1959]* [Victoria: AGGV, 1978]). Brief discussions of her life and work can also frequently be found in studies of Emily Carr.

² Sophie Pemberton to Ada Beaven, Feb. 27, year unknown. Ada Beaven fonds, BCA.

³ Pemberton’s first marriage was to Canon Arthur Beanlands; after Beanlands died in 1917, the artist re-married, to Horace Deane-Drummond. After her first marriage, Pemberton painted several major portrait commissions, and provided the decoration for the Jubilee Hospital memorial chapel in Victoria, which was donated by her family in 1909.

Contemporary photographs of Pemberton capture the artist in these two guises (figs. 104 and 105) (1904 and 1905): as a practicing professional and as a blushing bride. The two images present quite a striking contrast. Sophie-as-artist sits amidst a room filled with her own work: paintings and drawings surround her and cover every surface. She holds brushes and a palette covered in paint, and sits at an easel, which holds a work in progress. Dressed in a painter's smock, she looks straight at the camera, staring strongly out at the viewer. In the second image, though, Sophie-as-bride sees her utilitarian smock transformed into a delicate white wedding dress, and the tools of her trade into a bouquet of roses. Instead of the direct gaze evident in the first photograph, the artist looks down and away from the camera.

It is the latter persona most often ascribed to Sophie Pemberton in recent writing about the artist and her work. She is now generally known as an essentially “feminine” painter, one of the first generation of professional women artists in Canada who Maria Tippet, for example, mischaracterizes as being “obsessed” with *maternité* themes.⁴ Seeing her in this light, Gerta Moray argues that Pemberton's work – and especially, her abandonment of that work upon her marriage – “neither transgressed gender demarcations, nor risked the un-sexing which threatened the vanguard woman artist.”⁵ As such, the artist is most often examined not as a subject in her own right, but employed to provide a contrast to her colleague, friend, and neighbour Emily Carr in order to “throw into relief the

⁴ Maria Tippet, *By a Lady: Celebrating Three Centuries of Art by Canadian Women* (Toronto: Viking, 1992), 33.

⁵ Gerta Moray, “‘T’Other Emily:’ Emily Carr, the Modern Woman Artist and Dilemmas of Gender,” *RACAR* 26 [1999]: 79.

singularity” of that artist’s career.”⁶ In this way, Pemberton and her work have become an object lesson in nineteenth-century women’s art history: an illustration of the opportunities available to women artists in this period, or, more precisely, the lack thereof given the limitations of the ideology of separate spheres. The traditional reception of the artist exemplifies the framework through which Canadian women artists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have until recently been approached.

And yet, among the scripture book’s layers of ink, there are indications that Sophie Pemberton’s life cannot be so easily slotted into the conventional narrative of an “angel in the house” working within the confines of the private sphere (whether by “natural” instinct or by socially-prescribed necessity). To the contrary, throughout the scripture-book-cum-diary there is a persistent record of physical mobility in the form of travel: noted are trips to California, Paris, Monte Carlo, Germany, Florence, Rome, and Milan, among other locales. In one section at the beginning of the book, Pemberton recorded her family’s movements back and forth across the Atlantic in a long list:

Sailed 1871	to England
1876	to Victoria
July 19, 1884	Mother, Father, Ada and self
March 5, 1885	Father and mother returned
May 12, 1887	Fred and self to Victoria
January 21, 1888	Father and self to California
April 17, 1889	Mater, Susie, and self to England
May 1890	Father to London and first visit to Continent
October 9, 1890	Father, mother, Susie and self to Victoria
May 8, 1892	Mother, father, self, and Will to England
November 16, 1892	Fred and Mal married
November 11, 1893	Sailed
November 17, 1894	Joe, Mater, Ada, Susie, and self to Victoria

⁶ Ibid., 80.

September 7, 1895	Gertie Sangworthy and self to England
1898	Mater, Ada, and Susie to England
	Third visit to continent
1899	To Julian's Paris, first winter
May 23, 1900	Mr. and Mrs. Walker and self to Victoria
January 24, 1901	Susie, Jessie Bell, and self to Paserobles (?)
September 24, 1902	With Jessie Gallebly to England
October 8, 1902	Sailing with Col. (?)
December 3	Self to Paris with Lily Cameron for Italy, fourth visit
June 18, 1903	Mater, Susie, and I to Normandy
December 6, 1903	Mater, Susie, and I to Florence, fifth visit
June 1904	To Victoria with mother and Susie
September 28, 1908	Sailed with (?)
July 29, 1909	Sailed by the Ottawa and with Miss Batchelor
November 13, 1909	Sailed Megantic

Seen in this straightforward format, the list vividly captures a life spent in transit.

This dissertation began by asking in what ways might this kind of physical leaving of home make possible a leaving behind of traditional ideological understandings of home as well. Through her physical mobility, Pemberton quite clearly challenges the iconic image of a nineteenth-century woman ensconced in her home, cloistered away from the wider world. Perhaps even more importantly, however, her travel provides an alternate model for understanding the spaces of modernity as mobile, relational, and in flux. Pemberton, like her contemporaries, moved back and forth between public and private – home and away – not simply transgressing “her” sphere to enter another, but actively dismantling the boundaries between the two.

A final photograph presents yet another way of looking at the artist (fig. 106): one that suggests the possibility of a reading of her life and work that goes beyond the question of separate spheres to this wider context. This photograph

depicts Pemberton as an artist, but not in the process of physically working; the artist again poses in her painter's smock, now with a clean palette. Of note is the artificial studio background: a classical temple façade looms behind Pemberton. The setting clearly links the artist and her work to a longstanding and revered Western artistic tradition that began in ancient Greece and Rome. Outside of the art world however, it also serves to visually link the white Canadian-born woman to her European heritage. Like Carr, Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes, Mary Bell Eastlake, Helen McNicoll, and Frances Jones, Sophie Pemberton left Canada to live and work in Britain, a move that was as much about a kind of secular pilgrimage for a white colonial woman of British descent as it was a simple professional choice to go "abrod to trie my lott." Literary scholar Christopher Mulvey has argued that colonial travellers were in fact adding Britain itself to "the itinerary of the eighteenth-century English grand tour. England was for the American ... a classic land, and Americans pointed out that England was to them as Italy and Greece were to the Englishman."⁷ Located in a scripture book, Pemberton's list of movements back and forth across the Atlantic takes the idea of returning home to Britain as a type of pilgrimage to a new level. An examination of this colonial desire for *home* and claim to their own cultural heritage as members of what has come to be called the British World – which was itself self-conceptualized as the modern inheritor of the glories of Ancient Greece and Rome – opens up an understanding of the lives and work of Canadian women like

⁷ Christopher Mulvey, *Anglo-American Landscapes: A Study of Nineteenth-Century American Travel Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 257.

Pemberton to more than questions of femininity, but of whiteness, Britishness, and colonial identity as well.

This desire to insert oneself into a particular cultural and racial tradition and claim one's position in the modern British World is expressed even more clearly in Pemberton's letters home to her family in Victoria. A 1910 trip to Ireland receives special attention as a journey to see her family's old stomping grounds. Especially thrilling for the artist was the opportunity to see Killachy Castle, her father's family's ancestral home, the journey to which she proclaims to her parents as a "successful pilgrimage" (though admittedly one filled with annoyances that included bad weather and irritating locals – "asses two legged and four legged").⁸ Pemberton's day began with a visit to a nearby church, where she finds the gravestones of distant family members, which she transcribes for the benefit of her family in British Columbia. Arriving at the castle, she is initially disappointed: "alas instead of stately turrets we saw nothing but low grey ruins." Still, she concludes, "We were very glad to see even these sad ruins as they conveyed more than any description an idea of what a fine old castle the home of the Despards once had been and indeed it was well that some members of the family should have visited in time, for it will certainly not be long before the last vestiges will have disappeared, before the greed of neighbouring builders." To preserve the scene for posterity, Pemberton included quick sketches of the sights

⁸ Sophie Pemberton to the Pemberton family, May 6, 1910. Ada Beaven fonds, BCA.

Cecelia Morgan looks at this letter as an example of tourist hostility towards the Irish, but misattributes it to Sophie's sister Ada writing to an unknown recipient; the letter is clearly addressed to "Dearest Mater and Family," and signed by Sophie; it also includes a note from Sophie's first husband, Arthur Beanlands ('*A Happy Holiday: English Canadians and Transatlantic Tourism, 1870-1930*' [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008], 140-41).

(fig. 107), including an alcove “which may have been the dungeon or the beer cellar” and the keep, “the most important vestige of what had evidently been a very extensive feudal building. Solid masses of masonry and ivy-clad walling enclosed fields which must once have been courtyard and gardens.”

Her second husband’s family’s ancestral Megginch Castle in Scotland merited equal exclamations: there, she found various distant family members, including one who “is a dear woman and accepted me as cousin so charmingly” and “treasures and the wonderful old castle and ancestors so like Horace and Jack. It was all too beautiful and wonderful.”⁹ In her desire to situate herself (“as cousin”) within this long lineage, Sophie Pemberton joined many of her contemporaries – other white Canadian women artists who lived as expatriates in Britain and there found themselves occupying a marginal position somewhere between citizen and foreigner: between being at home and being away from home. As white women of British heritage, they laid claim to belonging in Britain; as colonial subjects, however, they found themselves dismissed as uncivilized – a rejection that Pemberton felt acutely, as discussed in Chapter 1. This tension between belonging and exclusion not only runs through Canadian women’s accounts of their experiences in Britain, but, according to Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose, formed the very basis of the British Empire:

Since empires depended on some notion of common belonging, there was a constant process of drawing and redrawing lines of inclusion and exclusion. The British Empire was held together in part by the promise of inclusion, all British subjects were the same, while at the same time being fractured by many exclusions.¹⁰

⁹ Sophie Pemberton to Ada Beaven, undated. Ada Beaven fonds, BCA.

¹⁰ Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose, introduction to *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 20.

While imperial power was maintained through the fiction of a stable distinction between metropole/colony, colonizer/colonized, the realities of multiple, shifting, interlocking, and conflicted identifications based on the “multiple axes of power”¹¹ of gender, class, race, and nationality made such clear cut distinctions impossible. Like her colleagues, Pemberton was forced to devise strategies to negotiate this tension between home and away.

II. “Keep moving!”

Looking at women who were decidedly *away* from home has provided the opportunity to show that the multivalent binaries constructed between home and away that so successfully structured the nineteenth-century imperial project were in fact permeable and precarious. Expanding Canadian women’s art history beyond the frequently-examined question of separate spheres, this dissertation ultimately insists, following Antoinette Burton, that “colonial identities have not historically been unified but have instead been fragmented across a variety of cultural axes, and that they have been determined in part in the social relations of the everyday – at the intersection, in other words, of the public and the private, the personal and the historical, the social and the political.”¹² Moreover, it has demonstrated that multiple levels of “home” and “away” intersected and were mutually constitutive. Home-as-private-family-house and home-as-homeland were inextricably linked and constructed in conjunction with one another, even as

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Antoinette Burton, *At the Heart of the Empire: Indians and the Colonial Encounter in Late-Victorian Britain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 15.

contemporaries sought to distinguish between them: “the mass-marketing of empire as a global system,” Anne McClintock concisely summarizes, “was intimately wedded to the Western reinvention of domesticity, so that imperialism cannot be understood without a theory of domestic space and its relation to the market.”¹³

Each of the artists examined in this dissertation dealt with this complex dynamic in their own way. Emily Carr struggled with definitions of both levels of home, as she navigated both the space of the boarding house and the space of the imperial metropole when she “returned home” to Britain. Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes faced her own difficulties in feeling “at home” in both Britain and the British art world, and turned to medievalist Anglo-Saxonism – the potent myth of an white British family that stretched beyond the geographical borders of the British Isles – to negotiate that sense of belonging and exclusion. Mary Bell Eastlake tackled the subjects of both white and non-white motherhood in a context when a discourse of happy mothers and happy homes was being deployed in the service of protecting racial and colonial power. And the works of both Helen McNicoll and Frances Jones revealed that the empire was not only metaphorically, but quite physically present within the supposedly private spaces of the home.

While critical and popular interest in historical Canadian women artists has happily expanded considerably in recent years, much work remains to be done. Each one of the artists under consideration here deserves further scholarly

¹³ Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (London: Routledge, 1995), 17

attention. Emily Carr's early years remain unfortunately neglected in comparison to the wealth of scholarship concerning her later production. Of particular interest are her other illustrated books, especially *Pause*, which raises important questions about the representation of the *un*-ideal white female body. Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes is likewise fairly well known in comparison to her colleagues, but is now seen almost exclusively as an English artist and almost unheard of in Canada. Further research might expand upon her influential role in Newlyn and examine the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the rural artist colony as a beneficial environment for women artists. For her part, Mary Bell Eastlake's prolific and diverse artistic output is ripe for further study, given that no academic attention has yet been devoted to her work; while Helen McNicoll and Frances Jones have fared slightly better, examinations of their oeuvres need to push still further beyond the question of the ways in which their femininity impacted their work. Two areas of study in particular would extend the work done in this dissertation of situating all of these white Canadian women artists in the wider context of the British World. First, an examination of their travel and mobility within Canada, particularly in terms of their contributions to landscape painting, would considerably enhance an understanding of their work within the colonial context in which it was produced. Second, Canadian women's travel, study, and work in the United States is also deserving of further scholarly attention. Taken together, a consideration of women's work in these areas would produce a more complex picture of the white, Anglo-American social, cultural, and artistic network that stretched throughout the British World.

An examination of the kind of transnational mobility experienced by Canadian women artists in the pre-WWI period, especially within the context of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century imperialism, might lead to the conclusion that “home,” whether conceived of on the private or national scale, is not a stable, singular, fixed sphere. Travel and expatriate life meant that one might feel at home in more than one place, or perhaps more troublingly, at home nowhere. How might home be imagined when it is no longer tied to a specific place, or when it is tied to multiple places? How might home itself be conceptualized as mobile? With this in mind, anthropologist James Clifford has argued instead for a model of study based on “routes” rather than “roots.”¹⁴ Such a model insists on an examination of networks across time and space rather than of bounded, discrete, and fixed spaces or spheres. As Irit Rogoff states, this theoretization of what she calls “unhomed geographies”¹⁵ provides a challenge to not only gender norms, but to class, colonial, and racial power systems as well: a “disturbing message” in this context would be, she writes, “keep moving!”¹⁶

However, while this transnational mobility provides a challenge to the home/away binaries that structured the British World, it is important to recognize that it was itself a privilege. It was possible for a woman like Sophie Pemberton to travel to Britain and Paris not only because she was wealthy and educated enough to do so, but because she was white and of British heritage. While travel was, for her, a way to challenge gender norms, this challenge was only made possible

¹⁴ James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

¹⁵ Irit Rogoff, *Terra Infirma: Geography's Visual Culture* (London: Routledge, 2000), 4.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

through her privileged imperial position as a white woman. A number of scholars have challenged the now-common celebration of travel and mobility as transgressive and the popularity of those concepts as metaphors for these reasons, calling attention to the racial, class, and gender connotations of words like “travel,” “tourism,” and “expatriatism,” not to mention the fact that not all mobility is voluntary.¹⁷ Moreover, travel itself was one means by which the British World was connected and imperial power maintained, given that travellers like those under examination here acted as links between England and Canada at a time when that political and cultural link was increasingly in question. Whether in white British emigrants moving to settler colonies like Canada and in so doing forming a white and/or British diaspora, or in white women returning “home” to Britain, this mobility connected the people and areas of the diverse British World, and thereby strengthened the Empire.

A consideration of artists like Carr, Forbes, Eastlake, McNicoll, and Jones not only as women, but specifically as *white* women who worked within the context of late nineteenth-century imperialism is crucial, not least because it acknowledges the complex part that white women played in the construction and maintenance of the colonial project (which has largely tended to be erased from traditional art historical narratives). Each of the artists examined in this dissertation contributed to the construction and maintenance of imperial power in

¹⁷ In addition to Clifford and Rogoff, see Inderpal Grewal, *Home and Harem: Nation, Gender, Empire, and the Cultures of Travel* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996); Caren Kaplan, *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996); Charmaine Nelson, *The Color of Stone: Sculpting the Black Female Subject in Nineteenth-Century America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007); George Robertson, ed. *Travellers' Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement* (London: Routledge, 1994); Janet Wolff, “On the Road Again: Metaphors of Travel in Cultural Criticism,” *Cultural Studies* 7, no. 2 (1993): 224-39.

her own way. Emily Carr made the expected pilgrimage to Britain, and in so doing solidified the link between Canada and its colonial parent (whether she meant to or not). More obviously, Forbes and Eastlake both contributed to popular discourses that supported imperialist goals (Anglo-Saxon medievalism and maternalism, respectively). The works of McNicoll and Jones functioned to neutralize and naturalize potentially threatening cross-cultural relationships that were based in unequal colonial political and consumer networks.

An insistence on an examination of white femininity complicates traditional white feminism and white feminist art history. It not only nuances interpretations of these women's lives and works by pointing to the greater context in which their works were produced, but also functions to problematize the traditional understanding of whiteness as the invisible, universal norm from which all else deviates. Further scholarship remains to be done in terms of interrogating whiteness in the context of nineteenth-century feminist art history. While there is now a large body of excellent work on women's art and the representation of femininity in this period that pays conscientious attention to the complexities of class and gender identity, and a growing body of scholarship that attends to the specificities of white femininity more generally, these fields must be brought together to examine the ways in which visual culture functioned to reflect and construct ideals of whiteness in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

World War I forms a natural end to this study not only because the artists under consideration here (for the most part) experienced changes or ends to their

careers at that time, but also because the relationship between Canada and Britain shifted significantly at this time. While most Canadians continued to think of themselves as members of the empire and of Britain as “home,” WWI provided the opportunity for a uniquely Canadian identity to be expressed on the international stage.¹⁸ This had ramifications in the art world, which had begun to shift away from the international style of the pre-war period in favour of national schools and styles. This is perhaps best seen in Canada with the rise in national prominence of the Group of Seven and the founding of a discipline that could be called “Canadian art history” (as opposed to a history of art made in Canada). It is no coincidence that it was at this very time that Canadian women of the earlier period began to be written out of art historical narratives. This erasure was partly because they were women in an age when the rugged masculinity of Canadian art was held up and celebrated in comparison to what was seen as an overly-feminized pre-war tradition. The oft-quoted Fred Housser is representative of this attitude: the true Canadian artist, he writes in his 1926 biography of the Group of Seven, is “a new type of artist; one who divests himself of the velvet coat and flowing tie of his caste, puts on the outfit of the bushwhacker and prospector; closes with his environment; paddles, portages, and makes camp; sleeps in the out-of-doors under the stars; climbs mountains with his sketchbox on his back.”¹⁹ However, women’s omission from Canadian art history was not simply because they were not seen as the right kind of artists, but also partly because, as

¹⁸ Morgan, 354-58.

¹⁹ Quoted in Lynda Jessup, “Bushwhackers in the Gallery: Antimodernism and the Group of Seven,” in *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, ed. Lynda Jessup (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 133.

expatriates, they were not the right kind of “Canadian” (Emily Carr, of course, continues to be the exception that proves the rule). This nationalist approach to Canadian art history (and to art history more generally) discredits the work of artists who worked in the transnational context of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century imperialism. A model of study that examines their work within the context of the “British World,” rather than as Canadians *or* Britons dismantles these boundaries and provides an expanded field of analysis that allows for the inclusion of artists like Carr, Forbes, Eastlake, McNicoll, and Jones who chose to reside somewhere in between home and away.

Illustrations



Figure 1. Emily Carr, “We determined on a personal investigation,” in “Sister and I from Victoria to London: Memoirs of Ods and Ends,” 1910.



Figure 2. Emily Carr, age 22. 1893.



Figure 3. Helen McNicoll in her studio in St. Ives, Cornwall, UK, c. 1906.



Figure 4. Mary Alexandra Bell Eastlake (with *Mobilization Day and Fairy Tales*), after 1917.



Figure 5. Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes in her “moving studio,” Newlyn, Cornwall, UK, 1894.



Figure 6. Frances Jones, undated.



Figure 7. Emily Carr, “A body guard of sniffing faithfuls,” in “Sister and I from Victoria to London: Memoirs of Ods and Ends,” 1910.

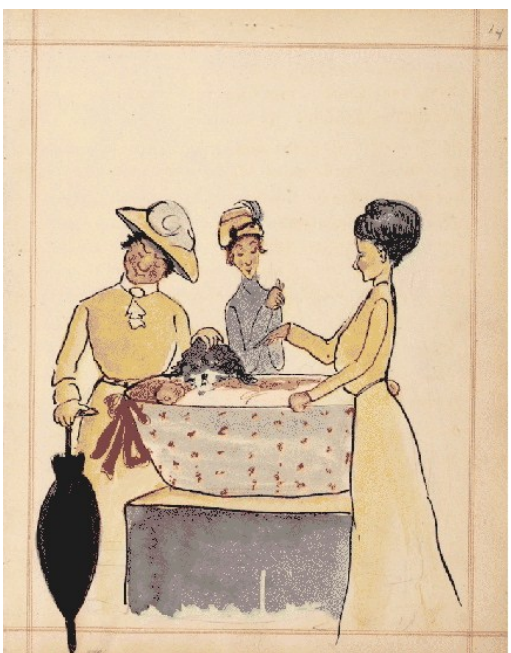


Figure 8. “An artist friend”

Figure 9. “The manageress”

Figure 10. “A squirming pink morsel of humanity in a basket”

Figure 11. “A highly irritating and noxious official”

Emily Carr, in “Sister and I from Victoria to London: Memoirs of Ods and Ends,” 1910.



Figure 12. Emily Carr, "Rotten Row," in "Sister and I from Victoria to London: Memoirs of Ods and Ends," 1910.



Figure 13. “Oh the trials of the train!”

Figure 14. “A *baby* show”

Figure 15. “I tackled the manager myself”

Figure 16. “A smelling tour all round the hotel”

Emily Carr, in “Sister and I from Victoria to London: Memoirs of Ods and Ends,” 1910.

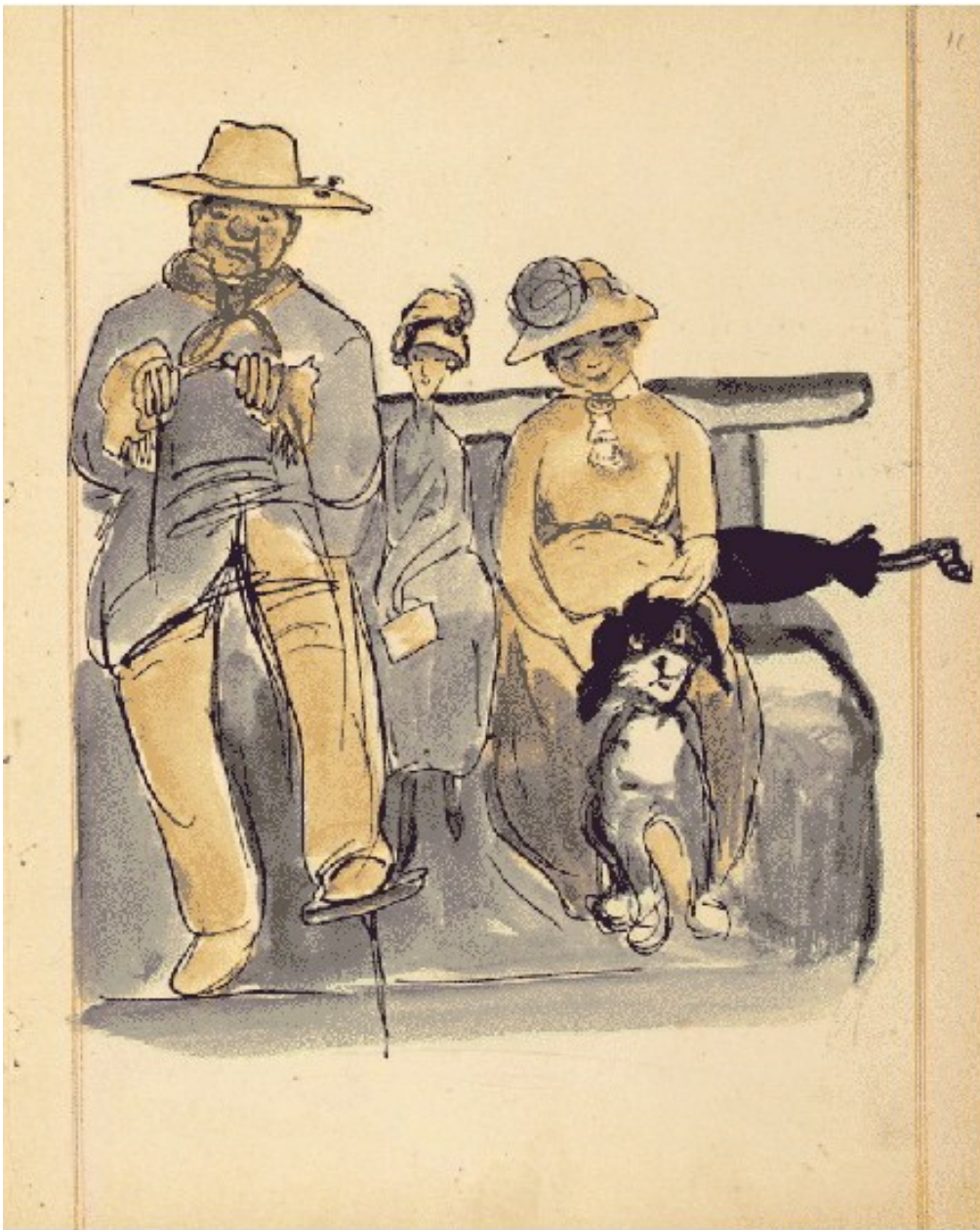


Figure 17. Emily Carr, "Sister has always prided herself on her small feet," in "Sister and I from Victoria to London: Memoirs of Ods and Ends," 1910.



Figure 18. Emily Carr, “Job Jewy, Dealer in Antiques,” in “Sister and I from Victoria to London: Memoirs of Odds and Ends,” 1910.



Figure 19. Photograph of Emily and Alice Carr, with Elizabeth, Edith, and Clara Carr (clockwise from Emily in bottom right), 1888.



Figure 20. Emily Carr, “She is a ‘herbalist’ I am an ‘all round eater’,” in “Sister and I from Victoria to London: Memoirs of Ods and Ends,” 1910.



Figure 21. Emily Carr, “I will in a way *even up* on CPR by embarking on their vessel looking dowdy and ill dressed,” in “Sister and I from Victoria to London: Memoirs of Ods and Ends,” 1910.



Figure 22. Emily Carr, “And so we came to Liverpool,” in “Sister and I from Victoria to London: Memoirs of Ods and Ends,” 1910.



Figure 23. "Marylebone clock strikes ten"

Figure 24. "A great many girls and a very few pegs"

Figure 25. "Now Kindal's cubicle was so small"

Figure 26. "When you are ill in a cubicle"

Emily Carr, in "London Student Sojourn," 1901.



Figure 27. Emily Carr, "Now she who doth talk in her sleep," in "London Student Sojourn," 1901.



Figure 28. Emily Carr, "Oh! was'nt it just too splendid," in "London Student Sojourn," 1901.



Figure 29. Emily Carr, "Someone goes out to supper," in "London Student Sojourn," 1901.



Figure 30. Emily Carr, "Some go and come no more," in "London Student Sojourn," 1901.



Figure 31. Emily Carr, "There is'nt a drop of water," in "London Student Sojourn," 1901.



Figure 32. Emily Carr, *Self-Portrait*, c. 1899-1904.



Figure 33. Emily Carr, "Rubbety, scrubbety, scrubbety rub," in "London Student Sojourn," 1901.



Figure 34. Emily Carr, "Oh! Washing's so dear in London Town," in "London Student Sojourn," 1901.



Figure 35. Emily Carr, "Someone lent me a sewing-machine," in "London Student Sojourn," 1901.



Figure 36. Emily Carr, "Now one of our number possessed," in "London Student Sojourn," 1901.

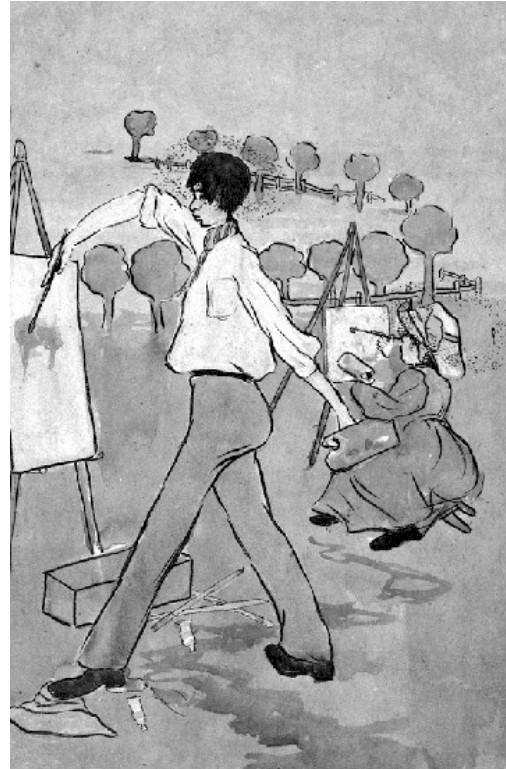


Figure 37. Emily Carr, *A Study in Evolution – Bushey (We went! We was! We Wasent – They was!)*, 1902.





Figure 38. Elizabeth and Frances Armstrong with the “Newlyn Brotherhood,” c. 1885.



Figure 39. Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes, *Girl on a Window Seat*, n.d.



Figure 40. Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes, *Young Woman in White*, n.d.



Figure 41. J.A.M. Whistler, *Symphony in White, Number 3*, 1865-67.



Figure 42. William Merritt Chase, *The Tenth Street Studio*, 1880



Figure 43. Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes, *The Critics*, 1885-86.



Figure 44. Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes, *School is Out*, 1889.



Figure 45. Edgar Degas, *The Rehearsal*, 1877.



Figure 46. Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes, *A Fairy Story*, 1896.



Figure 47. Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes, *A Dream Princess*, 1897.

Figure 48. Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes, *The Leaf*, before 1906.

Figure 49. Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes, *Will o' the Wisp*, 1900.

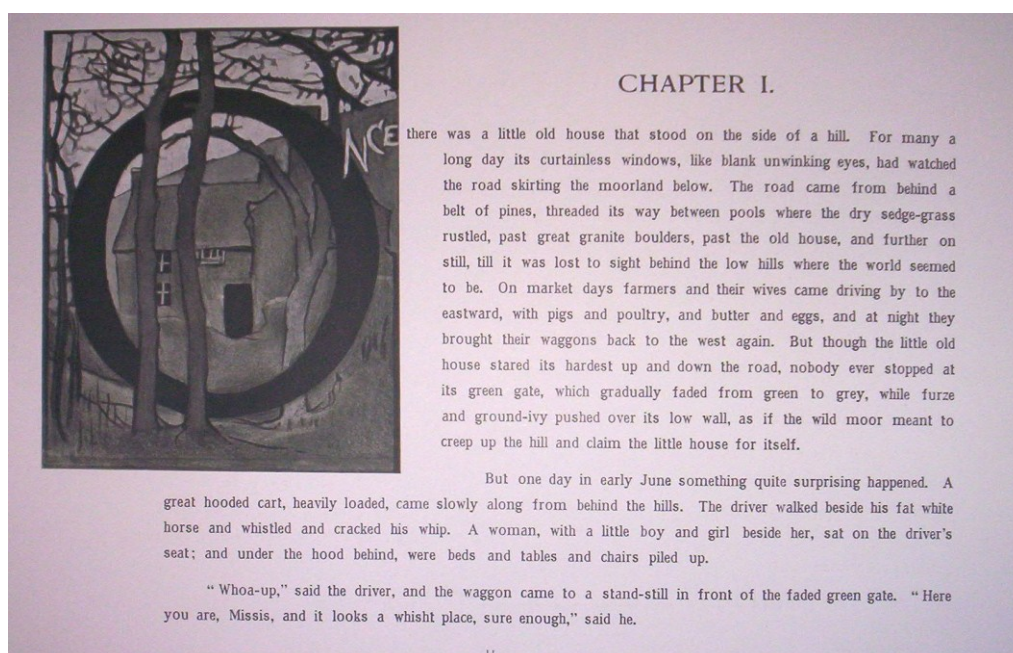
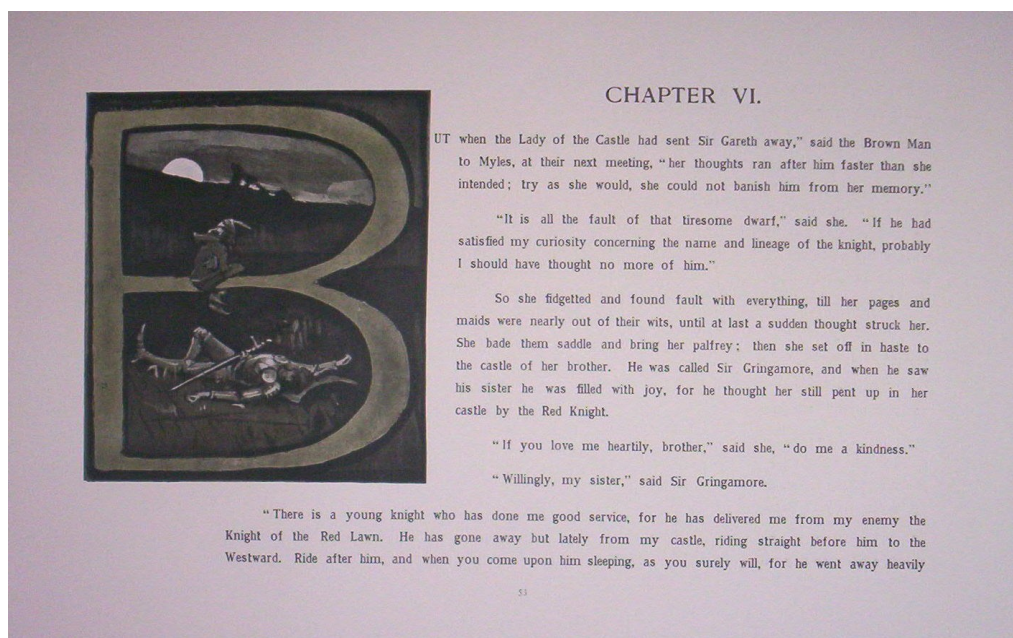


Figure 50. Decorated letters in *King Arthur's Wood*

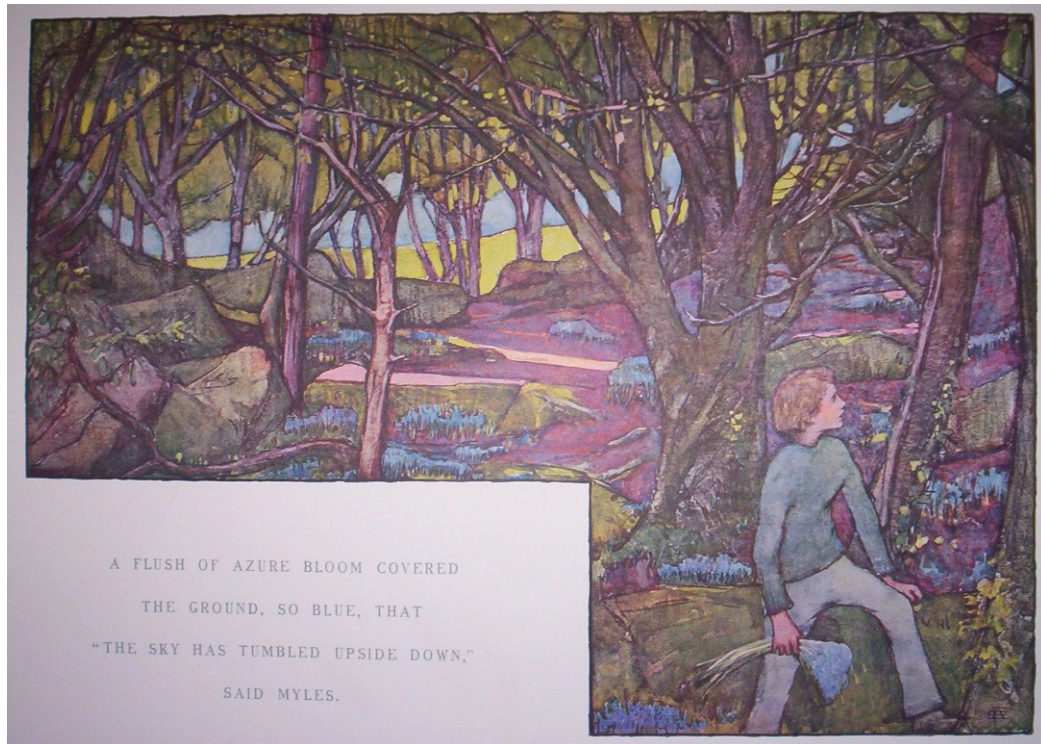


Figure 51. Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes, *A Flush of Azure Bloom*, Plate VI of *King Arthur's Wood*, 1904.



Figure 52. Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes, *The Black Knight of the Black Lawn*, Plate XX from *King Arthur's Wood*, 1904.



Figure 53. Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes, *So then in sign of peace and good fellowship they clasped hands*, Plate XIV of *King Arthur's Wood*, 1904.

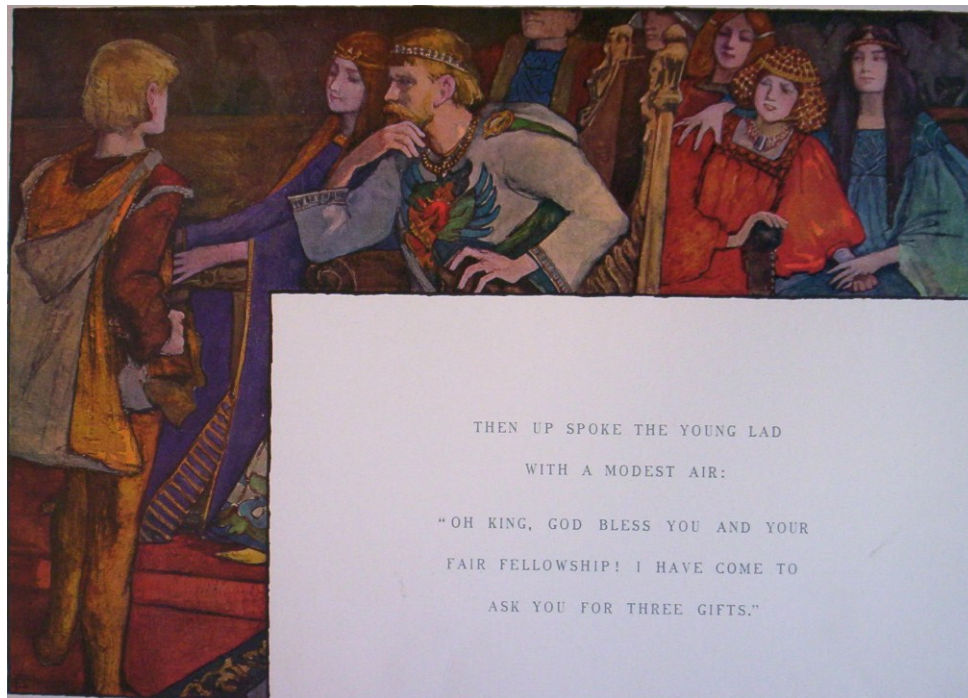


Figure 54. Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes, *Then up spoke the lad with a modest air*, Plate X of *King Arthur's Wood*, 1904.



Figure 55. Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes, *Sir Gareth and the Damsel in the Wood Perilous*, Plate XIII of *King Arthur's Wood*, 1904.



Figure 56. Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes, *And then came riding Sir Gareth*, Plate XXVI of *King Arthur's Wood*, 1904.



Figure 57. George Frederic Watts, *Sir Galahad*, 1862.



Figure 58. Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes, *And so making great dole he came to a broad and gloomy water*, Plate XXIII from *King Arthur's Wood*, 1904.



Figure 59. Jules Bastien-Lepage, *Jeanne d'Arc écoutant les voix*, 1879.



Figure 60. Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes, *La Demoiselle Sauvage*: “You are an uncourteous knight,” said she, Plate XII from *King Arthur’s Wood*, 1904.

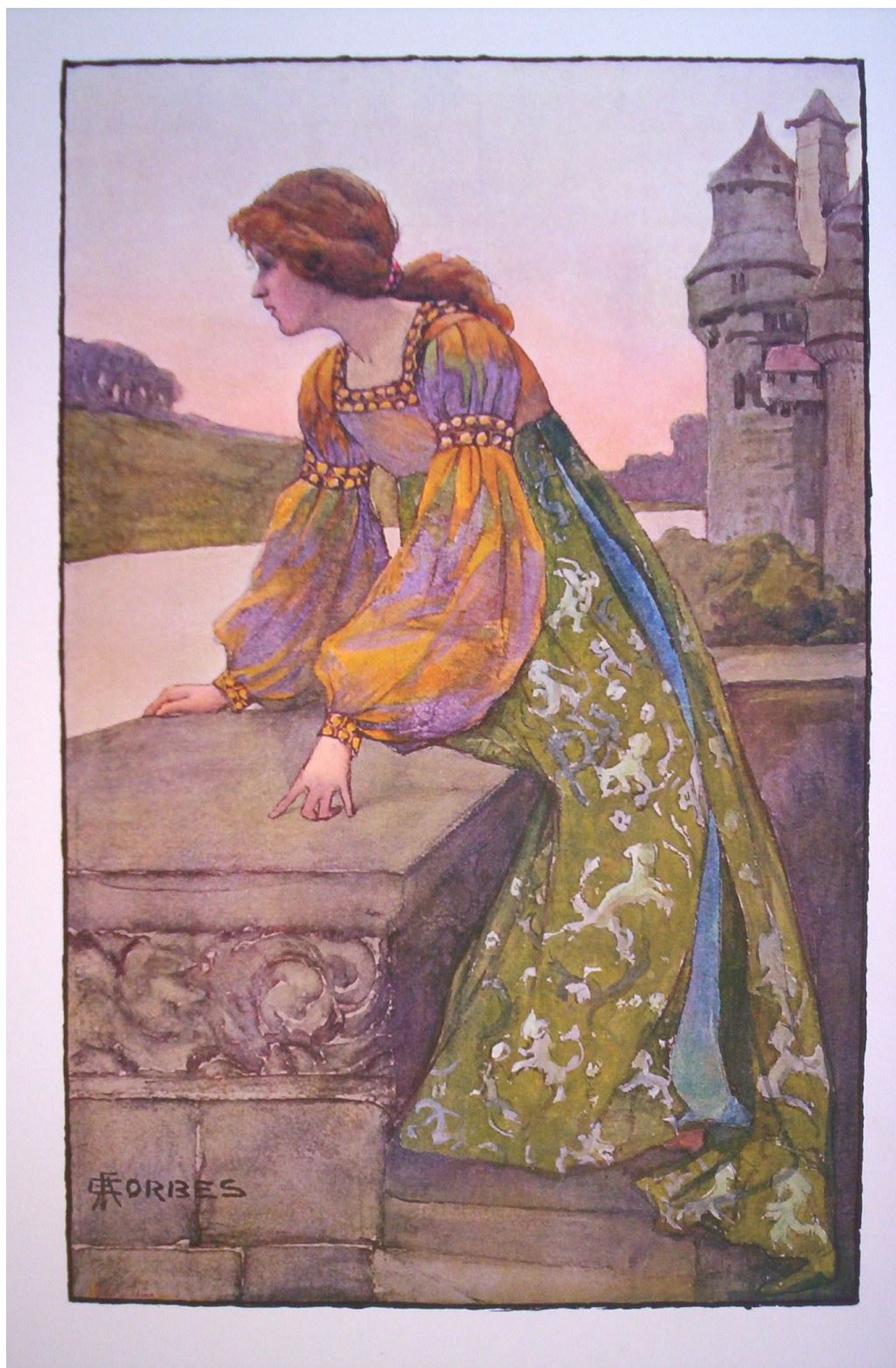


Figure 61. Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes, *But when the Lady of the Castle had sent Sir Gareth away*, Plate XXIV from *King Arthur's Wood*, 1904.



Figure 62. Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes, *The Lady Liones*, Plate XVI from *King Arthur's Wood*, 1904.



Figure 63. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Bocca Baciata*, 1859.



Figure 64. Edward Burne-Jones, *The Beguiling of Merlin*, 1872-77.

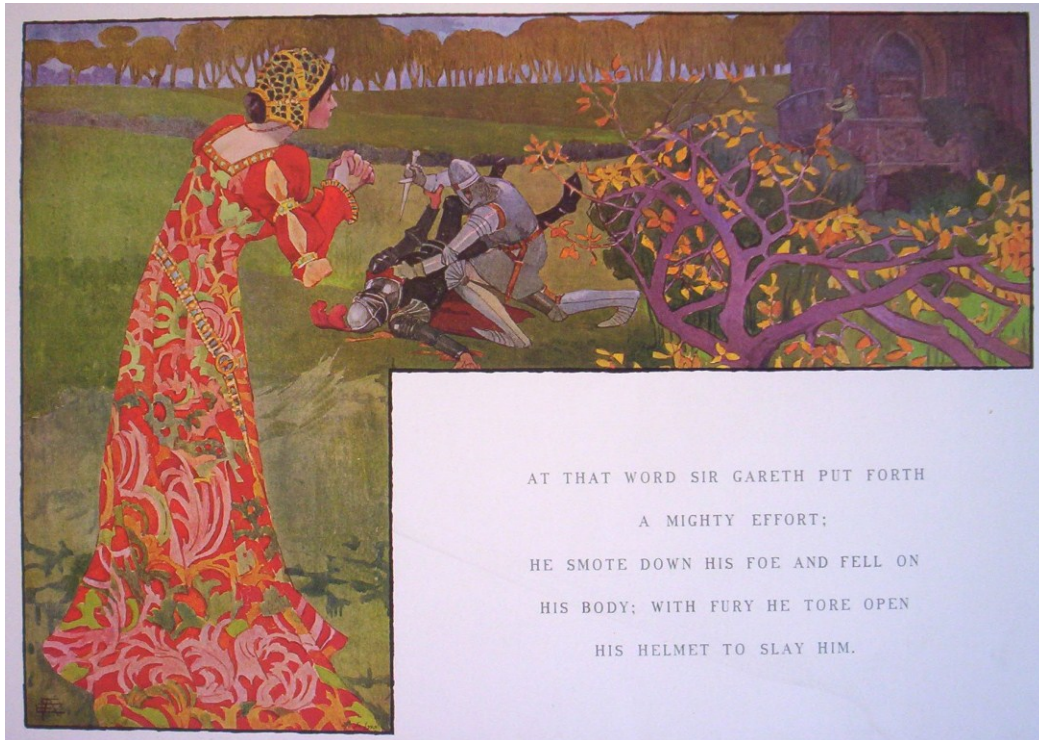


Figure 65. Elizabeth Armstrong Forbes, *At that word Sir Gareth put forth a mighty effort*, Plate XXII from *King Arthur's Wood*, 1904.



Figure 66. Mary Alexandra Bell Eastlake, *Fairy Tales*, c. 1916.



Figure 67. Mary Alexandra Bell Eastlake, *Happiness*, c. 1892.



Figure 68. Mary Alexandra Bell Eastlake, *Mobilization Day: French Fisherwomen Watching the Departure of the Fleet*, c. 1917.



Figure 69. William-Adolphe Bouguereau, *The Joys of Motherhood*, 1878.



Figure 70. Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Nursing*, 1886.



Figure 71. Giovanni Bellini, *Madonna of the Meadow*, c. 1500.



Figure 72. Raphael, *The Madonna of the Pinks* / *La Madonna dei Garofani*, c. 1506-7.



Figure 73. Mary Cassatt, *Mother About to Wash her Sleepy Child*, 1880.



Figure 74. Mary Alexandra Bell Esatlake. *Mother and Baby*, date unknown.



Figure 75. Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, *Portrait of the Artist with her Daughter Julie*, 1787.



Figure 76. Mary Alexandra Bell Eastlake, *Mother and Child*, n.d.

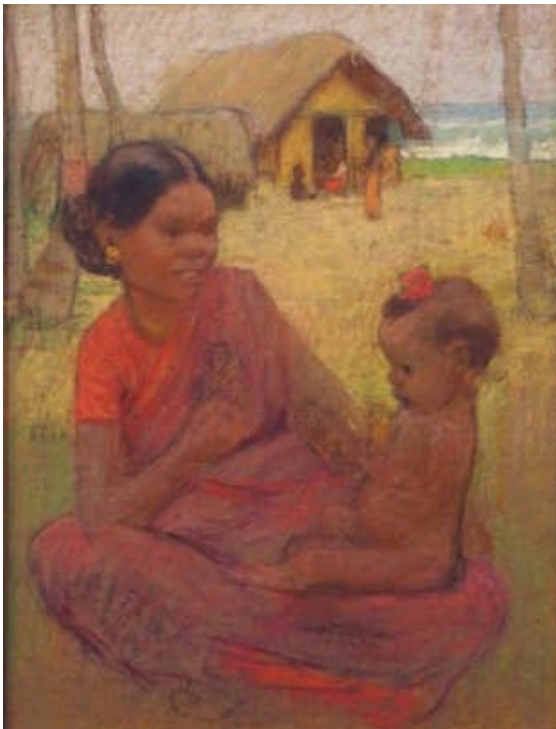


Figure 77. Mary Alexandra Bell Eastlake, *Mother and Child*, n.d.



Figure 78. Mary Alexandra Bell Eastlake, *Japanese Children at Play*, c. 1913.



Figure 79. Mary Alexandra Bell Eastlake, *Feeding the Pigeons*, n.d.



Figure 80. William Hodges, *Tahiti Revisited (Oaitepeha Bay, Tahiti)*, c. 1776.



Figure 81. Paul Gauguin. *Two Tahitian Women*, 1899.



Figure 82. Mary Alexandra Bell Eastlake, *Baby*, n.d.



Figure 83. Mary Alexandra Bell Eastlake, *Untitled sketch*, n.d.



Figure 84. Mary Alexandra Bell Eastlake, *The Annunciation*, c. 1900.



Figure 85. Paul Gauguin. *Vision After the Sermon (Jacob Wrestling with the Angel)*, 1889.

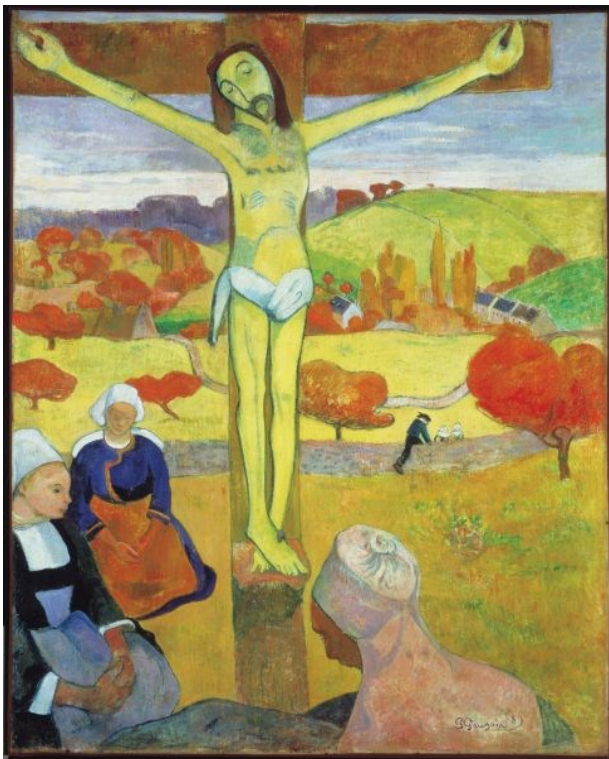


Figure 86. Paul Gauguin, *Yellow Christ*, 1889.



Figure 87. Paula Modersohn-Becker, *Kneeling Mother and Child*, 1907.

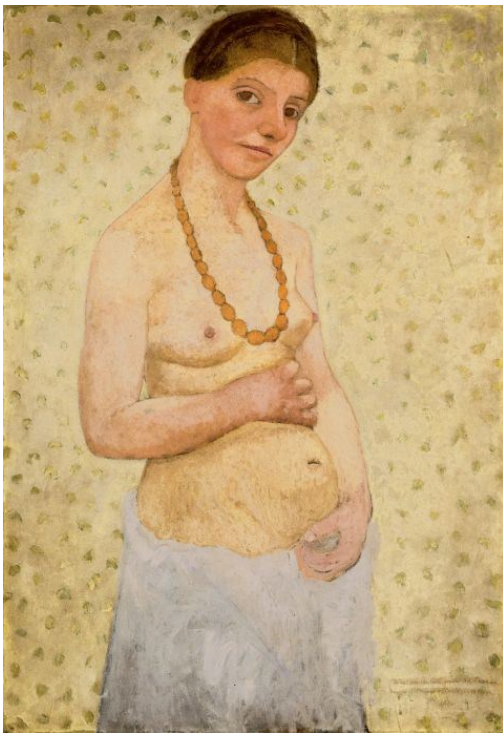


Figure 88. Paula Modersohn-Becker, *Self-Portrait on her Sixth Wedding Anniversary*, 1906.



Figure 89. Helen McNicoll. *The Chintz Sofa*, 1913.



Figure 90. Frances Jones, *In the Conservatory* / *Le jardin d'hiver*, 1883.



Figure 91. Pierre Mignard, *Louise Renée de Penancoet Kéroüalle, Duchess of Portsmouth*, 1682.



Figure 92. William Merritt Chase, *A Friendly Call*, 1895.



Figure 93. Edmund Tarbell, *Across the Room*, 1899.



Figure 94. Helen McNicoll, *The Victorian Dress*, c. 1914.



Figure 95. Helen McNicoll, *The Victorian Dress*, c. 1914.



Figure 96. “Miss McNicoll and a Corner of her Studio.” From “Miss McNicoll Now a Member of Royal Art Society,” *Montreal Daily Star*, April 2, 1913.



Figure 97. François-Hubert Drouais, *Madame de Pompadour at her Tambour Frame*, 1763-4.



Figure 98. Edwyn Llewellyn, “This is Allowed to Vote,” 1907.



Figure 99. Henrietta Briggs-Wall, *American Woman and her Political Peers*, 1893.



Figure 100. Edouard Manet, *Dans le jardin d'hiver / Dans la serre*, 1879.



Figure 101. Frances Jones, *Harry in the Morning Room*, c. 1886.



Figure 102. J.J.J. Tissot. *In the Conservatory*, c. 1875-78.



Figure 103. Louise Abbéma. *Déjeuner dans la serre*, 1877.



Figure 104. Sophie Pemberton, 1904.



Figure 105. Sophie Pemberton, 1905.



Figure 106. Sophie Pemberton, n.d.

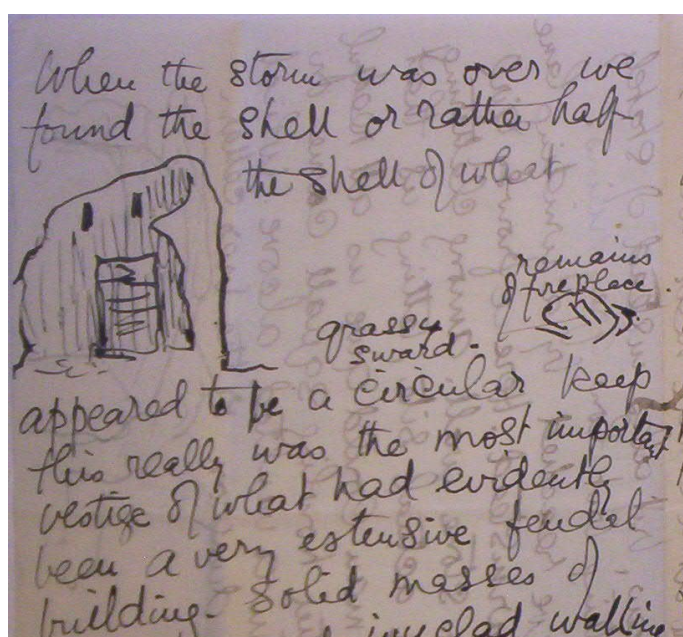
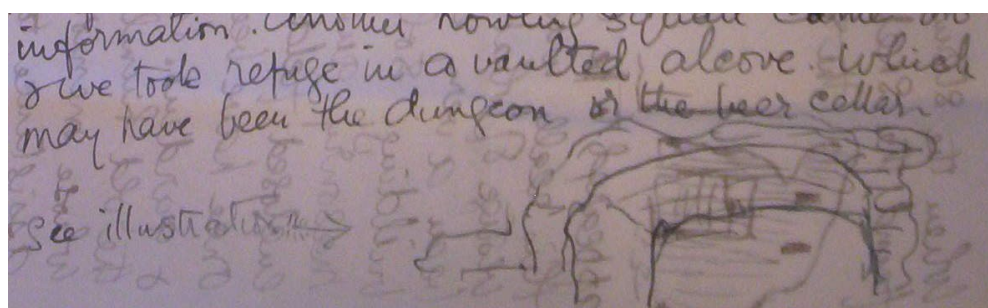


Figure 107. Sophie Pemberton, Sketches of Killachy Castle, Kilkenny, Ireland, 1910.

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